

Does the Bible Teach that Hell is Eternal or Temporal for Unbelievers with Guest Todd Friel

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HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

Does the Bible teach that hell is eternal or temporal for unbelievers? That is a topic we'll discuss today right here on The Christian Worldview radio program, where the mission is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm David Wheaton, the host. The Christian Worldview is a nonprofit, listener-supported radio ministry. Our website is TheChristianWorldview.org and the rest of our contact information will be given throughout today's program.

As always, thank you for your notes of encouragement, financial support in lifting us up in prayer. There are many fiery situations going on in the world right now. In Iran, millions have been on the streets protesting with thousands being killed by the Shia Islamist regime led by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who is on the brink of being ousted due to economic decline and repressive rule. The situation has significant ramifications for stability in the Middle East and even the end times.

Here in my home state of Minnesota, violent confrontations continue against ICE agents by protestors, and paid agitators, and rioters as ICE agents search for and arrest illegal immigrants. President Trump has stated he is considering employing the Insurrection Act to use military force to quell the obstruction and violence, which has been incited by our governor, Tim Walz, and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey. And there are other fires in Venezuela after the US captured the communist, narco-terrorist President Nicolás Maduro in England and Australia, which are threatening and arresting their own citizens for social media content against Islam.

In Ukraine, where the intractable deadly war with Russia continues. And yet all these fires at home and abroad are far less significant and lasting than what the Bible describes as the unquenchable fire of hell. Hell is an issue that is almost unspeakable, and rightly so, because of the horror of what it is, eternal, conscious, torment, for all who have rejected God by not believing in his Son's substitutionary death and resurrection on the sinner's behalf. In fact, the final destination for nonbelievers is described this way in Revelation Chapter 20. "If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Because hell is so horrific and never ending, there are many who question God's character in sending people there. They say, "I know sin offends the Holy God, but punishment for eternity in hell? Well, that's disproportionate to the crime." Kirk Cameron, actor and Christian influencer and author who has worked and associated with many sound Christians like Ray Comfort, Ken Ham, and John MacArthur, announced on his podcast recently that he no longer believes that hell is eternal conscious torment, but rather that the

unbeliever is eventually annihilated. In other words, unbelievers do go to hell and are punished, but at some point, they go out of existence.

Now, this is certainly not the first time the eternality of hell has been challenged, and it won't be the last. Todd Friel, pastor of Alpharetta Bible Church in Georgia and host of Wretched, which produces radio and television programs, joins us today to examine what the Bible teaches about hell. Is hell being eternal and important doctrine to stand firm on? Is there a biblical basis that unbelievers are annihilated in hell in light of what Jesus said in John Chapter 10, fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell?

We hope you stay with us for this important discussion. Let's get to the interview with Todd Friel on the subject of hell and whether it is eternal or temporal.

Todd, it's so good to have you back on The Christian Worldview radio program. Very grateful to be able to talk with you today about this important topic of hell. Just going to start out by playing a soundbite about why we're doing this topic. This is not a new challenge against the doctrine of hell, but perhaps it is the latest one. And it was made by Kirk Cameron, the actor and notable Christian influencer that you know. And here's what he had to say on his own podcast.

Audio Sound Bite: Kirk Cameron:

I used to hold the position of conscious eternal torment because that's just what I was taught by people that I love and trust. I've learned that there are other positions and a very robust argument can be made for conditionalism or annihilationism as Edward Fudge posits here. And it fits the character of God, in my understanding, more than the conscious eternal torment position because it brings in the mercy of God together with the justice of God. It doesn't leave judgment out. It is just, but it also fits with the Old Testament picture of the fate of the wicked, which is to be destroyed. It is to die, and it is to perish, not live forever in an eternal barbecue.

And the classic verses that used to get me into eternal torment, the punishment, everlasting punishment, everlasting destruction, fits beautifully with a destruction, punishment, judgment that is irreversible and lasts forever. That is the eternalness of that punishment and that destruction. So that's where I am today.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

Okay, Todd, that was Kirk Cameron. He said that on his own podcast about he's changed from believing in really the two main positions, one being called eternal conscious torment view of hell. That's more the traditional orthodox view of what scripture teaches on it. And he has switched over to a view called conditional immortality, sometimes called annihilationism, where an unbeliever, once they're in hell and they've served their time, I guess you could say, goes out of existence. They're destroyed, they perish. And we'll get into that view a bit today.

