

Hell Fire

by E.A. Johnston

Duration: 7:30

Transcript

When I was a little boy, a house caught fire on the street where we lived, and that house burned to the ground. I used to walk by that house on the way to school each day and look at the twisted, charred walls and heaps of black ash that were frightening to look at, and the smell of burned things stayed in the air of that neighborhood for months on end, until that house was finally bulldozed and taken to the trash heap. I can't remember the last time I heard a sermon preached on hell.

I've been to dozens of churches over the last 30 years or so and have listened to hundreds of messages by pastors eager to please their congregations, but I have never heard in person a sermon on hell. Have you? Why is that? Why don't preachers use one of the most effective tools to awaken lost sinners, which is the doctrine of eternal punishment and hell? I'll tell you why, friends, because most pastors don't want to awaken anybody, because if they did, they wouldn't know what to do. It'd be too disturbing to the congregation of nice church folk to have somebody sitting next to them suddenly cry out as they see hell and its torments open before them, and the sanctuary become an abacum where people were shrieking and crying out like the hearers under Jonathan Edwards who preached on hell's punishment.

In his sermon, sinners in the hands of an angry God that he preached in Enfield, Connecticut in 1741, and as an eyewitness recorded, ye minister had to desist from preaching because of all the shrieks and cries throughout the house. You start preaching on hell, brother pastor, and you'll have a fight on your hands because you have to preach against sin. You had to preach up man's duty of repentance.

You had to preach about a God who must punish sin, and if you do that, why, some of the good deacons will come at you. I'll tell you what, friends, nobody wants to preach a disturbing message. Why trouble your church? Why upset the apple cart if you don't have to when you can get by with just preaching on more pleasant subjects? I remember Vance Havner saying, when I pastored a country church, a farmer didn't like the sermons I preached on hell.

He said, preach about the meek and lowly Jesus. I said, that's where I got my information about hell, and that's what we're going to look at tonight, friends, what Jesus has to say about hell. The title of my message this evening, friends, is Hellfire, and my text can be found in Mark's gospel in chapter 9. You can turn in your Bibles.

There now, friends, we will be in verses 43 to 47. Listen to what Jesus has to say about hellfire, and if thy hand offend thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter into life maimed than having two hands to go into

hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where the worm doth not, and the fire is not quenched.

And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter halt into life than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where the worm doth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out.

It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Jesus states several things here about hell. He says it's a fire that is never put out.

It's a burning region all the time, engulfed in flames that never ever shall be quenched. They will burn for all eternity, unlike that house fire that did all the damage, but finally was put out by several fire trucks and a score of firefighters who worked like trojans to put that fire out. But Jesus says you'd be better off chopping off your offending hand or foot and being maimed here in life than tortured in hell forever.

That's how radical his sermon on hell is, friend. It's disturbing to think of taking an axe and mutilating yourself rather than going on to hell to suffer there indefinitely. It's disturbing to think about plucking your eyeballs right out of their sockets.

But Jesus says you'd be better off if you did and could stay out of that place that's far worse than that, which is hell fire. Then Jesus talks about a worm where the worm doth not. When you die and your body is laid in the grave, the worms come after you and eat away on your corpse.

But they stop when all that's left is bones, but not in hell. You'll be eaten by worms in hell that will crawl all over you. They will feed on your charred, twisted flesh and gnaw away on you forever.

Jesus has described hell as a place of outer darkness. It's so dark you can't see your hand in front of your face. He calls it a bottomless pit, a place of torment where there's wailing and gnashing of teeth, the shrieks and incessant wailing that's going on in hell right now.

If you could listen to it, it's so loud and disturbing it would give you nightmares tonight to hear the collective suffering of the damned who line chains in a burgeoning, burning region of hell fire. You don't want to go to hell, friend. Once you shut up in that prison, there's no escape.

It's dark. It's crowded with the worst elements of every society from each generation since Adam. They're locked up and they're screaming and hollering and cursing God and spewing out all kinds of blasphemy.

There's a raining spirit of rage and hate in hell. You better be sure you don't end up in hell, friend. You may not like me now because of this message, but you'd surely hate me if I failed to warn you and you were cast into that smoking pit of darkness and flames and chained up in there to suffer forever and ever.

Repent before it's too late. Let us pray.

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