

NOT NEGOTIABLE

Hell's Reality

1. **[series]** We are in week three of the series NOT NEGOTIABLE. We are examining some beliefs in Vintage Christianity that are not open for debate, not on the chopping block, not up for reinterpretation, redefinition, or refinement.
 - This series is a Biblical response to the cultural phenomenon known as *Progressive Christianity* which is a group of disenchanted and disgruntled people who identify as Christians but for various reasons, reject a historical, conservative, orthodox Christian faith. They seek to deconstruct Christianity thereby letting go of traditional theology and adopting “progressive” beliefs that revise, reshape, revamp, and remake Christianity into something... well something NOT Christian.
 - Week 1, we talked about the authority of the inspired Word of God. Last week, we talked about the power of the Gospel.
 - This week, we will talk about the reality of Hell.
2. One of, if not the, iconic representation of Progressive Christianity is a professor who has written college textbook books that question, cast doubt upon, and deconstruct historic Christianity. Bart Ehrman is an authority in the movement. His spiritual journey has taken him from born again evangelicalism to liberal Christianity to now being a confessed agnostic atheist. Here's what he says about hell. **[Play Video]**
3. Now, let us read our text from the inspired Word of God.

TEXT: Luke 16:19-31

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. **So he called to him,** ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’

“But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’

“He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’

“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’

“‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

“He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’ ”

INTRO: [title] Today's message, *Hell's Reality*.

1. In the video we just watched, Bart Ehrman gives five things that Progressive Christians believe about hell. We looked at three.
 - 1) Heaven and hell as concepts do not appear in the Old Testament or Jesus' Teachings
 - 2) Jesus didn't believe in the soul going to heaven or hell.
 - 3) Jesus did not teach hell as a place of eternal torment.
2. Today, I'd like to examine Scripture and show you that the Bible in the OT and New **does** teach all three of these things. It is only by denial of the Bible as inspired and uncorrupted that one can twist Scripture into meaning exactly the opposite of what Christians have for 1,000s of years known that the Bible clearly teaches. Why does Bart believe this?
 - Let me give one possible reason in a quote from Francis Chan's book *Erasing Hell*. He writes, "Deep down in the heart of every person is a hidden desire to reinterpret Jesus in light of our own culture, political bent, or favorite theological belief. ¶ We do the same thing with hell."
3. In this message, I'll talk about what exactly the Bible teaches about hell and why the belief in hell is non-negotiable.

I. The Bible's Teaching About Hell

- Despite what Bart Erhman and Progressive Christians believe, the Bible teaches about the reality of hell from the beginning to the end.
 - A. **Old Testament reveals Hell** – We believe that the Bible is a progressive revelation of God about Himself to mankind. So, without elaboration, the Old Testament reveals 5 things about hell.
 1. **It teaches that there is an eternal afterlife.** - **Dan. 12:2** Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.
 2. **The OT word for Hell is She'ol** - **Deut. 32:22** For a fire will be kindled by my wrath, one that burns down to the realm of the dead below.
 - That phrase "realm of the dead" in the Hebrew is one word, She'ol
 - This word or phrase is used 26 times in the Old Testament.
 3. **The wicked go down to She'ol** - **Psa. 9:17** The wicked go down to the realm of the dead, all the nations that forget God.
 4. **There are thoughts and words in She'ol** - **Ezek. 32:21** From within the realm of the dead the mighty leaders will say of Egypt and her allies, 'They have come down and they lie with the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword.'
 - The OT clearly teaches that there is conscious existence "**down**" in hell. People will have thoughts and words.
 5. **Satan will be consigned to She'ol**
Is. 14:12-15 How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the

tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit.

- B. **Jesus teaches Hell** – If the OT reveals hell, Jesus takes the progressive revelation of hell to the next level.
1. **He validates the OT teaching about Hell.** - **Mark 9:47,48** “...It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where ¶ “ ‘the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ “
 - Jesus here is quoting **Isaiah 66:24**.
 - Jesus in our text says that the Rich Man’s 5 brothers have Moses and the Prophets to warn them.
 2. **He elaborates on Hell’s horrors.**
 - Place of Torment **Luke 16:23,28**
 - Occupants are in fiery agony **Luke 16:24,25**
 - Space of captivity and confinement **Luke 16:26**
 - It is outside in darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth **Matt. 8:12**
 - Eternal punishment **Matt. 25:46**
 - Eternal fire made for the devil and his angels. **Matt. 25:41**
 - **Jesus taught that hell is real and horrible!**
 3. **He communicates that everyone will live forever, somewhere.**
 - **John 5:28,29** ...for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.
- C. **New Testament writers confirm Hell**
1. **Paul states that hell is without the presence of God.** - **2Th. 1:8,9** He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might
 - This might just be the most horrendous thing about hell.
 2. **Peter asserts that hell is consistent with the nature of God.** - **2Pet. 2:4-6,9** ¶ For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell...if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people ...if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly ...then the Lord knows how to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.
 - Hell is not a anomaly. Punishing sin is consistent with God.
 3. **Writer of Hebrews establishes that everyone will be judged.** - **Heb. 9:27** ...people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment
 4. **John affirms that hell is the final state of the unsaved** - **Rev. 20:14,15** Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

