

A Study on the Doctrine of Hell

Geoffrey R. Kirkland

INTRODUCTION:

*"Such, in brief, is the portion awaiting the lost—
eternal separation from the Fount of all goodness;
everlasting punishment;
torment of soul and body;
endless existence in the Lake of Fire,
in association with the vilest of the vile;
every ray of hope excluded;
utterly crushed and overwhelmed by
the wrath of a sin-avenging God!"
— AW Pink (Eternal Punishment)*

Why Should Pastors Preach on Hell?

Hell is an awful and overwhelming reality. Yet where Scripture speaks, pastors must not be silent. Here are four things pastors should preach about hell:

1. **Hell is real.** It is as characteristic of Jesus' teaching to warn against the prospect of hell as it is for him to describe the high privileges of heaven. According to Jesus' teaching and the rest of Scripture, hell is just as real as heaven.
2. **Hell is terrible.** The New Testament descriptions of hell include: outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth, destruction of body and soul, eternal fire, condemnation, suffering the wrath of God, everlasting destruction away from the presence of the Lord, perishing, separation, blackest darkness. What is the preacher to do with this language? Exactly what one does with other biblical language: explain exactly what it means. In particular, the word "eternal" underscores the magnitude of what is in view.
3. **Those who do not repent of their sins and trust in Christ will spend eternity in hell.** The Bible teaches that those who do not have faith in Christ will suffer God's wrath in hell for all eternity. Pastors must not soften this hard reality in the name of false compassion.
4. **Most importantly, in expounding and applying the biblical teaching on hell, we must emphasize that there is a way of salvation.** The gospel is not a message about hell. Yet one cannot be faithful to scripture without preaching about it for the simple reason that the gospel itself cannot be understood apart from its reality. In a nutshell, the gospel is this: Christ took our place, bearing our sin, dying our death—so that we might share his place, be made his righteousness, taste his vindication, and experience his life.
— *Sinclair Ferguson*

No Truth More Grim Than Hell

There is no biblical concept more grim or terror-invoking than the idea of hell. It is so unpopular with us that few would give credence to it at all except that it comes to us from the teaching of Christ Himself.

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Almost all the biblical teaching about hell comes from the lips of Jesus. It is this doctrine, perhaps more than any other, that strains even the Christian's loyalty to the teaching of Christ. Modern Christians have pushed the limits of minimizing hell in an effort to sidestep or soften Jesus' own teaching. The Bible describes hell as a place of outer darkness, a lake of fire, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, a place of eternal separation from the blessings of God, a prison, a place of torment where the worm doesn't turn or die. These graphic images of eternal punishment provoke the question, should we take these descriptions literally or are they merely symbols?

I suspect they are symbols, but I find no relief in that. We must not think of them as being merely symbols. It is probably that the sinner in hell would prefer a literal lake of fire as his eternal abode to the reality of hell represented in the lake of fire image. If these images are indeed symbols, then we must conclude that the reality is worse than the symbol suggests. The function of symbols is to point beyond themselves to a higher or more intense state of actuality than the symbol itself can contain. That Jesus used the most awful symbols imaginable to describe hell is no comfort to those who see them simply as symbols.

Hell is an eternity before the righteous, ever-burning wrath of God

A breath of relief is usually heard when someone declares, "Hell is a symbol for separation from God." To be separated from God for eternity is no great threat to the impenitent person. The ungodly want nothing more than to be separated from God. Their problem in hell will not be separation from God, it will be the presence of God that will torment them. In hell, God will be present in the fullness of His divine wrath. He will be there to exercise His just punishment of the damned. They will know Him as an all-consuming fire.

No matter how we analyze the concept of hell it often sounds to us as a place of cruel and unusual punishment. If, however, we can take any comfort in the concept of hell, we can take it in the full assurance that there will be no cruelty there. It is impossible for God to be cruel. Cruelty involves inflicting a punishment that is more severe or harsh than the crime. Cruelty in this sense is unjust. God is incapable of inflicting an unjust punishment. The Judge of all the earth will surely do what is right. No innocent person will ever suffer at His hand.

Perhaps the most frightening aspect of hell is its eternity. People can endure the greatest agony if they know it will ultimately stop. In hell there is no such hope. The Bible clearly teaches that the punishment is eternal. The same word is used for both eternal life and eternal death. Punishment implies pain. Mere annihilation, which some have lobbied for, involves no pain. Jonathan Edwards, in preaching on [Revelation 6:15-16](#) said, "Wicked men will hereafter earnestly wish to be turned to nothing and forever cease to be that they may escape the wrath of God."

