

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church

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Pastor's Bible Study

If God Is Good

A Bible Study Series
Based on the book
"If God Is Good" by Randy Alcorn

Part XXII

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The Two Eternal Solutions to the Problem of Evil: Heaven and Hell

Hell: Eternal Sovereign Justice Exacted upon Evildoers

☉ Hell: Eternal Sovereign Justice Exacted upon Evildoers

- If there is no Hell, there is no justice.
 - When most people speak of what a terrible notion Hell is, they talk as if it involves the suffering of innocent people. That would indeed be terribly unjust—but nowhere does the Bible suggest the innocent will spend a single moment in Hell.
 - Without Hell, justice would never overtake the unrepentant tyrants responsible for murdering millions. Perpetrators of evil throughout the ages would get away with murder—and rape, and torture, and every evil.

☉ Hell: Eternal Sovereign Justice Exacted upon Evildoers

- Even if we may acknowledge Hell as a necessary and just punishment for evildoers, however, we rarely see *ourselves* as worthy of Hell. After all, we are not Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Bundy, or Dahmer.

- God responds, “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one” ([Romans](#))

☉ **Hell: Eternal Sovereign Justice Exacted upon Evildoers**

- Guilty people can always rationalize sin. Hell exists because sin has no excuse.
- After detailing a long list of human atrocities, Os Guinness asks the painful question, “What does it say of us as human beings that the people who do these things are the same species as we are?”
- To see the face of evil, we need only look in the mirror. If we don’t see evil’s reality in our lives, it’s no surprise. Evil people typically don’t.

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- **Hell exists precisely because God has committed himself to solving the problem of evil.**
 - Hell is not evil; it’s a place where evil gets punished. Hell is not pleasant, appealing, or encouraging. But Hell is morally good, because a good God must punish evil.
 - Hell will not be a blot on the universe, but an eternal testimony to the ugliness of evil that will prompt wondrous appreciation of a good God’s magnificence.
 - That sounds like nonsense to Hell-hating moderns, but it makes perfect sense when we recognize and hate *evil* for what it is.
 - We each have our preferred ways of sinning, whether as prostitutes, porn addicts, materialists, gossips, or the self-righteous. We all are sinners who deserve Hell.

☉ **Hell: Eternal Sovereign Justice Exacted upon Evildoers**

- We hate Hell precisely because we don’t hate evil. We hate it also because we deserve it.
- We cry out for true and lasting justice, then fault God for taking evil too seriously by administering eternal punishment. We can’t have it both ways.
- Sin is evil; just punishment of sin is good. Hell is an eternal correction of and compensation for evil. It is justice.
- To fear and dread Hell is understandable, but to argue against Hell is to argue against justice.

☉ **Hell: Eternal Sovereign Justice Exacted upon Evildoers**

- **Were this our only life, for there to be justice all evil would have to be judged here and all goodness rewarded here.**
 - Christianity teaches that one's life in this fallen world will give way to an unending life, either in Heaven or Hell. *That* life, not this one, will bring perfect justice.
 - Atheists consider the world terribly unjust, for they think that only in this life can any retribution for good or evil take place. But the Bible teaches that God will exercise justice in a never-ending afterlife.
 - At the end of this fallen world, just before the inauguration of the New Heaven and New Earth, God will at last bring ongoing justice to both unbelievers and believers (see Revelation 20).

☉ **Hell: Eternal Sovereign Justice Exacted upon Evildoers**

- **Hell is the only just alternative to Heaven.**
 - Fallen angels along with humans who haven't accepted God's gift of redemption in Christ will inhabit Hell (see [2 Peter 2:4](#); [Revelation 20:12–15](#)).
 - ☉ **2 Peter 2:4 (ESV) — 4** For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;
 - ☉ **Revelation 20:12–15 (ESV) — 12** And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. **13** 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 one of them, according to what they had done. **14** Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. **15** And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

☉ **Hell: Eternal Sovereign Justice Exacted upon Evildoers**

- After Christ returns, believers will be resurrected to eternal life in Heaven while unbelievers will be resurrected to an eternal existence in Hell. Jesus said, "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice

and come out... and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” ([John 5:28–29](#)).

