

Why The American Church Quit Preaching On Hell

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I must be honest with you, friends, I cannot in my recent memory recall the last time I sat in a church and actually heard a pastor warn his hearers on the dangers of hell. Preachers these days just don't preach on hell anymore. The largest denomination in the country shut the door on hell years ago and quit preaching on it. All you will hear today from most pulpits is, "God loves you. Just walk this aisle, friend, and accept Jesus into your heart and you will be to heaven." But that's not the true gospel, friends, that is a lie from the very pit of hell.

Today, I'm going to get to the bottom of this matter on why the American church quit preaching on hell. Listen friends, when we quit preaching on hell, then we help people go there by our lack and that's the title of my message today, "Why The American Church Quit Preaching On Hell." I'm going to list several reasons today why I believe this is so, why the American church quit preaching on the doctrine of hell. Are you ready? Here goes.

I want to begin by reading the words of Jesus Christ as found in the gospel of Matthew, in chapter 10, verse 28. Jesus spoke on hell and he warned people not to go there but we don't, I guess we know more than Jesus does when it comes to preaching his gospel. I will tell you this, friends: when the church in America quit warning people about hell, it was the day God said good-bye to the American church. He has withdrawn his presence from among us. There used to be a time years ago, there was a God-consciousness in the churches because preachers back then preached about a burning hell and warned men not to go there. They weren't afraid to call sin "black" and hell "hot." They were men on fire for God and lived for eternity but now, many live for themselves and are as cold as ice in regard to their concern for the souls of men. But the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of hell often. He called it a place "where the worm dieth not" and he referred to it as "outer darkness" and a place where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Now I want to read us our text today from Matthew 10:28, which declares,

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul:
but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Listen friends, in that verse is the key as to why the church in America has quit preaching on hell and the first reason is this: very few church members today believe in a God who will punish sin. That's right, friends, many pastors, many deacons, many church members refuse to believe that God is a God who will and must punish sin. Their concept of God is all love, God is love, and not a God of wrath who must punish sin. In fact, if you stand in a pulpit today in this country and preach that God is a God who must punish sin, the good deacons will come and get you and they'll fight you. You'll have a fight on your hands, friends.

But Jesus declares in this verse that we should “fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” God is the one who sends the sinner to hell. Do you believe that? Do you? This sad spiritual declension in the church in America has been going on for years. Years ago, I listened to a prominent leader of the Southern Baptist Convention say this, he said, “Folks, God doesn't send the sinner to hell. No sir, you send yourself to hell, friend.” That's what the dear boy said but he was dead wrong, friends. Dead wrong. You don't send yourself to hell. If you had any say-so in the matter, you would run for your life away from the smoking pit of hell. You're not going to jump into that lake of fire on your own, rather Jesus said angels will bind the sinner hand and foot and cast him in there, cast him in there against his will because nobody wants to go there.

Listen friends, the church in America killed off the doctrine of hell when they changed their view of Almighty God from a God of justice to just a God of love. That's why you don't hear many sermons on hell these days. I challenge you to visit any major city in this nation and visit a number of different churches there in different denominations within that city over a period of time and come back and tell me how many sermons you heard on hell. I bet you won't hear one. The main problem with the church in America today is that her view of God is too small. We've shrunken God down to our size or smaller. We've put him on our level. Why, we wouldn't send anybody to hell, that's too extreme and because we believe God thinks and acts like we do, why, surely he wouldn't send anybody to hell either. Why, that's not politically correct. God is on our level today because we put him there, at least that's how many view him.

I'll never forget sitting in a large Baptist church and the seminary trained pastor made the following comment, he said, “Do you know what? When I get to heaven, I can't wait to run up to Jesus and grab his hand and shake it for all he has done for me.” That's what the man said: Jesus is just his pal and this foolish pastor is going to run up to Jesus as soon as he gets to heaven like he'd run up to a deacon in the hallway and pump his hand. I guess that seminary trained pastor never read the portion of the book of Revelation where the Apostle John encounters the risen Christ and falls down as dead. Isaiah saw a vision of God too and fell down as dead. But no, we just want to treat God like one of us so he wouldn't send anybody to hell.

