

# Hell

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 04 May 2014

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[ 0 : 00 ] Father, it's very easy for us not to take your word seriously, to neither take your great mind-blowing promises very seriously, nor to take your warnings very seriously.

So Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would do a work in our minds and hearts and wills that our minds and hearts and wills cannot do by themselves. We ask that your Holy Spirit would move mightily in our mind and heart and will, our very soul, our very body, so that we might hear your word, both your warnings and your promises, and that your word will come into our lives and that we will be good soil so that as your word comes into our lives, our life, we will bear much fruit for your glory.

Father, please so pour out your Holy Spirit upon us at this time. We ask in the name of Jesus. Amen. Please be seated. Jesus is very clear and the Bible is very clear.

Hell exists. Jesus is very clear and the Bible is very clear. Hell exists. This is hard to talk about as a Canadian.

In fact, the idea of hell, the biblical idea of hell is probably one of the most offensive ideas to most modern and postmodern Canadians.

[ 1 : 33 ] And because it is so offensive to most modern and postmodern Canadians, it's very hard for Christians to actually hear texts about the doctrine of hell.

And that's on top of the normal types of worries and concerns that we have just as human beings. But the Bible, Jesus is very clear and the Bible is very clear.

Hell exists. Some of you might be wondering why on earth I would preach on a text like this and talk about hell. At Church of the Messiah, our mission is, I express our mission nowadays is making disciples gripped by the gospel living for God's glory.

And we understand that we believe that God is trying to build us, is building us into a prayerful Bible teaching evangelical church in the heart of the city with a heart for the city and the world.

That's our vision. And one of the main ways that we try to do that is on Sunday mornings when we gather, we preach through books of the Bible. And by doing so, we hope that it's the Bible that sets the agenda for us.

[ 2 : 38 ] It's the Bible that forms us rather than us trying to form ourselves. And so we've been preaching through the book of Revelation. And the next two Sundays, last Sunday, we talked primarily about two of the most wonderful images about what God has in store for us in heaven.

And in chapter 21 and chapter 22, we're going to have two weeks where we see how the Bible tries to heal and discipline our desires by painting the most spectacular pictures of our destiny in Christ. But before we get that, we get to chapter 20. And very, very four times the Bible text here talks about the lake of fire. And so we're going to talk about that.

And I know that for many people, just mentioning hell and even saying that hell exists, that it's real, is very alienating.

For many people in Canada, they will say that they are concerned about love and freedom and integrity and being inclusive. And hell comes across as unloving, unjust, repressive, and exclusive.

[ 3 : 53 ] Everything which most Canadians don't want to have anything to do with. But we're going to look into this topic today.

And so if you have your Bibles, and hopefully you do, let's look at Revelation chapter 20 together. And if you've forgotten your Bibles, you don't have one, there's always a few Bibles up here at the front.

You're welcome to take one. You can keep it as a gift or you can return it afterwards. That's up to you. And Revelation is the last book in the Bible. And let's read it together and just once again hear what it is that the Bible does and does not say about this idea of the lake of fire or of hell.

Revelation chapter 20. Actually, before I read it, and just in case you're worried, some of you who come to the church regularly, you'll know that most weeks I have either a three- or a four-point sermon.

I'm actually going to have 11 different things on the slide. That means I'm not going to spend 10 minutes on each point or we'd have a two-hour sermon. Can I hear some people say amen? That would be a good thing.

[ 4 : 58 ] No. But because the topic is so serious and so controversial, some of these points will just be up on the screen very, very briefly because I'll say them briefly.

But they'll all be online within a day or two, as will be the sermon. And you can look, if you like to take notes or you want to write them down later, you can go online. But just before we read Revelation chapter 20, I want to make something clearer to sort of unpack that statement.

The first one is this, or the second point, but is that the New Testament is clearer and more insistent on the reality of hell than the Old Testament is.

The New Testament is clearer and more insistent on the reality of hell than the Old Testament is.

This is very important because many, many people will say that the Old Testament teaches a God of justice and wrath, and the New Testament teaches a God of love and acceptance, that the Old Testament prophets were all doom and gloom, and that Jesus is all about love.

