

Can A Loving God Send Someone To Eternal Hell

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Preacher: Pastor Kenoyer

[0:00] I would like you to take your Bibles this evening just to frame the lesson that we're going to study together and have you turn back to the text that we looked at this morning in John chapter 8.

Let's look at John chapter 8 and mark again just for the frame and for our thinking what Jesus said there in verse 21. So he said to them again I am going away and you will seek me and you will die in your sin.

Where I am going you cannot come. Let's come to the Lord in prayer. Our Father this evening as we take the word in hand and we think carefully and deliberately about what the scriptures tell us about your love and the reality of eternal suffering.

In hell. We pray that our hearts would be humble and that our mind would be open to hear the authority and the sufficiency of your word and that we by faith would receive these things that we have here given to us for our joy and our profit.

We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. Now the question that I posed this morning towards the close of the sermon was that question how can a loving God send anyone to hell for eternity.

[1:25] And it's a question that anytime someone touches on the subject of hell particularly in terms of the reality of eternal judgment it's a very common question to have people ask.

And I would be curious how many of you have heard people pose that question before. Well how can a loving God do this. It's like it just it doesn't make sense for God to be in that situation of judging someone and condemning them forever.

And while I don't think the subject of hell should be the center point of every sermon. In fact if we were to stop and think about it the characteristic of expositional preaching is that you preach upon what the text actually says.

And so it's pretty hard to get from feeding the 5,000 necessarily when you're laying out the beauty of the fact that Jesus said I'm the bread of life to get right over there and launch into an extended lesson that deals with the reality of hell.

However when we are preaching through the text and we come to a statement such as the one that is made in 21 and 24 where Jesus on three different occasions in that same context he says listen you're going to die in your sin.

[2:40] You're going to die in your sin. You're going to die in your sin. And where I'm going you're not going to come. It's entirely appropriate for us to think about the reality of hell. To recognize that it has a very important part to play in every one of our lives.

And I'm just curious how many of you have loved ones that when you pray for them you are fully aware that they're not saved and you think of the prospect of their spending eternity in hell.

How many of you have people that you pray for like that? You know people that you love and you care about and you think about them man if they die I don't know they're going to spend eternity.

And when we think carefully and biblically about hell it has to do something with encouraging a heart in evangelism doesn't it?

I mean they may not want to hear the news but you realize that in the face of the reality of what God has to say about judgment and eternal condemnation. It kind of pushes you forward to be a little more aggressive and a little more clear in saying listen I want to talk to you about something that is desperately important.

Friday I had a wonderful and extended opportunity of sharing the gospel with an individual. And it was very interesting. The guy is almost 50 years old.

[4:01] And he said to me you know I've been thinking a lot about the fact that you know even if I live another 50 years the day is coming when I won't be around. And I'm thinking about what's it going to be like when it's all done and gone.

And after that there's nothing. I said that's not really what's going to happen after that. I said the reality of what the scriptures tell us is that people are going to spend eternity in one of two conditions.

And it is because of what I firmly believe the Bible says about heaven and hell that I want to plead with you. Trust in Christ.

Repent and come to faith. Repent and come to faith.

A pastor up in Michigan somewhere. I don't know. Pastor Andrew do you know what church it was? He has dropped out of the ministry now. But he was in a large congregation. Mega church. It grew grew grew.

[5:33] Tremendous communicator. Though not an expositor of the scriptures. And it kind of became one of the characteristics of his ministry. He went out and he said listen.

The name of his book was Love Wins. Love Wins. Very popular. Had quite a following. And the essence of his book was this. Is that at the end of the day because God is a loving God.

He will not condemn people to hell forever. So my purpose tonight is not to rehash the storyline. But rather think along some different lines as we address the subject of.

Would a loving God really send people to hell forever? And so when we think about the question we have to start with who are we really talking about? That's important. I appreciate John picking songs that had to do with the character of God.

Where else do you start when you think about any doctrinal truth? And so it's appropriate for us to remind ourselves when we think about this question of can a loving God send anyone to hell for eternity?

[6:38] We have to stop and recognize that even all of our efforts to really get our hands and our head around the reality of the scriptural truth is something that while enabled by the spirit of God when we are believers, it still is something that our human mind and hearts are limited in grasping.

I want you to think with me just for a moment of how the first sin took place. Go back in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 3 verse 5.

Genesis chapter 3 verse 5. I haven't parsed out exactly the flow of how sin came into the world, but I am struck by the fact that here is Satan coming to the woman and making an appeal to her, and right there in verse 5 here is Satan saying this, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and follow the rest of it, and you will be like God knowing good and evil.

