

January 2007

Pastor's Note

For many years now I've been bothered and burdened about the downward trend of Christianity into apostasy to the place that we are truly living in the time of the Laodicean Church phase of the Church Age. If any of the present day churches and their leaders were confronted on the matter they would be sure to reply that they are in the right as to what's taking place in their ministries. But the Word of God and the doctrines that it teaches is always the standard by which we measure these things.

Replacing grace with human good; self righteous legalism instead of Spirit filled living; programs, entertainment and emotionalism replacing the teaching of God's Word; appealing to the pride and flesh nature of people; catering to certain groups in the church; holding more to one's religious association rather than the Word of God; and in some churches just down and outright bizarre and goofy behavior going on.

It's bad enough that there isn't the much needed teaching of Bible Doctrine in much of today's Christianity, but their presentation of the gospel is completely flawed. Yes, when they talk about Christ's death on the cross, they speak fairly accurately about what took place at his crucifixion. But when they explain the gospel as to how we are truly saved, many of them are in grave error.

Some of them have faith plus something else, faith plus tongues, faith plus baptism, faith plus lordship, faith plus some kind of work or activity. It's never just faith alone in Christ alone. While many others have the unbeliever inviting Christ into their hearts. First of all, the unbeliever never invites Christ anywhere; it's Christ who invites him. Second, inviting Christ into the garbage dump of the heart is a work. Third, that passage in Revelations 3 deals with Christ being outside of the churches because his Word is not being taught in them! And four, throughout the OT and NT the way to salvation has always been faith alone in Christ alone!

But there has been something else that has bothered me for years, and that is the leaving out of the doctrine of hell when presenting the gospel message! **It is Christ saving us from this awful place that makes him our Savior!** For centuries hell was centrally placed in the gospel about Christ because all mankind is on the road to hell as soon as they enter this life! Only by believing on Christ can we get off this road.

So this evangelism series is reminding Christians once again that hell is the ultimate reality for all mankind if they do not believe on Christ as their Savior

To facilitate getting the message out I have formatted the notes so that one can copy them and teach: home Bible classes from them, sermons, put them in a tract, or print the two bolder titles on each side of a business card to hand out. The important thing is to get the message out and warn the unbeliever to believe on Christ and avoid hell!

Hell's still waiting!
Is it waiting for you?

It won't be if you believe on
Jesus Christ as your Savior.

People today don't talk about hell any more, not even in many churches. But just because we don't talk about hell **doesn't mean that it went away!** It's still there and it's still waiting. The question is, is it waiting for you? If you have not believed on Jesus Christ as your Savior, then it is waiting for you.

Are you frightened of these words? You should be. How much more frightened do you think you will be when you die and are brought down into the bowels of the earth to this terrible place and there is no escape? When you are brought down into this place of darkness and gloom, this place of heat and suffering, into this place of absolute despair and the not knowing what terrifying thing is going to happen to you next.

Are you frightened? You should be for this is a place that you should not want to go. But the good news is that you don't have to go there! It can be avoided, and has been avoided by countless millions of people, by placing your total faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior!

Hell is real whether you believe it or not. You may laugh or snicker at the idea, but you won't be laughing there. You may scoff at the idea now, but you won't be scoffing then. You may think that because you are good and do good things in this life that you won't end up there, only to find yourself surrounded in hell by people who were good in this life. People don't go to heaven because they are good, and they don't go to hell because they were bad! People go to heaven because they have believed on Jesus Christ in this life as their Savior, and people go to hell because they have rejected Christ as their Savior.

You ask how could this be? It goes back to understanding what took place many years ago in the garden of Eden. When God created the man, and later on the woman, he placed the man as the ruler over the earth. Man was perfect and sinless and enjoyed fellowship with God there in the garden. But one day the man and the woman ate the fruit from the tree that had been forbidden by God. On that day, and in that moment, both the man and the woman acquired a sinful nature and came under the condemnation of God. And on that day something else happened, **Satan became the new ruler of this planet and they became legally aligned with Satan.** They and all their descendents now were slaves of Satan and would share Satan's fate in the Lake of Fire.

