

- There is a story that has been told over the years that goes a little something like this. There were 3 young men that attend a Sunday service at a local church. The preacher just happened to be presenting a passionate and powerful lesson on the subject of hell. After worship concluded, the preacher approached the young men and asked them some spiritual questions in hopes of getting them to consider the condition of their souls. The boys didn't want to hear any of it and as they blew off the preacher one of the boys asked the preacher sarcastically, "just how far is it to hell anyways, preacher?" The boys hopped in their sports car and peeled out of the parking lot throwing gravel as they flew off. The preacher stood there and considered the question the one boy had asked.....
- What about that question, though? Seems pretty odd to ask, but I think it shows a lack of understanding concerning hell. Unfortunately, I don't think that we always comprehend the serious nature of hell. Maybe we do comprehend it, but it is always good to be reminded that hell indeed is real and that we must always be on guard so that we do not let our guard down and end up eternally separated from God. Let's seek to answer the question of just how far it is to hell.

I. Hell isn't far enough away.**A. When we realize that it is real.**

1. Jesus taught as if hell is indeed a real place. **(Mark 9:43-44)**
2. His story of the rich man and Lazarus gives a foretaste of what eternal hell (*gehenna*) will be like. **(Luke 16:23-28)**
3. If hades is real then we must recognize hell as being real, as well.
4. If we believe in God and the Bible then we must believe that hell is a real place because of the way it is spoken of in the Bible.
5. Hell is described as a real place reserved for the wicked. **(Matt. 25:46)**

B. When we realize that it is torment.

1. Not only is it real, but it is torment and punishment. **(Matt. 25:46)**
2. It is described in very vivid and and terrifying terms.
 - Furnace of fire **(Matt. 13:42)**
 - Lake of fire **(Rev. 20:10,14,15; 21:8)**
 - Eternal fire **(Jude 1:7)**
 - Unquenchable fire **(Matt. 3:12; Luke 3:17)**
 - Weeping and gnashing of teeth **(All throughout Matthew & Luke 13)**
 - Prepared for the devil and his angels **(Matt. 25:41)**
 - Outer darkness **(Matt 8,22,25)**

C. When we realize that it is eternal.

1. Some teach that the punishment of hell will only last for a period of time and then the soul will be completely destroyed. This is known as annihilation, and a soul will go out of existence at different times depending on the severity of the sins committed. This concept is foreign to the Word of God because it teaches that hell will last forever and be eternal.
2. Once again in **Matthew 25:46**, we see another aspect of hell that it is eternal.
3. The Greek word for eternal "*aionios*" is used over 50 times throughout the Bible and is translated in different places as everlasting and eternal.
4. Nowhere in Scripture does the severity of sin matter to God and incur different punishments.. The sins of **Galatians 5** are of a wide variety but there is nothing that gives the impression that they will receive different levels of punishment.

II. Hell is too close!

- Back to that story of the 3 young men that visited that congregation. The preacher continued to talk to other people that night, and just a little while later a policeman pulled into the parking lot. He asked if anyone had seen a sports car that would have passed by the church just a little bit earlier. The preacher said the car had left from the building, and the officer informed them that the car had crashed just down the road. They had crashed their car into a tree or pole and they had all been killed in the crash. For those boys, hell seemed to be just 2.5 miles down the road.
 - A. The Bible is full of individuals who were so very close to hell because of their actions. Some, thankfully, had time to repent of their sins, but others unfortunately died in their sin.
 - Adam and Ever were as close as the lowest fruit on the tree. (**Gen. 2:17; 3:6**)
 - Nadab and Abihu were as close as the alter in front of them. (**Lev. 10:1,2**)
 - Uzzah was as close as one touch of the Ark of God. (**II Sam. 6:6-8**)
 - David was as close as the nearest bed of adultery. (**II Sam. 11:1-4**)
 - Judas was close as the end noose on his rope. (**Matt. 27:5**)
 - Ananias and Saphira were as close as their lie to the Apostles and God. (**Acts 5:1-11**)
 - Simon was as close as his wallet and his greed. (**Acts 8:15-20**)
 - The Apostle Peter was as close as the nearest Gentile Christian. (**Gal. 2:11-13**)
 - Felix and Agrippa were as close the decision to obey the Gospel. (**Acts 24:25; 26:28**)
 - B. Hell is too close to every single one of us. One decision to sin against God lands us on the fast track to eternal destruction and punishment.

III. How close is it for you?

- A. Hell is as close as any sin we might commit.
 1. Maybe it's that moment where you lack self control and give in to your temptation.
 2. Maybe it's that moment when you think God will be ok with your sin.
 3. It might be that time where you sin because you just don't care anymore.
 4. At that moment you are as close to hell as you could ever be.
- B. Hell is as close as the Lord's return.
 1. We don't know when Jesus will return. (**Matt. 24:36**)
 2. It will come when we least expect it. (**I Thess. 5:2**)
- C. Hell as close as your death.
 1. Hell could be one heartbeat away.
 2. Hell could be one stroke away.
 3. Hell could be one trip down the road away.
 4. Hell could be one flight away.
 5. Much like the Lord's return, we have no clue when our time will be up and if we're not right with God then hell is going to be our eternal destination.

It should be truly terrifying to us to think about hell being so close for us. We should constantly live in such a way that we keep hell as far away as possible. Let us consider **Romans 13:11ff** as we close the lesson. While hell is close, our salvation can be just as close, if not closer! Let us reach out and obtain salvation and live our lives for the Lord! Hell can be close, but may God help us to steer clear of it and stay as close as we can to Him.