

Title: Driven by eternity IV – No second chances
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Hell is an uncomfortable topic.

Some ask: "How could a loving God send people to Hell?", implying that a loving God wouldn't do such a thing. Yet a better question might be: "Why would a God of love send people to Hell?" The answer to this question could lead us to understanding God's holiness, the severity of sin and the imperative for Jesus dying for all of us.

The fear of the Lord.

No fear?

Psalm 33:6, 8-9 (ESV) ⁶ *By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host...* ⁸ *Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!* ⁹ *For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.*

- **There is a God of love who rules the universe.** He is Lord. He is glorious. All should fear Him.
- The Fear of the Lord is a wellspring of life. The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. *In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence! The fear of the Lord keeps us from evil.... It brings sanity...*

Corruption of sin

Why hell? Devil / Satan / Lucifer and his angels rebelled against God. Hell wasn't created for mankind.

John 8:42, 44-45 (ESV) ⁴² *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here..."* ⁴⁴ *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

- **You are of your father the devil. In your nature** you have the same corruption, the same evil, the same moral cancer... the same rebellion... against God and His rule as King.

It is God's love that keeps unrepentant sinners out of Heaven. For He cannot allow corruption to come and destroy the rest of the saints.

Revelation 21:27 (ESV) ²⁷ *But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

Matthew 10:26–28 (ESV) ²⁶ *"So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.* ²⁷ *What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.* ²⁸ *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Rob bell – love wins

"Love Wins", a highly controversial book by Rob bell, was released earlier last year. The book has sparked loads of debate amongst Christians and non-Christians. The debate has been about what the Bible says about hell. The book is full of questions, especially leading questions that imply that God wouldn't sentence people to an eternal suffering in Hell. Rob Bell doesn't commit himself to any specific position, but the questions he asks does lead the reader to specific conclusions.

Bell writes: 'At the heart of this perspective is the belief that, given enough time, everybody will turn to God and find themselves in the joy and peace of God's presence. The love of God will melt every hard heart, and even the most "depraved sinners" will eventually give up their resistance and turn to God. '¹

Throughout history, some Christians have not only wanted God to save everyone, but have gone on to argue that the Bible says he will. This view is **called Universalism**. The most famous proponent of Universalism was an early church leader called Origen (AD 185 – 254). Rob Bell finds this view compelling. With creativity and wit, he sets forth a similar proposal yet he avoids the label Universalism. Nevertheless Bell suggests that every single person will embrace Jesus – if not in this life, then certainly in the next.²

Surely every Christian would wish this were true! Who wouldn't want every person that has ever lived to come to know the One whom we love? Yet does the Bible say this will be so? Even if we want this with all our hearts, does God state that everyone will be saved one day?

Diminishing the glory

Universalism diminishes the glory of Christ's death on the cross. Randy Alcorn explains, 'By denying the endlessness of Hell, we minimize Christ's work on the cross. Why? Because we lower the stakes of redemption. If Christ's crucifixion and resurrection didn't deliver us from an eternal Hell, his work on the cross is less heroic, less potent, less consequential, and thus less deserving of our worship and praise.'³

John 8:34–36 (ESV) ³⁴ *Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*

- **The Son remains forever.** We are sons of God! We have a new nature, no longer slaves of sin.
- **Free from what?** Jesus sets us free from sin. From the inner corrupting nature. Delivered us from hell on the inside. We have a new nature... we no longer want to sin.

Romans 6:22 (NKJV) ²² *But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.*

No second chances

Another chance after death? It's important to understand that Christian Universalists believe that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ and Christ alone. There's nothing unorthodox about this aspect of their teaching. The difference is that they believe people will have another chance (or many chances) after death to believe in Jesus and be saved. In this sense Rob Bell comes across as a Christian Universalist, although he denies this. ⁴

We need to look at all the after death second-chance passages in the Bible that actually teach this view to determine if it is valid. The problem is, there aren't any passages that say this. No passage in the Bible says that there will be a second chance after death to turn to Jesus. And that's frightening. It's frightening because the idea of an after-death conversion is the most important ingredient for the Universalist position. It makes or breaks the view. But there is no single passage in the Bible that describes, hints at, hopes for, or suggests that someone who dies without following Jesus in this life will have an opportunity to do so after death.⁵ In fact, there are passages that clearly contradict it, like Hebrews 9:27 '*...it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.*'

***This is more than theology, this is about destiny.** The destiny of multitudes of people hangs in the balance. It is incredibly dangerous to take a stance on this topic without clear biblical evidence to support the view. What if Rob Bell is wrong? What if your neighbour or colleague at work doesn't get a second chance after death?

¹ Bell, Love Wins, 107

² Chan, Erasing Hell, 23

³ Alcorn, Heaven, 25

⁴ Chan, Erasing Hell, 25

⁵ Chan, Erasing Hell, 35

What if Hell is real and each of us starts living with the urgency it demands? We will live differently when we know there are no second chances for those who die without Christ. Hell is real, but do we live like we believe it?