

Hell

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[0 : 00] Turn this evening to Matthew chapter 25 and reading the last verse, Matthew 25 at verse 46.

And they shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. Now on Friday evening, one or two of us heard the Reverend Vernon Chaim from Cardiff speak about the Welsh Revival, the revival that began in 1735 and went on for some years.

And the men involved in that revival were Daniel Rowlands, Howell Harris, and William Williams. Now Howell Harris was a young man of 21 years, and he was a schoolteacher in Talgarth.

And he says, writing about this period, I first broke out in the devil's service. No one told me I was on the way to hell. And the conditions in the society and in the church in Wales at that time was very much like our own day.

In the established Church of Wales, the clergy were content to leave their parishioners to live just as they pleased. They preached a dry morality.

[1 : 31] The Reverend Price Davis, the vicar of Talgarth, was one of them. And he was noted for following of hounds and overindulgence in strong drink. Nevertheless, this man's a preached one Sabbath morning on a necessity of partaking of the Holy Communion.

And this is what he said. You say that you're not fit to come to the table of the Lord. Well, then I say you're not fit to pray. You're not fit to live.

And neither are you fit to die. And Howell Harris had come to the church that morning as unconcerned as ever he had been. But the vicar's remarks pierced his heart like a sword.

On the way home, he met one of his best friends. And he repeated the words of the vicar to this friend. And he repeated them in solemn tones.

And these words that he repeated were blessed to this friend of his. And mind you, at this time, Howell Harris wasn't converted.

[2 : 43] You could call the vicar a modernist in many ways, or a moderate at least. And yet the words of that vicar and the words of this young man are blessed to the conversion of another young man.

It reminds me of an incident that took place in the revival in Barvis. I was speaking about recently where there was a home where a mother was ill.

And the father went off to the Pete's and left the daughter at home with the mother. And the daughter began repeating what she had learned in the school, the Gaelic school.

And what she had learned was an account of the crucifixion. And as she read this account of the crucifixion, her mother broke down in tears. And she went off to get another neighbor to look after the mother or to care for the mother.

And a neighbor came in. And she read the account of the crucifixion to the neighbor. And a neighbor broke down in tears. And one after another came into the home and broke down in tears.

[3 : 47] And when the father returned from the Pete's, he heard us wailing and weeping in a house. And he thought that either his wife had got very much worse or she had died.

Such was the impact of the truth when God comes in power with revival. And that's what was happening in the case of this Howell Harris. And after this he read the whole duty of man.

And as he was reading this book, suddenly a light above the brightness of the sun flashed upon his mind. So that he knew himself for the first time a lost and ruined sinner.

And he renounced everything. And for weeks he lived on bread and water. And what is so significant, when the Sabbath day came, he says, He feared in his heart to utter a single word on the Sabbath day, lest he should pollute the day.

That's a raw pagan, as you might say. Coming to know what conviction of sin really is. And taking that attitude to the Sabbath day.

[4 : 54] How he could teach many of us today in these things. But what I'm wanting to emphasize with regard to Howell Harris was this. When he could say, after his conversion, No one told me I was on the way to hell.

What an indictment upon his minister. What an indictment on those who were around him. Who were converted people. No one told me I was on the way to hell.

And I think that we in the evangelical and reformed camp today are almost commending ourselves that we are not hellfire preachers. We heard one man saying that he didn't preach on hell because there wasn't much about it in the Bible.

And others say, oh, you must preach the good news. But the good news is only good news where there's bad news. If there's no hell, if it's all conditional immortality, if it's annihilation, then there's no worry.

People can live as they like in this world. Because there's no end to it. There's no comeback on them. There's no judgment. So we have to tell the bad news before we can tell the good news.

[6 : 14] Now we spoke this morning about everlasting life. About eternal life. That life that is given to the people of God. That life of Christ.

And that life is given to the Christian. The life of God in the soul of man. This is a record that God has given us. Eternal life. And this life is in his son.

He that of the son hath life. And he that hath not the son of God hath not life. And so we already have eternal life. Everlasting life.

Because it's the life of God. It's the life of Christ given to us. And already in this present age, the Christian is a partaker of eternal life.

The powers of the age to come are in him now. And so heaven has begun on earth. And you see what we're emphasizing is this.

[7 : 12] There's an affinity between character and destiny. As your character is upon this earth, so will be your destiny.

If you become a partaker of life through the Lord Jesus Christ, and your character is changed, then your destiny is heaven. And there's an affinity between character and destiny.

The kind of life you live here upon earth is perpetuated into the future existence. If you're righteous, you will be righteous still, as Revelation tells us.

Character and environment are in harmony. They must be in harmony. And you see what happens in the case of the Christian is also happening in the case of the unbeliever.