Hell, then, is an eternity before the righteous, ever-burning wrath of God, a suffering torment from which there is no escape and no relief. Understanding this is crucial to our drive to appreciate the work of Christ and to preach His gospel.

— *RC Sproul*

A Comparison Between Pigs Led to Execution & Sinners Led to Hell

Rowland Hill illustrated the folly of sinners by the story of a butcher who was followed by the swine right into the slaughterhouse. As hogs do not usually go where they are wanted, it seemed a mystery how these animals were so eager to follow their executioner; but when it was seen that he wisely carried a bag of peas and beans with which he enticed the creatures onward, the riddle was solved at once. Unsuspecting of impending death the hogs cared only for the passing gratification of their appetites, and hurried to the slaughter.

And in the same manner ungodly men follow the great enemy of souls down through the jaws of hell, merely because their depraved passions are pleased with the lusts of the flesh and the pleasures of sin which the devil gives them by handfuls on the road.

Alas, that there should be such likeness between men and swine!

The joys of sin are so short and so unsatisfactory, that they can never be thought of for a moment as a fitting inducement for a rational being to lose his immortal soul.

Will a few hours of foolishness, gambling, drinking, or immorality, compensate for eternal fire?

Is the momentary indulgence of a base passion worth the endurance of flames which never can be quenched?

To moan in vain for a drop of water!

To be tormented by the never dying worm!

To be shut out from hope forever!

To be eternally cursed of God!

Is any sin worth all this?

Can any gain make up for this?

Oh, you who delight in the poisonous sweets of sin, remember that though pleasant in the mouth for the moment, sin will be bitter in your stomach forever.

Why will you swallow the bait when you know that the hook is there? Why will you be lured by Satan?

Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird; but you are more foolish than the birds and fly into the snare when you know it is there. Oh, that you were wise, and would consider your end.

—*Charles Spurgeon*

What Are Some Truths that Jesus Brings Out in His Parable of the Judgments (Matt 25)?

So, what should we think of hell? Is the idea of it really responsible for all the cruelty and torture in the world? Is the doctrine of hell incompatible with the way of Jesus Christ? Hardly. In fact, the most prolific teacher of hell in the Bible is Jesus, and He spoke more about it than He did about heaven. In [Matthew 25:41–46](#) He teaches us four truths about hell that should cause us to grieve over the prospect of anyone experiencing its horrors.

1. Hell is a state of separation from God.

On the day of judgment, Jesus will say to all unbelievers, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire” (v. 41). This is the same sort of language that Jesus uses elsewhere to describe the final judgment of unbelievers (see 7:23).

To be separated from God is to be separated from anything and everything good. That is hard to conceive because even the most miserable person enjoys some of God’s blessings. We breathe His air, are nourished by food that He supplies, and experience many other aspects of His common grace.

On earth even atheists enjoy the benefits of God’s goodness. But in hell, these blessings will be nonexistent. Those consigned there will remember God’s goodness, and will even have some awareness of the unending pleasures of heaven, but they will have no access to them.

This does not mean that God will be completely absent from hell. He is and will remain omnipresent ([Ps. 139:7-8](#)). To be separated from the Lord and cast into hell does not mean that a person will finally be free of God. That person will remain eternally accountable to Him. He will remain Lord over the person’s existence. But in hell, a person will be forever separated from God in His kindness, mercy, grace, and goodness. He will be consigned to deal with Him in His holy wrath.

2. Hell is a state of association.

Jesus says that the eternal fire of hell was “prepared for the devil and his angels” ([Matt. 25:41](#)). People were made for God. Hell was made for the Devil. Yet people who die in their sin, without Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, will spend eternity in hell with the one being who is most unlike God. It is a tragic irony that many who do not believe in the Devil in this life will wind up spending eternity being tormented with him in hell.

3. Hell is a state of punishment.

Jesus describes it as “fire” (v. 41) and a place of “punishment” (v. 46). Hell is a place of retribution where justice is served through the payment for crimes.

The punishment must fit the crime. The misery and torment of hell point to the wickedness and seriousness of sin. Those who protest the biblical doctrine of hell as being excessive betray their inadequate comprehension of the sinfulness of sin. For sinners to be consigned to anything less than the horrors of eternal punishment would be a miscarriage of justice.

4. Hell is an everlasting state.

Though some would like to shorten the duration of this state, Jesus' words are very clear. He uses the same adjective to describe both punishment and life in verse 46. If hell is not eternal, neither is the new heaven and earth.