How many of you recognize the difference between a temptation and entertaining sin to where it actually gains traction in your life?

Matthew chapter 4, Jesus was what? Tempted in the wilderness. Did he sin? Not at all. Had no traction. But I want you to think with me just for a moment. Here is Satan thinking that a reasonable appeal to the woman is that, hey listen, if you do this, you're going to become like God, and you're going to be able to determine what is good and evil.

[8:24] Now, just imagine the unbelievable gulf between the reality of who God is and who the created woman was, and here is Satan coming to her and proposing, hey listen, I want you to number one, doubt the character of God, but I want you to number two, fantasize about the fact that you could ever become a God.

Impossible. Impossible. And yet, there are those when they come with this question of, I can't believe a loving God would ever send anybody to hell, what they have done is they've just restricted and diminished the reality of who God is and pressed him down into a very limited mold.

I want you to listen to another passage that kind of frames the thinking of who God is in comparison to us, and turn in your Bible to Psalm 50, Psalm 50, verse 21.

The latter part of the verse says this, Now, admit that we have a tendency of thinking that way, don't we?

In broad terms. How many of you have tried to explain something to someone else, and at the end have reduced your logic and your argument to a presentation of your own experiences?

[10:03] Have you ever done that? Come on, we've all done that, haven't we? I mean, we think that our experience is the frame that explains things.

Give you an illustration. Any of you here ever had goat meat? Goat meat? Bob. Love goat meat. It's my favorite. It really is. But when I would try to explain goat meat to Andy Manwiller, no goat meat eater here, you know, okay, if I would say, well, it tastes just like chicken.

That's what I was going to say. I mean, hey, everybody knows what chicken tastes like, right? And my point is, is that we rely upon these comparisons based upon our own experiences to be the means where we communicate what we're thinking.

And here is God saying, you guys don't get it. You think that I'm like you. You think that I'm like you. And so when we come to this question of can a loving God really send anybody to hell for all of eternity, we've got to be very careful that when we take that question up, that we are, first of all, thinking with humility about who God really is and not just kind of thinking about Him with our limited little pea brain and deciding, well, He must be, you know, kind of like me and limited.

[11:33] The difference between who God is and who we are is profound, and we should be careful to remember that. Let me give you another passage in relationship to that as a foundation.

Go to Isaiah chapter 6. Isaiah chapter 6. And in that passage, beginning there in verse 3, we find that, not Elijah, Isaiah has a vision of the glory of the pre-incarnate Christ, and he hears the seraphim saying, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of His glory. And then look at verse 5, and he said, woe is me for I am, how many of you have the King James Version where it says, I am undone? Okay?

If you look up what that word lost means in the Hebrew, it doesn't mean like I'm lost in the mall or I'm lost somewhere out on 270 where I really don't know my directions.

It's a more profound word. It's communicating, I'm wiped out. That's why I like the word undone. It means that I am completely lost in terms of the reality of, just overwhelmed with the fact of who God is.

[12:56] And here is Isaiah getting a glimpse. And by the way, was Isaiah a godly, reverent, God-fearing individual? He absolutely was.

But when he came face to face with this vision of the pre-incarnate, it overwhelmed him. Absolutely. Absolutely. I would venture to say prior to this that Isaiah had a fairly reasonable sense of confidence in his own walk with God, in his daily relationship, etc.

He was chosen by God and given a very important ministry. But here he is coming face to face and he says, I'm undone. I'm undone.

And so in the presence of the holiness of God, Isaiah is completely overwhelmed by the reality of it and all he can say is, wow, who am I?

What am I? Let me give you one other passage as we kind of think about who we are talking about in relationship to this question of, you know, so can a God do this?

[14:00] Go to Deuteronomy chapter 29, verse 29. Deuteronomy chapter 29, verse 29.

The secret things belong to the Lord our God. Put that into your own words and tell me what you hear when it says that. The secret things belong to the Lord our God.

Put it in your own words. What do you think that's saying? David? Okay. There are some things that God doesn't want us to know.

Okay. What else goes through your mind in relationship? The secret things belong to God. God knows the unknowable.

What else? We're just not equipped to handle it. The secret, I mean, it's not just, and I appreciate David's comment.

[15:06] There are some things that God doesn't want us to know, but I think it's more than that. We're just not equipped to handle it. We never will be. How many of you have ever had people say to you, well, when I get to heaven, I'm going to ask.