But the fact of the matter is that the Old Testament is clearer and more insistent on the reality of hell than the Old Testament is. Furthermore, every New Testament writer teaches that hell exists, and no biblical writer contradicts what Revelation 20 teaches.

[ 6 : 17 ] Every New Testament writer teaches that hell exists, and no biblical writer contradicts what Revelation 20 teaches. Now, I'm not saying that every New Testament book talks about hell.

I use the word writer, but in fact, the New Testament at a human level is written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, and the unknown writer of Hebrews.

Eight writers. And if you go back and check the books written by those eight writers, humanly speaking written by those eight writers, you will see that all of them mention hell.

Every single one. Here's the next thing. Jesus teaches that hell exists, and nothing he says contradicts what Revelation 20 teaches.

Jesus teaches that hell exists, and nothing he says contradicts what Revelation 20 teaches. In fact, Jesus talks about hell more than any other writer in the New Testament.

[ 7 : 22 ] Every week, I don't know how many of you notice it, how many of you pick up the bulletins and stuff like that, but every week, I mean, there's announcements and stuff and some information. There's also a blog that I write that later on goes online, and then there's something called Growing in Grace that I think also goes online.

And sort of at the back of the bulletin, there's usually most weeks something called Going Deeper, and that's just something you can do by yourself, but it's even better if you connect with a few other people, and you look at some extra scripture texts that touch on the scripture texts that I preach on. And this week, I just give you a small sampling of some of Jesus' teachings on hell, and that's part of the Going Deeper thing in your bulletin, which if you lose your bulletin, I believe it's also put online.

So mindful that Jesus teaches that hell exists, and nothing he says contradicts what Revelation 20 teaches, let's start to read Revelation chapter 20. It begins like this. Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the abyss, or the bottomless pit, and a great chain.

And he, that's the angel, seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were ended.

[ 8 : 55 ] After that, he must be released for a little while. Just sort of pause for a second. This is a bit of an aside in terms of the overall sermon, but it's actually very, very important, and it does sort of fit.

It's a very, very important point, and that is this. At no time in the past, present, or future is the devil equal with God.

At no time in the past, present, or future is the devil equal with God. It's a very common part in general writing in our culture and thinking about the culture as if sort of there's the devil and there's God.

And that's sort of believing the devil's propaganda. And the Bible is very clear, and the book of Revelation constantly gives very, very powerful imagery to show this. So even here in these three verses, it's not God that deals with the devil. He sends an angel. He doesn't even send an archangel. He doesn't even send one of the four living creatures that are closest to the throne.

[10:01] He doesn't have to pick his biggest guns. He just sends an angel. And an angel binds Satan with no effort and casts him into the pit.

And if you go back and you look through all the book of Revelation, there's several times in the book of Revelation, it'll come up in a few verses, where the devil gathers an army to fight against God.

And every time the army, the devil gathers this massive army to fight against God, or the beast, or the false prophet, in every case they all gather, armed to the teeth, ready for war, God shows up, and there's no battle.

The devil instantly finds himself defeated. And so it's very important for us to hear this, that the propaganda, that somehow there's a type of equality between the devil and God, it's just completely and utterly rejected in the Bible.

God has no equal. He has rivals, in the sense of people who, idols and demons, who are rivals for our affection. But he has no true rival.

[11:06] There are no other gods. And the devil is not his equal. This is also very important for us in several other ways. And that is because one of the things about evil in our lives, whether it's just moral evil, or whether it's a type of demonic evil, is that moral evil and demonic evil always talks as if it is inevitable and undefeatable.

And as if it has a proper claim. And as if you have to surrender to it because you will suffer harm if you do not surrender to it because it is inevitable.

And whether that evil is a type of evil in society, that slavery is inevitable, for instance, which is what people would have said to Wilberforce, or in our day that things like maybe abortion are inevitable, that they can never be defeated, that they are here to stay, that any type of evil will always claim that it is inevitable and unable to be defeated.

And this is never true. It is never true. And it's pictured in picture language here in the book of Revelation.

But just an angel goes and binds Satan for a thousand years. Just an angel. At no time in the past, present, or future, is the devil equal with God. Now, we're going to keep reading, and I apologize to some people.

[12:34] Some people here, you've been putting up with me preaching on Revelation for so many weeks, and you've been desperately wanting to find out if George is a premillennialist, an amillennialist, or a postmillennialist.

