

The Danger of Perishing

John 3:16

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16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not **perish** but have everlasting life.

Introduction

More than 150,000 people die every day. That's 4.5 million each month, or 54 million a year, or 810 million since planes flew into the twin towers in New York city on Sept 11 2001. Add to that the number of dead throughout human history—it's a staggering figure. We are emotionally upset when we see a tragic event like 911 where over 3000 die.... but that is just a drop in the bucket of the millions that enter into eternity year after year after year after year.

Tragically, many of those people died without knowing Christ.

What fate awaits them? Do they really *Rest In Peace*, or do they find a different reality beyond the grave?

The real conflict over the biblical doctrine of hell is essentially an issue of authority. What the Bible affirms about hell forces you to believe or disbelieve, to accept or reject. It's back to the same question that confronts everyone: Do you believe the Bible, or do you not? At the end of the day, the answer determines the fate of every person who ever lived.

The Bible is the only authority source that tells the truth about death, hell, and eternity. The Bible has the final word on that subject—and on *every* subject—because it is a revealed book. It has come from God, from the spiritual realm, and has the answers about where all of us will spend eternity one day.

So if you say you believe the Bible, then you would have to believe in Hell, That souls without Christ are Perishing. For to deny or to try to explain away this reality is to deny the very plain teaching of Scripture

Jonathan Edwards wrote of hell:

This doctrine is indeed awful and dreadful. It is dreadful to think of it, but yet tis what God the eternal God who made us and who has us soul and body in his hands has abundantly declared unto us, so that so sure as God is true there will absolutely be no end to the misery of hell. (“Concerning the Endless Punishment of those who die Impenitent”).

Spurgeon said from his pulpit:

Until we know the power of divine grace, we read in the Bible concerning eternal punishment, and we think it is too heavy and too hard, and we are apt to kick against it, and find out some heretic or other who teaches us another doctrine; but when the soul is really quickened by divine grace, and made to feel the weight of sin, it thinks the bottomless pit none too deep, and the punishment of hell none too severe for sin such as it has

committed. (“Confession of Sin Illustrated by the Cases of Dr. Pritchard and Constance Kent”)

John MacArthur had this to say about *preaching* on the subject of hell:

This truth of eternal punishment to come on those who do not believe the gospel savingly is a painful message to preach. I can give you testimony to that. It is not only a painful message to preach, it is a painful message to hear. It is a painful message to process. It is a painful truth to apply, but it is biblical. (“A Testimony of One Surprised to Be in Hell,” Part 1: 42-212)

One factor contributing to the difficulty of pondering hell is that we all probably know someone especially resistant to the gospel—a parent, child, neighbor, or friend—who at the same time lives an outwardly moral life, exhibits kindness, engages in acts of philanthropy, gives to charity, someone who is the model of the ideal citizen. Imagining *that* person as the object of God’s eternal wrath makes hell seem even more unbearable.

Lesson

I. The Reality of the Perishing

Far from legend, myth, metaphor, or allegory, the Bible presents hell as **a *real place*** where wicked people suffer the wrath of God. Consider these vivid portraits of hell from three different New Testament writers:

Then the King will say to those on His left, “Depart from me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.” . . . These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (**Matthew 25:41, 46**)

If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. (**Mark 9:43**)

And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (**Revelation 20:15**)

Scripture presents a terrifyingly clear case for a literal hell. It’s a place where God punishes unbelievers for all eternity.

Contrary to what some so-called evangelicals are teaching, hell is not a state of mind or a hard life on this earth. Your state of mind can change; your circumstances can improve. Hell never changes, never improves.

Hell is not chastisement; it’s everlasting, insufferable *punishment* at the hands of an angry God.

Jesus and Hell

Though every New Testament author acknowledges the doctrine of hell, **Jesus has the most to say about it.**

The existence of hell wasn’t something He questioned, debated, or defended, and He certainly didn’t apologize for it.

He assumed the reality of hell just as much as He did the resurrection (**John 5:28-29**).

Jesus viewed hell as a real place, a *certainty*, and so should you. In fact, He’s the *model* on how you should think about hell.

When Jesus talked about hell, His purpose was always to warn, not to raise questions or plant doubts.

Consider the graphic words He used to portray hell—they clearly aren't meant to provide comfort, but to frighten.