How can God exact infinite punishment for a finite sin? First, because the person against whom all sin is committed is infinite. Crimes against the infinitely holy, infinitely kind, infinitely good, and infinitely supreme Ruler of the world deserve unending punishment. In addition to that, those condemned to hell will go on sinning for eternity. There is no repentance in hell. So the punishment will continue as long as the sinning does.

The dreadfulness of hell deepens our grateful praise for the salvation we have in Jesus Christ. Hell is what we deserve. And hell is what He experienced on the cross in our place.

Believing the truth about hell also motivates us to persuade people to be reconciled to God. By God's grace those of us who are trusting Christ have been rescued from this horrible destiny. How can we love people and refuse to speak plainly to them about the realities of eternal damnation and God's gracious provision of salvation?

Clearer visions of hell will give us greater love for both God and people.

— *Tom Ascol*

What Does It Mean to “Perish” in Hell?

"Unless you repent, you shall all likewise **perish!**" Luke 13:3

Perish! What is that?

- It is for hope to forever depart — and despair take eternal possession of the soul!
- It is to be banished from God forever — and to be shut up with devils and damned spirits!
- It is to be excluded from Heaven — and to be confined in Hell!
- It is to be driven from the rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand — and to be doomed to the lake of fire to dwell in everlasting burnings!
- It is to be thrust into blackness, darkness, and eternal woe!

If therefore you live impenitent, then you are condemned already; your destiny is fixed, and fixed by yourself. Hell is your eternal abode! And in Hell, you will be forever deprived of the glorious presence of God. There you will be shut up in prison with all the enemies of God — shut up in a prison where there is . . .

- no order — but horror;
- no voice — but of blasphemers cursing God, themselves, and each other;
- no sounds — but the dismal howlings of the tortured;
- no society — but devils and the damned! And these being tormented themselves — will eternally torment you!

In **Hell**, you must experience . . .

- punishment, without pity;
- misery, without mercy;
- sorrow, without support;
- crying, without comfort;
- mischief, without measure;
- torment, without ease!

— *James Smith*

The Most Terrifying Reality of Hell: Its Eternality

The most terrifying aspect of the torment in hell is that it never ends. It goes on forever and ever. The words used by Christ and the apostles to describe the duration of the suffering in hell clearly, unambiguously and unequivocally teach that the punishment in hell is eternal, unending and everlasting.

Jesus Christ describes the suffering in hell as: “everlasting punishment” (Mt. 25:46); “everlasting fire” (Mt. 18:8); “the fire that will never be quenched” (Mk. 9:45); “the worm that never dies” (Mk. 9:46). The apostles totally agree with Christ when they describe hell as: “a flaming fire” (2 Th. 1:8); “everlasting chains” (Jude 6); “eternal fire” (Jude 7); “the blackness of darkness forever” (Jude 13); “the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever” (Rev. 14:11; 19:3); “the lake of fire and brimstone, in which the devil, the beast, and the false prophet ‘shall be tormented day and night, forever and ever’” (Rev. 20:10).

— *Brian Shwertley*

An Attempt to Illustrate the Enduring Reality of Eternal Hell

The noted American preacher Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) gave this warning regarding the everlasting nature of hell's torments: “Imagine yourself to be cast into a fiery oven, or a great furnace, where your pain would be much greater than that occasioned by accidentally touching a coal of fire, as the heat is greater. Imagine also that your body was to lie there for a quarter of an hour, full of fire, and all the while full of quick sense; what horror would you feel at the entrance of such a furnace! And how long would that quarter of an hour seem to you! And after you had endured it for one minute, how overbearing it would be to you to think that you had to endure the other fourteen! But what would be the effect on your soul, if you knew you must lie there enduring that torment to the full for twenty-four hours! And how much greater would be the effect, if you knew you must endure it for a whole year; and how vastly greater still, if you knew you must endure it for a thousand years! Oh then, how would your hearts sink, if you knew that you must bear it forever and ever! That there would be no end! That after millions of millions of ages, your torment would be no nearer to an end, and that you never, never should be delivered! But your torment in hell will be immensely greater than this illustration represents.”

Hell is Just

The eternal aspect of hell reflects God's justice, honor and majesty. Every sin is ultimately directed against God. Every sin is a direct challenge to God's nature and authority. Every time you sin you are saying, "I will be my own god. I will determine for myself what is right and what is wrong. I refuse to submit to Jesus Christ and His Word." God, who is infinitely holy and pure, has an infinite hatred of sin. God must glorify His justice by eternally punishing the wicked. Sinners spit and cast contempt upon God's honor and majesty. On the day of judgment and throughout eternity God will glorify and exalt Himself by the eternal destruction of the ungodly. "The vindictive justice of God will appear strict, exact, awful, and terrible, and therefore glorious." To sin against an infinite God merits eternal punishment.