And those of you who aren't used to that type of Christian language, you've just wondered, what on earth I said? But for certain people in Christian culture, this is the big question. And whole denominations are partially founded on whether you're premillennial, amillennial, or postmillennial.

And in fact, all that argument comes up in these few verses in Revelation chapter 20. And I'm going to read it. It's very controversial, but I'm going to bypass it with a simple little comment, because I think in our day and age, the far more pressing question is what exactly is the lake of fire?

And are people actually cast into it by God? And does hell exist? But to get to those texts, we have to read through this text. So let's continue at verse 4. So the devil's just been released for a little while.

Then verse 4, then I saw thrones and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.

[13:52] They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection. Over such, the second death has no power. But they will be priests of God and of Christ and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison, the pit, the abyss, and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle.

Their number is like the sand of the sea and they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints in the beloved city. Ha! What happens? But fire came down from heaven and consumed them.

There's no fight. And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were. That was last week, chapter 19. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

[14:55] Let's just pause there. You can keep your finger in the Bible. Just a very, very brief comment about the millennium and all that stuff. I read 20 pages of a big hardcover academic commentary going through Greek tenses and verbs and roots and trying to decide how much of this is symbolic and how much of it's literal.

And, you know, I wrestled with it, made notes and stuff. At the end of it, I actually did something like this. It was actually in this book. It's sort of before my notes. And I sort of put the, sort of put my Bible down and the book down.

I sort of sat back and thought, you know, I don't have to figure this stuff out. God's going to do what God's going to do. I don't have to figure out whether there's going to be a literal thousand years and it's exactly literal like this or whether the thousand years is just a picture of the church.

It's a symbolism of the current situation and then Jesus just comes back. It's all, I don't have to figure it out. God's going to do what God's going to do. I mean, that's something we should get an amen for. We're not an amen type of congregation.

Not that that would be bad if we became one. But that's just sort of, so I'm not going to tell you, you know, my view on it is God's going to do what God's going to do. The real thing for most Canadians is that verse 10, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

[16:35] So let's start to try to unpack it. The first thing I want to say is this, if you could put it up on the screen. Hell is a real place of punishment, destruction, and banishment.

Hell is a real place of punishment, destruction, and banishment. And I put place in quotation marks not because I'm trying to get out of anything. What the Bible is teaching is that hell is real in the fullest sense of the word.

But, I'm not going to, hell, I'm not saying a but to get rid of hell is real in the fullest sense of the word and that's what the Bible is teaching. How do these different images go together?

Like some of you might be wondering how is it that the Bible talks about, I remember Ken reading that there's a second, like hell is like a second death, but how is it that hell is like a second death and then there's this eternal torment?

How is it that, like if you go back, George, and look at Jesus' teaching, how is it that he talks about hell as being a place of darkness yet it's also a place of fire? And I could multiply examples like that.

[17:49] And the fact of the matter is, is that when we look at these types of, when the Bible is talking about something which is literally outside of our experience and our categories of thought.

And the Bible is trying to communicate to us something in a series of images and the Bible isn't saying that we should sort of use one image to discard the rest.

We use all of the images and we can't figure out on this side of the grave or this side of Jesus returning what parts of these different images are literal and what parts of them are symbolic and metaphorical.

We can't figure that out on this side of the grave. But here's what we can know, that both in this teaching of the lake of fire and you look through the New Testament teaching, the New Testament teaching can be summarized in this.

Hell is a real place. of punishment, destruction, and banishment. And that's what we can see here even if we're not entirely sure what it means or what's symbolic or what's metaphorical.

[18:58] The question of how fire and darkness and death which implies that it's all over and how that all goes together, God knows how it goes together, but it's we just what we can know is that and that we should not live our lives hoping that it is something other than that.

That hell is real in the fullest sense. In fact, when we start to lose a sense of this, that hell is a real place of punishment, destruction, and banishment, when because of the pressure that we feel that to talk about hell is to talk about something which is unjust, unloving, repressive, and exclusive, and so we try to adapt and make hell into a series of metaphors that empties it of this, and I don't mean to offend anybody who's here.