II. Why Hell Is NOT Negotiable

- I could call this last point *the good news about hell*. I didn't because that would be counterproductive and a bit confusing.
 1. **Hell establishes the sovereignty of God.** – To negotiate hell away is to give up the sovereignty of God. In his book *Love Wins*, Rob Bell says that he refuses to believe that a God of love would send anyone to hell.
 - Biblical Christianity teaches that a sovereign God, who created everything and everyone, can do as He pleases.
 - He can send every human to hell and be completely justified. But He doesn't. He sends His only Son to pay the penalty for my sin. God's sovereignty is not submissive to my sense of appropriateness or proportion.
 - **You can ask questions of God but don't ask questions against God.** The difference is real and essential. It's about attitude.
 - You cannot reject Biblical truth because of human questions!
 - Just because you can't believe something, doesn't make it untrue.
 2. **Hell displays the holiness (goodness) of God.**
 - The Scripture is clear that God cannot tolerate sin in His presence. He is THAT holy, THAT good!
 - I love how Alisa Childers puts it in her book *Another Gospel?* She writes, "...hell is not some kind of divine torture chamber in which God sadistically enjoys the torment of those who reject him. It's God giving them their way. Hell is a place for those who reject God. And God will not force anyone into his Kingdom who doesn't want to be under his rule. And he can't let sin and corruption in the door, even for those who want the benefits of heaven but don't want to turn from their sin to follow him." In another place she writes, "**Simply put, without the wrath of God toward sin, heaven would be full of hell.**"
 3. **Hell guarantees justice for all.**
 - **Deut. 32:35** It is mine to avenge; I will repay.
 - Listen, the only hope for justice in the world is when Jesus comes. He will make everything right. Take away hell, you take away justice.
 - Deconstruct hell and you can kiss any chance of God taking vengeance on your behalf.
 4. **Hell demonstrates that sin has consequences.**
 - If we negotiate away hell, we are in a sense saying, "Sin has no lasting consequences!" You can get away with anything!
 - The Bible says that mocks God. **Gal. 6:7** We reap what we sow. I don't want a weak God who can be mocked!
 - Hell is a reminder that sin has consequences, wages.
 - That God doesn't overlook or ignore our sin, He is just!

5. **Hell points to the patient love of God.**

- We all have a lifetime to listen to the Word, accept Christ, obey His commands. We aren't promised tomorrow. But don't think that just because God is patient, that He is weak.
- He loves us so much that He is excruciatingly patient with us.
- But don't confuse His patience for slowness **2 Peter 3:9.**
- **Rom. 2:4,5** Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? ¶ But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

CONCLUSION: **The Bible teaches that hell is REAL!** – God has provided Jesus to save us all from horrors of hell! - But it does NOT happen universally or automatically!

- Salvation from hell comes only through repentance of sin and faith in Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross.

Let's pray: Father God, I thank You that although hell is a real place and horrible, You have provided Salvation for us through the death, burial and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus. You have saved us from hell!

- We repent God, of our hidden desire to ignore the consequences of our sin. We repent of our attempts to delete, destroy, distort and deny the reality of hell. We repent of our rebellious nature that resists accountability to your laws and commands.
- Forgive us of our tendency toward unbelief. Pardon us for our questions against You. Forgive our pride and arrogance that presumes against Your sovereignty.
- We acknowledge that You are holy, that there is no shadow of evil in You. We deserve to be subject to the flames of hell because of our sin. We plead the Blood of Jesus over our lives. Show us grace Oh Lord. Show us mercy!
- Help us to reject our sinful habits and value holiness as You do. Help us to have the patience that You model for us. We know that vengeance is Yours. You will repay all the injustices that have been done to us.
- Give us grace to stand in the judgment coming to every human being not in our own righteousness but in the righteousness of God in Christ.
- We pray this in the strong Name of Jesus. AMEN!