

~Other Speakers A-F: Christian Apologetics:

The idea of a loving God sending people to hell for eternity is not easy to accept. Why would God, who is full of mercy and grace, send people to a place of torment for ever and ever for not trusting in Jesus even though they are nice people, or never heard of Jesus, or were sincerely trying to find God? Is that fair? Is that right?

When people ask these questions, they are appealing to what they perceive as fairness. They are looking at the issue from their human perspective. But this perspective is not necessarily the right one. If God exists, and He does, then it is He who is the One who says what is right and fair, not us. So, we need to see what the Bible says about what is right regarding sin and salvation and make a decision afterwards.

The Bible tells us that God is holy, "You shall be holy, for I am holy," (1 Pet. 1:16). Holiness is incorruptibility, perfection, purity, and the inability to sin, all of which which are possessed by God alone. Holiness is the very nature of God's character. His character is perfect, without flaw, and He is the standard of all that is right and good.

The Bible also says that God is infinite, "Great is our Lord, and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite," (Psalm 147:5). If God's understanding is infinite, then God is infinite in nature.

The Bible tells us that God is love. "And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him," (1 John 4:16). God cares about us and seeks our well being and security. His thoughts about us are infinite and His love is too. This is why God does not desire that anyone go to hell, but that all come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

The Bible tells us that God is righteous. "God is a righteous judge," (Psalm 7:9). His righteousness is part of His character just as are mercy and love. Righteousness deals with justice and justice deals with the Law. This means that God will always do that which is right and He does so according to the righteous Law that He has set forth. God cannot do anything wrong. God must do that which is right, otherwise He would not be righteous.

Jesus said that "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks," (Matt. 12:34). So too with God. He speaks out of the abundance of His heart. God spoke the universe into existence, "Let their be light," (Gen. 1:3) and He also spoke forth the Law (Exodus 20 - the Ten Commandments, etc.). Therefore, the Law of God, is a reflection of God's character, because it comes out of what He is, holy, perfect, righteous, and good. Therefore, the Law is a standard of perfection. It is perfect and if we do not keep it perfectly, then we have offended the God who gave it; after all, it is a reflection of His character. To break God's Law is to offend (sin against) God. Since it is law, there is punishment because there is no Law that is a law without a punishment. This means that when we break the Law of God, we fall under the judgment of the Law of God. Since He is infinite, our offense against Him is takes on an infinite quality because we have offended an infinitely holy and righteous God.

Must God punish?

Yes, God must punish those who break His law because it is the right thing to do. Just as a parent should punish a child for doing something wrong (intentionally), so God must punish those who do wrong. You see, if God did not punish the person who does wrong, then He would be unjust and unrighteous. He would be breaking His own law -- which He cannot do. But, someone might say that the punishment of a parent on a child is temporary whereas God's punishment is eternal. Why the difference? The answer is two fold. First, God is infinite and a parent is not. Second, God is the standard of all righteousness and the parent is not.

Because God is infinite, when we sin, we are offending an infinite God. This is incredibly significant. The reason sin is so bad is not so much because of the one committing the sin, but because of the One who is offended. In other words, sin is so incredibly bad because it takes on a horrible quality by the very fact of who it is against: an infinitely pure, holy, and righteous God.

A parent is not the standard of righteousness. God is. A parent is (or should be) using the righteous standard of God in raising children. Therefore, though a parent's punishment is temporary because it is instruction and correction, the punishment of God is eternal because our sin is against an eternal God. There is a big difference.

Can we please God on our own?

Is it possible to earn one's place before God by what we do (being good, etc.)? Is it possible for a finite being to please an infinite one? If so, then that means a sinner who has offended an infinite God, is able please God by his efforts. But, if he is a sinner, then aren't those "good" things he does also touched by sin since they are motivated out of the heart of a sinner? Yes. This is what the Bible declares since it says that our hearts are deceitful and not to be trusted (Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:21-23).

But then someone might say that if the person is sincere when he does the good works, then that should be

A loving God would never send anyone to hell

acceptable to God. But, saying it should be acceptable doesn't mean it is. Remember, according to the Bible we cannot trust our own hearts (Jer. 17:9). This means that we cannot even trust our own sincerity.

God is the judge, not us. If we could please God by our efforts or sincerity, then it would mean that a finite person can appease an infinite God by doing good works. It further means that sincerity becomes a meritorious condition of the heart. It would be like saying, "God, I am worthy to be with you because of the good works I have done and the good and sincere condition of my heart." Can any mortal who has fallen into sin ever do anything good enough to please an infinite God? The answer is no. Gal. 2:21 says, "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." In other words, if we could get to heaven by what we do, then Jesus didn't need to die on the cross. Therefore, God has established that our works and sincerity cannot be good enough.

Finally, for those who still maintain that we can please God by our efforts, we must ask how many good works must he perform in order to undo an offense against an infinitely holy God? Is there a standard by which we can judge which sin requires how many goods works to cancel out? There is none. Therefore, he is left in a predicament. Since God must punish the sinner for offending Him (breaking His holy and righteous law), and our works cannot undo the offense against God, then how are we going to escape so great a righteous judgment?

The way of escape

The only way to escape the righteous judgment of God is to trust in the provision He has made. This provision is found in Jesus. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life," (John 3:16). Jesus is the only way to salvation (John 14:6). Jesus is also God in flesh (John 1:1,14; Col. 2:9). Therefore, Jesus' life is of infinite value. This means that His sacrifice is sufficient to cleanse you of your sins. It is capable of satisfying the infinitely righteous standard of God that is required to match His infinite holiness.

Jesus' sacrifice is the only provision acceptable to God the Father. If you want to escape the eternal judgment of God, you must put your trust in Jesus and what He did on the cross and in nothing else. Without Him, there is no hope of escape on the Day of Judgment. How do you do this? You receive Jesus (John 1:12). You trust in Him alone. You can ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins (John 14:14). Trust Him alone.