I'm sorry if I offend, but I'm going to still say it. To move away from a doctrine and understanding that the Bible teaches something like this is to move into residual Christianity, not full-bodied Christianity.

It's to move to a residual understanding of who Jesus is. It's to move into abstractions in something which is ephemeral and something which lasts substance.

It's to move away from Jesus in his full reality and God in his full existence. It is to move away from something which is full-bodied and full-throated and able to save and deliver.

[ 20 : 56 ] And to move away from this is to move into residual Christianity, not into deeper Christianity. Now some of you say, okay, George, don't you think that if that's true, if hell is a real place, and you're putting place because when you're talking about, what's it like to step out of time?

I sort of get it, but if you're really saying, George, that hell is real in the fullest sense of the word and it's a place, whatever that means in terms of the new heaven and the new earth and all, but it's real punishment, destruction, banishment.

George, if Jesus taught that, don't you think he's a bit of a scoundrel? Don't you think he maybe needs to know the Buddha? Don't you think, George, that type of teaching is unloving and repressive?

We're going to talk about that now, but before I do, I'm going to dig myself deeper into a hole. I'm going to say this before we read Revelation chapter 11, 20 verses 11 to 15, because up until now it's just been like the devil and the beast and the false prophet who are in hell, but Revelation 20 is going to end with people being thrown into the lake of fire.

I'm going to say this, Canadians see the biblical teaching on hell as causing spiritual, moral, and intellectual problems, but the Bible presents hell as solving spiritual, moral, and intellectual problems.

[ 22 : 40 ] That's part of the problem why I say that to move away from understanding hell as being real is to end up moving into residual Christianity, not real Christianity. And I don't mean to offend, I probably just offended virtually every Anglican United Church minister in the city by saying that.

And in many evangelical denominations, there would be a whole pile of youth pastors and even senior pastors who for me to say that will have gotten very squirmy and would maybe end up, if this was a room that I was speaking to of them, they would send me angry emails afterwards.

But the fact of the matter is, is that Canadians see the biblical teaching on hell as causing spiritual, moral, and intellectual problems, but the Bible presents hell as solving spiritual, moral, and intellectual problems.

Now, I'm going to give you a couple of examples in a moment as to what I mean by some of that, to try to see that, in fact, the teaching on hell does solve problems, that, in fact, to deny hell causes more problems than it is to uphold the teaching of hell.

I'm going to give you a few examples about that, thought experiments in a moment, to try to help you to see that. These are all secondary to the Bible, because, you see, one of the things is that the Bible, part of the thing is that, you know, for us, it's so easy for us to think of God as being tiny and people as being big, that Canada is big and God is tiny, that my problems are big and God is tiny.

[ 24 : 17 ] It's so easy for us to think of God as being, you know, it's so easy, you know, many of you have heard me speak before that the normal way that we understand Jesus coming into a locked room, you know, we think of him in terms of Star Trek analogies, and we think that somehow or another it's as if Jesus becomes like immaterial, like a ray or like sunlight, and he becomes so immaterial that he can pass through the walls and come in the room, but the Bible understands that what's happened with Jesus is that Jesus after he's died and risen from the dead, he's so real that the walls are as if they are immaterial, that Jesus is more real than the walls, that God is more real than we are, that God is more real than we are, and so it is that for the Bible writers who have this deeper view of God than is common for us as Canadians, they understand the huge problems, how can the unclean dwell with the clean forever, how can the impure dwell with the pure, how can the evil dwell with perfect goodness, how can that which is of darkness, not only that which is, how can darkness dwell with unapproachable light, how can darkness dwell with light, how can darkness

dwell not only with unapproachable light, but how can we ever approach unapproachable light, and the Bible see, and how is it that God can be completely and utterly, how is it that we can do bad things, and God must judge these bad things, and the Bible has this deeper, richer, more powerful understanding of the existence and the reality of God, and at no point in time does the biblical writers agree with what goes on in my mind, in my imagination, in my heart, where I am constantly being pushed to understand God is tiny, and people are big,

God is tiny, and the country is big, God is tiny, and money is big, God is tiny, and sex is big, God is tiny, and my boss is big, and the Bible never once accepts that.

