

How to avoid Hell

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[0 : 00] could this morning with the Lord's help and with the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, the gospel according to Mark and chapter 9.

The gospel according to Mark and chapter 9, and if you read again at verse 43. Mark 9 at verse 43. And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.

Remember, remember, the 5th of November, gunpowder treason and plot. We see no reason why gunpowder treason should ever be for God. You know, like me, I'm sure that those words bring you back to your childhood, especially at this time of year, and the fun of building and burning bonfires. But as you know, building and burning bonfires, it dates further back than our childhood to over 400 years ago, when on the 5th of November, 1605, there was this failed gunpowder plot to blow up the houses of Parliament. And it was a failed plot by the Roman Catholic Guy Fawkes. And on the very night that the gunpowder plot was foiled, bonfires, they were lit all over the skyline in order to celebrate the safety of King James I. And since then, for generations, bonfires have been lit, and we have encouraged our children to remember, remember the 5th of November. But you know, even though I love bonfire night with all its fireworks, you know, it's at this time of year, with the night skylines of our community being lit up with bonfires, and you know, even standing at a bonfire, you stand there with your children on bonfire night, and you feel the burning heat, and you see the powerful flames.

I don't know about you, but when I stand there, it often reminds me of this bonfire that Jesus speaks about so often in the Gospel. And what Jesus speaks about is the solemn reality that the bonfire of hell will never go out. And you know, needless to say, my friend, there are some, these words that Jesus speaks here, they are some of the most solemn words that Jesus spoke during his life and ministry, because there can't be a more solemn subject than the subject of hell. But you know, we have to ask, even as we come to these words, we have to ask, why does Jesus talk about hell? Why does Jesus say these things? Is it because he's trying to manipulate us? Is it, is he trying to scare us into the kingdom?

[3 : 34] Or are these words there for us as a loving warning? And as you know, and as you've learned by listening to the Gospel, Jesus was the most loving man who ever lived. Therefore, the reason Jesus warns us about hell is surely because he loves us and he doesn't want us to go there. Jesus wants us to avoid hell. But Jesus knows that if we reject God all our life, then God will be just and right to reject us.

Because if our sin is left undealt with, it will take us to a place of unimaginable pain and unending suffering. Which is why Jesus warns us. He warns us because he loves us and he wants us to be saved.

I want you to be saved. Because you know, when I look at some of you here this morning, you and I both know that if you were to enter eternity today, you would wake up in hell.

That's the reality of it. My friend, I don't take delight in preaching about hell. I have been led to preach about it today. But if I'm honest, I tremble at the thought of it.

But I do it not to hurt anyone, not to upset anyone, but out of a care and a concern for your soul. So that you'll see your need of Jesus. And that you'll run to him for salvation.

[5 : 08] Because in this passage, Jesus teaches us how to avoid going to hell. Jesus teaches us how to avoid going to hell. And you know, my unconverted friend here this morning, these words of Jesus, they are of the utmost importance to you.

So please listen to them. Listen to them. Because the first thing Jesus says about how to avoid hell is a needed deterrent.

Jesus talks about a needed deterrent. We see that in verses 36 and 37. Jesus says, or it says there, He took a child and put him in the midst of them.

And taking him in his arms, he said to them, Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me. And whoever receives me receives not me, but him who sent me.

And so in order to avoid hell, Jesus teaches, he teaches those in front of him, By bringing a little child and using this little child as a visual aid to those who are before him.

[6 : 15] And Jesus taught that sinners must come to him like little children. Just like we were saying to those who went to Sunday school. A child can't feed themselves.

A child can't wash themselves. A child can't even clothe themselves. And what Jesus is saying is that you need to realize that you can't save yourself. Nothing you do is going to save yourself.

Therefore you must come to Jesus by faith, Resting upon his finished work, With your arms wide open like a little child, Crying to Jesus for mercy and help.

My friend, you must come to Jesus as a sinner who is wholeheartedly seeking his gracious offer of salvation. That's what Jesus is saying here.

He's warning sinners that they need to come to Jesus like little children. But then he also warns servants. Jesus warns his servants.

[7 : 14] He says in verse 42, Whoever causes one of these little ones, Still with the illustration, Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, It would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck And he were thrown into the sea.