The Bible uses different terms for hell. And this just reading off gotquestions.org, which uses one-page explanations of theological questions. They say the Hebrew word Sheol or Hades in Greek, which means place of the dead or departed spirits, this word is a general reference to the realm of the dead where all human spirits go upon death, whether good or evil. There's another term for hell in the Greek called Gehenna, which means valley of Hinnom. This is a physical literal valley south of Jerusalem where some Old Testament Israelites sacrifice their children to the Canaanite god, Moloch. And Jesus used Gehenna as an illustration for what hell is like.

The final phrase the Bible uses to reference hell is lake of fire described in Revelation 19 and 20. This is the final destination for the spirits in Sheol and Hades who rejected Christ as Lord. At the great white throne judgment, those whose names are not found in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire. With all that as context, could you explain more about hell and how it's been understood throughout church history?

GUEST: TODD FRIEL:

Well, we're not Roman Catholic, and so we do not affirm that everything that was taught in the church throughout the ages is dogma. And yet the testimony of the church, really since its inception, has been of one voice. It is indeed eternal conscious torment. There's a place of the damned that was originally prepared for the devil and his angels, and yet we will also find that human beings are cast into this Gehenna, this lake of fire, that will last for forever. And it was so plain, it was so clear, it was so obvious, even to the patristics, the early church fathers, they affirmed almost with one voice. There are two that you could potentially cite, but almost the unanimous voice of the early church, the Middle Ages church, the Reformation Church, and even into, I would say, probably the Victorian era.

Overwhelmingly, it was only ... And this is important in this current conversation because that is indeed what we're being encouraged to do. Have a conversation. The early church never saw this as a conversation. The Middle Ages church, the Reformation Church, it was not a chat. This was not an intraorthodox dialogue. They were so certain that the doctrine of hell was best represented by those three words, eternal conscious torment. They didn't chat, but they didn't even debate it. They merely affirmed it almost of one voice with the exception typically of either fringe groups or downright heretical groups.

You could cite the Socinians in the 16th century, the Jehovah's Witnesses affirm annihilationism, and a few theologians along the way. But overall, the overwhelming chorus sang eternal conscious torment, no debate. We don't need to reopen this for discussion conversation. It is not a dogma that demands question asking anymore than we need to reevaluate the doctrine of the Trinity. So I affirm what the church has always affirmed, and it's not because the church has always affirmed it. We're not a three-legged stool when it comes to our creeds, but we do need to recognize it's so clear in the Bible, it was simply never debated.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

So what you're saying is this is a primary issue to be settled on and not a secondary issue to agree to disagree on?

GUEST: TODD FRIEL:

That gets a little bit tricky. You have to define well. If you're going to consider theological triage, what is a primary? What is a secondary? David, I don't know that everybody would affirm the way that I see this particular doctrine, the eternality of hell. But if you will, to me, a strict definition of primary doctrine, these will be cardinal essentials, first order issues. In other words, if you bif it on one of these, you're outside of the faith. This will affect your eternity.

And so those are the big issues that I think could be best summed up with the five solas. I think the nature of Jesus, the two distinct natures, one person of Jesus Christ, the Bible alone, faith alone, the Trinity. This is the stuff that the church has always said, "You got to get this stuff right, or you're out." That's primary. Now, secondary are issues of very ... They're very important, but in my opinion, a secondary issue doesn't reach into a primary issue. In other words, a secondary issue, let's use eschatology. If you and I disagree on the order of events at the end of time, it doesn't affect any of the cardinal doctrines. It doesn't affect even the character and the nature of God per se.

Unless, of course, somebody said, "Well, I don't believe God could create the universe in six 24-hour days, rested on the seventh, because he's not omnipotent." Hold the phone. Suddenly, a secondary doctrine launches into a first-level doctrine. But I do think that as a rule and for the sake of clarity and the understanding of the importance of this, especially based on the way this conversation is being presented to us, a secondary issue does not invade a primary issue.

