

BAD IDEAS

REMOVING ROADBLOCKS TO KNOWING GOD

*For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.
~ The Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)*

BAD IDEA #4: God Tortures People Forever (Part 1)

APPETIZER: What Is At Stake?

What is at stake?

- Our understanding of ourselves.
- Our understanding of God.
- Our ability to share the gospel.

Romans 2:4

What is NOT at stake?

Indeed in nothing is the power of the Dark Lord more clearly shown than in the estrangement that divides all those who still oppose him.
- J.R.R. Tolkien, Lord of the Rings

DINE IN: Rock, Paper, Scissors – Three Views of Hell

Matthew 5:44-48; Luke 6:27-36

1. ETERNAL TORTURE (Traditionalism / Classical View)

- Key Word: *PUNISH*
- *An eternal life of loss.*
- We are a rock in the fire – enduring, but with feelings!
- Held by Tertullian, Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, John Piper, Tim Keller, Francis Chan, and most Protestants and Catholics.



2. ETERNAL END (Annihilationism / Conditionalism)

- Key Word: *PERISH*
- *An eternal loss of life.*
- We are paper in the fire – won't last long!
- Held by Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, NT Wright, John Stott, Greg Boyd, Edward Fudge, Ben Witherington III, Clark Pinnock, Michael Green.



3. ETERNAL OPPORTUNITY (Universalism / Restorationism)

- Key Word: *PURIFY*
- *An eternal offer of life.*
- We are a surgical scissors in the fire – decontamination!
- Held by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Rob Bell, Jacques Ellul, Hannah Whittall Smith, George MacDonald, Brad Jersak, Karl Barth (in hopeful form).



THE BEST BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR THE TRADITIONAL VIEW...

**Daniel 12:2 (but see Isaiah 66:24); Matthew 25:41, 46;
Mark 9:47-49; Revelation 14:9-11; 20:10, 15**

The evil ones shall be made immortal – but only to be tormented in the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.
~ Belgic Confession (Article 37)

Re: "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16)...

"Here then he does not speak of the essence of God, but only shows what he is found to be by us [i.e., the elect]."

~ John Cavin (Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles)

TAKE OUT: God's Love Outlasts His Anger

Psalms 30:4-5

For more on this topic...

- Sermons: We Believe, part 9; Beyond the Grave, part 3
- Book: All You Want To Know About Hell, by Steve Gregg

NEXT WEEK: BAD IDEA #4: God Tortures People Forever (part 2)

Home Church Questions

HANGOUT [Warming Up to the Topic – in one Large Group]

1. After reviewing Sunday's message, talk about something you learned or any questions that remain.
2. What view of hell have you held in the past and/or do you hold now?

HEAR [Listening to God through Scripture – in Discussion Groups]

3. Debate! OR...Research & Report!
 - a. Take turns dividing into three groups representing the three views of hell. Take five minutes to prepare by studying the relevant scripture passages. Then have a debate! After a few minutes, switch positions, take five minutes to prep, and get back to debating!
 - b. OR... Divide into two groups to research and report on the two other hell options of Conditionalism and Universalism. Each group take one view and research it's scriptural support, then report to and discuss with the other group. (Way to prep for next Sunday's message!)
 - **TRADITIONALISM** – see Scriptures in your notes.
 - **CONDITIONALISM** – Matthew 7:13-14; 10:28; 16:25-26; John 3:16; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 6:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Timothy 6:15-16; 2 Peter 3:7-12; 1 John 5:12
 - **UNIVERSALISM** – Matthew 18:34-35; Romans 5:18; 11:32; 14:11; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 15:22, 28; Ephesians 1:10, 23; Philippians 2:10-11; Colossians 1:20; Revelation 21:5
4. How would you respond to someone who said, "How can you believe in a God who sets up a universe that ends with countless numbers of people being tortured forever?"

HUDDLE [Making It Personal and Praying Together – in Huddles]

5. Use your Huddle Handout Questions and pray for one another.

Quotes

Welcome back to our series about common bad ideas that interfere with people knowing God.

Today we tackle one of the most powerful bad ideas that prevent people from knowing the God revealed by Jesus:
God Tortures People Forever

I can conceive of no more powerful and irrefutable argument in favour of atheism than the eternal torments of hell.

~ Nicholas Berdyaev (Russian Theologian)

There is one very serious defect to my mind in Christ's moral character, and that is that He believed in hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment.
~ Bertrand Russell (Atheist Philosopher)

I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother and almost all my best friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine.
~ Charles Darwin

Emotionally, I find the concept of eternal torment intolerable, and do not understand how people can live with it without cauterizing their feelings or cracking under the strain.
~ John R.W. Stott (Christian Theologian)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
~ Jesus