According to Jesus,

hell is a place of outer darkness (Matthew 22:13)
 where there is **weeping and gnashing of teeth** (Matthew 8:12).
 Hell is a **fiery furnace** (Matthew 13:42, 50)
 of **unquenchable fires** (Mark 9:48-49).
 Hell is a **place of spiritual and bodily destruction** (Matthew 10:28) where **there are endless torments** (Luke 16:23-24).

Hell is most certainly a place, a horrific place where agonizing conditions exist.

John Calvin, commenting on those descriptions, wrote, "By such expressions, the Holy Spirit certainly intended to confound all our senses with dread."

Charles Spurgeon once advised fellow-preachers,
 "Shun all views of future punishment that would make it appear less terrible."

Jonathan Edwards understood the necessity of preaching on Hell

In is application of the sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.

"The Use may be of Awakening to unconverted Persons in this Congregation. This that you have heard is the Case of every one of you that are out of Christ. That World of Misery, that Lake of

burning Brimstone is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful Pit of the glowing Flames of the Wrath of God; there is Hell's wide gaping Mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, not any Thing to take hold of: there is nothing between you and Hell but the Air; 'tis only the Power and meer Pleasure of God that holds you up.

You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of Hell, but don't see the Hand of God in it, but look at other Things, as the good State of your bodily Constitution, your Care of your own Life, and the Means you use for your own Preservation. But indeed these Things are nothing; if God should withdraw his Hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling, than the thin Air to hold up a Person that is suspended in it.

Your Wickedness makes you as it were heavy as Lead, and to tend downwards with great Weight and Pressure towards Hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend plunge into the bottomless Gulf, and your healthy Constitution, and your own Care and Prudence, and best Contrivance, and all your Righteousness, would have no more Influence to uphold you and keep you out of Hell, than a Spider's Web would have to stop a falling Rock. Were it not that so is the sovereign Pleasure of God, the Earth would not bear you one Moment; for you are a Burden to it;

The God that holds you over the Pit of Hell, much as one holds a Spider, or some loathsome Insect, over the Fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his Wrath towards you burns like Fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the Fire; he is of purer Eyes than to bear to have you in his

Sight; you are ten thousand Times so abominable in his Eyes as the most hateful venomous Serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn Rebel did his Prince: and yet 'tis nothing but his Hand that holds you from falling into the Fire every Moment: 'Tis to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to Hell the last Night; that you was surer'd to awake again in this World, after you closed your Eyes to sleep: and there is no other Reason to be given why you have not dropped into Hell since you arose in the Morning, but that God's Hand has held you up: There is no other reason to be given why you haven't gone to Hell since you have sat here in the House of God, provoking his pure Eyes by your sinful wicked Manner of attending his solemn Worship: Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a Reason why you don't this very Moment drop down into Hell.

O Sinner! Consider the fearful Danger you are in: 'Tis a great Furnace of Wrath, a wide and bottomless Pit, full of the Fire of Wrath, that you are held over in the Hand of that God, whose Wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the Damned in Hell: You hang by a slender Thread, with the Flames of divine Wrath flashing about it, and ready every Moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no Interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the Flames of Wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one Moment.

The Bow of God's Wrath is bent, and the Arrow made ready on the String, and Justice bends the Arrow at your Heart, and strains the Bow, and it is nothing but the meer Pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any Promise or Obligation at all, that keeps the Arrow one Moment from being made drunk with your Blood."

The reaction of the congregation was astounding.

Reverend Stephen Williams was minister at Longmeadow Mass. He recorded the reaction in detail later that night in his diary. This is Pastor Williams' description of the congregation's reaction at Enfield to Edwards' sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,"

"Before the sermon was done there was a great moaning and crying out throughout the whole house, "What shall I do to be saved?! Oh, I am going to Hell! Oh, what shall I do for Christ?!" etc. etc. So that the minister was obliged to desist. Shrieks and cries were piercing and amazing. After some time of waiting, the congregation were still so that a prayer was made, and after that we descended from the pulpit and discoursed with the people, some in one place and some in another, and--amazing and astonishing!--the power of God was seen, and several souls were hopefully wrought upon that night, and oh, the pleasantness of their countenances that received comfort."

John 3:16

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not **perish** but have everlasting life.