Jesus warns his servants against causing sinners to stumble into hell by their false teaching. Jesus says to unfaithful servants that it would be better for them If a millstone were tied around their neck and they were thrown into the sea.

And you know, Jesus, he doesn't mince his words. Because he wants everyone to know the seriousness of telling people the truth. And my friend, the gospel is a serious business.

It's not some light-hearted thing that we do on a Sunday morning. No, Jesus is warning us, and especially the servant of God, That if you teach sinners lies and give them false hope, And if you tell them just what they want to hear, And not what they need to hear, Then it would be better for the servant of God To have a millstone tied about his neck And be thrown into the sea.

And you know, these words, they hit home with me. Because on the day of judgment, I will be judged for every word that I've spoken from a pulpit. Every sermon will be accounted for before God.

[8 : 42] And there's one thing I don't want to do. And that's tell you that everything will be okay. Yes, it would be easy for me to tell you that everything will be fine.

And you'll get to heaven on your own merit. And it would be comfortable for you today, If all I told you that was that your position out of Christ, Is a safe position to be in.

Church would be a comfortable place to come, If all I did today was preach to you a lie. That you're not as sinful as the Bible makes you out to be.

And that you can put off coming to Christ for your salvation at a later date. Because, well, you're promised tomorrow. My friend, it would be comfortable for me, And it would be comfortable for you. If all I did today was tell you that you're going to heaven. But that's what Jesus warns against. Jesus warns the servant of God against preaching a false gospel.

[9 : 43] Jesus warns against telling people what they want to hear. Because what people want to hear, Is that they're good people. What people want to hear is that they're religious people.

What people want to hear is that they're moral people. What people want to hear is that they're upstanding people. What people want to hear is that when they die, No one goes to heaven. Everyone goes to hell.

Everybody becomes a bright shining star in the sky. Looking down on everyone else. But my friend, If only that were true.

If only everyone went to heaven. If only we could all escape the judgment of God. If only there was another way to be saved. If only we didn't need our sins to be forgiven.

If only there was another way of salvation other than the way of the cross. If only there was another way to heaven other than through Jesus Christ. But there isn't. There's no other way.

[10 : 43] Because Jesus is the only way. Jesus is the only way. And you know there are some false teachers who go as far as to say that there's no such thing as hell.

Because they say, Well, how can a good God send good people to hell? But anyone who asks that question, They don't know God. And they don't know themselves.

Because they don't understand that God created them. And because he created them, he loves them. And he sustains them. And he provides for them. They don't understand that they've sinned against God.

They've spurned his word. They've scorned his commandments. You know, my friend, why do we always start with the wrong question? The question is not, Why does a good God send good people to hell?

The question is, Why does a good God? And a loving God. And a just God. And a holy God. Who lovingly made us in his image and likeness. For his own glory. Why should he allow sinners into heaven?

[11 : 49] If they willfully reject him. And refuse to accept the good news. That his son came to die for them. My unconverted friend here today.

If I don't tell you the truth about your condition out of Christ. And that your sin is going to take you to hell. If I don't tell you that your sin has left you in ruin. And you need Jesus as your remedy.

If I don't tell you that you could be one step away from eternity. And that you're not promised tomorrow. And that now is the accepted time. And today is the day of salvation.

If I don't tell you the truth. Then Jesus says it would be better for me. If a millstone were tied around my neck. And I was thrown into the sea. And the thing about Jesus is he practiced what he preached.

Because during his ministry. You look at his ministry. Jesus spoke earnestly with people. Jesus spoke evangelistically to people. But Jesus spoke more times about hell.

[12 : 53] Than he did about heaven. And why was that? Because he knew the seriousness of sin. And the need to tell people the truth.

Which is why Jesus went on to explain. That in order to avoid hell. There is unnecessary detachment. A necessary detachment. So a needed deterrent.

And secondly. A necessary detachment. Jesus says in verse 43. And if your hand causes you to sin. Cut it off.

It is better for you to enter life crippled. Than with two hands to go to hell. To the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin. Cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame.

Than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin. Tate it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God. With one eye. Than with two eyes.

[13 : 50] To be thrown into hell. Where the worm does not die. And the fire is not quenched. You know in these verses. Jesus shifts the focus away. From the servant of God.

