

Today's Bible reading is very topical for Australians at the moment – at least it should be, especially if we're following current events, and how our brothers & sisters in Christ are being treated in our country....

Earlier this week, Israel Folau, (who is recognised by many as "Australia's best Rugby Union Player"), was found guilty of committing a "**High Level**" breach of the Rugby Australia Professional Code of Conduct... A judgment of a "High Level" breach, could mean that he could lose his job, and Rugby Australia (even before the tribunal met), had already announced, unconditionally, that regardless of what the tribunal decided, he would not play rugby for Australia again...

Some people of authority have made mention of his position as a role-model for children... and their comments have indicated that he's not a good one...ⁱ

Why? What has this man done? What conduct has been so heinous, that he has earned such a judgment of his character and conduct???

I'll tell you what he did:

In his personal social media, he reposted something that said:

- *Drunks*
- *Homosexuals*
- *Adulterers*
- *Liars*
- *Fornicators*
- *Thieves*
- *Atheists*

- *Idolaters*

Will go to Hell, unless they repent and turn to Jesus.

Basically, he was quoting the Bible, and his personal words were:

“Those that are living in Sin will end up in Hell unless you repent. Jesus Christ loves you and is giving you time to turn away from your sin and come to him.”

That's what he did. What's the reaction about? Well, I'm pretty sure that if he didn't include the word “homosexual”, it wouldn't have gotten much attention at all... But it did include that word, and so it got lots of attention, and in fact, some media headlines were **only** homing in on that one issue...

But what is so offensive???

Israel dared to warn people about “Hell” and “Judgment”...

I've been watching this issue pretty closely as it unfolds in the media. And it depends (very much) on which media outlet you listen to, as to what they think of Israel and his comments.

But it's been very enlightening, to read comments coming from varying segments of the community, and various readers of the articles...

In the paper that I read “The Australian”, most readers comments are **highly** supportive of Israel, and his right to state his religious beliefs... But even support comes in varying forms... Some say:

- “I don’t agree with what he says. But I agree with his right to say it. You see, for them it’s an issue of freedom of speech
- And yet, some people who claim to be “Christian” have caned him for believing in Hell, and even worse, for daring to preach about Hell.
- Some have said “That’s ‘hate speech’” – “Telling someone they’re going to Hell, is ‘hate speech’”
- Some have made the point that he shouldn’t judge others... You see, by warning others of the existence of Hell, and God’s plan of salvation, they feel that Israel has judged them, and declared them guilty, and they say he doesn’t have that right
- Some have presented themselves as theological experts, and explained how Israel’s version of the gospel, isn’t the gospel....

Basically, our society do not want to be reminded of this place called “Hell”... And we certainly don’t want to be told that we might happen to be going there...

So, as disciples of Jesus, what **are** we to think of “Hell”?

Some people claim that to believe in “Hell”, **isn’t** the view of Jesus.... And they come down hard on any preacher who dares to mention “Hell” and “Judgment”... And some people would brand me today, as being one of those “Hell, fire and

brimstone preachers (He's probably a climate denier as well)..."... (as if that would fit me into some kind of 'box' of theirs, so therefore, don't bother listening to me – ("He's one of those sorts of preachers – we can just dismiss him...")...

But if you've been listening to these messages for a while, you should know, that I preach my way through whole books of the bible – we don't leave anything out... And that way, we only bring up stuff, as often as what God wants to bring it up... And perhaps today, I am a hell, fire and brimstone preacher, because in the passage we're studying today, **Jesus** is a hell, fire and brimstone preacher...

Some people claim that Jesus would never tell someone that they're going to Hell... But the hard (and for some people, unpalatable) reality, is Jesus had more to say about "Hell" than anyone else in the Bible... To make the claim, that to warn against the existence of Hell, isn't the way of Jesus – well, that's simply:

- Honest;
- at the best, it's complete ignorance;
- and at the worst, it's demonic deceit...

Jesus had more to say about "Hell" than anyone...

What is this place called "Hell"?

*Up until a couple of years ago, I used to call the local St George Rubbish Dump "Gehenna" ... There were certain locals, who (no matter how illegal it was, and no matter how hard the council told people **not** to do it), there was always*

someone who felt it necessary to light a match, and throw it into the dump... And dump seemed to be always smouldering away – it was a place where the fire never seemed to go out...

Why did I call it “Gehenna”?

Gehenna, was a valley south of Jerusalem. It was a place where people used to sacrifice their own children, to the god Molech...

When King Josiah re-discovered the book of the Law, and realised that the people of Israel had been unfaithful to God, he instituted reform in that nation. He wanted to make it Godly again... And he did his best to stamp out, the worship of false gods. And as part of this reform, he desecrated the place where people had sacrificed their children to Molech...

It was cursed; it was impure; it was unholy.

And so, by the time of Jesus, Gehenna had become the rubbish dump of Jerusalem. It was a place, where the fire never went out... They would take their rubbish there, and it would be continually smouldering... That's why I used to call our dump “Gehenna” – a dump, but a place where the fire seemed to never go out...