I am drawn to the awful word and reality of Perishing
What exactly is this and what does it mean .

Original Word: ἀπόλλυμι

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: apollumi

Phonetic Spelling: (ap-ol'-loo-mee)

Short Definition: I destroy, lose, am perishing

Definition: (a) I kill, destroy, (b) I lose, mid: I am perishing (the resultant death being viewed as certain).

622 *apóllymi* (from **575** /*apó*, "away from," which intensifies *ollymi*, "to destroy") – properly, fully destroy, cutting off entirely (note the force of the prefix, **575** /*apó*).

622 /*apóllymi* ("violently/completely perish") implies *permanent* (absolute) destruction, i.e. to cancel out (remove); "to die, with the implication of ruin and *destruction*" (*L & N*, 1, 23.106); cause to be *lost* (utterly perish) by experiencing a miserable end.

Occurs some 92 times in the NT

John 10:28

I give them eternal life, and they will **never perish**, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

John 6:39

And this is the will of him who sent me, that **I should lose nothing** of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

John 10:10

The thief comes only to steal and kill and **destroy**. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Romans 2:12

For all who have sinned without the law will also **perish** without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.

I Cor 1;18

For the word of the cross is folly to those who **are perishing**, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

I Cor 15:18

...**17**And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. **18**Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ **have perished**.

2 Cor 2:15

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who **are perishing**,

2 Cor 4:3

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who **are perishing**.

2 Thess 2:10

9The coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by the working of Satan, with every kind of power, sign, and false wonder,

10and with every wicked deception directed against those who **are perishing.**

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any **should perish.** but that all should reach repentance.

What Is Perishing?

1. Perishing means being under the wrath of God.

John 3:18, "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already."

The issue is not merely dying, but being judged by God.

John 3:36 is the most sobering of all in this gospel:

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

To perish means that we remain under the wrath of God because we will not trust Christ. And that is a terrifying place to be.

2. Perishing Means Fiery Torment

In one of John's other books, the **Revelation (14:10)**, he describes the one who is perishing like this:

He will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

Perishing is not, as some say, going out of existence. It is staying in existence and suffering in the fiery torments of hell.

3. Perishing Means Separation from the Glory of God

2 Th 1:7–10

when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

- 8** in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,
10 when He comes, in that Day

These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

Here in this world God reveals himself in a thousand ways every day, if we would see. In hell the perishing will be cut off from all his work—except the work of wrath.

4. Perishing is Everlasting and Irreversible

Punishment in hell is defined by the word *aionios*, which is the word eternal or everlasting. There are people who would like to redefine that word *aionios* and say, "Well, it doesn't really mean forever." But if you do that with hell, you've just done it with heaven, because the same word is used to describe both. If there is not an everlasting hell, then there is not an everlasting heaven. And I'll go one beyond that. The same word is used to describe God. And so if there is not an everlasting hell, then there is not an everlasting heaven, nor is there an everlasting God. It is clear that God is eternal; and, therefore, that heaven is eternal, and so is hell. (John MacArthur, "A Testimony of One Surprised to Be in Hell, Part 2")

Augustine put it simply more than 1,500 years ago: "To say that life eternal shall be endless, [but that] punishment eternal shall come to an end is the height of absurdity."

Have you ever been *stuck* somewhere in a situation beyond your control—an airplane, an elevator, a jail cell? In times like those we usually have a reasonable hope of rescue or escape.

Remember the mine that collapsed last year in Chile? Thirty-three miners were trapped thousands of feet below ground. It took sixty-nine days, but all of them were rescued from their underground tomb.

We love stories like that—against unthinkable odds, finding a surprise exit route or the execution of a successful rescue in the eleventh hour. But that’s not possible when it comes to hell. God built the prison of hell, and there are no doors or windows. God is hell’s jailer, and there is no key. There are no escape routes, and no one is powerful enough to rescue anyone out of His hand.

That’s why Jesus said, “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” ([Matthew 10:28](#)).

Hell offers no means of escape, rescue, or relief—no way out, ever. The occupants of hell are sealed in their damnation ([Revelation 22:11](#)). Friends and family *can’t* help; God *won’t* help. The time for mercy has passed.

As one who knows exactly what awaits the wicked, Jesus told the story of a rich man who was tormented in hell:

And the rich man cried out and said, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.”