You ever done that? You ever been around people that say those kinds? My attitude is, you know, when I get to heaven, I'm just going to be overwhelmed to be there. And I'm not going to pull a little piece of paper out of my pocket and say, by the way, God, you know, I really did want to ask you this.

Not going to happen. The secret things belong to the Lord our God. Just beyond you. But the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of the law. So when we come to this question of can a loving God send anyone to hell for eternity, we have to recognize, number one, that God is God. That God really is God.

And there are going to be things about God's dealing with us that at the end of the day, we can't fully put our mind around. And so we are best served to accept the reality of who God is with humility and then allow the word that he has given to us to communicate with us accurately about who he is and what he's chosen to do.

[16:37] There's another thing that is important. When we come to that question, can a loving God send anyone to hell for eternity, sometimes that question really rises out of a rebellious and arrogant spirit.

Do you follow what I'm saying? It's kind of like, I have Trump because I know what God is like and if he is loving, he wouldn't do this. That kind of question is not one that a search of Scripture is going to reconcile because the attitude colors the approach to the Scriptures and the ears are kind of silenced by the attitude of the heart.

There are a number of doctrinal truths that really are complex and profound and if we come to them with the wrong attitude and the wrong heart, we are not going to get anywhere with them. Let me give you just a short litany of some of these.

When we think about the Trinity, I mean, how many of you have to recognize that the Trinity is one of those complexities that it's just, all it does is kind of, as we think about it enough, it kind of stretches our mind out to where we say, ah, I can't take it anymore.

I could step away from it. I think about the issue of the full humanity and the full deity of Christ. I think about the matter of, okay, so where did evil come from?

[18:07] Just explain that one to me completely. I remember reading R.C. Sproul's book that does probably a better job at getting you started in that passage or that thought than many others, but at the end of the day, where do you solve that one?

How do you solve that one? Election and free will. And so when we ask this question, can a loving God really send anyone to hell for eternity, I want you to recognize that there's a difference with how we come to the subject and the attitude with which we come to the subject.

A perfect illustration of the importance of how we come to the subject would really be found in the case of Job. Can you hear yourself playing Job's part?

Honestly? I mean, hey, there's not a one of us in here that on one or more occasions has not kind of looked at the circumstances in our life and said, what are you doing?

Why is this happening, right? Do you follow that? We've all been there. It's not the way I planned it. And it doesn't seem fair.

[19:23] And so here is Job, actually goes on for 37 chapters, the book of the back and forth between Job and his low-life counselors trying to help him understand, you know, Job, the reason all these bad things are happening is because you must have been a bad guy.

And then in chapter 38, who shows up? God. And when God shows up and begins to call Job to task, very interestingly, God starts with the simple.

Why do I say the simple? He starts by asking Job where he was and what his thinking is in relationship to the simple matter of creation.

Where were you when I did this and I did that and I did the other thing and I designed this and I told the, you know, the mountain goats or whatever and I had just one thing after another and for two chapters, he goes on and just hammers the issue of, hey, Job, pea brain, where were you?

Well, let's look at Job chapter 40 because it has some bearing on what our thinking is about tonight. Job chapter 40, verse 1 and 2.

[20:52] And the Lord said to Job, shall a fault finder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.

Now, what is that saying? In essence, part of what was going on as Job was suffering was what was he coming to God and saying? What was Job kind of hinting at?

Hey, why is this happening to me? And here is God challenging him and saying, shall a fault finder contend with the Almighty? When we're arguing with God, are we ever, ever, ever going to win?

What's the answer? No. And here is God coming down and communicating with Job and saying, hey, listen, Job, stop and think about this.

Anyway, there it goes on. Then Job answered the Lord and said, behold, I am a small account. What shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. Okay. I really recognize that I don't have the right to speak.

[22:03] We find ourselves sometimes in the midst of difficulties and things aren't going the way we would like them to go and Satan tempts us to get a little snitty with God about the way he's dealing with us and we need to remind ourselves we haven't approached Job yet in terms of suffering.

And then God shows up and says, hey, listen, what are you doing, Job? Well, as we come back to that question of let's think about can a loving God send individuals to hell?

We have to put a couple facts out there for us to recognize. We understand who God is. We understand who we are in broad terms. But we have to understand that the Bible also speaks very clearly about the reality of hell.

And I mentioned that last week and I mentioned it this week. And the reality is that sinners will spend all eternity in hell. And the Bible has a great deal to say about hell.

Now, I want to, I remember Jared Piles making a comment several weeks ago that just, whoa, it just made something crystal clear. We live in a day and age where anything that anybody says can be immediately referenced.