That's one of the main reasons why the American church won't preach on hell today, their view of God is too small, too unbiblical. The second reason why the American church won't preach on hell is this: about 40 years ago in this country, maybe a little longer, a bunch of eggheads at a famous seminary decided that repentance was no longer necessary

to salvation and faith so they trained their seminary boys not to preach the need of repentance but just to preach an “only believe” gospel, just believe and you will go to heaven, there was no need to repent. And our pulpits for years have been overflowing with that kind of mentality, “God loves you. Just walk this aisle and accept Jesus into your heart and you will be saved. Come to Jesus, friends, just come to Jesus.” But no talk of repentance. Why, there is no need to preach on a burning hell if you can be saved and still hang onto your sins. We preach a sinning religion today, friends, “Come to Jesus and keep your life the way it is. No need to change. No need to surrender to his Lordship because you can just have Jesus as a Savior. If you want him as a Lord, well, that's up to you but you don't have to have him that way. You can become a Christian and go to heaven without ever repenting or turning from your sins.” That's a big lie from hell, friends. There are many books written by well-known scholars who feed people such nonsense but it's all a lie.

Listen to me, friends, if you do not repent, you will surely go to hell. God will send you there because you are a big sinner who deserves to go to hell because you've broken the strict and severe law of God and God will have no guilty rebels in his kingdom. So the church in America quit preaching on hell when they quit preaching on repentance. The two go hand-in-hand.

The third reason why the church in America quit preaching on hell is this: there is a mad rush these days to grow a church campus as big as it can be grown and you need a lot of members to float the thing financially. You need to preach a feel-good message that doesn't offend anybody if you want to grow your church so most pastors today will preach nice little sermons that don't offend anybody so they can grow their little empire all in the name of God and religion. A little boy likes to sit with a plastic shovel and a bucket and play on a pile of sand and build things and when that boy grows up and graduates seminary, he still wants to play in his sand pile and grow things as big as he can. So you won't hear a message on hell, friends, because many pastors today need you to grow their church so they don't want to offend the richest members in their church by preaching on uncomfortable topics. So because of their lack, many will end up in an uncomfortable place of misery called hell because if you preach on hell, then you have to preach on sin and if you preach on sin, then you have to preach on the need of repentance from sin. You see, friends? Then you have to change the whole way the seminary has taught you to preach.

I'll never forget my own experience on this when I was working on my Ph.D. I had already taken my written exam and turned in my dissertation. It was now time for my oral exam in order for me to graduate from seminary with my Ph.D. I was being interviewed by two professors and one of them was of the stamp I've already talked about: he didn't believe that repentance was necessary to faith and salvation. I made the comment that the church and Christians should be Spirit-filled, believers like the ones found in the New Testament in the book of Acts and we should preach like they preached and live like they lived. This professor told me in a very condescending tone, “That was for those days. We live in a different time now.” That's what the old boy said. I wanted to jump out of my chair and scream, “You've got to be kidding me. Why not live a vital Christianity like

they had?" But the old boy was too far gone in his own opinions and I had to graduate so I kept my mouth shut.

But my point is: when we changed the gospel into something it was never intended to, then we changed the way we preached the gospel. We changed the God of the Bible into something he never was intended to be as well and when you change God and place him on your level and preach nice, comfortable sermons to grow your church, then you don't need to preach on hell and drive your membership away. But Jesus said, "Unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," and that means you, friend, if you've not exercised repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ just like they did in the New Testament. The church of our hour has moved so far away from God and the Bible that it bears little resemblance to real Christianity anymore and the sad thing is, nobody cares. As long as we can be the pastor of one of the biggest churches in our community and play church on Sunday morning, then all is well. All is well while hell fills up with the people we failed to warn about the dangers of hell and their blood God will require at our hands. That's what my Bible says. That's what it says in Ezekiel. Let me read it to you now from Ezekiel 3, beginning in verse 17 and you'd better listen up, Brother Preacher, because this refers to you as well. Here now is the word of God as found in the book of Ezekiel.

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."

Listen friends, the church in America today is an utter failure in her failure to warn men of their great danger of dying in their sins and being cast into hell by a just God who will and must punish sin. And if you, Brother Pastor, do not warn the wicked and you just preach nice little sermons to grow your church and not offend anybody, you will be held accountable with your blood-stained hands.

I did not come here today, friends, to tell you jokes and entertain you. I came here today to explain why the church has failed in her great duty of preaching the doctrine of hell to this hell-bound generation of church members. I am warning you all within the sound of my voice to turn from your wicked ways, repent of your sins and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ in a life of utter surrender or you will surely die in your sins and be cast into hell. Now, that's not a politically correct gospel but it's the real one found in my Bible.

I will leave you with more of the gospel. Listen to it carefully for it's hard to find it preached in your day and mine.

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

Turn from your sins, friend, and turn to God or you will surely die in your sins and be cast into an everlasting place of torment called hell. I warn you not to go there. Repent now.