But Abraham said, “Son, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be

able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.” (Luke 16:24-26)

Dante seemed to understand that message. His imaginary inscription over hell’s entrance, “Abandon hope, all ye who enter here,” rightly pictured hell as a place where mercy and hope are left at the door. But some reject that view, believing against Scripture’s testimony that God gives people a second chance. Some still say there’s a postmortem opportunity to believe the gospel, repent, and be saved. That may sound appealing (especially to sinners), but it doesn’t come from the Bible. Others hold to a form of universalism that holds out the false hope that hell is not the *final* destination for sinners. In their view, God’s redeeming work doesn’t stop at death. God will eventually reconcile every creature to Himself—yes, even those in hell. As British evangelist John Blanchard put it, All the ways to hell are one-way streets. The idea that those who go there will eventually be released and join the rest of humanity in heaven has not a shred of biblical evidence to support it.

Children are sometimes told fictional adventure stories with the delightful ending: “And they all lived happily ever after.” We call that kind of story a fairy tale. Universalism is exactly that. (John Blanchard, “Whatever Happened to Hell?”)
(gty. blog)

II. The Reasons of the Perishing

YOU have offended God.
You have rejected His Law
You have spurned his Love
You have mocked His mercy
You have grieved His Grace
You have taken His name in vain
You have Worshiped other gods
You have Denied His Lordship
You have not believe His Word
You have rejected His Son
You have Blasphemed His Name
You have sinned repeatedly in thought and deed

The simplest way to answer this is to quote the apostle Paul in **Romans 3:23**, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
And **Romans 6:23**, "The wages of sin is death," that is, perishing.

We have all sinned. And sin deserves perishing.
But there is a less simple, but utterly crucial and biblical way to go a step deeper. Why is sin so serious as to deserve perishing? The answer is that God is the most worthy person in the universe.
He is absolute Holiness, Righteousness and Perfection

His greatness and his value are infinite. All things are measured by him. He is the beginning and the ending of

all things. Every person depends on him for everything. We owe him perfect trust and allegiance and love and worship and honor and respect and obedience, because he made us and owns us and sustains us.

Therefore rejecting him, and distrusting him, and disobeying him, and neglecting him, and enjoying other things more than him—all these are infinite insults because he is an infinite treasure. And an infinite insult—or a life of infinite insults—deserves infinite punishment.

III. The Requirements of the Perishing

A. Recognize

Mt 10:28

28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Lk 13:1–5

- 13:1** There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.
- 2** And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things?
- 3** I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.
- 4** Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all *other* men who dwelt in Jerusalem?
- 5** I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

Ps 119:120

- 120** My flesh trembles for fear of You,
And I am afraid of Your judgments.

B.Repent

Ac 2:38–39

- 38** Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- 39** For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

Ac 3:19

19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

Ac 17:30

30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

Ac 26:20

20 but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

C. Receive

Jn 1:12

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

Jn 3:16–18

- 16** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- 17** For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.
- 18** “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Ro 10:9–13

- 9** that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.
- 10** For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
- 11** For the Scripture says, “*Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.*”
- 12** For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.
- 13** For “*whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*”

D. Respond

Col 2:6

6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

2 Co 6:16–7:1

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

*“I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people.”*

17 Therefore
*“Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you.”*

18 *“I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the Lord Almighty.”*

7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Many of us could testify of how the wrath of God drove us to the gospel where the love of God relieved our fear.

John Newton, who was born in 1725 and became a sea captain and slave trader and generally perverse rebel against God, was brought to faith in Christ through a series of fearful dangers that shocked him into spiritual seriousness, and made him take heaven and hell seriously. He almost shipwrecked. And while God was dealing with him after that, he was in Londonderry, Ireland, hunting

As I climbed up a steep bank, pulling my shotgun after me, in a perpendicular direction, it went off so near my face as to burn away the corner of my hat. (*Out of the Depths: Autobiography*, p. 70)

Newton came to see these experiences as God's way of getting his attention and teaching him to fear so that he would look for relief in the only place it can be found: Christ.

So he finally wrote the great hymn:

T'was grace that taught my heart to fear
 And grace my fears relieved,
 How precious did that grace appear,
 The hour I first believed.