Back to the sinner. And he gives the. He moves back to the solemn responsibility. Of the sinner. And Jesus emphasizes the seriousness of sin.

By using this vivid illustration. Of cutting off your hand. Or severing your foot. Or plucking out your eye. And of course Jesus. He isn't saying that you literally need to amputate your foot.

Or your hand. Or pluck out your eye. In order to be saved. But what Jesus is saying. He's saying that. You must detach yourself.

From whatever it is. That's holding you back. From coming. To Christ. Jesus says. Your sin problem is so serious.

[14 : 45] That failure to comply. Or refusal to obey. Or a willful neglect. Of the problem. Is a sure way. To go to hell. Therefore the way to avoid going to hell.

Is to give up. Whatever stands. In your way of salvation. And cut it out. Cut it out. Jesus says. You must ensure.

That you detach yourself. From it. It's a necessary. Detachment. And what Jesus is seeking. To drive home here. Is the seriousness. Of our sin.

Because far too often. We take our sin lightly. We think of sin. As that naughty thing. Which we do. We enjoy it for the moment. And we just ignore it. Most of the time. Or even cover it up.

When it's really bad. But Jesus says. That sin is so serious. That it would be better. For you to be maimed. Lame or blind. Than for you to go to hell.

[15 : 45] Because the disability. Of being maimed. Lame or blind. Although it's awful. In this life. It's only temporary. Says Jesus. It's only temporary.

Hell is eternal. Hell is forever. Hell is the place. Where the worm does not die. And the fire is not quenched. My friend.

The seriousness of sin. Is that you need to cut it off. If it's keeping you. From Christ. You need to cut it off. If it's keeping you. From Christ. Now Jesus mentions.

Cutting off your hand. Because the hand. Is what holds on to possessions. And struggles. To let them go. And it's so true. Isn't it? Our things.

Are sometimes. The very thing. Which keep us from Christ. These blessings. Which we have in life. All the blessings. That we receive. They all come from God.

[16 : 42] And. Sometimes these things. Keep us from Christ. The blessings. Which we have. They come from God. Our job. Our wealth. Our health. Our family. Our children.

Our friends. They all. Come from God. But sadly. Sometimes these. Blessings. They become the very idols. Which busy our lives. And fill our thoughts.

And distract our minds. And keep us from Christ. But my friend. The problem isn't having possessions. The problem is. Loving these possessions. Or these people.

Or these things. And clinging to them. For your hope and security. Rather than clinging to Christ. But you know. Jesus. He not only speaks about.

Cutting off your hand. He also speaks about. Cutting off your foot. And he says. It's better for you. To be lame in life. Than to go to hell. It's better for you. Not to be able to walk. Than for you to walk.

[17 : 36] A road that leads to hell. And what Jesus is talking about. Is the places we go. And the company we keep. That hold us back. From coming. To salvation.

Even the desire. To go to these places. For satisfaction. Rather than the desire. Than. For going to Christ. For satisfaction. And salvation. My friend.

Are there places and people. That keep you from Christ. Are there places and people. That keep you. From Christ.

Where your desire. For enjoyment. And entertainment. Is more important. Than your soul. And eternal life. And you know. As Jesus reminds us. In the sermon on the mount.

The enjoyment. And entertainment. Of this world. It's to be found. On the broad road. Because the broad road. Says Jesus. Is wide. And the way is easy.

[18 : 35] My friend. The broad road. It doesn't go against. The grain of this world. It just goes with a flow. It doesn't make you stand out. It doesn't make you look different. Because. Well. Everybody else. Is going the same way.

The broad road. It doesn't even have danger signs. Warning you to turn back. Or to go another way. Because. The majority. Who are on this road. Don't care. And they're oblivious.

To where they're headed. And yet. Jesus here. He's lovingly. Lovingly. Warning us. That. To walk. The broad road. Leads to destruction. But to walk. The narrow path. It leads to life. It leads to life.

And Jesus says. Few there be that find it. Few there be that find. Why would Jesus say. That few there be that find. That narrow path. Why would Jesus say. That there are so few people. Who come onto the narrow path.

[19 : 31] Well. It's not because. They can't come onto the narrow path. It's because. They're not willing. To give up. What's on the broad road. Maybe that describes you.

You're not willing. To come onto the narrow path. Because you're not willing. To give up. What's on the broad road. And like many.