So if it's a secondary issue, rightly defined, we can just chat about, then we can have a conversation, David. We can talk about church polity. We can even talk about Paedobaptism versus believer's baptism because it doesn't have any implications on primary doctrines. The doctrine of hell is a little bit different. And I personally prefer you could, and I certainly wouldn't spend much time arguing with somebody who said, "No, it's a secondary issue." I say it's something in between primary and secondary because the doctrine of hell, when it comes to the eternality of hell, is in the bullseye of God's character and nature.

The argument that has been forwarded by virtually every annihilationist is it just doesn't seem that the crime fits the punishment. It doesn't seem to fit the character of, uh-oh, the character of God. So when you start immediately talking about as your primary argument, the character of God, you've just elevated it into an essential. Now, I don't think that it can be rightly placed there initially as an essential, but I don't think it belongs as secondary. So I put it in the category and I think the church would affirm this throughout the ages. This is a heterodoxy issue.

Again, this isn't intraorthodox dialogue. This has always been esteemed heterodox. This is outside of orthodoxy. We need to know, if you want to take a look at church history, sixth century, there were five synods, five councils that took place in Constantinople. The third one, they anathematized annihilationism. They were

addressing the teachings of origin from a couple of centuries earlier because some of his devotees, they took his teachings that I think we can rightly understand to affirm the annihilationist position, they had extended them. It had become a universalist position, which tends to go hand in hand with annihilationism. And the council of Constantinople said, "Nope, you are anathematized if you believe in annihilationism."

And so I like to see the doctrine of hell, not as an essential on the face of it. I personally don't believe that if somebody affirms annihilationism, they're automatically damned. People would disagree with that. The council of Constantinople would disagree with that. I just don't feel confident in saying that, but simultaneously, I don't think it's right to call it a secondary issue. We're dealing with something really big here and really potentially dangerous because it can very easily make its way into primary, I call it, heterodoxy.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

Okay. We're going to pick up that topic again that we just discussed, the importance of this particular issue of hell, a little later, but let's go back to some more fundamental understanding of what happens according to scripture when an unbeliever dies versus a believer.

GUEST: TODD FRIEL:

It is appointed unto man wants to die, then judgment. Now, granted, this needs to be understood because the Bible does talk about a final judgment. And so we need to deal with a white throne judgment. We need to deal with 1st Corinthians 3 and 4, the Bema Seat judgment. And then what happens to somebody when they die? They either find themselves in the presence of God or they find themselves condemned to a lake of sulfur.

So there can be some debate as to the order of those things, but what is very clear in the Bible, when you die, there will be a determination. There will be a rendering of a judgment that determines your eternity. You will be a sheep or a goat. You will go to the left or to the right. And so eternity begins immediately. I do not affirm soul sleep that you're knocked out until the final judgment. There's some form of judgment, determination that takes place that settles your destiny. But then I do believe at the end of the age then, we are going to see that great white throne judgment, which I actually ... David, you could argue with me on this. I think everybody's going to be judged. There's just going to be a distinction. The great white throne judgment is going to be the judging of sinners for their sins.

And I think the Bema Seat judgment is going to be, yeah, we, Christians, get judged, but not for our sins because Jesus was judged for our sins. We're going to be judged for our works. So it is appointed unto man once to die, then judgment, you are either absent from the body, present with the Lord, or you are absent from your body and separated from the goodness of the Lord for eternity. So I don't know how much more clear the Bible could be on this subject. You die and your eternity is fixed.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

I'll read just a couple sentences from gotquestions.org on this subject of hell and what happens immediately after an unbeliever dies versus a believer. The Hebrew word Sheol or the word Hades, which is the Greek form of it, means place of the dead or departed spirits. The word is a general reference to the realm of the dead, where all human spirits go upon death, whether good or evil. Jesus spoke of this realm in Luke 16, which I'll read later in the program about the rich man and the beggar named Lazarus, and appears to suggest that Sheol or Hades is split into two compartments or sides, one of blessing for those who were faithful to God based on their faith and one of torment for those who rejected him." And then from there, at the final great white throne judgment, as Todd was just describing, unbelievers are then cast into the eternal lake of fire. It's horrific, but it is biblical according to a perfectly just God.