The Bible always understands God is immense, God is immense, even the devil is not his equal, even the devil, God does not have to send the four living creatures or the 24 elders or some mighty archangel, but an angel to deal with it, and so it is in a whole raft of levels that the Bible understands that the doctrine of hell and how it fits with the person of Jesus solves countless spiritual, moral, and intellectual problems, but we, for whom, are always being drifting into seeing God as tiny, and heaven is just that good place to go where you die, when you die, that heaven is just living on in people's memories.

I'm not trying to put people down by saying that, I'm really not, I apologize if the tone of my voice sounded like I was, but I'm just trying to illustrate how for most of us as Canadians, heaven and God is tiny, abstract, wispy, and not at all what's being portrayed here.

It's part of the reason we have problems getting our minds around the Bible and understanding the depths and the immensity of grace. Let's read verses 11 to 15.

[ 28 : 00 ] Then I saw a great white throne, and him who was seated on it, that is, he sees God. It doesn't describe God, but he sees God. This is powerful few words.

From his presence, earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. What did I just tell you about the Bible constantly portrays God as immense and more real?

God shows up in our created order, unveiled, and earth and sky flee away, and no place is found for them.

We think of the earth as being so powerful and strong. God shows up, and earth flees. It's also a picture of as God comes and brings with him the new heaven and the new earth, this earth and the heaven that we now live in, it flees.

They don't, in a sense, flee. Verse 12, and I saw the dead, great and small, Bill Gates and the lowest untouchable and the poorest country in the planet, standing before the throne, and books were opened.

[ 29 : 16 ] That's bad news, folks. Then another book was opened, which is a book of life, which I'll talk about later. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books according to what they had done.

And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each of them according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.

Notice that, folks? Death is thrown into the lake of fire. Death dies. Death dies in two stages.

The true beginning of death, the true death of death happens with the death of the Son of God upon the cross. The day the Son of God, Jesus, our Savior, dies upon the cross, died upon the cross, is the day that death died.

Amen! But the final completion of that death will happen in the future. Death is thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

[ 30 : 22 ] And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. does this show that God is unloving?

Last week, if you go back and listen to the sermon online, we talked about two powerful images in the book of Revelation chapter 19. It's the image of the bride coming down from heaven.

It's a corporate image of the church, and there's also an image of being very invited to a feast. And I talked at some length about how these are very powerful images to help start to order and heal our desires and our longings and our yearnings, to captivate our imagination.

I pointed out how Jesus even points to the feast in one of the times when he's describing the Lord's supper, and that one of the things we can do when we come to communion is pray that God will fan into flame within us, a longing and yearning to feast with him in heaven when we come to remember the death and resurrection of Jesus as we celebrate the Lord's supper.

And so it's definitely the case that, and it's going to be seen next week, you know, after hell we have two weeks on heaven, chapter 21 and chapter 22, and the fact of the matter is that the Bible presents in a picture of God's intention for us, which is social and loving, and it's an eternal relationship with God of intimacy and companionship and trust with no exit strategies, which is all about love, which is deep love, and which is for all eternity, and it's in God's presence, and it's us standing with God, unashamed, being able to stand in unapproachable light, and have ourselves completely open and transparent, and every detail of our lives transparent to him and to all others, and seen through the eyes of love, and experiences love, and experiences peace, and experiences rest, and the Bible paints the most exalted picture of our destiny, of unending existence redeemed by Jesus in the presence of

[ 32 : 47 ] God, and experiencing God as love, and that's what the picture that the Bible will present to us. In fact, the Bible presents love and heaven not as abstract, but as very, very, very, very, very, very powerful.

Woody Allen is famous for complaining about the contemporary understanding that when we die, we live on in people's memories, and Woody Allen famously said that when he dies, he doesn't want to live on in people's memories, he wants to live on in his condo, that living on just in people's memories isn't very good.

Many people will say that when they die, they just go to a better place, but the Bible says that when you die, you're going to be with God. Imagine for a second there's a person that you don't particularly care for.