My unconverted friend. You might have good intentions. Of one day. Walking this narrow path. You might have good intentions. Of one day. Giving up. What's on the broad road. And cutting out these things.

In your life. And coming onto the narrow path. And becoming a Christian. And following Jesus. And committing your life to him. You might have good intentions. But at the moment.

You're doing nothing with them. And as it often. It's often said. That the road to hell. Is paved. With good intentions. Good intentions.

[20 : 28] But good intentions. Are useless. Unless you act upon them. But then Jesus. He speaks about our eyes. In verse 47. When he says. If your eye causes you to sin.

Tear it out. It's better for you. To enter the kingdom of God. With one eye. Than with two eyes. To be thrown. Into hell. Jesus not only. Warns about. What our hands are holding.

And where our feet are going. He also warns about. What our eyes are seeing. Because our eyes. See a lot. And our eyes. Say a lot. Our eyes.

Say a lot. About the condition. Of our heart. Jesus said. In the sermon. On the mount. Everyone who looks. At a woman. With lustful intent. Has already committed.

Adultery in her heart. If your right eye. Causes you to sin. Tear it out. Throw it away. It's better for you. To lose. One of your members. Than your whole body.

[21 : 24] Be thrown into hell. You know my friend. The seriousness. Of our sin. Is that Jesus says. You need to cut it off. If it's keeping you. From Christ. Christ. You need to cut it off.

If it's keeping you. From Christ. But you know. The heart. Of your problem. It isn't your hand. Or your foot. Or your eye.

As J.C. Ryle often said. The heart of your problem. Is the problem of your heart. The heart of your problem. Is the problem of your heart. Because. No matter how much.

Amputation. Or moral rectification. You can try. You cannot cure. Your heart problem. You need Jesus. For that. That's why Jesus came.

He came into the world. To deal with your sin. Jesus went. To the cross. To take. Your sin. Upon himself. Jesus went. To endure your hell.

[22 : 21] To die your death. All so that he could. Offer you. The gift of eternal. Life. My friend. The seriousness. Of sin. Is that you need. To cut it off. If it's keeping you.

From Christ. You need to cut it off. But you know. I want to be clear here. Jesus. Isn't saying. Cut it off.

And then come to me. He isn't saying that. Jesus isn't saying. Cut it off. And then come. Jesus is saying. Come to me. And I will help you.

Cut it off. Come to me. And I will help you. Cut it off. Come to me. Just as you are. Because in order to avoid hell.

This is a necessary. Detachment. A necessary. Detachment. So I need a deterrent. A necessary detachment.

[23 : 17] And lastly. A non-stop description. A non-stop. Description. Jesus says in verse 43.

We'll read it again. If your hand causes you to sin. Cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled. Than with two hands. To go to hell. To the unquenchable fire.

And if your foot causes you to sin. Cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame. Than with two feet. To be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin. Tear it out.

It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God. With one eye. Than with two eyes. To be thrown into hell. Where the worm does not die. And the fire. Is not quenched.

And you know my friend. These awful expressions of hell. The worm that never dies. And the fire that is not quenched. They all lovingly.

[24 : 14] But vividly. They describe for you. God's eternal judgment. And what will happen if you don't flee. To Christ. Christ.

But when Jesus uses the word hell here. He is actually referring to a place outside the city of Jerusalem. Because the word Jesus uses here is the word Gehenna.

Gehenna. And Gehenna was where this fire was continually burning outside the city. And it was burning day and night. You could say it was a bonfire.

A bonfire that kept burning. In order to consume all the rubbish of the city. Just like the bonfires in our communities. That's what they're there for. They're there to burn all the rubbish in our community.

But you know the thing about Gehenna. Was that nothing escaped the fire of Gehenna. And Jesus uses this familiar illustration with his first century audience.

[25 : 11] In order to give them a vivid description of the eternal punishment. Which unforgiven sinners will receive. But when Jesus describes eternal punishment.

As the place where the worm does not die. And the fire is not quenched. You know he's not only emphasizing what happens to someone who goes to hell. He's also emphasizing the fact that it never ends.

The worm he says does not die. The fire is not quenched. There is no death in hell.

Because in hell you are dying but never dead. And my unconverted friend as you sit here today. I'm sure the devil has come with every distraction possible.

