

*Why Hell?*  
Romans 9:19-29

No doctrine more difficult to accept than the doctrine of HELL. Any God centered discussion concerning Hell ought to be SOBERING, Serious, and with a broken heart.

A church was hearing from two candidates for pastor. Both were assigned to preach from (Matthew 25:41) "*Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'*"

Both preached accurate messages, both explained the truth about hell. But the second man was given the job. The Elders explained, "The first preacher explained hell, but almost seemed happy that some would go there. The second preacher was distraught that anyone would suffer there."

Christians STRUGGLE with the doctrine of hell.

Scoffers MOCK at the thought that heaven or hell even exist.

Doubters QUESTION how a loving God would condemn His own creation.

More than ever, the doctrine of hell is being questioned by many who claim the Christian faith as their own.

Emergent leader, DOUG PAGITT wrote: "*God's going to judge the life and repair and restore and heal the life of everybody in the same way. .... there's going to be no difference between the way God going to interact with you when you die and the way God's going to interact with a Muslim when a Muslim dies.*"

([www.http://apprising.org/2008/10/doug-pagitt-after-death-no-difference-between-believer-and-unbeliever/](http://apprising.org/2008/10/doug-pagitt-after-death-no-difference-between-believer-and-unbeliever/))

**Today's text focuses on the question of God's right to condemn the wicked.**

**The CONTEXT of this question is the reality that "*Israel is not saved!*" (Rom 9:1-5)**

As we have studied, Romans chapter 9 flows from the opening 5 verses and centers around THREE QUESTIONS:

- Has God's Word failed? (9:6-13)
- Is God unjust? (9:14-18)
- Am I trapped by God's Sovereignty? **(9:19-29)**

This sermon will examine the third of these questions, as we interact with the human dilemma of figuring out the implications of God's sovereignty. Let me say in advance, that while the Bible present the doctrine of God's sovereignty, it does not explain the mystery of how it all fits together, particularly in light of the clear teaching that emphasizes human responsibility to repent and believe. We are best to leave the reasoning to God, and accept what he declares, even when it seems to violate our sense of logic.

God's Sovereign choice in salvation has been explained, starting in Romans 8:28-30. But there is another example of God's sovereignty, namely Old Testament Israel who rejected God even though they were his chosen people. From this context, Paul writes about **God's Sovereignty**.

God's sovereignty in salvation, and his sovereignty over Israel leave us with potential questions regarding his fairness in these sovereign choices. Mounce presents the question in this way, "*If God in his sovereignty has mercy on some and hardens the hearts of others, on what possible basis can he find fault with those he excludes?*" (Mounce, NAC, 201)

Or to ask this another way, *How does God judge some when He has chosen others? How can He condemn people to hell?*

#### I. Description of Hell

- A. **Eternal Fire.** (Matthew 18:8) "*If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into **eternal fire**.*"
- B. **Torment.** (Revelation 20:10) "*And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be **tormented day and night for ever and ever.***"
- C. **Separation from God presence.** (John 3:36) "*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.*" REMAINS = present active
- D. **Darkness.** 3x in Matthew, 8:12; 22:13; 25:30 "*And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*"
  - 1. KJV = "outer darkness"
  - 2. Recently I toured Corregidor and the Malinta tunnel. This tunnel was dug by Filipino conscripts during the 1920's and used during the second world war. The tunnel was impervious to bombs and artillery. For five months, the American's kept Corregidor from falling to Japanese control. Thousands of soldiers, doctors, nurses and civilians from Filipino President Quezon's staff lived in the damp, cramped and stale tunnel. The branches of the tunnel stretched for over three miles. The tunnel hospital housed 1,000 patients. Although safe from the exploding ordinance above, it was a frightening and unpleasant existence.

There were actually two major battles for Corregidor, and the final holdout of Malinta tunnel. When America forces liberated the Philippines, they had to conquer Corregidor. The Japanese held out for weeks in the tunnel, refusing capture. Some banded themselves

with dynamite and blew themselves up inside the tunnel. The blast marks are still visible. For weeks, the Japanese held out without electricity, ventilation fans, lighting, medicine or outside communication. Repeated appeals from the American forces were disregarded. Finally, in a final effort to end the conflict against suicidal Japanese soldiers, the Americans filled the tunnel with gasoline and lit it on fire. Every occupant perished in the flames.