Haven't you ever looked around and wondered why people do wrong things? Why there is suffering in this world? And why, sooner or later, everyone dies? It's because Adam's sin brought the curse of death into the world. *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”*

Romans 5:12

Even though people like to look at society as made up of those who are good and bad, but in the eyes of a holy God all are bad! “*But we are all as an unclean thing, and **all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags**; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*” Isaiah 64:6

In the eyes of God there is none righteous and none that seek after God. “*As it is written, There is **none** righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*” Romans 3:10,11 And it say that he will send the wicked to hell, “***The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.***” Psalm 9:17

But the good news is that God sent his Son to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins so that through faith in Christ we can have total forgiveness of sins and the guarantee of eternal life! “*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” Romans 5:8

But you ask why then does hell and the lake of fire exist? **It exists because God created it for the devil and his angels.** When the man and the woman sided with Satan in rebellion against God, they and all humans, would share Satan's destiny in the lake of fire. “*Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, **Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:***” Matthew 25:41

In the story of the rich man in hell, or *hades*, we see that he was in a place of torment. “*And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*” Luke 16:23 The word for *being* is *huparcho* which tells us that he was now existing in a place of torment called Hades. Now he was not there because he was rich. He was there because he had not believed on Jesus Christ as his Savior. Being in the *bosom* of Abraham meant that he was identified with Abraham before his death. That is to say, he was a true child of Abraham because he also had believed on the God of Abraham, *Yeshua Messhiah*, or as we say in English, Jesus Christ.

Hell is real, but the subject is either made light of, or avoided altogether. Even when many churches present the gospel they leave the subject of the reality of hell out. But without the doctrine of hell, then Christ has only become a friend to you in life, or an helper, someone who enhances their lives. To be our Savior he has to save us from something, and the thing that he saves us from is this terrible place and God's wrath.

At the final judgment man is going to be judged by his works, “*And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*” Revelation 20:12 Our sins are not going to be brought up at the judgment because they were already judged by God on the cross when Christ paid the penalty for them in his atoning death. But men's works will be judged and no one will be righteous enough to get into God's kingdom. Only those who have believed on Jesus Christ whose names are found in the Lamb's Book of Life. “*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*” Revelation 20:15

Hell is real and it is a terrible place of suffering. But it can be avoided by believing on Jesus Christ as your Savior. **When we believe on Jesus Christ God views that faith in Christ as righteousness** thereby guaranteeing us the resurrection from the dead and spending an eternity in God's kingdom with him. *“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”* Romans 4:5

You ask then what can I do to be saved and avoid this terrible place? A good question and one that many have asked over the years. The jailer of Paul and Silas also asked the same thing in Acts 16:30, *“And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*

He had been listening to the men singing and praying and also giving out the gospel about Christ. But when God opened up the doors of their cells by a large earthquake he instantly knew that this demonstration of power brought home the point that there is a God and he was not right with him. So he asked what did he have to do to be saved.

And this is so typical of all people. Everybody thinks that they have to do something to get right with God. But they replied back to him to just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and he would be saved. *“And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.**”* Acts 16:31

The words *“believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”*, are in the original Greek, πιστευσον επι τον κυριον ιησουν χριστον, *pisteuson epi ton kurion iesoun christon*. Now when you have the verb *pisteuo*, *to believe*, combined with the preposition epi with the accusative of direct object, then **the idea of to believe becomes the idea of trust**.

The difference is this. You are standing before a narrow, old suspension bridge that connects two sides of a great chasm with rocks down below. You may believe that this old bridge will safely carry you through to the other side, but you aren't trusting it do so until you walk on it.

Trusting means that you have thrown your entire self on a matter. So when we say believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, what we are saying is that you, personally, must trust him to save you from your sins and from this terrible place called Hell. That you are depending on him and him alone to do this. Not your works, not your morality, not your church, not your friends or family, not anything that you can do to save you. You are trusting in him and in him alone to do this.

What must you believe? You must believe in the true Jesus Christ, that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God; that he was sinless in his person and his actions in life; that he is God manifest in the flesh; that he is the Messiah of Israel; that he died on the cross fully paying the penalty for our sins thereby satisfying the righteousness of God the Father; that he died; that he was buried; and that he rose from the dead on the third day. *“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”* 1 Corinthians 15:3,4

When you believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins, and that he rose from the dead, what you are doing is making **your personal connection with him as your Savior**. *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, **thou** shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* Romans 10:9,10

And the natural expression of that faith in Christ is stating that faith in words to God. *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord **shall** be saved.”* Romans 10:13 Not that they might be saved, but with **absolute certainty** that they will be saved! The person who calls out to Christ to save him has already believed in him in their heart.