The Anger of God Increases toward the Unbelieving Every Day

God's anger against you increases every day that you live without Christ. Your sins multiply day after day. Every sin is recorded by God. God's wrath against you continues to grow. You do not know when God's patience and forbearance will run out. You do not know when you will be cut down and cast into the oven. "You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man" (Ps. 5:4-6). When God's patience runs out, you will be exposed to the fierceness of His unmitigated wrath. "I will tread them in Mine anger, and will trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all My raiment" (Isa. 63:3). You will want to hide from the fury of the Lord. You will say "to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!'" (Rev. 6:16)—but you will not escape.

What Is Hell?

HELL! What is it? It is God's great prison, where His criminals are confined. It is the place of punishment — where the wages of sin are paid. It is the house of despair, the residence of desperation, the dwelling-place of the worm that never dies. It is called the lake of fire, burning with brimstone. It is a place of terrible torture, dreadful agony, and soul-racking remorse. Hope never enters there. Repose is never enjoyed there. Light never shines there. But all is pain, gloom, restless agony, and indescribable torment! There is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth — forever! HELL! Who are there? The rich man, at whose gate Lazarus lay, is there. Judas, who betrayed Jesus, is there. Cain, who slew his brother, is there. Demas, who preferred the world to Christ, is there. The covetous and thieves are there! The immoral and liars are there! The proud and vain are there! All who made light of the Gospel are there! All who neglected the great salvation are there! All who worshiped the Roman beast are there! And they are all "tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb! The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever — and they have no rest day nor night!"

— *James Smith*

The Variety of Hell's Torments

Those in the infernal dungeon of Hell, will undergo a *VARIETY* of torments. Those who are most afflicted upon earth, have seldom any more than one malady at a time. But should they have the plague, the gout, the stone, and fever all at one time — how miserable would they think themselves! Yet all that is but like the biting of a flea — compared to those intolerable, pungent pains which those in Hell endure! There, they have all the loathed variety of Hell to grapple with:

- the unquenchable fire to burn them;
- a lake of burning brimstone ever choking them;
- eternal chains to bind them;

utter darkness to affright them, and
 a worm of conscience which gnaws upon them eternally!
 Any one of these is worse to bear — than all the torments which mankind ever felt on earth!

But the torments in Hell are also *UNIVERSAL*, afflicting each part of the body and soul — which renders what they suffer, most insufferable! In those illnesses which men are seized with on earth, though some parts are afflicted — other parts are free. But in Hell, each member of the soul and body is continually tormented:

- The **eye** is tormented with the sight of the devils, who appear in all the horrid and black shapes which sin can give them!
- The **ear** is tormented with the loud yellings and continual outcries of the damned.
- The **nostrils** are smothered with sulphurous flames.
- The **tongue** is covered with burning blisters.
- The **whole body** is rolled in flames of liquid fire!
- The **imagination** is tormented with the thoughts of what a Heaven has been lost.
- The **memory** is tormented with reflecting on those opportunities they had of being saved.
- The **mind** is tormented with considering how vainly precious time has been wasted.
- The **understanding** is tormented with the thoughts of of present pains, and future sorrows — which are to last forever!
- The **conscience** is tormented with a continual gnawing worm.

Another thing which makes the misery of Hell so dreadful, is the *EXTREMITY* of the torments. The fire which burns is so violent that all the water in the sea can never quench it! The pains suffered are so extreme, that it is impossible they should be known by any, but those who feel them!

Another part of Hell's misery is the *CEASELESSNESS* of the torments. As various, as universal, and as extremely violent as they are — they are continual, also. Nor have they the least rest from them. If there were any relaxation — it might be some allay. But what makes this condition so deplorable — is that there is no easing of the torments!

"They will go away into eternal punishment!" Matthew 25:46

The *COMPANY* they have there, is another element of their misery. Tormenting devils and tormented souls are all the company! Dreadful shrieks and howlings, under the fierceness of pain, and fearful blasphemies, is all the conversation!

The *PLACE* in which they suffer is another thing which increases the sufferings. Hell is the epitome of all misery —
 a prison,
 a dungeon,
 a bottomless pit,
 a lake of fire and brimstone,
 a furnace of fire which burns to eternity,
 the blackness of darkness forever!