There's an affinity between character and destiny. Think of what is said of Judas, who betrayed our Lord. The ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, says Peter, that he might go to his own place.

[8 : 25] Judas was destined to go to his own place. It's a place for which he was fitted. And remember in the parable of the vineyard, the employer said to the disgruntled servant, take that is thine.

You've lived like this, you've done this, take that is thine. And remember how Paul puts it, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad.

You see, there's a harmony between what we are in this life and what we will inherit in a life to come. And remember the man without the wedding garment.

He knew himself to be unfit for the place where he was found. He was speechless. He knew he was in the wrong place. There was nothing he could do but acknowledge that he had come to the wrong place.

He came without the wedding garment. One of those who have written a lot on the subject of hell, WGT Shedd, said Jesus Christ is the person who is responsible for the doctrine of eternal punishment.

[9 : 49] And of course he means that the Lord Jesus Christ spoke more about that than anyone else in the Bible. And here we have the Lord Jesus Christ who is the model of perfect manhood, who is noble, kind, compassionate, loving, and you cannot fault him.

There's no fault in him. And here is the Lord Jesus Christ speaking to us about everlasting punishment, about hell. Now there's two main things I would like to mention this evening as we are

speaking about that which is the opposite from the destiny of the righteous when we are speaking about the destiny of the wicked.

First of all, hell is a place. You will notice how the Lord Jesus Christ says in verse 41, depart from me, he cursed, and to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Hell was the place prepared for the devil and his angels. Now we've been thinking as we've been going through the creed about some of the words.

And we've already spoken about the Hebrew word shoal, which speaks about the state to which all men go at death.

[11 : 12] And that word is used frequently in the Old Testament. And it's asserting to us that death does not terminate human existence. There's something after death.

And the Old Testament people went down to that place of shoal where men go after death. And for God's people, there is to be a deliverance from that shoal, from that place of death.

The Lord Jesus Christ went down to that place. And he lay in the tomb, and then he was resurrected, and he rose from the dead. That place of the departed.

That place of the dead. But then there's another word in the New Testament which is used, and that is Hades. And it speaks to us not so much of the place of the dead, but the destiny of the wicked.

The destiny of the wicked. Remember how the rich man went to that place. That place that is called Hades. And that place that shows the great difference between where the righteous are and where the wicked are.

[12 : 29] The rich man went down to Hades. That place where we have what we might call the intermediate state. Where the souls of the wicked are between the time of their death and the time of the last judgment.

Because if you look in the book of Revelation, you will see that death and Hades gave up the dead. They were forced to leave that place where our souls were in preparation for the day of judgment. So Hades is speaking to us of that place where the souls of the wicked go before the time of the resurrection and before the time of judgment.

Remember how our Lord Jesus Christ said that thou art Peter and upon this rock will I build my church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

The headquarters of evil. That's where Hades is. But then perhaps the most important word of all that is the word Gehenna.

[13 : 34] The word used by the Lord Jesus Christ. The word that is used 12 times in the New Testament. And what it tells us is this because this word has a background and it goes back to Jewish history and it reminds us of King Aas in the year 750 BC who adopted some of the most revolting heathen practices of the day.

And the worst of them were the offerings of human sacrifices. He had his own sons burned to death as human sacrifices.

And in this valley of Ben Hinnom southwest of Jerusalem these practices went on. They sacrificed children. They sacrificed human offerings for a long period in the history of Israel.

And then Josiah the good king came on a throne and he brought about a reformation and he knocked down the idols and so on.

And he turned this place where there was offerings human sacrifices to the god Moloch he turned it into a rubbish dump into which all the awful and filth of Jerusalem was poured.

[14 : 59] And on that rubbish dump they put the bodies of animals and even the corpses of criminals. And in that rubbish dump the fires kept burning.

It was a place where the fires never stopped burning and the worms never stopped eating. And so it became known in the Hebrew as Gehenom and in the Greek as Gehenna.

But that is what is referred to that rubbish place outside Jerusalem where all the things of rubbish were dumped and where there was a continual burning.

And the Lord Jesus Christ used that word eleven times in his ministry here upon earth. And it's the most vivid in teaching us the reality of that eternal punishment.

Remember how he said do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul rather be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell in Gehenna.

[16 : 07] That is the word that speaks to us most clearly of all the words that there's going to be a punishment of body and soul for those who do not believe in Christ after the judgment of the great day.

And so we see here therefore that hell is a place it's a location and it's signified to us by that word Gehenna.

