

Thursology 101:
Hell—Dealing With the Philosophical Problems (The Judgments-Pt 5)
(Thursology Live! 7/6/2023)

--The profound implications of having the freedom to make moral choices:

--Implication #1: Even with an all-good and all-powerful God...human
_____...if it's _____...creates the possibility for _____

--What the theological traditions that say God is **NOT** the cause of Evil believe: God _____ for the possibility of evil...by granting humans the power to make genuine moral _____...and giving them the _____ to rebel against His will.

Christians believe that an evil power has made himself the Prince of this World. And that raises problems. Is this state of affairs in accordance with God's will or not? If it is, He is a strange God, you will say, and if it is not, how can anything happen contrary to the will of a being with absolute power?

But anyone who has been in authority knows how a thing can be in accordance with your will in one way, and not in another. It may be quite sensible for a mother to say to the children, "I'm not going to make you tidy up the school room every night. You've got to learn how to keep it tidy on your own." Then she goes up and finds the teddy bear and the ink and the French Grammar all lying on the floor. On the one hand, this is against her will. But on the other, it is her will that has left the children free to be untidy. And it is the same way in the Universe. (*Mere Christianity*)

--Implication #2: The free _____ that God created...used their freedom to _____ Him...and tried to become their own _____

The moment you have a self at all, there is a possibility of putting yourself first—wanting to be the center—wanting to be God, in fact. That was the sin of Satan; and that was the sin he taught the human race...What Satan put into the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they could "be like God"—could set up on their own—as if they had created themselves—could be their own masters—invent some sort of happiness for themselves outside of God, apart from God. (*Mere Christianity*)

--Implication #3: The only _____ joy for beings who were created in God's image...is to freely _____ to surrender to _____ will!!!

God created beings with free will. That means creatures that can go either wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature that was free, but had no possibility of going wrong. I cannot. If a thing is free to be good, it is also free to be bad. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata—of creatures that worked like machines—would not be worth creating. The happiness that God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him in an ecstasy of love and delight compared with which the most rapturous love between a man and a woman on this earth is mere milk and water. And for that, they must be free. (*Mere Christianity*)

Out of the hopeless attempt to invent happiness apart from God has come nearly all that we call human history—poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery—the long terrible story of humanity trying to find something other than God which will make them happy.

The reason why it can never succeed is this. God made us—invented us—like someone invents an engine. A car is made to run on gasoline, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is no good asking God to make us happy in our own way, without bothering about following Him. God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.

--**Key Concept #1**: God designed humans to run on _____...in a freely-chosen _____ relationship with Him

--**Key Concept #2**: Thus...it is _____...even for God...to give us happiness apart from _____...there is no such _____!!!

--**The complaints...and the resolutions:**

--**Major complaint #1**: The doctrine is _____!!!

The doctrine of Hell is one of the chief grounds on which Christianity is attacked as barbarous and the goodness of God is impugned. We are told that it is a detestable doctrine—and indeed, I too detest it from the bottom of my heart.

There is no doctrine that I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture, and, especially, of Our Lord's own words. It has always been held by Christendom, and it has the support of reason...I am not going to try to prove the doctrine tolerable. Let us make no mistake, it is not tolerable. (*The Problem of Pain*)

--**An unsettled tension**: Hell is _____...and...everything about it...even the fact that it _____...is _____!!!

--**Major complaint #2**: The doctrine is _____!!!

--**Eternity Truth #1**: God _____ for everyone to have eternal life

--**II Pet 3:9**: The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

--**Eternity Truth #2**: God has provided the _____ for everyone to have eternal life

--**John 12:32**: And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

--**Key Concept**: Not all people will be saved...but...more people will _____ God...and _____ to Him...than _____ know of...in our finite understanding!!!

Here is another thing that used to puzzle me. Is it not frightfully unfair that this new life should be confined to people who have heard of Christ and been able to believe in Him? But the truth is, God has not told us what His arrangements are for the other people. We do know that no one can be saved except through Christ; we do not know that only those who know Him can be saved through Him. But in the meantime, if you are worried about the people outside, the most unreasonable thing you can do is to remain outside yourself. (*Mere Christianity*)

--What we know for sure: Jesus is the Perfect _____...the Perfect _____...and He's perfectly _____!!!

--Major Complaint #3: Endless _____ is out of proportion to the " _____ " committed...even by the _____!!!

--A correction of the wrong assumptions of Complaint #3: Those who think of Hell as an endless _____ chamber with unspeakable horrors that God _____ to inflict pain and suffering on rebellious humans...have completely misunderstood eternal punishment...because the _____ eternal punishment will be the _____-imposed banishment from the very Presence of the One Who _____...Life...and Hope...and Joy...and Happiness!!!

--A perineal question: How can you reconcile God's _____...and the existence of _____ ???