[23 : 25] Why do I say that? How many of you have your phone in your pocket right now? Just raise your hand and wave at me if you have your phone in your pocket. You know that the web, you can pick up, you can, okay, so if I said to you that there's much more said in the Bible about hell than there is about heaven, what could you do?

You could Google it right now. And you would find out actually, in fact, if you wanted to dive into it, you could find out how many references there are about heaven, how many references there are about hell.

and I do not want to be one of those people that ends up getting an email from you saying, hey, what you said was wrong and I Googled it and here's the passage, a recitation, et cetera.

So my point is, is the Bible has a lot to say about hell, not as much as about heaven, but it has a lot to say about it. And in particular, Christ is the one who communicates the reality of hell over and over again and he does with a compassion and a sensitivity.

Why? Because in his desire for the souls of men and his love for lost mankind, he wants us to understand the reality. But I want you to understand also that it's not just the fact that the Bible tells us about hell.

[24 : 46] The Bible also tells us about the love of God for fallen man and it's real. How can a loving God send men to hell? We do want to recognize God is loving and I think about a couple different illustrations in relationship to that.

For one, it tells us over in Ezekiel chapter 33, verse 11, it says that God does not take pleasure in bringing or exacting judgment on men.

Okay? He takes pleasure in mercy, he delights in showing loving kindness and there is no satisfaction in one sense in God bringing judgment on mankind. Does he judge mankind?

Yes, he does. But it's not his pleasure. I want you to look at another passage that kind of reminds us of the nature of God in relationship to the subject of hell.

And turn in your Bible if you would to Romans chapter 2, verse 4. Romans chapter 2, verse 4. Can a loving God send people to hell forever?

[25 : 48] Well, we do want to recognize that he really is loving. And he is also profoundly patient with men. Verse 4. Do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Why is God so patient with people? As a sidebar, how many of you have ever found yourself being impatient with God's judgment in other people's lives?

Have you ever been there? Look at me so, you know, boy God, I want you to deal with them. They deserve it. At a younger point in my life, I used to really desire God to bring vengeance on individuals who had deeply offended and harmed me.

As I've grown older, I've become more sensitive and recognized that it was only God's loving kindness and patience that I was not consumed.

And it has moved my prayer from, hey, I wish you'd deal with that person to this thing. Lord, I want you to be as patient with that individual as you have been with me.

[26 : 58] Passage tells us that God is incredibly patient. And why is he that way? Because he is a God that delights in mercy. He doesn't sit around just kind of rubbing his hands thinking, boy, I cannot wait to get hold of him.

But as we think about the love of God, I want you to also consider that Christ, sent as our Savior, is the supreme proof of his love.

We know that God is loving. How do we know that? Because he sent Christ to be the Savior of mankind. John 3, verse 15 and 16, we know well, but I want you to look at another passage in

relationship to that over in Titus 3.

Titus 3, verse 4, it says this, but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, when did it appear? It appeared when Christ Jesus came into the world.

And he appeared to be our Savior and to die for us, to die in our place. And his love took him to the cross on our behalf. He died for my sins, he died for your sins, and he died there, rose again, and his sacrifice is an undeniable proof of the love of God for us.

[28:14] Well, I want you to think about another thing as we consider the reality of people spending forever in hell. And I want you to recognize that the Bible tells us that apart from the grace and the work of God, the unrepentant is not persuaded by suffering.

Are you listening carefully? I'll say it again slowly. The sinner is not persuaded by suffering. How many of you have, on occasion, hit your thumb with a hammer?

Okay. I see that as a gender-specific illustration. I'll back that one up. How many of you have decided that you didn't need an oven mitt to pull something out of the oven?

Oh, that? Thad? Both parties, right? Okay. My point is this, is that there are some things that we generally, we learn from pretty quickly that that was a bad idea, right?

Tragically, the unintended consequences of sin do not persuade sinners as a general rule to completely stop. Do you understand that? Let me have you look at a passage in relationship to that, and that's just stunning.

[29:30] Proverbs chapter 27, verse 22. The Bible tells us that the sinner is not changed by suffering. Proverbs chapter 27, verse 22.

Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not depart from him. What's the illustration? What's the illustration?

It is that suffering in and of itself is not going to persuade people to change the way they think. I don't know where our country is going to go during the elections, but I can tell you that at least the two frontrunners are probably not going to be the remedy for this nation's revival.

And when I think about our nation actually choosing an undeniable socialist, by the way, I don't think Trump is much better of a solution in case you're wondering.