But then secondly we see that hell is a state and first of all it's a state of separation and surely that's what our Lord is telling us in this account he gives us here of the last judgment.

when the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all holy angels with him then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory and before him shall be gathered all nations and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats he shall separate them one from another and you see this separation begins in character and conduct he speaks here to us about the wicked and what they did not do verily I say unto you inasmuch as ye have not done it and to one of the least of these ye have not done it and to me and what is characteristic of these people well what is characteristic of them is this they're the embodiment of selfishness and brotherliness they are asserting their individualism a negation of fellowship they are not caring for those around them and he's saying to these people

I'm separating you from those who have manifested in their lives and selfishness who have manifested in their lives true caring for their brothers and that's the difference in character it was seen here upon earth in that his true people the righteous they cared for one another they cared for those who were in need they looked after those who were destitute and so on but the unrighteous did not do that because they were caught up in self-pleasing and that was the characteristic of them here upon earth and now our Lord is making a separation between the righteous and the wicked and he's separating them one from another and what he's doing to these people is he's separating them you see what sin does is separate people sin is a great separator the people in hell may be numerous but they are separate units units how often you hear some of these people perhaps if you meet people in a group and they're maybe laughing and so on and scorning the things of God and if you mention to them that they're going to hell then one of their reactions will be this well if I'm going to hell there's plenty people going with me

[19:32] I'm sure you've heard that reaction I'll have plenty of friends there but the sad thing about it is this that in hell there'll be no friendship sin may be a way of keeping people together here upon earth but it certainly will not be so in hell sin is a great separator I heard a woman had said to her minister rather shockingly in one way she said I would rather be in hell with my husband who had died than be in heaven without him what a dreadful thing to say but that's the way that the wicked talk and I think that there's that community of wickedness but when a great day of judgment comes there'll be no longer a community of wickedness there'll be a separation there'll be separated not only from the righteous but from one another because sin is a great separator the Lord is separating them from the righteous but he's also separating them one from another and so it'll be a state of separation but secondly it'll be a state of conscious suffering and how it's true that the one who was most sensitive the one who was most caring the one who was most loving the Lord

Jesus Christ was the one who gave us pictorial representations of that final state he said it's a furnace of fire they shall go into everlasting fire he said they shall go into outer darkness where there'll be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth he said they will go into a debtor's prison and they will not come out until they have paid the uttermost farthing and what do these figures represent well they represent this not so much what is true literally but what is aroused in our consciences you see separation will awaken their consciences and every man will be his own tormentor he will realize that what he has done is wrong he'll be his accuser he'll be his judge and he'll be his own executioner and in his own consciousness and in his own conscience he will know these things all these things that our lord is speaking about in effect they will be in a man's consciousness he will know and feel these things throughout an ever ending eternity and we are also given to believe from our lord Jesus Christ that as there'll be degrees of blessing in heaven so there'll be degrees of suffering in hell and it will be according to the knowledge of god's will those who have never heard the bible those who never heard the gospel will not be judged so severely or have suffering so great as those who have heard the gospel and rejected that gospel it will be more tolerable for sodom and gomorrah in a day of judgment than for the cities that heard Jesus preach the gospel there'll be a degree a difference in degree those who are in the knowledge of god and who have heard the gospel and who have refused that gospel will be judged with a severer judgment and in the third thing as we think of hell as a state and that is it's a state of finality there's no reversal of the judgment there's no reversal of the punishment there's no purgatory there's no second chance there is no there is not even disputing the rightness of the judgment the man without

the wedding garment he was speechless and so will everyone who was to face that judgment recognizing in themselves what they have been and done they will be speechless and that judgment will be final the whole drama of redemption will be closed the whole as it were act is over the end of the world the end of time and the coming of that never ending eternity and you see there's a finality of character in that judgment and in that hell as the person lived here upon earth so he will meet his destiny that's what our lord is telling us hell is a place in the first instance prepared for the devil and his angels but also for those who align themselves with the devil that's the sad thing whose moral affinity is with evil it's because they aligned themselves with the devil our first parents did and by the grace of

God they were saved but from them there came a line of the righteous and a line of the wicked and there's that separation at the last between those who have aligned themselves with Satan and who have lived in accordance with the evil that was in their hearts and those who have been saved by grace and transformed by the grace of God and lived a righteous life here upon earth you see character determines environment and character determines destiny and that's what we see in the case of the righteous and that's what we see in the case of the wicked it's their character that will determine where they will be and that character is a character that is judged by God the holiness of God must judge character the holiness of God reacts to evil and in the case of the righteous that holiness reacted at

Calvary in the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf and so their hell was suffered by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross who says Paul has delivered us from the wrath to come it was the way in which God provided a savior to save us from the wrath to come but if we're not saved with that salvation with the Lord Jesus Christ meeting the justice of God on Calvary and us accepting that sacrifice offered on our behalf then there must be the hell at the end of the day because the holiness of God demands it and evil will be put under restraint now we wonder sometimes and people wonder how can there be a restored universe at the end of the day a perfect restoration of God's universe if there is a hell that's something we cannot answer but we know that this evil must be put away it must be put into the bottomless pit all the opposition to God must be overcome all that are without the mediator who have not received the Lord