It's a romantic thing. Imagine that you're single, and there's a person you don't particularly care for, and you know they want to spend time with you, and you have a friend who wants to set you up with that person, and one day you agree to go on a long car drive, you're going to drive to Windsor, that's a long car drive, you're leaving from Ottawa, you're going to go to a long car drive with Windsor, and you show up, and your friend picks you up, and lo and behold in the car is this person that you don't like, but your friend's been trying to set you up with, and you're pretty mad, but you get in the car, and then the very, very next thing you know is your friend gets out of the car, and the person drives, that person you've been trying to avoid, they drive the car, and you're now stuck in the car all the way to Windsor with somebody that you've been trying to avoid, you don't really care for, and now you have to drive all the way to Windsor with them, stuck in a car with them.

When you get back, or when you have a freak moment, and you call up your friend, and what will you say to them? You will say, how dare you make me spend 10 hours with that person?

[ 35 : 00 ] How dare you make me spend 10 hours with that person? You know I don't want to be with that person, you know I don't like them, you know I don't want to be in their presence, and you made me spend 10 hours with them.

How dare you? So, what's it going to be like if we die and we have to spend eternity with God? And we don't want to. Here's what I'm going to suggest, and we're going to start to unpack it a little bit more, that how dare you, if you could put it up, how dare you is the anthem of hell.

How dare you is the anthem of hell. The doctrine of hell is completely and utterly unloving.

Well, let me just suggest this. Imagine for a moment that you're a single woman, and you meet this fellow, and you seem to just meet by chance, you meet by chance, you strike up a conversation, everything is perfect about this fellow, and ask you after just a couple of dates, you're telling all your girlfriends about how you've met this spectacular guy.

[ 36 : 15 ] He's like, you already sense this unbelievably deep connection, and then it just, the more you get to know this person, the more you seem to love him and like him, and then you finally decide that you're going to get married, and then just the day before the wedding rehearsal, so two days before the wedding, you go in to visit your beloved in his office, and the secretary who knows you very well says, oh yeah, he's not here, he's gone out for some coffee, just go and sit down, he'll be in in a second, and you walk in and you notice that the computer's on, and you notice that there's an email, and you don't think you should read this email, but you start to read this email, and all of a sudden, you start to feel horrified, and then you start to press down the replies, because it's a long list of replies, and then you discover that this fellow had, a month before he met you, met a very, very rich man who was an experiment, said, I'd like you to see if you could woo this young woman, and get her to marry you, and if you can do it, I'll give you 50 million dollars.

Would you still marry the man? No revenge fantasy Hollywood thing, you marry him when you know the 50 million's in the bank, you divorce him, and get 25 million under Canada's no fault, divorce

laws.

Okay, none of that. But you might do that out of a revenge thing, wouldn't you? You wouldn't marry him. You wouldn't marry him.

How is it that if heaven is like being married to God, and you're forced to spend eternity married with God, wouldn't you want to say to God, how dare you?

How dare you want to have that type of intimacy with me? How dare you? Want to force me to go to spend eternity in love with you?

[ 38 : 13 ] How dare you do that? People think that the doctrine of hell, that everybody should go to heaven, that nobody should go to hell, that that's a sort of a more, it's actually more in keeping with freedom, but is it in keeping with freedom?

You go out after the service, and you go on Rideau Street to have a coffee, and you meet a street person, and this street person's really, really messed up. They're very, very deeply addicted to drugs and alcohol.

And then you realize that there's a politician, you see many street people like this, and then a politician arises who says, I can very simply solve the problem of all drug addiction. What I'm going to do is I'm going to have the police pick up every person who has an alcohol problem and every drug addict.

And we're going to be very, very humane, and we're going to be very, very loving. We're going to put them in a place, and in that place there will be no drugs and no alcohol, and we'll make sure that if any guard ever tries to smuggle something in, they will be completely and severely punished.

And because of the fact that drug addicts, even though many drug addicts have been in and out of the drunk tank and in and out of rehab things many times, but as soon as they leave and they get clean, they go back in the street, they go right back to using drugs and alcohol.

[ 39 : 25 ] What we're going to do is we just know that that's the way drug addicts and alcoholics are, so we're going to put them in this place where there's no alcohol and there's no drugs, and they're going to live there till they die. They're going to live there till they die, and we'll give them all their food, all their meals, the latest movies, all the sporting equipment, but they'll just never be able to leave, and we've solved the drug problem.

And you would say, how dare you take away that person's freedom? How dare you do that? So how is it that God could force people to go to spend an eternity with him when they don't want to?