Once we have believed on Christ as our Savior **we are declared righteous by God** at his judgment seat in heaven. *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Romans 5:1 The word to *justify* meant to be declared righteous, or in a right standing before the law in court.

And once we have believed on Christ as our Savior **we have eternal life**. It's not that we **might** live forever, but that we possess eternal life right now. *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”* 1 John 5:13

Hell is a terrible place to end up, but can be avoided by having the righteousness of Christ through faith in him. Today Americans have become obsessed with self improvement. They work feverishly to have the best physical bodies; they study self help books; they go to specialists of all kinds; they have surgical procedures to enhance their beauty; and we have ended up with many people being the epitome of beauty, education, social graces and well adjusted personalities.

Yet the tragic reality is that without Christ all of that is for nothing. They will end up in the fires of hell, in this dark and formidable place from which there is no escape. I think of all the beautiful girls out there, who without Christ, end up in hell at their death; all the strong, handsome young men, the sweet little old ladies, the distinguished older men, all those who worked so hard to accomplish so much in their lives, and when their hearts stop beating they will be taken down to this horrible place. That's the true reality!

Are you frightened? Good! You should be. **If you were born on this planet**, and have not believed on Jesus Christ as your Savior, this is where you are going when you die! But it doesn't have to end up this way. You can change this by placing your faith in the Lord. And there is no better time to make your peace with God than right now. *“For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, **now** is the accepted time; behold, **now** is the day of salvation.”* 2 Corinthians 6:2 All you have to do is believe that the Lord died on the cross for you and that God raised him from the dead. Then express that faith to the Father by telling him that you have believed on his Son and thanking him for saving you.

The frightening reality is that without Christ as your Savior you will plunge down into hell at death. Frightening? Think of this, you're living in a beautiful home that you've worked so hard to get, sitting around a nice fire in the fireplace, enjoying a beverage and listening to beautiful music. Then tragedy strikes, a heart attack or something else, then the very next thing you're experiencing is the heat, smoke, fire and darkness of this horrible place the Bible calls hell and there is no escape!

The people in hell want to get out, but they can't. They want to send people back up to the surface of the earth, to the land of the living, as the rich man did to warn them about this horrible place, but they can't. *“For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”* Luke 16:28

Abraham told the man that they had Moses and the prophets, let his family members listen to them. The rich man replied that if someone came back from the dead and warned them, then his family members would repent and believe on Jesus Christ. To which Abraham replied, that if they wouldn't listen to the communicators of God's Word, then they wouldn't listen to someone else. *“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”* Luke 16:31

We might add in here that hell is not the final destination of those who are above the age of accountability and have not believed on Christ as their Savior. It is like a holding cell where the unbelievers are kept until the day of the resurrection when they will stand before God at the great white throne judgment and be judged for their works. There they will find that none of their works compare to the righteousness of Jesus Christ and then they will be thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15

And there in the lake of fire they will join the devil, the beast and the false prophet. *“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”* Revelation 20:10

This is a matter of the utmost gravity and importance. How can someone apply themselves so diligently to getting an education, making a living, having a good financial portfolio, going after health, finding the right mate for life, but not prepare for their own death? People don't want to think about their death, but we all are going to die!

Remember this, death is certain – life isn't!

You say, I don't believe all this. I'm a good person; God would never send me to hell, if it even exists at all! You will then. You'll believe it; you'll see it, but it'll be too late. You must have a standing of righteousness, which only comes through faith in Christ, **before you die!** And you will die; we will all die. *“And as it is appointed unto men **once to die**, but after this the judgment:”* Hebrews 9:27

The ultimate reality for all of us is that each day of our existence here on earth we are being brought closer to standing before this holy God and being judged. No friends, no family, just you alone. Are you ready for that day!