Okay. I'm going to read, Todd, two passages of scripture, one from Matthew 25 and one from Mark Chapter 9, both by Jesus Himself. Matthew 25, starting in verse 31, Jesus said, "But when the Son of man comes in all His glory and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them from one another as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, just as you just said, and He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on the left. Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of You?' Then He will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'"

Christ here referring to the evidence of true saving faith by how we treat fellow believers who represent Christ. Verse 46, Matthew 25, "These, these goats, so to speak, will go away. Unbelievers will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." So just keep that in mind for a second and read one more passage, Mark Chapter 9, where Jesus says, starting in verse 42, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it'll be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea." Little ones here referencing other believers that may be led astray by our sinful actions.

Jesus goes on to say, "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." Verse 45, "If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than having your two feet to be cast into hell. If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into hell." Verse 48, last sentence, "Where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched."

So Todd, aside from the fact that the fear this should induce any nonbeliever about eternal judgment of God someday, and what hell is like, and it wouldn't be worth keeping parts of your body if those parts of your body are leading you toward hell. Explain why these passages and the phrases used eternal punishment. Worm does not die. Fire is not quenched. Support the position of eternal conscious torment in hell.

GUEST: TODD FRIEL:

I'm listening to you read these verses and it's like it's so clear. I can't explain it better than the way Jesus did, which is why the church always affirmed it. But because of historically and now currently the assaults on the eternality of hell, we have to explain them. And it is a very ... In both of the verses that you read, David, I would consider, especially Matthew 25, to be the clobber verse for eternal conscious torment because what we see is a perfect Greek parallel. You see it in both of those texts, by the way, side by side, eternal life, eternal death. You see life in heaven, you see life in hell, the kingdom prepared before eternity. You see that on one side. And then you see the place prepared for the devil and his angels.

And so they stand side by side. So if heaven is eternal, hell is eternal. And you can't separate. You just can't separate them. You can't say, "Well, heaven is eternal in this particular verse, but hell isn't because we've re-understood the word eternal, that it doesn't necessarily always mean forever," which, by the way, is actually right. It tends to be the exception to the rule, but when you have a perfect parallel, this eternal has to be that eternal. So I would simply say, if you want to shorten the duration of hell, if you are going to be consistent in your interpretation of the Bible, then, gulp, heaven isn't eternal either. I don't think a conditionalist would like to make that argument. And then conversely then, they shouldn't make the argument that somehow there's an expiration date on hell. If heaven is eternal, and it is, then so is hell.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

Todd, we've referenced a lot in the New Testament so far. So how does the Old Testament describe hell?

GUEST: TODD FRIEL:

I would actually take a look at some interpretive tools, understanding that the Bible needs to be interpreted in light of the Bible. So, in other words, the clear interprets the unclear. Furthermore, I remember the idea that the Bible is a progressive revelation. It doesn't change the character and the nature of God or how salvation works in Jesus Christ, but progressively, the mystery is unfolded. We learn more and more about the character of God.

For instance, you probably would struggle to clearly make the case for the doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament. I think you can do it, but it becomes really clear in the New Testament. That principle needs to be applied to hell because when you look at the descriptions of the afterlife and hell, they are very fuzzy. It's nothing that you would really solidly build everything. And now I believe we can understand what Sheol is if we remember what the New Testament says to bring clarity to what's pretty fuzzy in the Old Testament.

So to precisely answer your question, they understood the afterlife. They understood, as you rightly said, that Sheol, that this was a place of the dead, but it was for both the righteous and the unrighteous. Beyond that, there is not a great deal of clarity in the Old Testament. We need the New Testament and we can settle into that quite nicely because we understand progressive revelation. So I can find support for eternal conscious torment in the Old Testament, but to build eternal conscious torment in the Old Testament is pretty tricky. We have to admit that, but so does the conditionalist. There just isn't enough there to demand this is the duration of hell.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

And there was an understanding, though, in the Old Testament, for those who did not obey or believe God, that there was judgment by God.

GUEST: TODD FRIEL:

Daniel, I think, is the strongest verse. It sounds so New Testamental that there's everlasting life, there's everlasting darkness. It is there, David, but the conditionalists throughout the ages, they like to invoke the Old Testament because it has a tendency to make things like, "Oh, okay. It's not as clear as I thought it was." And I think it can be used to introduce doubt. I don't think the Old Testament is the place to start the conversation.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

Okay. Let's hear another soundbite by Kirk Cameron from, I think it was from an interview or from a podcast, can't remember where, where he talks about his view of conditional immortality or annihilationism that the unbeliever goes out of existence at some point in hell. Here's what he has to say, then I'll follow up with a question.