Jesus Christ they will be put in that place because of the holiness and justice of God there must be an end because God's holiness demands it and if that holiness is not satisfied in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of you then you have to meet that holiness at the end of the day and you've got to meet that justice that God requires of all who fail to live up to his demands who come short of his glory and so there's a state of finality that character has determined the destiny and that character that was set in rebellion against God is a character that goes on throughout a never ending eternity that's the state that the wicked will be found in now of course as

[28 : 31] I said at the beginning this is a doctrine that has almost disappeared from our midst there's been a widespread defection from this doctrine Charles Haddon Spurgeon met with this at the end of last century and he said shun all views of future punishment that would make it appear less terrible and he was like a lone voice against the great downgrade that took place at that time when doctrines such as conditional immortality and annihilationism came in but you see they're all being resurrected again in our day and they're being resurrected in some instances by respected evangelicals saying that the wicked will perish at the end of the day that there'll be no more and it's only those who believe in Christ and receive that eternal life that will live forever in heaven and so we have got to be on our guard as I was saying last night to some of you if the trumpet give an uncertain sound who shall prepare himself for the day of battle there's a battle for souls and a devil would have us believe that there's no such battle but it's a battle for souls in it is a heaven to win and a hell to be shunned and if we don't proclaim that doctrine if we don't proclaim that truth there'll be many who will rise up at the day of judgment and say of us as Howells

Harris said no one told me that I was on my way to hell and how could a minister far less any believer go to his own destiny and that he said about him leaving even something that would enable people to say that about him if we believe these things we must preach them if we believe these things we must live according to them if they are realities then we have to face up to them but oh how difficult it is to announce the reality of hell is a testing task we remember what was said of Robert Murray McChain when a man told him that he had been preaching that day or the day before on hell McChain said did you do it with tears did you do it with tears

R.W. Dale said of D.L. Moody he had a right because he did it from a weeping heart he did it from a weeping heart and we need to do it from a weeping heart we need to see people as Jesus saw them we see them scattered abroad as sheep without a shepherd and destined for that everlasting destruction unless they are plucked as brands from the burning save that man from going down to the pit I have found a ransom that's the call of the gospel and that's the good news you can be saved you can be delivered if there's no hell there's no urgency if there's no hell there's no bad news but there is bad news because as far as we can see from the teaching of the Lord and from the teaching of the apostles they give prominence to this doctrine that there's a destiny awaiting us and if we're unbelievers and unrighteous the destiny that we're working out for ourselves here upon earth will eventually come to us it will come our way we can't stop it and it may come suddenly and that's the urgency of the situation it may come suddenly and therefore we say don't delay don't put off dare not presume that you will see another day one theologian has said death is oft times as near to the young man's back as to the old man's face don't think because you're young that there's plenty time don't think because you're still in your youth that you've got a plenty time to repent and to think about hell the gospel never allows us to think in these terms it says today is a day of salvation we're not promised tomorrow we are to repent before it becomes too late we have to realize that if we sow to the flesh we shall of the flesh reap corruption if we live for the world and selfishly and not for the things of

Christ and of the things of God we are preparing our own destiny so what are we to do we've got to repent we've got to turn round if we're like Howell Harris on a road to hell pleasing ourselves going our own way that will lead us to hell and so therefore we've got to turn round about turn that's the only thing we must do if we're going to be delivered from going down to hell it's the important thing the most important don't delay you know as Jonathan Edwards preached sinners in the hands of an angry God what is keeping us from going down to that hell but the hand of God and it's the hand of God in long suffering the hand of God in kindness that you may have the opportunity to hear the gospel that you may have the opportunity to believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ that you may have the opportunity to flee from the wrath to come that's why we are still in this room in this place of mercy because God has not permitted us to fall into hell because he is offering us the gospel of his son he is long suffering and as Paul says let a long suffering of the Lord lead us to repentance and to come to Christ and to believe in him and then we will know what it is to be saved from the wrath to come and delivered for time and for eternity may God bless his word to us let us pray our gracious God we handle things that are too much for us we cannot really understand what will be the destiny of the wicked and yet thou hast shown us it in thy word and we understand it in some measure we pray that thy

[35 : 50] Holy Spirit will apply it to our consciences tonight to realize that what thou hast spoken is true what thou hast spoken in love to our souls we thank thee for the Lord Jesus Christ and for his teaching for his warning for his direction we pray that we may hear his voice tonight in those appealing tones that he even here upon earth called the sons of men called the needy called the sinful to himself may we hear these tones tonight that we might believe in him to the saving of our souls we ask it in his name and for his sake amen