--Key Concept #1: No one in Hell will be a _____...and all separation from God happens as a result of intentional _____...made by beings who God _____ so much...that He _____ for them!!!

--Key Concept #2: Hell is not _____ choice...it's a _____ choice... despite all that God has done to _____ it!!!

Christianity asserts that every individual human is going to live forever, and this must be either true or false. Now there are a good many things which would not be worth bothering about if I were going to live only seventy years, but which I had better bother about very seriously if I am going to live forever. Perhaps my bad temper or my jealousy are gradually getting worse—so gradually that the increase in seventy years will not be very noticeable. But it might be absolute hell in a million years: In fact, if Christianity is true, Hell is the precisely correct technical term for what it would be. (MC)

Even in this life we can see the kind of soul disintegration that self-centeredness creates. We know how selfishness and self-absorption lead to bitterness, envy, anxiety, and the mental denials and distortions that accompany them. Now ask the question: "What if when we die, we don't end, but spiritually our life extends on into eternity?" Hell, then, is the trajectory of a soul, living in a self-absorbed, self-centered life, going on and on, forever." (Timothy Keller: *The Reason for God*)

Our Lord spoke of Hell as a sentence in the law-court sense. But He also said that the judgment consists in the very fact that humans prefer darkness to light. Indeed, in the long run, these two things mean the same thing. In other words, it is accurate to think of the bad man's punishment not as a sentence imposed on him, but as the mere fact of being what he is. The characteristic of lost souls is their rejection of everything that is not simply themselves. (CS Lewis: *The Problem of Pain*)

In short, Hell is simply one's freely chosen identity apart from God on a trajectory into infinity. (*The Reason for God*)

--Key Concept #3: _____ faith isn't just about _____ truth...it's also about _____ our will!!!

When humans offer back their will in delighted obedience to their Creator, there, most undoubtedly, is Heaven. The problem in this fallen world is how to recover this self-surrender, because we are not merely imperfect beings who must be improved. Rather, we are rebels who must lay down our arms. And to render back to God, the will that we have so long claimed for our own, is a grievous pain...To surrender a self-will, inflamed with years of usurpation, is a kind of death. (*The Problem of Pain*)

--**Key Concept #4:** It's a myth to believe that...after death...when the prospect of being separated eternally from God becomes _____...humans will want to _____ their mind and _____ to the Truth!!!

Modern people inevitably think that Hell works like this: God gives us time, but if we haven't made the right choices by the end of our lives, He casts our souls into Hell for eternity. As the poor souls fall through space, they cry out for mercy, but God says, "Too late!" You had your chance! Now you will suffer!" This caricature misunderstands the very nature of evil. The Biblical picture is that sin separates us from the presence of God, which is the source of all joy, and indeed, of all love, wisdom, or good things of any sort. Since we were originally created for God's immediate presence, only before His face will we thrive, flourish, and achieve our highest potential. If we were to lose His presence totally, that would be Hell." (*The Reason for God*)

The people in Hell are miserable. But here's why. We see them raging, like unchecked flames, in their pride, their self-pity, their certainty that everyone else is wrong, that everyone else is an idiot! They are utterly, finally locked in a prison of their own self-centeredness, and their pride progressively expands into a bigger and bigger mushroom cloud. And this soul disintegration continues forever, as they eternally blame everyone but themselves.

This is why it is a travesty to picture God casting people into a pit who are crying, "I'm sorry! Please let me out!" People in Hell would rather have their "freedom," as they define it, than salvation. Their delusion is that, if they glorified God, they would somehow lose their power and freedom. But in a supreme and tragic irony, their choice has ruined their potential for greatness. Hell is, as Lewis says, "The greatest monument to human freedom!" (*The Reason for God*)

--**Key Concept #5:** God paid the _____ price for our restoration...but He will not _____ or _____ anyone into a compulsory Heaven!!!

If the happiness of a creature lies in self-surrender, no one can make that surrender but them, and they may refuse. I would pay any price to be able say truthfully, "All will be saved." But my reason retorts, "Without their will, or with it?" If I say, "Without their will," I immediately perceive a contradiction. How can the supreme voluntary act of self-surrender be involuntary? If I say, "With their will," my reason replies, "What if they will not give in?"...The problem is not that of a God Who consigns some of His creatures to final ruin. That is a problem for Islam. But Christianity, always true to the complexity of the real, presents a God so full of mercy that He becomes human and dies by torture to avert that final ruin from His creatures, and Who yet, where that heroic remedy fails, seems unwilling, or even unable, to arrest that ruin by a mere act of power. (*The Problem of Pain*)

I said glibly a moment ago that I would pay "any price" to remove the doctrine of Hell. I lied. I could not pay one-thousandth part of the price that God has already paid to remove the fact of Hell. And here is the real problem: so much mercy, and yet, there is Hell. (*The Problem of Pain*)

--**Key Concept #6:** In one very real sense...the those who ultimately choose rebellion..._____ their battle against God...and in their self-proclaimed eternal "_____" of having their own way...they lose _____!!!