Audio Sound Bite: Kirk Cameron:

Where Christians are differing on their views of hell is not over whether or not judgment happens, but over what scripture says is the final outcome of that judgment. Conditionalism holds that those who finally reject God and die will be judged according to their deeds in full justice and then, eventually, cast into what the scripture calls the lake of fire, also known as the second death. After full and just punishment, the unrepentant perish. They die. And that death is final. It's not temporary, it's not reversible, not redeemable. There's no appeals court. There's no return.

The view of conditionalism does not deny hell. It does not deny judgment. It does not deny the seriousness of sin. It doesn't even deny conscious torment. The only difference is, does that conscious torment last forever and ever and ever, or does it eventually come to an end, and the person is annihilated?

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

Again, that was Kirk Cameron making his position clear on this. So a lot of times, conditionalists or annihilationists will refer to really well-known verses to make their case. Todd, John 3:16, the most well-known verse in the Bible, "For God so love the world that He gave His only-begotten son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life," or what Jesus said, "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body and hell."

So someone listening might think, "Well, how does that support conditionalism or temporal hell?" Well, they think they'll see the words, destroy and perish, they'll say, "Well, see, at some point, you're actually destroyed

or perished and you're actually annihilated." What are your thoughts on what Kirk Cameron just said in that particular soundbite on annihilationism in light of those two passages I read?

GUEST: TODD FRIEL:

Well, in light of the passages you read, get ready, David, I'm going to be surprisingly hip and contemporary. This is not my typical MO. David, did you see the football game between Indiana and Oregon?

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

I did not.

GUEST: TODD FRIEL:

Oh, I'm telling you. Indiana destroyed Oregon. Question. Does the football team from Oregon still exist?

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

I would think so.

GUEST: TODD FRIEL:

But they were destroyed. That's the argument of the conditionalist. See, the word destroy means obliterated. No. Destroy typically means ruin. Somebody can be destroyed and not go out of existence, just like the football team from Oregon was destroyed, and yet they're still alive and well. Same thing is true with the eternality of how those who go to hell, they are destroyed in that they are ruined. They do not lose consciousness. They do not perish. Perish is also a word that has a semantic range that needs to be defined in light of everything the Bible says about a subject. You can't just use a verse or a word without being informed by the totality of scripture.

And so when you look at the word perish, you look at the word destroy. They do not argue against eternal conscious torment. They intensify how horrible it is. Those are terrifying words. So I don't find those dismantling of historically understood words to be very strong or persuasive. But to your other inference, David, the argument that is being forwarded is that full justice says the conditionalist is actually exhibited when an individual does not spend eternity in hell. I would say, "Hold on a second. That's where we need to go." We need to get into the nature of God. We need to understand the seriousness of sin because I get it.

If we think that lying, well, it's like, well, sure, it's bad, but you wouldn't block your kid in his room for the rest of his life because the crime doesn't fit the punishment. That is the argument, by the way. And that was forwarded. There's been so many cultural influences on this dialogue about the theology of hell. The crime has to fit the punishment. And I wouldn't argue that, that's even a biblical concept. But the question is, does the crime fit the punishment? Does the punishment fit the crime committed against whom?

Now, it was probably not Thomas Aquinas who first forwarded this idea, but he probably popularized it. We can understand the eternality of hell based on the One who has been offended by the action of the finite being because the conditionalist would argue, "We're just ... Look, they're finite crimes from finite beings. How could there be an eternal punishment?" It's because the One against whom we commit the crime is eternal. And so you can use a number of analogies if you want to, but if I lie to my son, no big deal. If I lie to my wife, bigger deal. Lie to my boss, I could get fired. Lie to a police officer, he might take me to jail. Lie to a judge, I'm in contempt of court. I lie to the government, yikes, I could be banished because I could be committing treason.

And now I committed the same crime each time. And yet the punishment increased. Why? Because of the one against whom I committed the crime and the same thing is true with hell. And that's why the Bible says things like all liars will have their part in a lake of fire for lying. Come on. That seems so extreme. Not when you remember the character of God. And that is why the punishment does fit the crime because of the One who has been offended by the sin.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

Yes. And ultimately, the unbeliever spends eternity in hell for not just lying and other transgressions of God's laws, but for rejecting God's provision of His Son for their sin, which is really like saying, "I don't believe you, God. You're not trustworthy. I won't bow my knee to You and Your Son. I have my own way." That's ultimately what God justly sends an unbeliever to hell for.