Picture this if you will, a man or woman going about their daily business making a living, enjoying life with their family and friends, then a car wreck, or heart attack, or something else and their life is over. As with the man who had accumulated many things in life, like so many today in retirement. “*And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night **thy soul shall be required of thee**: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*” Luke 12:19, 20

Now what happens to these people who had not prepared to meet their maker? The believer in Christ will be taken by the angels into heaven and the presence of God, while the unbeliever will be dragged down into hell. And there we see the procession of millions of people entering through the gates of this dark domain.

Statistics show, as best they can calculate, that **155,000 people die each day** and most of them have not believed on Christ to be saved! That's approximately 6,000 per hour and over 100 per minute going through the gates of hell into this terrible place. If they were single file, and approximately three feet between each one, **the procession for just the one day would be 100 miles long!** Can you imagine this terrible spectacle and it's going on one per second as we speak!

This is where the devil's highway ends. It began at our physical birth and ends in hell's dark domain And on the devil's highway is a parade of millions and millions of lost souls going to this terrible place. Do you want to be one of them? **You already are if you have not believed on Christ as your Savior.** But you can get off this highway by believing on Jesus Christ as your Savior.

“*And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*” 1 John 2:17 The word for *passeth away* is *parago* and was the word used for a parade, or the procession of the mother goddess cult that the Apostle John was able to observe in his town. But you notice, where was John? He was standing on the sideline watching the parade go by! He observed it; he not a part of it.

We have all seen parades in our lives with their floats, bands and what not, as we stand on the side watching it all go by. The devil's world is like that. It's a procession of people going by laughing and talking and doing their things, full of life and what they have done in life. But has anyone asked **where does this procession end up?** They're born, they grow up, they become of age and they join in the parade. That's the beginning. But they are not able to see the head of the parade; they don't see where it's going to end. And the **parade of this world ends up in hell!**

And along the sidelines of this world's procession into hell are those yelling to those in the “parade” to get out of it by coming to Christ. They're warning them that this parade doesn't have a happy ending, that it ends up in hell and then the lake of fire. It reminds me of going down a certain river for the first time on inner tubes. Everybody's having fun and enjoying the day, but along the banks are those yelling at them to get out because there is a major waterfall ahead that will kill them.

The treacherous river, although it seems OK at the time, is like the world system that belongs to the devil. Now there will be some who laugh at those sounding the warning, there will be those who are having too much fun to pay attention to them, and there will be those who heed the warning to come out of the world and place your faith in Christ. **Which one are you?** There is no middle ground here; there is no debate. **You are on the road to hell right now and you must believe on Christ to avoid it.**

Christians are called “narrow-minded” by many because we insist that Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation. Many believe that they don't even need to be saved! But Christ made this very clear when he talked about the narrow gate. *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”* Matthew 7:13,14

The image of the **narrow gate** was familiar in the ancient world. It indicated that because this one particular gate was so narrow that it was difficult to find, hence it was ignored by so many, choosing rather to go through the wide gate due to it being larger, easier to find and used by so many people.

The gate is narrow and so is the road. The road isn't narrow, it has been **narrowed**, the perfect passive participle of *thlibo*, shows the restriction of the divine condition of solely believing on Christ to go down this road. It also has the idea of two steep mountains so close to each other that they create a very narrow gorge that one can only enter into by a very narrow gate. **The one narrow gate and narrow path leads upward into the section called Paradise, while the broad gate and broad path lead downward into the area called Torments.**

Satan's wants to drag as many people as he can with him down into the lake of fire. Christ wants to take all who will trust him as their Savior in his train up to heaven to be with him. Who do you want to follow? Who do you want to be with? **Where do you want to end up?** You will end up in only one of two places at the end of your life. You will end up in heaven if you have believed on Christ, or you will end up in hell if you reject him.

Throughout the entire Bible there is a major theme that stands out and that is God is a holy God, that he judges, that he judges righteously, that no one can escape his judgment, man nor angel, *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”* Hebrews 9:27, and that when he judges, he judges with fire, *“For our God is a consuming fire.”* Hebrews 12:29

God's judgment had already passed on the entire human race when Adam sinned against God in the garden. That is why when anyone is born they are already on the path down to the fires of hell. Hell is the precursor, a holding cell if you will, where unsaved man is kept until the final resurrection and judgment. The only way to avoid that, the only escape from this path is through faith in Christ. God is a just God, but he is also gracious and loving as demonstrated in him giving us his Son as the sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sins so that we might be saved through faith in him.