I'm sure he's already told you that this is all nonsense. It's just like Halloween. It's all far fetched. It's all fantasy. It's all make believe. It's not true. But you know my unconverted friend.

[26 : 14] The fact of the matter remains. That today. There are no unbelievers in hell. Today there are no agnostics in hell. Today there are no atheists in hell.

Today there is no one who is ignorant in hell. Because they know why they're there. And they know that their sin has brought them there.

Their sin that they never dealt with. By coming to Jesus. And you know it's a question I often wrestle with. Who created hell? Who created hell?

It wasn't the devil who created hell. God created hell. And God created hell. This is the thing. He created hell for his own glory.

Because if the heavens declare the glory of God. Then so does hell. Hell declares the glory of God. In fact Jesus says in Matthew 25.

[27 : 20] That God created hell for his own glory. Jesus says when the son of man comes in his glory. He will separate people. As a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.

And he will set the sheep on his right hand. And the goats on his left. And Jesus will say to those on his right hand. Come you blessed of my father. Inherit the kingdom.

Created and prepared for you. From before the foundation of the world. And Jesus will say to those on his left. Depart from me. You cursed into the everlasting fire.

Created and prepared for those. Who reject me. And the devil. And his angels. My friend. God created and prepared. Heaven and hell.

For his own glory. And if God created hell. Then God is present in hell. Because there is nowhere God is not present.

[28 : 15] We were singing about that in Psalm 139. David says. Ascend I heaven. Lo thou art there. There if in hell.

I lie. You are still there. My friend. Heaven. Heaven is the immediate presence of God. With a mediator.

Jesus Christ. Hell is the immediate presence of God. Without a mediator. In fact hell is the immediate presence of God.

Without God's grace. Without God's love. Without God's mercy. Without his kindness. His forgiveness. His forgiveness. And his compassion. You know my unconverted friend.

The greatest difference between heaven and hell is Jesus. And as you know by now. Jesus makes all the difference. Jesus makes all the difference.

[29 : 16] In the 18th century. The Puritan Jonathan Edwards. He preached a sermon. At the time of the great awakening. And the sermon was entitled. Sinners in the hands of an angry God.

God. And in the course of his sermon. Jonathan Edwards. He addresses his unconverted friend. Sitting before him. In the pew. And as the congregation sat in the pews in front of him.

He said to them. Every one of you. Has heard that you are out of Christ. And as you sit here. That world of misery.

That lake of burning brimstone. Is right under you. And you have nothing to stand upon. Nothing to stand upon.

Not anything to take hold of. There is nothing you can cling to. Between you and hell. It's only the power and pleasure of God. That holds you up.

[30 : 15] You are probably not aware of this. Says Edwards. That it's God's hand of mercy. That is keeping you. Out of hell. But if God were to withdraw his hand.

Nothing. Would keep you from falling. If you were to be let go. You would descend. And sink. And plunge. Into the bottomless gulf.

And Edwards says. O sinner. O sinner. Consider the fearful danger.

That you are in. It's a great furnace. Full of fire. And you are being held. Over it.

By the hand of God. Do you know many people. Were converted under that sermon. As they cried out for mercy. And fled. To Jesus.

[31 : 18] For salvation. But my unconverted friend. Here today. What about you? You are still on mercy's ground.

You still have time. There is breath in your lungs. There is a heart that beats.

You still have time. What about you? What about you? Because Jesus. You are still on mercy. Because Jesus. Jesus. Today.

He has taught you. How to avoid hell. And I don't say any of this lightly. I say it out of a care. And a concern for your soul. And for most of you.

You know that I am speaking to you. Because I have spoken to you. On many occasions. About your soul. Jesus has reminded you.

[32 : 19] Of a needed deterrent. A necessary detachment. And a non-stop description. But the question is.

Are you listening? Are you listening? Are you listening to what Jesus is saying? And if you are. All I can say to you today is.

When you leave this building. And you go home. You go to your bedroom. You get on your knees. And you ask Jesus to have mercy upon you.

You cry out like a little child. For mercy. Because this morning Jesus has taught you. How to avoid going to hell.

And he has taught you lovingly. And gently. Out of a care. And a concern. For your soul. You have no excuse now.

[33 : 21] See to it. That you avoid going to hell. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. Let us pray. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.