The cruelty of our *TORMENTORS* is another thing which adds to the torments. The tormentors are devils, in whom there is no pity. Being tormented themselves, they take pleasure in tormenting others.

But that which makes these sufferings most grievous — is that they shall *ALWAYS* be so — these most intolerable sufferings shall last to all eternity. 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire!' will perpetually sound in the ears of the damned! The miserable situation they are in, shall be forever!

— *John Bunyan*

The Increasing Nature of Hell's Intensity

See what vast treasures of wrath are laid up for unrepentant sinners. "Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed." --Romans 2:5

As guilt increases—so does wrath. Every sin committed, is another stick to heat hell—and make it burn the hotter!

It is a thing to be lamented—that men should live in the world, only to increase their torments in hell. While they commit new sins, they are burdening themselves with more iron chains, which will be so heavy at last, that they will not be able to bear them—or avoid them.

Oh, sinner! Know that for every sin, you are only adding to your torment! Every dish Satan serves you—will only increase your fatal reckoning, and make your condemnation heavier. Every sin is a drop of oil upon hell's eternal furnace!

—*Thomas Watson*

A Fitting Reminder to Meditate on Hell

Let us descend daily into Hell by meditation — lest we finally descend there by condemnation.

Let us often go to Hell while we live — lest we go there when we are dead!

—*Thomas Adams (1633)*

The Joy of Believers in this Contemplation of Hell

All the pains, torments, curse, and wrath which were due to the elect—fell on Christ, until divine justice was fully satisfied. "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thes. 5:9. Oh, exalt that Christ! Oh, extol that Savior, who has saved you from that eternal wrath!

— *Thomas Brooks*

The Gospel of Jesus Christ? Jesus Swallowed God's Wrath For Us!

In order to be a true believer, in order to be a child of God the Holy Son of God was forsaken by His Father and then crushed under His own Father's punishment. You say, "Oh brother Paul you've gone to far now." Have you not read Isaiah 53:10? "It pleased the Lord to crush Him." Take a ten thousand pound millstone and put another on top of it. Put a grain of wheat between them and see what you got when it comes out on the other end. Take a dam, a hundred thousand miles high and a hundred thousand miles wide and have it break in-front of you and as the torrent of water rolls down towards you, to engulf you and destroy you and all of the sudden the ground before you opens up and drinks it down and not one drop of it splashes to your feet. And so Christ raised His hand up to heaven and took the wrath of God, that great cup, and drank it down. When He cried out "It is finished!" He turned it over and not one drop came out. He drank the wrath of God and satisfied justice and appeased wrath and therefore God can now be just, and justify the sinner. This is what He's done, this is what He has done.

Puritan's spoke allot about repentance, not only from sin, but repentance from good works. You say "What do you mean?" There is a real sense in which repentance is simply this: you give up from trying to justify yourself, you just quit. You see that every one of your most righteous deeds is nothing but filthy rags and you detest them and you throw them to the floor and you stand there before God and say "Unless you move on my behalf I am damned." And you believe You believe. You trust.

—*Paul Washer*

The divine wrath that should have been ours would be exhausted upon the Son, and by Him, it would be extinguished.

Imagine an immense dam that is filled to the brim and straining against the weight behind it. All at once, the protective wall is pulled away and the massive destructive power of the deluge is unleashed. As certain destruction races towards a small village in the nearby valley, the ground suddenly opens up before it and drinks down that which would have carried it away. In similar fashion, the judgment of God was rightly racing toward every man. Escape could not be found on the highest hill or in the deepest abyss. The fleetest of foot could not outrun it, nor could the strongest swimmer endure its torrents. The dam was breached and nothing could repair its ruin. But when every human hope was exhausted, at the appointed time, the Son of God interposed. He stood between divine justice and His people. He drank down the wrath that we ourselves had kindled and the punishment we deserved. When He died, not one drop of the former deluge remained. He drank it all on our behalf!

Imagine two giant millstones, one turning on top of the other. Imagine that caught between the two is a single grain of wheat that is pulled under the massive weigh. First, its hull is crushed beyond recognition, and then its inwards parts are poured out and ground into dust. There is no hope of retrieval or reconstruction. All is lost and beyond repair. Thus, in a similar fashion, it pleased the Lord to crush His only Son, and put Him to grief unspeakable. Thus, it pleased the Son to submit to such suffering that God might be glorified and a people might be redeemed.