Fire plays a dominant theme in this matter of God's righteousness, holiness, justice and judgment. In the book of Daniel we see the justice of God in action and that his throne is ablaze with flames; we see a river of fire flow from the throne, and as all rivers end up in a lake, sea, or ocean; we see the final judgment of the lake of fire.

*“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his **throne** was like the **fiery flame**, and his wheels as **burning fire**. A **fiery stream** issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.” Daniel 7:9-11*

And the final judgment in the lake of fire is where the devil, and those angels who sided with him in the rebellion against God, and all those who have not believed on Christ as their Savior will be thrown into this lake of fire and brimstone. Yes, my friend, the very expression that millions have laughed at for so many years is there and it's real and it's where you are heading without Christ as your Savior. *“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. **And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.**” Revelation 20:13-15*

But there is found something else flowing from the throne of God afterward and that is the river of the water of life. *“And he shewed me **a pure river of water of life**, clear as crystal, **proceeding out of the throne of God** and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” Revelation 22:1,2*

Where the **river of fire** proceeding from God's throne speaks of the righteousness, justice and wrath of God on all those who reject his Son; the **river of the water of life coming from the throne of God** speaks of his love, his grace, mercy and forgiveness for all who believe on his Son. **So the question is which one do you want?**

Even believers in Christ and their works will be judged by the fire of God! I don't think many believers think about these things any more or live their lives with these things in mind. They have become like the unsaved pursuing after money and their own things and have not considered where all this is going to end.

Believers in Christ are going to be judged by fire also and so are their works. They will survive the fiery judgment of God, but their works of the flesh won't. *“Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by **fire**; and the **fire** shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by **fire**.” 1 Corinthians 3:13-15*

If you are not a believer in Christ you might be asking yourself the question what do people do to go to hell? The answer is nothing! We are all on the path to hell from our birth! Because we were born into Adam's race we were born into sin and under the curse of God. When Adam sinned against God and aligned himself with Satan, Adam then, and everyone born from Adam, was doomed to share Satan's destiny in the lake of fire.

But the love and grace of God intervened on man's behalf and sent his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. All we have to do is believe on Jesus Christ as our Savior and thereby accept God's gift of forgiveness. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* John 3:16

The Bible says that in Adam all will die, but in Christ all will be made alive. *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”* 1 Corinthians 15:22 The term *in Adam, en Adam*, and *in Christ, en Christo*, are legal terms meaning that one is legally identified with someone. When we were born, we were legally identified with Adam meaning that we would share Adam's legal punishment in the lake of fire. But when we are born again, through faith in Jesus Christ, we now share Christ's position in heaven throughout eternity! **So which one do you want?**

Remember this, that if you are not a believer in Christ you are already on the devil's highway that ends up at the gates of hell! It's not what do I have to do to end up on this highway – you are already on it! We all were! The question is what do I have to do to get off it? And there is only one way to get off this path and that is by believing on Christ as your Savior!

We live our lives on earth doing this and that, busying ourselves with so many pleasures and pursuits, that is our present reality, sort of like the movie, “The Matrix”. But we have ever **asked ourselves, what is the reality after I die?** Do I automatically go to heaven? Do I just cease to exist? (What was all that about?) Do I go to another dimension? Is our thinking along the lines of that old Rock song, “Sure there ain't no heaven, but pray there ain't no hell”? People need to ask themselves what happens to me after I die? What will happen to me when my soul leaves my body? **Where will my soul go?**

Your soul is the most precious thing that you have. It is you. And it is going to live on past your physical death. **The question is where do you want it to go?** Do you want to go to hell? Do you want to wake up one moment after your death in this line of people going through the portals of the gates of hell knowing that there is no escape and that nothing but torment and suffering await you there? Or would you like to wake up face to face with Jesus Christ in heaven surrounded by his love and peace?

If the answer to that question is Jesus Christ, then you must simply place your faith and trust in him as your Savior. Tell God that you are believing on his Son as your Savior right now and thank him for saving you.

Pastor Mike

