

Due to the Reality of Hell

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[0 : 00] Man, that's good. I'm telling you, this place will come up in a shout one day. It's going to scare most of you to death. That's good stuff. Thank you so much for the music. If you have your Bible, turn to John chapter 3.

John chapter 3, probably the greatest passage in Scripture, at least the most well-known, was spoken first to a Jewish ruler that went to Jesus to find out more information.

He snuck to him in the night, probably so that he could have some spiritual exploration, check things out without being seen by his friends and colleagues, keeping them from knowing it.

And it was in that conversation that Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, 16 and 17, For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. For the last three months, we've been studying the reality of eternity.

[1 : 22] And for the last month, we've been studying the brutal realities of hell. I love preaching on heaven. It makes people feel good, and they appreciate it.

I tried to clarify some myths that Christians have about dying and about heaven, and it reminds us of what we had to look forward to. That's when we preach about heaven.

Preaching about hell is a whole different place. Literally. To preach on it, light some people's fire, and they say, Hey, let them have it, preacher.

Like that kind of preaching. While others think you're a jerk. Because the reality is stark, the finality is harsh, and the concept is horribly beyond us.

To think about it much will make sure Christians, will be sure to make some Christians nervous, and it should. But it also shouldn't.

[2 : 28] If you have a doubt about your salvation, and you know that you've never really surrendered your life to Christ, I don't preach on the reality of hell to make you nervous, but it ought to make you nervous.

It ought to. Life is short, and hell is real. However, if you know that you're saved, you don't have to be concerned about any chance of you facing hell.

Please understand that salvation is more than just raising your hand when nobody's looking. That is, except God, he sees it, and the preacher, and then there's always a few people that's peeking, in case y'all didn't know it.

All right. Raising your hand does not save you. I don't remember a time in Scripture, somebody will point out a Scripture when I'm done, probably, when I'm wrong, but where Jesus asked somebody to raise their hand when nobody was looking.

And that's why I don't do it. But please also understand that salvation is also not repeating a prayer after someone. Mimicking someone does not make you a Christian.

[3 : 48] I took introductory classes. I took several classes in Hebrew in seminary, and when I took the introductory classes, it was overwhelming. A Hebrew Bible starts at the back, and it reads from right to left.

It's a whole different concept. The consonants look like characters, but the vowels are just points, just period-looking things that are above the letter or below the letter, and so when you read Hebrew, you read it backwards, and you kind of zigzag through it to find the vowels that are in it.

It can be overwhelming. I would say it's a language of the devil, but it's not because most of the Old Testament is written in Hebrew, so I can't say that. But when I went through seminary, there was no Internet, okay?

So I know that that shocks the vast majority of you millennials that there was a time when there was not, but you couldn't just look something up like that.

So I spent hours translating by taking the Bible text, put it on a copy, or blowing it up to where it's 8 1/2 by 11 sheet of paper, so I had enough space between the lines to write what the translation was, how to parse the verbs, and go through that whole process that we were asked to do for class, and then in class, we were to take the Hebrew Bible in our hand, and we were to translate it when he called on us.

[5 : 30] Well, I left my Hebrew Bible on the desk, and I took that 8 1/2 by 11 sheet of paper, and I tucked it right under that Bible, and so when he called on me to say it in introductory Hebrew, I would read what I had written the night before in a broken kind of slow kind of, I didn't mind if he thought I was remedial.

It didn't bother me at all. I didn't want him calling on me cold turkey about something, and so, and that's kind of how I got through it. Now, did that make me a Hebrew scholar? No, but I said the words that I had written the night before, and therefore I got through the translation.

That's kind of what I thought of when I thought about somebody repeating a prayer along with everybody else and hoping that it stuck. You're not saved when you're praying somebody else's prayer.

It's not the way it works. You're saved when you admit you're a sinner, when you need a Savior, and when you surrender your life to Christ, that his way is the only way for my life.

Following a friend down the aisle does not bring salvation, folks. Surrendering to Christ is what brings salvation, and I think you have to be adamant to make sure we know what we're doing.

[6 : 45] What horrifies me more about the Baptist faith, honestly, and the Baptist church is that manipulative tactics in the past have caused people to raise their hand when nobody was looking or repeat something after somebody, and nothing ever came of that.

There was no fruit bore in their life. There's no evidence of their salvation, and they think because something they did at 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 that they never followed up on and never did anything with, that they're safe.

