

Bethel Community Church *Sermon Series*

Why would a loving God send people to Hell?

Pastor Steve Jones

Sunday 11th January 2004

Prayer

Psalm 9:17 “The wicked shall return to Sheol (Hell), all the nations that forget God”
[\[PP1\]](#)

Hell is not a place that people want to go to. Even non-Christian people have a basic sense that Hell is a very unpleasant place to be. If in any way God were good, He wouldn't be sending people to such an awful place. That would be completely unfair.

Well, let's start today by looking at the issue of fairness.

Situation 1 [\[PP2\]](#)

You have a university essay paper to write. The professor tells you that it will take you 2 weeks to complete. He is in fact going to give you 4 weeks. He provides every study tools necessary and makes himself available to answer your questions. He says, though, that the deadline for the paper is 4 weeks from today at 3 pm. If you try and hand your paper in at 3.01 pm, it won't be accepted and you will fail.

You hear all that is said. Over the weeks you struggle to get around to the work. At 2.30 pm on the deadline day you print off your paper at home and rush to the University to hand it in. This is the best paper that you have ever written. You arrive at 3.10 pm. Your paper is refused and you are given a fail.

Fair or Unfair?

Situation 2 [\[PP3\]](#)

There is a big New Years TV promotion of the police's new anti-speed campaign. They are aiming to cut road deaths by 75% this year. The reports tell you that the police will prosecute you for doing 32 mph in a 30 mph zone. New guidelines for the Court direct that everyone doing more than 10 mph over the speed limit is banned from driving for 3 months. The police state that they are going to be using many more unmarked police cars this year. On your way home last week you were stopped by an unmarked police Volvo doing 42 mph in a 30 mph zone. The Magistrates fined you and banned you for 3 months. Because you drive for your job, you lost your job on Friday.

Fair or Unfair?

Situation 3 [PP4]

Planes from the Indian Air Force have been consistently flying along the air border with Pakistan. The Pakistani government have told the Indian Government, on at least 7 occasions, that if any Indian Air Force jets fly into Pakistani airspace, it would be considered an offensive act and they would be shot down. Yesterday 2 Indian Air Force MIG-23's flew 10 miles inside Pakistani airspace and were shot down by surface to air missiles.

Fair or Unfair?

Situation 4 [PP5]

God created man. He set some rules for man to live by. Man ignored those rules and did his own thing. God again and again warned mankind that for disobeying the rules they would face an eternity separated from Him and suffering punishment. He loved mankind so much that God even sent His Son in human form to tell the world of the future for those who continued to reject God. God gave mankind a clear and simple route to being reunited with him. Mankind heard what God's Son had to say and rejected Him too.

After much patience God sent those who rejected Him to eternal punishment.

Fair or Unfair?

Summary

In each case the outcome of action or inaction was made clear to the people at risk. They were given every opportunity to keep themselves safe. They chose not to. Basic rule that every child learns by around 3 years of age.

YOUR ACTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES. A FORK IN THE ROAD. [PP6]

CHOOSE THE PATH: ACCEPT THE CONSEQUENCES - You harvest what you sow!

Story of Dave. [PP7]

Dave was 35 and marketing manager for ACT Investments in High Holborn, London. Dave lived in St. David's, Exeter, and 4 days a week he caught the 6 am train to London for work. He would get home at 8 pm each evening. Dave was a proud and self-reliant man. He was fiercely independent. One day he turned up at St. David's station and there was the train sat at Platform 4 as normal. Dave always sat in the front of coach F, first seat on the left. He sat down and opened his copy of the Financial Times. A minute or so later he heard a tapping on the window beside him. He looked out on to Platform 4

to see Phil Thomas, the new office clerk at ACT Investments, who also lived in Exeter, waving at him. Phil was mouthing “YOU ARE ON THE WRONG TRAIN. YOU SHOULD BE ON PLATFORM ONE”. Dave replied, “Don’t be ridiculous. I know which train I should be on. I have been doing this for 6 years”. Dave turned back to his paper as amazed, Phil walked off towards the steps to Platform 1. The whistle blew and guards were slamming doors on Dave’s train. Just then a conductor walked up the carriage passed Dave. Dave said to him, “Which train is this?”. “The delayed 5.35 to Newcastle”, said the conductor. “Is that your train?”. “Oh yes”, said Dave. He didn’t move and sat with his eyes fixed straight ahead as the Newcastle Express pulled out of the station.

Were like that with God.

Because we have lived life according to our plan, most people are sat on the Hell Express. That service goes non-stop to eternal punishment. There is no return service. At some point while we are sat in the station waiting to depart, someone comes by and tells us that we are on the wrong train and that we need to get off.

We either:

- Don’t believe that the train is going to Hell (if we looked at the timetable[Bible] we would see that it is)
- Are too proud to be told that we are on the wrong train
- Too afraid what the other passengers in our carriage would say if we stood up and got off of the train

So we stay on the train.

We would very much like to paint God as harsh and uncaring in His sending people to Hell. That is because such a view helps us to reject Him. But how can God be uncaring and harsh when He provides us with a way out?

THE SHOCKING TRUTH IS THAT WE CHOOSE TO GO TO HELL

Like Dave, we choose to stay on the train leading to destruction.

So, does God want to get as many off of the train as possible, or doesn’t He care?

2 Peter 3:9 [ESV Church 1226 Compact 1019]

The Lord will bring His promised Judgment upon mankind. That Judgment is already on its way. It just hasn’t arrived yet.

Its delayed arrival is explained by the fact that Almighty God wishes that no one who will turn to Him should perish.

He exhibits patience, or “longsuffering” in waiting for you. You are so precious that He is prepared to wait. He is holding the train to give you every possible opportunity to get off. He won’t let the train go until everyone who will return to him is back on the station.

One of the characteristics of God we looked at is His omniscience. He knows everything, past, present and future. Although you have free will to choose or reject Him. He knows whether you will or not.

Therefore, if you will come to Him. He will hold that train for you, even if it might take a while.

The future if you remain on the train, “not wishing that any should *perish*”.

Perish means total loss with no hope of recovery.

Note also the key to coming to Him. Repentance. That means a reversal of direction.

Doesn’t this bring a whole new meaning to the phrase, “Hold the train for me”.

Summary

God fixes us with a consequence of our lives of sin. A ticket to an eternity in Hell.

But He loves us so much that He sends His Son to us with a ticket to Heaven.

[Envelope]

Challenge [PP8]

If you are *not* a Christian:

- Read the timetable and see where your train is headed (Psalm 9:17; Matthew 25:46; Matthew 10:28)
- If you are going to **stay** on the train:

Be there by decision and not accident
Be there out of choice and not through embarrassment
Be there for yourself and no other

- If you are going to **get off** the train:

Use your ticket to Heaven and get off!

If you *are* a Christian:

- The ticket won't do you any good unless you get on the right train.
- Getting on the train means that God is going to move you from where you were when you got on, towards Heaven. That means you get closer and closer to Heaven as you mature. If you are not growing closer and closer to Heaven, guess what? Chances are you never got on the train!
- Thank God daily for the ticket that cost Him so much, and you nothing yet everything all at the same time.

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