- God will judge the unsaved for their sins. Christ will say to those who don’t know him, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” ([Matthew 25:41](#)).

☉ JESUS AND HELL

- **In the Bible, Jesus spoke more about Hell than anyone else did.**

- Jesus referred to Hell as a real place and described it in graphic terms. He spoke of a fire that burns but doesn’t consume, an undying worm that eats away at the damned, and a lonely and foreboding darkness.

- ☉ **Matthew 10:28 (ESV) — 28** And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

☉ JESUS AND HELL

- **Matthew 13:40–42 (ESV) — 40** Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. **41** The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, **42** and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- **Mark 9:43–48 (ESV) — 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. **45** 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. **47** 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, **48** ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’

☉ JESUS AND HELL

- Christ says the unsaved “will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” ([Matthew 8:12](#)). Jesus taught that an unbridgeable chasm separates the wicked in Hell from the righteous in paradise. The wicked suffer terribly, remain conscious, retain their desires and memories, long for relief, cannot find comfort, cannot leave their torment, and have no hope (see [Luke 16:19–31](#)).
- Our Savior could not have painted a bleaker picture of Hell.

☉ JESUS AND HELL

- C. S. Lewis said, “I have met no people who fully disbelieved in Hell and also had a living and life-giving belief in Heaven.”[2] The biblical teaching on both destinations stands or falls together. If the one is real, so is the other; if the one is a myth, so is the other. The best reason for believing in Hell is that Jesus said it exists.
- It isn’t just what Jesus said about Hell that matters. It is the fact that it was he who said it.
- “There seems to be a kind of conspiracy,” wrote Dorothy Sayers, “to forget, or to conceal, where the doctrine of hell comes from. The doctrine of hell is not ‘mediaeval priestcraft’ for frightening people into giving money to the church: it is Christ’s deliberate judgment on sin.... We cannot repudiate hell without altogether repudiating Christ.”

◎ JESUS AND HELL

- C. S. Lewis said of Hell, “There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of Our Lord’s own words; it has always been held by Christendom; and it has the support of reason.”[5]
- We cannot make Hell go away simply because the thought of it makes us uncomfortable. If I were as holy as God, if I knew a fraction of what he knows, I would realize Hell is just and right. We should weep over Hell, but not deny it.
- If there isn’t an eternal Hell, Jesus made a terrible mistake in affirming there is. And if we cannot trust Jesus in his teaching about Hell, why should we trust anything he said, including his offer of salvation?

◎ JESUS AND HELL

- We may pride ourselves in thinking we are too loving to believe in Hell. But in saying this, we blaspheme, for we claim to be more loving than Jesus—more loving than the One who with outrageous love took upon himself the full penalty for our sin.
- Who are we to think we are better than Jesus?
- Or that when it comes to Hell, or anything else, we know better than he does?

◎ JESUS AND HELL

- **God determined he would rather endure the torment of the Cross on our behalf than live in Heaven without us.**
- Apart from Christ, we would all spend eternity in Hell. But God so much wants us not to go to Hell that he paid a horrible price on the cross so we wouldn’t have to.

- This can be distorted into self-congratulation: if God paid such a great price for us, we must be extremely valuable.
- A better perspective is that if God had to pay such a great price for us, it emphasizes both the extent of his love *and* the extent of our evil.

◎ JESUS AND HELL

- Jesus asks a haunting question in [Mark 8:36–37](#): “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”
- The price has been paid, but we can’t benefit from forgiveness unless we choose to receive it. A convicted criminal may be offered a pardon, but if he rejects it, he remains condemned.

◎ JESUS AND HELL

- **By denying Hell’s reality, we lower the stakes of redemption and minimize Christ’s work on the cross.**
 - If Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection didn’t deliver us from a real and eternal Hell, then his work on the cross is less heroic, less potent, less consequential, and less deserving of our worship and praise.
 - Theologian William Shedd put it this way: “The doctrine of Christ’s vicarious atonement logically stands or falls with that of eternal punishment.”