If we were to knock on doors today, most people wouldn't answer the door, but if we were and were to ask that question, do you know the Lord Jesus? They may not know how to answer that, but if you say, are you saved?

They'd say, yeah, what happened? And they'd tell you. So that's why I think it's so important that anybody that makes a decision, we make sure that we thoroughly go through that with them and help them to understand that.

Now, if you know that you've surrendered your life to Christ, and you know that you're a Christian, then why are we talking about hell? I mean, what is to come from having a conversation about the reality of hell with people who are secure in their salvation?

[7 : 56] How does the reality of hell change anything for the Christian? Well, if that's your question, I'm glad you ask, because I want to talk about that this morning.

For the Christian, who knows that you've surrendered your life to the Lord, the reality of hell, due to the reality of hell, we ought to be godly.

We ought to be godly. We ought to live for the Lord. Put even more simply, we need to stop sinning. I want you to listen to what Jesus says about it, and especially if you're not familiar with his passage, I want you to brace yourself, okay?

It's in Matthew chapter 5, verse 29 and 30, and Jesus says, if your right hand causes you to sin, excuse me, your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.

For it's better that you lose one of your members than your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off. Throw it away. For it's better that you lose one of your members than your whole body go to hell.

[9 : 09] Now, first off, men, keep your pocket knife in your pocket, okay? Let me explain something to you. Jesus didn't mean this literally.

And if there's any man in here that says he believes the Bible is literally true all the time, and he has two eyes, he's lying, okay? If he's familiar with this passage.

Jesus does not mean this literally. He uses hyperbole here, he uses exaggeration here, to get across a point, and his point is, stop sinning. Stop going to the places where you're prone to sin.

Stop looking at the stuff that leads you to sin. Stop thinking on the things that throw you off. Stop it. As the great theologian Barney Fife said, nip it in the bud.

Nip it in the bud and go to extreme measures to nip it in the bud. When there's a pattern of sin in your life, you're living like one going to hell.

[10:14] An indication of our salvation is one who's walking in a pattern of obedience for the Lord. Following the Lord. Not perfectly, but getting better at it.

That's what sanctification process is. And an indication of lostness when there's no change in your life. You can go to a scary Christian presentation or some other judgment house kind of display and get the woolly scared out of you, but if your life doesn't change, it does not speak of salvation.

It brings life change. Therefore, Christian, if you want the assurance that you're truly saved and walking with the Lord, nip it in the bud. Stop sinning. If the thought of hell does not help you stop sinning, you need to evaluate what it means to have Christ as Lord in your life.

Be godly. Second thing is, due to the reality of hell, we ought to be serious. We ought to be serious. Hell is nothing to play with, and because hell is real, life is nothing to play with.

How shall a Christian live? Listen to Romans 12. The Apostle Paul put it this way. Beginning in verse 1, he said, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

[11:42] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than you ought to think, but to think, and get this, with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

So in other words, we're to live our lives set apart for the Lord. That's what holy means, is to be set apart for the purposes of God. We are to be sacrificial to the Lord.

I always say, Christ don't want you to die for him, he wants you to live for him. And that's what it means to be a living sacrifice for the Lord. Not through our death, but through our life. We should not conform to the ways of the world, but allow the truth of God's way to guide our lives.

He will renew an old warped mind by the application of his word in our lives and by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. He will show us what is right.

[12:53] He will show us what is not. Lastly, in verse 3, it says that we ought to think soberly. We ought to use sober judgment.

Now that means two things. One is, it means we ought to be sober. Few things compromise the Christian life and the Christian testimony like alcohol.

It'll ruin your career, it'll ruin your family, it'll ruin your reputation, it is a strong tool in the toolbox of the evil one. Nobody has ever been benefited spiritually from drinking alcohol.

And most are hindered by it because they drank it. And my advice is just stay away from it. But the reality is this speaks of a lot more than just a sobriety.

As a matter of fact, it speaks of being serious minded about the things of God. And to be honest, I really believe that this passage when it speaks of being sober minded speaks more to being serious minded than it speaks to sobriety.

[14:03] But I have strong feelings about sobriety and because I've seen too many lives ruined by alcohol, anytime I get a chance I'll clean me out of spot and say something about it. Because the reality is it does nothing for you beneficial in your walk with the Lord.