We should not think that God found some gleeful pleasure in the suffering of His beloved Son, but through His death, the will of God was accomplished. No other means had the power to put away sin, satisfy divine justice, and appease the wrath of God against us. Unless that divine grain of wheat had fallen to the ground and died, it would have abided alone without a people or a bride. The pleasure was not found in the suffering, but in all that such suffering would accomplish: God would be revealed in a glory yet unknown to men or angels, and a people would be brought into unhindered fellowship with their God.

The beloved Puritan writer **John Flavel** once wrote a dialogue between the Father and the Son regarding fallen humanity and great price that would be required to obtain our redemption. It beautifully illustrates the true agony of the Cross, and the love of the Father and the Son which moved them to embrace it. Flavel writes: “Here you may suppose the Father to say, when driving His bargain with Christ for you –

Father: My Son, here is a company of poor miserable souls, that have utterly undone themselves, and now lie open to my justice! Justice demands satisfaction for them, or will satisfy itself in the eternal ruin of them: What shall be done for these souls? And thus Christ returns.

Son: O my Father, such is my love to, and pity for them, that rather than they shall perish eternally, I will be responsible for them as their Surety; bring in all thy bills, that I may see what they owe Thee; Lord, bring them all in, that there may be no after-reckonings with them; at my hand shall thou require it. I will rather choose to suffer their wrath than they should suffer it: upon me, my Father, upon me be all their debt.

Father: But, my Son, if thou undertake for them, thou must reckon to pay the last mite, expect no abatements; if I spare them, I will not spare thee.

Son: Content, Father, let it be so; charge it all upon me, I am able to discharge it: and though it prove a kind of undoing to me, though it impoverish all my riches, empty all my treasures, yet I am content to undertake it!”

“Those who are sent to hell never will have paid the whole of the debt that they owe to God, nor any part that bears any proportion to the whole... Justice therefore can never fully be satisfied in your damnation, but it is actually satisfied in Christ. Therefore, He is accepted of the Father & all who believe are accepted & justified in Him. Therefore, believe in Him, come to Him, commit your souls to Him & be saved by Him! In Him you're safe from the eternal torments of hell! Nor is that all: but through Him, you shall inherit inconceivable blessedness and glory that will be of equal duration with the torments of hell.”

—*Jonathan Edwards*

“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”

— *Romans 5.9*

A Biblical Essential: The Doctrine of Hell

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Hell exists and hell is real. One of the core, orthodox doctrines that many seem to wage war against in this present day is the doctrine of eternal hell. Hell does not end. Hell should not be discussed as if it were an insignificant matter. Perhaps no doctrine in all the world exists that should both bring humans to their knees in utter fear and should compel sinners to fly to Christ, the only Refuge, so as to find safety from the firestorm of divine fury that perpetually occurs in hell.

In this brief essay, I will expound on the doctrine of hell by providing **fifteen biblical realities of this place of torment**.

1. Eternal

Hell is eternal. That is to say that hell does not come to an end. It endures perpetually. There is no rest, no end in sight, no termination, no extinction, no annihilation. There is no soul sleep. The sinful soul that dies will enter a state of eternal judgment without end. After millions and billions of ages have passed, one will have barely just begun to endure hell. So long as heaven is eternal, hell is eternal. As long as heaven endures, hell endures. As long as the glory of the redeemed exist, so will the punishment of the damned exist. Hell is eternal, unending, without termination. What a horror! Perhaps one may endure some degree of pain knowing that an end is in sight; but this shall never be known in hell. It is eternal.

2. Punishment

In hell God punishes all sinners. Sin is lawlessness. To sin is to break God's Law and to sin is to violate God's glory. To sin is to incur punishment. To receive a punishment is not unfair; rather, it must be fair. To not receive a punishment for a crime committed would be unfair. But for God to punish transgressors of His holy Law who are fully deserving of the just sentence and the righteous judgment is not unfair; it is right, good, fair and just. Hell is punishment. Nothing about hell is unfair. There is nothing about hell that the sinner did not merit. To sin is to incite God's anger and it thus expects His punishment.

3. Isolation

Contrary to what some scoffers may suggest, hell has no parties. No friendships exist in hell. Sure the screams of the crushed shriek through hell perpetually but there is no rest, no friendships, no sympathy. Hell is banishment. Hell is eternal blackness forever isolated in the eternal chains of isolation. To reside in hell is to be in isolation forevermore. Heaven is a world of fellowship, love, friendships, communication, and corporate worship. Hell, on the contrary, is a lonely state of horror, hatred, banishment, and isolation.