Now, I want to circle back to something we talked about earlier, and how important this particular issue of hell is, and getting it right according to scripture. Todd, you do a lot of street evangelism. You and Wretched are going onto college campuses for evangelistic purposes, apologetic conversations. So you have a good understanding or lots of experience with explaining who God is and what our sin deserves to unbelievers. So how is the gospel undercut or weakened by making hell temporal?

GUEST: TODD FRIEL:

You can thank all missionary activity to the doctrine of hell goes the credit because individuals have been motivated to go proclaim their salvation under no other name, but Jesus Christ. Please repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved from being snuffed out or eternal conscious torment. It was a great motivator for missionary activity. It's a great motivator for evangelism. And let's actually take conditionalism and apply it to evangelism.

I go to the streets, "Hey, have you told any lies? Have you stolen anything? So do you think you'll be innocent or guilty? Oh, you think you'll be guilty? So heaven or hell? Well, I guess hell. What's hell like? Well, you see, after ... Well, I don't know how long. It depends on how many crimes that you've committed, but after a bit, you're not going to exist. It's going to be really bad upfront, but at some point, you won't exist. Well, how long is that time? I don't know. The Bible doesn't really say so." If I apply conditionalism to evangelism and I

get into the nitty-gritty of the doctrine of hell, I think most unbelievers aren't going to feel very threatened by it.

Now, that isn't the reason that we believe in the eternality of hell. We believe it because the Bible says it and we need to get our sentiments in submission to what God clearly states. But if I apply this to evangelism, I don't think the threatening of the law is nearly as severe. And to your question, David, about how does this undermine the gospel, it undermines the suffering of our Savior. Did He die for people getting annihilated in a thousand years or for people who would spend eternity receiving the furious wrath of God? So this undermines the passion of our Christ, what He did for sinners.

So the implications for this, David, they are massive. And yet I would always return back to, what does the Bible say? And the church has always been of one voice on the subject. There's no need for a conversation. We don't really need to ask questions. We need to clearly state the doctrine of hell is eternal conscious torment.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

Great points all around. A temporal hell undermines the full gravity of the gospel and even Christ's atoning work on the cross.

Okay. Final question for you, Todd. And I'm going to read a passage, again, from Christ Himself in Mark Chapter 8, starting in verse 34, where it says, "And He summoned the crowd with His disciples and said to them, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me,' for whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospels will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

And so my question for you as a follow-up to that really powerful passage from Christ, what is your exhortation as we close today, to me and those listening, who could be believers or unbelievers, in light of that passage and the importance of the eternal destination of one's soul?

GUEST: TODD FRIEL:

I don't think any Christian should ever announce the eternality of hell with glee or excitement and thrills or in any ghoulish way or wait until you see what happens to you, you pagan. The doctrine of hell is earnest and it's serious. And what makes it so deadly serious is its eternality. So on the one hand, it's not a gleeful doctrine per se, but it is a doctrine that is clearly stated in the Bible. It is a threatening to unbelievers. It most certainly is. And simultaneously, it is indeed a theology that enhances our love for the Savior.

What Jesus went through to save you, dear Christian, is that He took the wrath that you deserve forever upon Himself, that you could be forgiven, that you could be justified, that you could be adopted, and that you could one day be fully glorified. His tremendous sacrifice is beyond our imagination. And when we water down the doctrine of hell, it waters down what our Savior did to redeem sinners. And so I would encourage us, let's take it to the streets and let people know with the threatening of hell so that, that's not the last word on the subject, so that we can point them to a Savior who is so magnanimous, who is so beneficent, who is so kind, who is so merciful that He took that wrath on behalf of sinners, on Himself, that you could be set free, that you could be ushered into a warm relationship with God.

Come to Jesus Christ because He's an amazing savior. He saves sinners because He drank the cup of God's wrath down to the dregs, and He did it because He is good, and He is kind, and you have every reason to love a Savior like that. So turn from your sins, put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved from eternal damnation unto eternal life.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

So well said, Todd. And thank you for explaining the glorious truth, the glorious gift of grace that God offers sinners who are destined for eternity and hell, and that there is one way that this great God has provided for us to avoid that and live for eternity with Him in His presence. And Todd, thank you for standing for the truth of God's word and for your ministry at Wretched and pastoring Alpharetta Bible Church, and just so appreciate your friendship over so many years, and we just wish nothing but God's grace and blessings to you. Thank you for coming on The Christian Worldview radio program today.