And it'll also lead other people astray if it don't adversely affect you. The reality of what he's saying is if you're not sober, you're not serious.

And you need to be serious. We ought to be somber and serious about the things of God. Now, when do you get serious about things?

I'll tell you when you get serious about things. You get serious about things when time is pressing. When the pressure is on. When a job needs to get done.

That's when the pressure's on. And I'll just tell you, friend, it's time. It's time to live spiritually alert. It's time to live on task.

[15:06] It's time to live fully dedicated. Hell is ready and people are headed there. And so let's respond accordingly.

Let's be godly. Let's be serious. Due to the reality of hell, let's be timely.

Let's be timely. Take advantage of the time that we have. We don't have much time. Now, you may have more than me and I may have more than you and I don't know how much time is not much, but think about it this way.

95 million people will die this year. Every second, three people slip into eternity. Within the time that I preach this sermon, and you can do the math if you want to know how long I'm going to preach, 4,000 people will have gone to a place of everlasting beauty and bliss are into an eternal hell.

And if the words of Christ are true, and they are, if wide is the road that leads to destruction and narrow is the gate, as Jesus said, most of the 4,000 that will die while I'm preaching will go to hell.

[16:22] Most of them. We have to take advantage of the time that we have, however long it is. We need to get our lives straight.

We need to help others through their journey and help for the cause of Christ, pointing folks to him while we have time. Be timely.

As well, due to the reality of hell, we ought to be grateful. We ought to be grateful. If you're a Christian, you have acknowledged that you are a sinner in need of a Savior.

You're also fully aware that you continue to sin, but for the grace of God would have had hell to pay. But thank God for his grace. So let's never forget that. But instead, let's live in response to that.

St. Patrick is the man that St. Patrick's Day is named after. He's a good man. Saw a poem that he wrote that I wanted to read.

[17:24] And so I got to wondering, how could such a good man be what St. Patrick's Day is named after? I got to researching that and found out that St. Patrick's Day is a celebration of Christianity coming to Ireland.

And in order to properly celebrate that, they lift the limits of Lent for a day so they can properly celebrate. And that's why they're turning rivers green and all that stuff, you know.

That's why it's become a drunken mess. But in reality, the man, St. Patrick, was a missionary and a bishop in Ireland. Never canonized as a saint by the Catholic Church, but he was called saint out of respect and out of reverence.

And there's a poem that's attributed to him that got my attention. It says this, God be in my head and in my understanding. God be in my eyes and in my looking.

God be in my mouth and in my speaking. God be in my heart and in my thinking. God be at mine end and at my departing.

[18:44] Gratitude leads to an effort to make God the center of all of our lives and to realize that all that you are and all that you have is in him.

We get most of our understanding of hell from the words of Christ and they are inadequate to describe the horrors of hell.

Not because Jesus is inadequate in anything, but because we're inadequate to understand an eternity that is beyond us. But he understands and he knows what it means to be separated from the Father because he was on the cross.

He's drank the cup of the wrath of God and tasted its bitterness. He's endured the agonizing pain. The Lord has laid on Christ the iniquity of us all.

God did not spare his son, but had him experience the fury of judgment of God's holiness. 1 Peter chapter 4 and Ephesians chapter 4 tells us that in the period in which Christ died, between the cross and the empty tomb, that Christ went to hell for us.

[20:01] He took the horror so we don't have to. And that's worth more than just some sentimental pause, more than just a bowing of the head, more than just a solemn moment of silent reflection.

That is worth a life that is marked by gratitude because outside of Christ we have no hope. As the Apostle Paul put it in Galatians chapter 6 verse 14, but far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do the realities of hell. We ought to be grateful and it ought to show. And lastly, due to the reality of hell, we ought to share Jesus.

Do you believe in hell? How much does it mean to you that people avoid hell? People that you love, people that you live with, people that you relate to, people that you work with, people that you recreate with, how much difference does it make?

I read this and I thought about it a lot this week. Paul said in Romans chapter 9 that he wished that he would be accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of his brothers and those related to him.

[21 : 40] What a statement. He's saying I'd go to hell if it would save the souls of others. And I'm just going to tell you, after we spent a month detailing hell, how many of us could say with Paul, I'd rather go to hell than others go?