Wouldn't they want to say to God, how dare you force me to go somewhere in a way that I don't want to? How dare you, God, do that? How could God force them? C.S. Lewis said that the teaching on hell in the Bible is the most profound teaching in the world on human freedom and on the dignity of human beings?

Some of us might say that the teaching of hell is not very inclusive, that it's very, very exclusive, and we have in the back of our mind this idea that, you know, we sort of have in our idea that, you know, you sort of, we sort of know that maybe God has to put some sort of people who are bad into, you know, to have some type of a punishment, but, you know, basically we have this sort of idea at the same time as hell is sort of open and ended is that basically common human religion is you go and you do some things, you do more nice things, you do bad things, and then God sort of has this obligation to put you into heaven, and that sounds all very, very well and good, but if you think about it for a second, it's actually not very inclusive at all.

What about people who just really aren't going to be able to manage that? I'm not making a political comment on this right now, but I'm just using something which is very common in the press.

[ 41 : 29 ] How many people think Rob Ford would be able to manage that? I know that Rob Ford has his defenders, but boy, there's not many people who think that Rob Ford would be able to manage that, do you?

In fact, the idea that sort of we just do more good things than we do bad things, and we sort of define what those are, that actually ends up usually leaving out any type of hope for people who just really seem to be deeply messed up.

And the idea that somehow God would just sort of force, can you just imagine that the writers of the Toronto Star or the CBC, that they were going to have to spend eternity with Rob Ford?

And they would say to God, how dare you make me do that? How dare you make me do that?

And just sort of in, in fact, even this idea that God is unjust sending people to hell, we can start to get a sense that it might very well be that in this particular text in Revelation 20, it emphasizes that God throws, but in fact, the other teaching in the rest of Scripture that somehow or another, hell is

something that we freely choose, we start to see that that actually starts to make some sense. [ 43 : 08 ] That that actually starts to make some sense, because how dare you is the anthem that we sing. See, here's what the Bible teaches.

Since no one deserves heaven, unless God intervenes, hell is my destination. Since no one deserves heaven, unless God intervenes, hell is my destination.

And I want to stand before you, and I want to tell you, and I say this with no sense of pride, no sense of vanity, no sense of arrogance. But Spurgeon once famously said that the Christian faith is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

And I can tell you that apart from what Jesus has done for me on the cross, that my destination is hell. Because I've given my life to Jesus, God, not weighing my merits, but pardoning my offenses, my destination.

If I was to die today, I would not go to hell. I would go to heaven. And I say that to you not because I think that I am better than anybody here in the room, not because I think there's anything in me particularly worthy of going to heaven.

[ 44 : 26 ] But I understand that no one deserves heaven, and unless God intervenes, hell is my destination. I understand that the cry, how dare you, is a cry that deeply resonates within my soul and within my spirit.

And unless God intervenes, hell is not only where God would put me, but hell is what I would freely choose. See, here's what the Bible teaches, and we'll just say one more thing after this and then we'll wrap up.

That God takes no delight in the death of a sinner, but rather that I will turn from my wickedness and live. It's almost a direct quote from the book of Ezekiel where it's said three times.

Those of you familiar with Anglican tradition in morning prayer will know that that's a regular part of morning and evening prayer. God takes no delight in the death of a sinner, but rather that I will turn from my wickedness and live.

And what happens is if you go back and look more clearly at Revelation chapter 20, you'll see that there's two books. And one of the two books that we're judged by is the Lamb's Book of Life.

[ 45 : 31 ] And one of the things to describe conversion is that we're taken out of the books and put into the Lamb's Book of Life. And how does that transfer happen? It happens because on the cross, Jesus took my punishment, destruction, and banishment, and offers me his standing with God.

Hallelujah. Remember I described that hell is the place of punishment, destruction, and banishment. And the Bible teaches that on the cross, Jesus took my punishment, my destruction, and my banishment.

He took mine, and he offers me his standing with God. That's what Jesus does on the cross. He experiences the functional equivalent of hell for me.

The punishment that brought me peace was upon him. By his wounds, I am healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Before Jesus died on the cross, he's in the Garden of Gethsemane, and he knows that when he dies upon the cross, he's not dying for anything that he has done wrong himself. But that literally, literally, all of the things that I've done wrong that demand punishment, he will have those fall upon him, and he will take my punishment.