◎ ANNIHILATION

- **The Bible teaches Hell is a place of eternal punishment, not annihilation.**
 - Jesus said, “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” ([Matthew 25:46](#)). Here in the same sentence, Christ uses the word “eternal” (*aionos*) to describe the duration of both Heaven and Hell.
 - Thus, according to our Lord, if some will consciously experience Heaven forever, then some must consciously experience Hell forever.

◎ ANNIHILATION

- [Revelation 20:10](#) says not only that Satan, but also the beast and the false prophet, “will be tormented *for ever and ever*.” [Revelation 19:20](#) shows the beast and false prophet are humans, put in Hell a thousand years earlier. Hence, we at least know that Hell for humans *cannot* mean immediate annihilation at death.
- The most graphic New Testament statement of the eternal suffering of the unrepentant says simply, “The smoke of their torment goes up *for ever and ever*, and they have no

rest, day or night” ([Revelation 14:11](#)). It’s hard to imagine a more emphatic affirmation of eternal punishment.

⦿ **ANNIHILATION**

- If we are going to discard the doctrine of eternal punishment because it feels profoundly unpleasant to us, then it seems fair to ask what other biblical teachings we will also reject, because they too don’t square with what we feel.
- And if we do this, are we not replacing the authority of Scripture with the authority of our feelings, or our limited understanding?

⦿ **ANNIHILATION**

- **Annihilation would not satisfy God’s justice and solve the problem of evil.**
 - Do you believe that Stalin, Pol Pot, and Idi Amin got their just punishment in this life? Do you think the life imprisonment of Charles Manson—in which he receives food, clothes, reading material, television privileges, and protection from other inmates—supplies full justice for his arrogant, unrepentant slaughter of innocent human beings?
 - Would eternal nonexistence be a just punishment for such men? In what sense does an annihilated person, who by definition experiences nothing, experience any punishment at all?

⦿ **ANNIHILATION**

- Can you imagine God saying to Hitler, Stalin, and Mao at the final judgment, “For all your evil rebellion against me and your unspeakable crimes against humanity, your punishment is to no longer be conscious”? The “pain” of nonexistence is no pain at all. To cease to exist is to not be held accountable for sin. How could God satisfy his justice if he responded to despicable sins against himself and humanity by merely flicking a switch into nothingness?
- Annihilation is no solution to the injustice of evil and suffering. If it were true, annihilation might itself raise a serious moral problem, for it suggests that our sins are not so grievous and the consequences for committing them are painless, or at worst exist only for a limited time.

⦿ **ANNIHILATION**

- If, as the Bible teaches, Christ’s redemptive work is so magnificent that it delivers us from an eternal Hell, then it should elicit maximum worship from us.

- But if it delivers us only from nonexistence—which is exactly the end atheists, naturalists, and materialists believe in—then we may feel grateful to God for what we are rescued to, Heaven, but not so grateful for what he rescued us from, mere nonexistence.

◎ ANNIHILATION

- Although the doctrine of annihilation continues to gain ground among believers, Christians must realize that embracing this doctrine minimizes, or worse, eliminates altogether the horrors of Hell.
- This doctrine in its most popular form merely confirms what most unbelievers already think, that their lives will end at death, and therefore there's nothing to be concerned about.
- In contrast, the Bible speaks of an eternal Hell as something that should motivate unbelievers to turn to God, and motivate believers to share the gospel with urgency.
 - Been given this message to tell ya
Don't let it be said too late
Ready or not he is coming
Decision is yours lost or found
There's no where to hide
 - (Chorus)
No hiding place down here there's no hiding place
No hiding place down here there's no hiding place
 - It's getting late in the evening
Looks like the sun is almost down
Where will you run when the world's on fire
I'm tellin you no there's no escape
 - There's no where to hide...
Don't try to hide...
Hey where you gonna run sinner man
You may run to the mountains
And the mountains will say