Some object that the ultimate loss of even and single soul means the defeat of God's omnipotence. And so it does. In creating beings with free will, God from the outset submitted to the possibility of such defeat. But what you call "defeat," I call "miracle." For to make things which are not Itself, and thus to become capable of being resisted by Its own handiwork, is the most astonishing and unimaginable of all the feats attributed to God. I believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end. In other words, the doors of Hell are locked on the inside. I do not mean that they lost may not wish to come out of Hell, in the vague fashion that an envious man "wishes" to be happy. But they certainly do not will even the first preliminary stages of self-abandonment through which alone the soul can reach Heaven. Tragically, they "enjoy" forever the horrible freedom they have demanded, and are therefore self-enslaved.

In the long run, the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of Hell is itself a question: "What are you asking God to do?" To wipe out their past sins and, at all cost, give them a fresh start, smoothing over every difficulty and offering every miraculous help? But He has done exactly that, on Calvary. To forgive them? They will not be forgiven. To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that is what He does. (*Problem of Pain*)

"In the end...there will only be two kinds of people: Those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'Thy will be done.'" (*Mere Christianity*)

--A question: Which kind of person are you becoming? Are you becoming the person who says to God, "Thy will be done!"? Or...are you becoming the person to whom God will say, "Thy will be done!"?

Thursology 100:

Hell: Misunderstandings & Problematic Attitudes (The Judgments-Pt 4)

(Thursology Live! 6/1/23)

--Introduction:

--Matt 25:41, 46: "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire... These will go away into eternal punishment..."

--Rev 20:11, 12, 15: Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled...and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds...And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

--Some Pervasive Misunderstandings...and Problematic Attitudes about Eternal Punishment:

--A historical fact: Errors related to eternal punishment ABOUND...both in the CHURCH...and in the WORLD

--Challenge #1: To affirm God's desire to SAVE everyone...without NEGATING the clear biblical truth of the eternal CONSEQUENCES of unbelief

--Eternity Truth #1: God DESIRES for everyone to have eternal life

--II Pet 3:9: The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

--Eternity Truth #2: God has provided the WAY for everyone to have eternal life

--John 12:32: And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

--Eternity Truth #3: MOST people will NOT have eternal life

--Matt 7:13-14: Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

--Eternity Truth #4: Eternal punishment will last FOREVER

--Mark 9:47-48: "And if your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell, where their worm does not DIE, and the fire is not QUENCHED."

--II Thess 1:7-9: "...the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of ETERNAL destruction, away from the presence of the Lord..."

--What we learn from this verse:

1. Hell is ETERNAL
2. Hell IS being AWAY from the Lord

--A perfect contrast to the biblical doctrine of Heaven: Eternal Paradise IS being...WITH the Lord

--Phil 1:20-23: "...according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better..."

--Eternity Truth #5: The **SOULS** of unbelievers aren't **UNMADE** when they die
--The premise of "Annihilation Theology": When a person dies...if they don't go to Heaven...then they simply **CEASE** to **EXIST**

--Rev 20:10: And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

--Challenge #2: To affirm the clear biblical teachings about the reality of the coming **JUDGMENT**...without being **JUDGMENTAL**

--A truth about Hell that's very sobering: The most **MERCIFUL** Preacher of all time...preached about **HELL**...repeatedly

--Matt 5:29-30: If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

--Matt 10:28: Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

--Four HUGE warnings from Scripture:

--Warning #1: Judgment **BEGINS** in the **HOUSEHOLD** of God

--Warning #2: When John the Baptist and Jesus spoke about Hell...the **VAST** majority of the time...they were speaking to **RELIGIOUS** people!!!

--John the Baptist:

--Matt 3:7, 10, 11, 12: But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?...The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire...but He who is coming after me is mightier than I...and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

--Jesus:

--Matt 23:15: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."

--Matt. 23:29, 33: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites... You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?"

--A great biblical irony: Most **RELIGIOUS** people think of Hell as a place for **NON**-religious people

--**Warning #3:** Lots of religious people who are absolutely **CONVINCED** they're headed for Eternal Life...are completely **DECEIVED!!!**

--Matt 7:21-23: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

--**Warning #4:** Jesus' message was **SCATHING** to those who tried to determine who's "**IN**" and...who's "**OUT**"

--Matt 7:1-3: Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

--**Two pictures of judgment:**

--**The Samaritans:**

--Luke 9:51-54: When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

--Luke 9:54-56: When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

--**An absolutely unwavering mission:** While it's all too easy for believers to focus on the wicked getting their **JUST** punishment...Jesus is **ALWAYS** focused on their **SALVATION!!!**

--**Sodom:**

--Gen 18:22-26: "...Abraham was still standing before the Lord. And Abraham came near and said, 'Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it?' Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" So the Lord said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account."