4. Blackness

God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. To be opposed to God is to be in the darkness. Jesus came as the Light of the world. Hell, however, is darkness. There is no light in hell. There is no flickering light that can give warmth, guidance, comfort or shelter to any of hell's criminals. Hell is a thick blackness akin to the blackness that God sent upon Egypt; it was a blackness that was so thick it could be felt. Hell is utter blackness, banishment, terror, torment, and endless aeons of darkness.

5. Fire

Amazingly, hell is blackness yet hell also is a place of fire. Hell has flames. Hell will forever and ultimately be cast into the eternal abode of the wicked — the Lake of Fire. It will be a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. To be in a hot oven for 1 hour would inflict mortal wounds; to reside in an oven for 1 year would be inconceivable; to dwell in an oven for 1 thousand years goes beyond what the human mind can really ponder. And yet to think that souls will really, literally, consciously and eternally dwell in an everlasting Lake of Fire is beyond the human imagination.

6. Without Rest

Hell has no rest, no end, no termination, no painlessness, no ceasing. To reside in hell is to reside in a restless state where the wrath of God relentlessly rests upon all rebels without rest day or night. None shall ever find a moment of comfort. None in this eternal pit will ever find an hour of respite. Everyone in hell together suffers under the sentence of eternal wrath without rest, without a lightening up of divine fury that is being released. To know Christ is to experience joyous rest. To live apart from Christ is to live in perpetual fear. Jesus welcomes all who would come to Him and find rest for their weary souls!

7. Conscious

Hell is a place where the worm does not die and where the fire is not quenched. To live in hell is just that — to live. None eternally grow extinct and none are annihilated in hell. All endure forevermore with consciences that will torment them ceaselessly. Those who die will remember the things they had while on earth. The damned in hell will remember all of the gospel presentations that they heard. The consciences of the tormented in hell will terrorize them as they continuously remember hearing the preacher give the gospel, as they remember reading that gospel tract, as they recall hearing that street preacher tenderly yet urgently pleading for souls to repent and come to Christ! Consciences will remember the gospel that was once offered to them but now is shut off to them forevermore. They will remember their rejection of the gospel and their consciences will unendingly hound them because they heard the Truth, rejected it, and are now suffering for it.

8. Infinitely Harsh

The reason hell is infinitely harsh is because sin is treason against an infinite King. To sin incurs a penalty. But the measure of the penalty is governed by the dignity of the one sinned against. To disobey the Law will incur a temporary penalty. To disobey God's Law is to incur an eternal penalty. God is an infinite God and all sin against an infinite God deserves an infinite punishment. God offers infinite love and to disregard this love and trample on it heedlessly is to exchange infinite love for infinite hatred. Thus, hell is infinitely harsh. No mercy enters into hell. Hell knows no grace. Love is found only in heaven, not in hell. There is infinite mercy and tenderness in heaven. There is infinite harshness and fury in hell. To sin against God requires that He mete out His infinite justice upon the rebel. Thus, hell must be infinitely and divinely harsh.

9. Agonizing

To agonize speaks of pain and hurt. Hell is a place of dreadful agony. Nothing enters hell that escapes the relentless pains of agony. The reason why hell is agonizing is because hell is punishment. The reason that hell is punishment is because God has established His Law and wicked men have violated all of those laws. Therefore, it must be that hell is agonizing because the dreadful wrath of divine fury is unleashed upon the sinner in hell forever. This agony denotes dreadful pain and horrible suffering.

10. Just

Nothing could be more fair than hell. What every sinner fully deserves is the weight of Omnipotent wrath because every person has sinned against God Almighty and is fully deserving of God's *just* wrath. For God to dispense wrath in hell does not show Him to be unkind, unfair, or mean; rather, it demonstrates His justice, His righteousness, and His goodness. Those who reject the notion that hell is just are those who do not understand the real nature of mankind and just how wicked, depraved, vile, corrupt, and despicable all people are in the sight of an infinitely holy God. Thus, God the Judge fairly, rightly, perfectly and justly repays each person according to His ways. Man has sinned so God must justly punish. This is right, praiseworthy and according to God's nature. God must punish sin.

11. Deserved

None in hell can point the finger at God and suggest that they suffer unfairly. None can say that they do not deserve the punishment. All in hell fully deserve the recompense they receive. God promises to repay all those who are storing up wrath for themselves by their lack of repentance and unbelief. Sinners get what they deserve in hell. Every person in heaven has not gotten what he deserved, since he deserve hell. On the contrary, every person in hell receives exactly what he deserves. All liars will receive the due penalty in hell. All sexual immoral ones will receive what they deserve in hell. All unbelievers, all those caught in false religions, damning cults, and gospel-denying waves of so-called 'Christianity' will receive the due penalty for their error in hell. Again, everyone in hell is fully deserving of the condemnation and judgment they receive without end.