[ 47 : 04 ] And the imagery is of the cup of wrath of God. And Jesus will drink my cup for me when he dies upon the cross. And his destruction is clear.

He dies a death, a horrible death upon the cross. And his banishment from the Father is also clear. I've been married to Louise for 32 years.

You know, I can have somebody that I meet at Starbucks. Sometimes people ask me what I do at Starbucks, and I tell them I'm a pastor of a church, and you can see their face fall. And you can just tell that they're rejecting me because I say that.

I can tell they've just rejected me. And I just met the person just a few moments ago, and I feel some pain with it. One of the... But if Louise, after 32 years of marriage, was to leave me, to tell me I had to leave her and that I could never see her again, the pain of that would be unbearable for me. And Jesus, who is the second person of the Trinity, and the Holy Spirit can be understood as the unending love of the Son of God for the Father and the unending love of the Father for the Son.

[ 48 : 19 ] And that has been going on for all eternity. And on the cross, as Jesus bears the rebellion and the sin and my death in his very, very person, as he bears my punishment and my destruction,

he experiences my banishment from God.

And we see that on the cross when Jesus cries out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And he does it because he's bearing my punishment, my destruction, and my banishment. And he offers me his perfect standing before the Father. And when I put my faith and trust in Jesus, that means I'm accepting what he's done for me on the cross and the great exchange that he offers. Please stand. The Christian life begins by saying, there's something I have to acknowledge. And that I have to acknowledge is that the anthem of my life is, how dare you? And then there's something that I need to believe. I need to believe that Jesus has dealt with that which keeps me far from God.

[ 49 : 38 ] And then I have to consider something. I have to consider that if I accept what was just written on the screen, if I understand and accept that Jesus has borne my punishment, my destruction, and my banishment, and he offers me his place with the Father, that he can reconcile me to God and make me God's adopted child forever, if I accept that, if I accept Jesus into my life as Savior and Lord, that as I'm gripped by the gospel, my life will change.

But then there's that moment of decision, that knowing, acknowledging, and believing, and considering the cost, still we would have Jesus as our Savior. We would have Jesus not only save us from our anthem, but that he would teach us to sing a new song, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and glory and honor and might and majesty and love forever and ever. Amen. And there's no time better than right now to make such a transaction with God and to speak to Jesus and say, Jesus, you know what the anthem of my life has been. Still you died for me on the cross. Please take me as yours and be my Savior and my Lord. There's no time better than now to pray such a prayer to God.

And your own words are all that need, but I'm going to very slowly, with gaps, pray a prayer to help you. And if that is what the Holy Spirit is leading you to do, you don't have to pray it out loud, you don't have to do anything to show it, but just repeat after me, not speaking to me, because I'm not the Savior, but speaking to Jesus.

[ 51 : 16 ] Maybe it's appropriate we pray it with a screaming child in the background. The echoes of hell. So if the Holy Spirit has put such a burden on your heart, just quietly to God, not to me or to your neighbor, but quietly to God, say this.

Jesus, I acknowledge that my anthem has been, how dare you. I am sorry for this, and I do not want to sing it ever again.

Thank you for dying for me, and bearing the punishment, destruction, and banishment I deserve. Please come into my life as my Savior and my Lord. And never let me go.

Make me your disciple, gripped by the gospel, living for your glory. Amen. I'm just going to pray in closing.

[ 52 : 38 ] Father, you know those of us who've once again done some type of transaction with you because we realize that even though we've been redeemed, that that song of how dare you has been becoming the song of our lives.

And Father, we know we turned from that when we gave our lives to Jesus, and it's growing within us, and we thank you that you've delivered it from us. And we ask, Father, that you would do a mighty work of your Holy Spirit in our lives to have that be stilled and have that be quietened.

And Father, we give you thanks once again for what your Son did for us on the cross. May what he did for us on the cross so grip us that we can live for your glory.

Father, we thank you for what he did for us on the cross. And Father, if there are any here who have for the first time prayed and given their lives to Jesus, we ask that your Holy Spirit would fall upon them with might and power and deep conviction.

Seal such a decision to them and seal them to be yours forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever. Amen. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.