GUEST: TODD FRIEL:

Yes. And thank you for your faithfulness, David. I love telling people about the Christian worldview.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

Well, I hope you are sharpened by today's discussion on hell with Todd Friel. I have known Todd for many years. In the early 2000s, I started on the same radio station in Minneapolis, Salem's AM 9080, The Mission, where Todd was an afternoon talk show host, and by God's grace, Todd has served in Christian media and ministry for many years, and I greatly appreciate his faithfulness. You can find out more and get connected with his ministry by visiting our website, TheChristianWorldview.org, where we have links.

Here's the main takeaway from today. Despite challenges from the world and professing Christians even, I believe the Bible is clear that hell is eternal conscious torment. And that has always been the Orthodox biblical position. To assert otherwise is to misrepresent God's word and really the justness of His judgment, as if God would be unjust to punish the unbeliever for eternity. To say that hell is temporal and the believer is annihilated lessens the heavy weight that unbelievers should feel to repent and believe in the gospel. We can't go by human reasoning on this topic or any other biblical topic, but we must accurately believe what God has spoken on this issue.

And Jesus spoke much on hell. And in Luke 16, as we referenced earlier in the program, He tells the story of a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. This is presented as a real account and not a parable, which is a fictitious story in order to teach a spiritual lesson. The description of hell should impel the believer to share the gospel and should impel the unbeliever to repent and believe in Christ as Savior and Lord. Jesus said in Luke 16, "Now there was a rich man and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day, and a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table. Besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores."

Now, the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, he, the rich man, lifted up his eyes being in torment and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he 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 an agony in this flame." But Abraham said, "Child, 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 an 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."

And the rich man said, "Then I beg you, father, that you send him, Lazarus, to my father's house, for I have five brothers in order that he may warn them so that they will not also come to this place of torment." But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them." But the rich man said, "No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." But Abraham said to the rich man, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead." That, again, from Luke Chapter 16. There is so much in this from the uncrossable chasm gulf between hell and heaven to the hardness of the unregenerate human heart that won't believe unless God graciously opens one's spiritual eyes.

Hell is eternal, hell is conscious, hell is torment. Let's not alter this truth, but rather implore others to repent and believe before it's too late. If you are not assured of going to heaven after you die, I encourage you to go to our website, TheChristianWorldview.org and click on the page, What Must I Do To Be Saved or just call us toll-free, 1888-646-2233. Thank you for joining us today on The Christian Worldview and for your support of this nonprofit radio ministry. Until next time, think biblically, live accordingly, and stand firm.

What is The Christian Worldview radio program really about? Fundamentally, it's about impacting people, families, churches, with the life and eternity-changing truth of God's word. We know the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only message that saves us from God's wrath by God's grace for God's glory. And we know the Bible is the inspired word of God, providing the only way to think and live to the glory of God. We are a nonprofit listener-supportive ministry. If you'd like to help us impact listeners with the biblical worldview and the gospel, consider becoming a Christian Worldview partner who regularly give a specified amount to the ministry. As a thank you, Christian Worldview partners automatically receive many of the resources featured on

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Audio Sound Bite: Emeal Zwayne:

We need to remember that as our savior hung upon that cross, extended his arms and bore those stakes in his hands and his feet, that crown of thorns on his head, he was paying for our sin. Our sin put Christ on the cross. We need to pause before we indulge in sin. Look at the cross, look at what the Savior did to redeem us and say, "I can't sin against the Savior who did that.

HOST: DAVID WHEATON:

"That was Emeal Zwayne, president of Living Waters, and author of our new featured resource, Fight Like a Man, A Bold Biblical Battle Plan for Personal Purity. This important book is softcover, 272 pages in retails for 17.99. For a limited time, you can order it for a donation of any amount to The Christian Worldview. To order, go to TheChristianWorldview.org or call 1888-646-2233 or write to Box 401, Excelsior, Minnesota 55331.

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Thanks for listening to The Christian Worldview.