

How Can a Loving God Send
Anyone to Hell?

Four Lessons On Questions That Try Our Faith:

- How can a loving God allow evil to exist?
- How can a loving God send anyone to hell?
- Why did a loving God make me this way?
- Why does a loving God allow me to be tempted?

Understanding Hell

- Gehenna: the Valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem; place where garbage was burned; place where worm does not die, fire unquenched; manifests hell as terrifyingly unpleasant
 - Matt. 5:22, 29 - “But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.”

Understanding Hell

- Matt. 10:28 - “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”
- Mark 9:43-49 - “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched-- 44 where 'Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.' 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched-- 46 where 'Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.' 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire-- 48 where 'Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.'”

Understanding Hell

- The Outer Darkness: demonstration of complete separation from God; place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, great torture, misery
 - Matt. 8:12 - “But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
 - Matt. 22:13 - “Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

Understanding Hell

- Hell is vengeance upon unbelievers, those disobedient to Gospel, suffering eternal destruction away from God and His power
 - 2Thes. 1:8-9 - “...In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

Understanding Hell

- Hell is the second death, a lake of fire and sulfur, a place of perpetual torment
 - Rev. 20:10, 14-15 - “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever... 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Understanding Hell

- It is the abode of those who do not believe in God, do not obey Gospel of Jesus Christ; those who have done evil; those involved in sin without repentance
 - Rom. 2:5-10 - “will render to each one according to his deeds”
 - Gal. 5:19-21 - “will not inherit the kingdom of God”
 - Rev. 20:12-15 - “they were judged, each one according to his works”

Understanding Hell

- How could a loving God send anyone there?
 - Has it occurred to anyone that the Loving Savior had a lot to say about sinners going to hell?

Understanding “Loving”

- True love cannot rejoice in unrighteousness
 - 1Cor. 13:6 - “...does not rejoice in iniquity...”

Understanding “Loving”

- True love is demonstrated through discipline
 - Heb. 12:6-8, 11 - “For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives. 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Understanding “Loving”

- Love seeks the best interests of the one loved
 - “If God loves everyone, how could hell be in the best interest of anyone?”

Consider The Question

- How can a loving God send Adolf Hitler to hell? Joseph Stalin, Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden?
 - After all, God loves them too, right?
 - John 3:16
 - For most people, the idea of terribly sinful people being sent to hell does not pose much difficulty. Why is that?

A Sense Of Justice

- Justice: “The virtue which consists in giving to everyone what is his due” (Webster's)
- If wrongdoing goes unpunished, it both cheapens doing right and encourages further wrongdoing
 - Psalm 33:5 - “He loves righteousness and justice”
 - Isa. 61:8 - “For I, the LORD, love justice”

A Sense Of Justice

- God cannot allow unrepentant sin to go unpunished and still love justice
 - Rom. 2:5-6, 11 - “But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who will render to each one according to his deeds... 11 For there is no partiality with God.”
 - Rom. 12:19 - “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

A Sense Of Justice

- A source of hope for the oppressed: God's righteous judgment against those who oppress
 - 2Thes. 1:6 - “Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you”
 - Rev. 6:9-11 - “When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth? 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.”

A Sense Of Justice

- So, your sense of justice allows Hitler to be sent to hell; where do you draw the line as to who else should be sent there?
- Wouldn't better questions be: Where does God draw the line, and why does He draw it there?

How Can a Loving God Send
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Harmonizing Love, Justice, And Grace

- Sin is sin; distinctions are generated by human opinion
 - Gal. 5:19-22
 - 1Cor. 6:9-10

Harmonizing Love, Justice, And Grace

- Murder, adultery, stealing are on the same level as rivalries, outbursts of anger, lying
 - Showing partiality and failing to do good is sin
 - James 2:9, 4:17

Harmonizing Love, Justice, And Grace

- Sin is transgression against God's purposes
 - 1John 3:4, 8, 10 - “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness... 8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil... 10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.”

Harmonizing Love, Justice, And Grace

- All sin is as much transgression as any other sin
- All who sin fall under the same sentence of condemnation
 - Isa. 59:2 - “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”
 - Rom. 3:9-12 - “What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. 10 As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.”

Harmonizing Love, Justice, And Grace

- We all deserve condemnation for our sins
 - Rom. 6:23 - “For the wages of sin is death...”
- Yet God has shown us grace and mercy by providing the payment for our sin through the blood of Jesus Christ
 - Rom. 3:24 - “being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”

Harmonizing Love, Justice, And Grace

- Rom. 5:6-9 - “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”
- Eph. 2:4-6 - “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”
- Titus 3:3-5 - “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us”

Harmonizing Love, Justice, And Grace

- We must remember that if we are redeemed from the sentence of hell, it is due to God's great grace and mercy toward us; we do not deserve it
 - Forgiveness is NOT an entitlement!
- The question is not how can a loving God send anyone to hell; it is instead the none of us deserves to go to heaven, so what has a loving God done to help us avoid hell and go to heaven?

God's Ways Are Greater Than Ours

- We are the creation; God is the Creator
 - Isa. 55:8-9 - “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.”
 - Rom. 9:19-21 - “You will say to me then, Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will? 20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, Why have you made me like this? 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?”

God's Ways Are Greater Than Ours

- If God is a God of justice, and He declares it just, who are we to say that it is unjust?
 - Ez. 18:29-32 - “Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair? 30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. 31 Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? 32 **For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies**, says the Lord GOD. Therefore turn and live!”
 - 2Peter 3:9 - “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

God's Ways Are Greater Than Ours

- The question has radically changed! It is not, why is a loving God sending sinners to hell; it is, why are sinners choosing to go to hell? Is God going to oppose their choice to go there?

God's Ways Are Greater Than Ours

- Does anyone complain about the idea of receiving eternal blessings that are clearly over the top as a reward for earthly obedience?
 - Rom. 8:17-18 - Fellow heirs with Jesus. Has anything we have done in this world measured up to what He has done?
 - Rev. 21-22 - Have we worked enough and been righteous enough for such a place?

God's Ways Are Greater Than Ours

- There is no sin beyond forgiveness
 - 1Tim. 1:12-16
- All have the same opportunity to come to the knowledge of God and will be judged justly at the Judgment
 - Rom. 1:19-20 - “because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse”
- While this may offend your sense of fairness, you need to understand that no one promised life would be fair as judged by an arbitrary human standard of fairness

God's Ways Are Greater Than Ours

- There is no passage of Scripture that gives the idea that everyone will be saved, that good people will be saved by their own merit, or that there is some last-minute exemption clause for the majority of people. Jesus acknowledged that the majority will not be redeemed
 - Matt. 7:13-14 - “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

God's Ways Are Greater Than Ours

- Let no one be deceived: hell is not just for terrible sinners; it is for every unrepentant sinner, believer or unbeliever
 - Matt. 7:19-21 - Those who call on the Lord
 - 1Cor. 6:9-10 - Those who are disciples
 - Gal. 5:19-21 - Those who give in to weakness
 - Heb. 10:26-31 - Those who deliberately sin

Lessons

- It is only thanks to His grace and mercy that any are saved
- Some will be saved, but not by their own merit, but because they believed in God and obeyed Him
- In spite of human definitions and opinions, God considers all unrighteousness (and the failure to do righteousness) to be sin, and all who continue in sin without repentance will go to hell