On the tour of the tunnel, our tour guide made everyone turn out their lights. The darkness was more piercing than anything I have ever experienced. My thoughts immediately focused on the trapped Japanese, and the knowledge that they would die in the tunnel. I pictured them groping in the darkness for days, even weeks, tripping over their dead comrades, wasting away without food, water, medicine or hope. I thought of how putrid the air must have been. And then I realized that this horror was only a foretaste of what hell will be like for all eternity. I thought of the Japanese soldiers who blew themselves up, expecting to be free from the horrors of the tunnel, but only to open their eyes in the horror of a life of separation from God, and the expectation of the coming judgment in the Lake of fire.

We cannot think lightly about the reality of hell. Millions will perish without Christ.

The apostle Paul anticipated the question of God's justice in light of the coming judgment. The text now proceeds to answer this question.

- II. **Is God Righteous** if He shows Compassion on some while others reject HIM?
- A. **We Cannot Judge God.** Romans 9:20-21
1. **The rights of the potter.** Quotations: **(Isa 29:16)** *"You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'He did not make me'?"* **(Isa 45:9)** *"Can the pot say of the potter, 'He knows nothing?' 'Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands?'"*
  2. The CREATION is **unqualified to reply** to the Creator!
    - a. We are condemned because we are **SINNERS from birth.** *Adam sinned for us all.*
      - (1) (Psalm 58:3) *"Even from birth the wicked go astray;*

*from the womb they are wayward and speak lies."*

(2) (Job 14:4) *"Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!"*

b. We are also condemned because we are **SINNERS by choice**. If we say this is unfair, our condition is CONFIRMED by our ACTIONS. *We prove that we would do EXACTLY what ADAM did!*

(1) (Romans 3:23) *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"*

(2) (Genesis 6:5) Notice the condition of mankind BEFORE the FLOOD: *"The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."*

(3) But notice that the same condition exists AFTER the flood! (Genesis 8:21) *"The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done." God had not failed in his flood judgment. Rather, we can say that the sin problem is one that permeates every person.*

c. We cannot speak back to God about his decisions because we are **FINITE**. (Psalm 102:11-12) *"My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass. But you, O Lord, sit enthroned forever; your renown endures through all generations."*

d. We are also **MORTAL**. (1 Timothy 6:16) *"who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen."*

e. Finally, we are **His SUBJECTS**.

B. We Do Not COMPREHEND God's ways! Rom 9:22-28

1. God has dealt patiently with us! ***"What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath...?"*** (9:22)

a. His **PATIENCE** - He allows us to even live at all!

b. **EVERYONE** is an "object of wrath" until they receive Jesus!

(1) (Ephesians 2:3) *"All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature*

*and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."*

(2) (Galatians 3:22) *"But the Scripture declares that **the whole world is a prisoner of sin**, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe."*

2. The LOST are **not condemned** by God's choice. They are **condemned by their own sin!**
  - a. (John 3:18) *"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."*
  - b. (John 3:36) *"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for **God's wrath** remains on him."*
  - c. (John 8:24) *"I told you that you would **die in your sins**; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."*
  - d. (1 Corinthians 15:17) *"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."*
  - e. (Colossians 2:13) *"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,"*

- C. God's Glory will be demonstrated in ALL He does. **Rom 9:23-24**
  1. His glory is shown through **His patience** toward those who believe, and **His Judgment** on those who do not.
  2. His glory is shown
    - a. In Lucifer's Creation, fall, actions and JUDGMENT
    - b. In Sin and the curse
    - c. In All of creation
    - d. In the punishment of the wicked. They are punished only after they have REJECTED the knowledge of the truth!

- D. **Am I trapped by God's Sovereignty?**
  1. It is our SIN, Not God's CHOICE that condemns us
  2. The Death of Christ is sufficient for all . Romans 10:4, 13
  3. Whoever believes will be saved. Romans 10:13

### III. Why Hell?

- A. Because the evidence of GOD's existence is available for all to see
- B. CS. Lewis wrote *"The lost enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have*

*demand*ed and are therefore self-enslaved” (Problem of Pain, 115 - quoted in “Illus for Bib Preaching, 186).

The world tries to answer the basic questions of life:

1. Who am I? *Psychology cannot figure it out!*
2. Where did I come from? *Evolution cannot explain it!*
3. Why am I here? *Sociology cannot reason our purpose or find solutions for our self destructive behavior.*

- C. Because God’s MERCY is great. NO ONE has to suffer in hell! Christ suffered the torments of Calvary so that you would not have to suffer the torments of hell. If you receive Jesus, you will be forgiven of your sins, and escape the coming judgment. If you reject him, he will be just when he punishes you. If you die without Christ, the best life you have will be now. Eternity is forever. Receive Jesus.