How many of us could say that? I'll just be honest with you. I could say it about a few people. I could say it about my family. Thank God the ones I'm thinking of are the ones that are saved, praise God. And he goes on in that chapter to say in that chapter that all will not be saved. And then he follows that up with Romans chapter 10.

And in Romans chapter 10, beginning in verse 9, he said this, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confess and is saved. For the scripture says, everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.

[22 : 52] For there's no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

How then will they call on him in whom they've not believed? Get this. And how are they to believe in him of whom they've never heard?

And how are they to hear without somebody preaching? And how are they to preach unless they're sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us. So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of God.

He goes on to quote Isaiah in Romans chapter 10, verse 20. It says, Then Isaiah is so boldly as to say, I have been found by those who did not seek me.

[24 : 02] I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me. Leave that up a moment because I want you to see that. Isaiah said, I realize God sent me to folks that didn't seek me out.

They didn't ask me spiritual questions. God sent me to them. I've shown myself to those who didn't ask that for me. Don't wait for somebody to ask a spiritually exploring question for you to share Christ with them.

They're dead in their transgressions and sins. Allow the Holy Spirit to use you to wake them up with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have a responsibility to share the gospel.

Isaiah says, I showed up in people's lives that were not expecting me. I shared with many folks that did not ask. People's eternity is based upon our faithfulness. There were places Jesus went where he did little work because they didn't have the faith for him to work there.

Scripture says that. Dr. Francis Schaeffer was a Presbyterian pastor, a writer, and theologian, and he was visibly moved by the thought of hell.

[25 : 15] He was meeting with some college students in Switzerland and discussing these things. When a young man asked him a question, he said, Dr. Schaeffer, what about those who've never heard the gospel?

They waited. They paused for a brilliant answer. And instead, he didn't say a word.

He just bowed his head and wept. God chose to use us as instruments to bring people to the Lord. He can save them without us. But why should he? When he has lived for us, he's died for us, he's rose for us, he's empowered us, he's commissioned us to go in his name and to share in eternity changing gospel.

So what if reality of hell is really true as scripture says it is as I believe? If it is Christian, because hell is real, let's be godly.

[26 : 37] Because hell is real, let's be serious. Because hell is real, let's be timely. Let's make the most of our time. Let's be grateful.

Let's be sharing Jesus. Because doing so makes an eternity of difference. With every head bowed and every eye closed, I just want you to think about something for just a moment.

I want you to be honest with God. Can you rest in the fact that you've come to the point in your life where you know that you have eternity? You know that you've given your heart and life to the Lord and you go into heaven when you die.

Hell hangs in the balance. And that's not a threat, it's not a scare, it's just the truth. So I encourage you, if there's any uncertainty in your life about your salvation, respond as we stand in the moment. Let's have a conversation about that. Let's deal with that. Maybe you're here this morning and you know that you are a Christian. You know that you've given your heart and life to the Lord, but you've

never publicly acknowledged Him.

[28 : 04] You've never let others know what God's done in your life. And Christ, by His example and by His commission, tells us that we ought to let others know about our private decision publicly through baptism.

If you've never done that, I encourage you to come this morning. We'll line that up, take care of that. Maybe, in fact, God's drawing you to this congregation. You've worshipped with us and you realize that this is the place that God would have you to serve alongside us.

If that be the case, I encourage you to come. If you have questions, let's talk. Let's set up a time to talk about that. Maybe you're here this morning and you do know you're a Christian, but you're like me.

You're weighed down about folks that don't know the Lord. Maybe God's laid somebody upon your heart today. Will you ask Him to just give you the words, empower you, to speak up, to make a difference in their lives?

And if God's not put anybody on your heart and mind, would you do me a favor today and would you say, Lord, will you lay somebody on my heart that might need the Lord? Will you help me to walk through the doors of obedience and grow because I've simply followed you and obeyed you?

[29 : 27] Man, what a difference we could make and pickings in our surrounding area if we'd share our faith for the Lord Jesus Christ faithfully. Lord Jesus, I love you and I thank you for the opportunity that you give us to rest in you, dear God.

I'm thankful, Lord, that even though hell is real, salvation is even more real and I'm thankful that we can rest in that today. I pray that every one of us will and if there's one struggling, or one needs to make a decision, Lord, I pray that you'll give them direction today.

The boldness to step forward as you lead, dear God, to just simply follow your will and your way.

We love you. Thank you for what you're about to do in our midst right now.

In Jesus' precious name, amen.