Well, we stay where I am. There is no place that socialism has worked ever. And so you think about the foolishness of men not being persuaded by circumstances, but just cranking on off the end of the pier into the dark.

[31:09] And here it says in Proverbs, you know what? Suffering doesn't cause people to change their mind. Let me give you an even more profound illustration of that truth that sinners are going to stay sinners regardless of the suffering.

And I think that has bearing on hell in part. But anyway, look in your Bible at Revelation 16, verse 9, 11, and 21. And by the way, I would encourage you to underline this recurring phrase.

I think it is profoundly instructive. I think one of the things that will happen during the Great Tribulation is that God will permanently remove from all men the argument, we didn't know how you felt about sin.

God will make His judgment undeniably clear. And you would think, hey, you know, I get the memo. I understand you really don't like me to be this way, and I'm going to stop. Let's look at verse 9.

They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues.

[32:27] They knew who was causing the problem, right? And what was their reaction? They did not repent. Whew. Verse 11.

People gnawed, the latter part of verse 10. And people gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and their sores. They did not repent.

Verse 21. And great hailstones, about 100 pounds, each fell from heaven on people, and they cursed God for the plague of the hail because the plague was so severe.

They hated the suffering that they endured because of their sin, and not for a minute did they repent. I remember some months ago dealing with a man that ministered to repeatedly, and I had, in case you're wondering, how I look forward for opportunities to share the gospel, and with this individual probably three or four different times, I kept on having an opportunity to share the gospel, usually in the context of the wheels absolutely coming off in his life.

I mean, we're talking about skid row disaster. And about the fourth time into it, I said, you know what, Bradley? I said, it is evident that you are unwilling to listen to my appeal.

[34:01] and it is also evident that the circumstances of your life are not in any way persuading you. I don't know what else I can say, but I will pray for you.

The unrepentant sinner of his own nature is just going to grow harder and harder in their state of wicked rebellion regardless of the circumstances and pressure that comes upon them. And so, you know, you stop and think about all that suffering in hell, it would have to bring people to repentance, to a change of heart. It won't. It won't. What we know about the state of the wicked in all of eternity is that their existence will be marked by all forms of suffering. It will also be marked by the immediate presence and association with Satan and his demonic host. And I venture to say on the basis of what we see particularly in Revelation chapter 16 and what is the heart of the unregenerate going to be like throughout all of eternity? It is going to persist in its rebellion against God. So in simple terms, we have to ask ourselves the question, what does a loving God do?

[35:24] For one, a loving God realizing the absolute despair of our situation and understanding the consequences of sin sent the Lord Jesus Christ to be our Savior.

That's what he did. The love of God provided his son as the unbelievable, miraculous remedy for our sin and said, listen, what you need because of your sin is a solution that is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he sent his son to die for me and to die for you. And for those who reject, who refuse, the blessing of grace offered to them in Christ Jesus as our Savior will spend all of eternity suffering for their unrepentant, hardened hearts against the grace of God.

Why is eternal suffering the just penalty for sin? I don't know if I can explain it exactly mathematically, but I'll try it this way.

An infinitely holy God is infinitely offended by a single sin. And apart from the infinite sacrifice and substitution of Christ for the infinite weight of sin, an individual who refuses the offer of salvation will spend all of eternity answering for their willful rejection of the sweetness of the work of Christ.

[37:15] So, the next time you have someone say to you with kind of a sarcastic tone, how in the world can a loving God send anyone to hell for all of eternity?

You appeal to them first of all that they need to be careful in thinking who are they talking about? Someone like them?

That's not who the God of the Bible is. Are they also considering what God has done for their sins in the person of Jesus Christ?

And in the face of the reality of the awesomeness of their sin, will they continue to reject what Christ has done for them in dying in their place and offering salvation through His work?

Let's close in prayer. our Father God, we are thankful for this evening and just for the reminder that you in your grace sent the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Savior of the world and you have given us the blessing of eternal life.

[38:25] I'm thankful that with that gift you've also appointed us to be your representatives and ambassadors. And Lord, our purpose in this brief reminder this evening is not to equip us to be sharp and belligerent with other people but to be tender and sympathetic as the Lord Jesus was.

Father, put us in situations where we have opportunity of lifting up the sweetness of the gospel and the hope that we have in Christ. Give us also this evening as we think about the reality of heaven and hell a very real compassion for those who have been deceived by Satan hardened in their sin that we would pray that your mercy and your grace would deliver them from that state and cause us as your children to walk with humility and joy that the lives that we live would cause unbelievers to ask us a reason for the hope that's so starkly different from theirs.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm going to encourage you.