12. **God's Presence in Anger**

What makes hell hell is not that God is absent. What makes hell so bad is that God is there – in unrelenting, undiminishing, unending hatred. Those who are cast away from the presence of the Lord in hell, as the Scripture says, are those who are cast away from the presence of His eternal love, compassion, mercy, and deliverance. But those in hell will forever reside in the immediate presence of God's holiness, righteousness, justice, wrath, and vengeance. Perhaps those in hell feel the utter holiness of God to such a degree that these nonbelieving rebels could only wish that God's presence might be removed even for a moment! What makes hell hell is not that God is not there, or absent, or not in control. No! God controls hell. God is the One who casts all nonbelievers there. God casts Satan there, the AntiChrist, and the false prophet. Thus, hell is excruciatingly horrible because God's wrath is there without a drop of mercy; his hatred without His love.

13. **Imminent**

Every nonChristian is one step away from eternal hell. Every unbeliever walks in his life as if he walking on a thin thread over the very flames of hell that singe him every step of the way. Little does he know that the thread will soon break and his next step will plunge him into the eternal abyss of everlasting hell where God's Almighty fury will forever drown him without a moment of respite. O the fool who lives his life rejecting Christ! He is juggling the fires of hell upon his chest hoping to not get burnt. He is walking on hot coals hoping that his feet will not be scorched. The unbeliever walks as a blind man nearing the edge of a cliff at which point he will, in just one step of his foot, cast himself down into the flaming fire of the mouth of God's wrath. Hell is imminent. Every person who lives apart from Christ will eventually die and immediately be fall into hell. And all who have not repented and believed in Christ alone will, in a moment's time at the very instant of death, will awaken to everlasting darkness and agony. All who arrogantly live now rejecting Christ will meet Christ, when their eyelids close in death, not as Savior and deliverer, but as Judge and executioner. One step from hell. O nonbeliever! Beware, you walk one step away from eternal fire!

14. **Unchanging**

None who enter hell leave. There has never been a man who entered the eternal pains of hell who came out for a respite. None who write fanciful books about entering hell speak the truth. The Bible alone provides the truth about this eternal place of horror. All who enter hell shall never depart. When God casts a soul into hell, he will forever make his home there. There will come a moment, however, when all the dead will be called forth before the Great White Throne Judgment seat of Jesus Christ. And all those who are brought before this sovereign judgment will be nonbelievers and their names will not be found in the Lamb's Book of Life. They will, however, be judged according to the deeds which are recorded in the books. When Christ tells them to depart and to be cast into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and His angels, there is a great chasm fixed between the Lake of Fire and the New Heavens and the New Earth. None can cross this chasm. It is an impassible gulf that exists between the two destinies. It is an ocean that cannot be crossed. None who enter hell will leave. It is unchanging. The sentence is declared. The matter is settled and fixed. All who die in unbelief will reside in unbelief forevermore and will abide in hell perpetually for billions and billions of ages to come.

15. **Real**

Contrary to what some may suggest, hell is not myth. Hell is real. Hell is not made up. Hell is more real than your life right now. Hell presently exists. And millions and millions right now loudly shriek with groans and cries as they suffer the weight of God's fury. Every second around the world, someone dies and enters through the the place where they cannot exit: hell. Yes, hell is real. Some may scoff. Many may doubt. Preachers may ignore it. Theologians may endeavor to explain it away. Scholars may mock. But God Himself declares hell to be true because He created it, He runs it, He owns it, He judges people there. Yes, hell is real. Better to be warned about it now and to flee for your life than to die and then find out that you cannot escape the reality of hell. It is real; yes, more real than your life now! Hell is real! Flee! Turn! Repent!

Hell is real! And hell is inescapable for the sinful soul! All people everywhere deserve this wrath of God in hell. O the dreadful state of man's soul! But O, poor soul, there is one solution! Jesus Christ has come and He has suffered and died for sinners! He bore this dreadful curse for sinners! God treated Christ as if Christ lived the life of His people. He suffered in their place. He took the curse in their stead. He suffered anguish, receiving all the divine blows, the hostile wrath, the just fury of God in the place of His people. Jesus paid it all! Jesus took the blame! He bore the penalty! He suffered anguish! He became a sin offering by dying in the place of sinners! O sinner headed for hell, look to Christ, and escape for your life! Turn! Turn! Repent! Repent! Look to Christ! Fly to Him now, at this moment, so that your soul may be spared by Him who endured wrath in your place!