And when the ancients looked for a name to describe the destination of eternal judgment, they could think of no better place than Gehenna... A place for the wicked and the vile – a place for the refuse of the holy city to be dumped and burned... That's where the word “Gehenna” comes from, which we translate as “Hell”...

And Jesus had more to say about “Hell”, than any other person in the Bible...

So, what are we to make of it?

1. Firstly, Jesus teaches us that Hell is a real place...

There's been a popular (most probably fictional) book published in the last few years – “Heaven is for Real”... And most people don't mind hearing that heaven is for real... But it's not so comforting to hear that “Hell” is for real...

Hell, is not a fantasy constructed to try and make children and simpletons behave themselves. It's a real place. It's a real destination...

Is it a place of literal smouldering of fire, with worms eating your flesh and what-not??? I don't know... Just as we don't have a full and complete picture of what “Glory” is going to be like, nor do we have a full and complete picture of what this place of torment is going to be like” (a lot of the description of Hell, is Metaphor)... But what I **do** know, is the metaphors that are used, make it very clear, that Hell is a place of punishment and torment.

I've heard many people joke that Hell's going to be a fun place to go, because that's where all the fun people are going to be.... Oh dear, if only they knew....

2. Secondly, it is a place of **eternal** torment...

You will have heard the phrase, “Hell’s too good for him”... Oh, no it’s not. It’s a place of eternal, dreadful torment, and we don’t want to end up there...

As I was preparing for today, even in one of the commentaries that I read, the author had the attitude that Hell **isn’t** a place of eternal fire and torment... I very quickly concluded “that was their own view, because it’s certainly not at all, what the Scriptures clearly say”... They had the view that Hell was an instantaneous death or judgment, that just simply annihilated the existence of those found guilty.

Nowhere in the Scriptures, does it say that, and if we turn to the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, and the Last Judgment, the torment is described as “**forever and ever**”.

3. Thirdly, there is a day of judgment coming.

When Jesus returns, (And that day is getting closer and closer), those who embrace sin, and who reject Jesus Christ, will be judged, and sentenced to Hell.

There is no middle ground:

- With Christ in glory – His church presented to Him as the pure, holy bride of Christ; or
- Without Christ, in Hell...

That’s the 2 options. And many hold on to hope (the hopeless hope), “Surely there’s got to be a third option... I’m not a bad person... I don’t deserve Hell”...

But there **is** only 2 options...

- With Christ in glory; or

- Without Christ in Hell

How do you feel about that???

If this is our starting point – that Jesus said it, so it's true:

- that Hell exists;
 - that Hell is eternal; and
 - that those who reject Christ, will be going to Hell:
-
- how do you feel about that???
 - What do we do???
 - How do we respond?

Are you happy about it???

Does it make you want to shout "**Hallelujah!!!**"

It doesn't??? Are we the saints of God, or aren't we???

Would it surprise you to know, that the word "Hallelujah" (a transliteration of the Hebrew "Praise the Lord") occurs only 4 times in the whole of the Bible, and they all occur in the first 6 verses of Revelation 19... What's happening there??? Why are the saints of God, and the multitude of Heaven shouting out "Hallelujah"??? It's because God's righteous judgment has come...

The saints who have been persecuted and killed for their faith, have been crying out "How longⁱⁱ, O God??? How long, will you let this go on??? How long, until those baddies get what

they deserve??? How long until you bring your righteous judgment..." And finally it comes... Hallelujah!!!!

How do we feel about the concept of judgment and Hell? Do we want to shout out "Hallelujah!!!"? Or are we a little bit ashamed???

We've got the world's utter rejection:

- their disdain for Christ;
- their disdain for judgment; and
- their rejection of the concept of Hell; and
- their utter disdain for those who believe it...

Does it make us a little bit ashamed???

Some people make the point that Jesus gave this message privately to the Disciples, and it wasn't for the world to hear, and that therefore we should keep it to ourselves, and not mention it to anyone in the world...

Rubbish. In Matthew 10:26–28 , Jesus said:

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.

Our society, have generally lost the fear of God... Why is that??? Oh, they tell us they don't believe in Him, and that's why they're not afraid... Well, if that's the case, why are they

so keen to shut Christians up... Why do they hate the word of God being preached, so much???

Why have they lost their fear of God??? I believe, one reason is, we Christians, have been ashamed... We're afraid of the world, and so we haven't proclaimed the words of Jesus from the roof-top... Be encouraged: Jesus said: **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.**

But how do we feel about it??? It grieves us, doesn't it... Good.

It grieves us, to know that so many who reject Christ, are on their way to Hell... Good...

It's like when Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, He stopped, as he looked down from the path that overlooked the city, and He wept. He wept, because the way of peace with God was before them, but they failed to see it, and awful judgment was coming...

4. The fourth thing we learn, is "It's Godly to grieve the judgment of the wicked".

I remember as a child, when I'd done something naughty, my Dad would get out the strap, and once or twice, he said "This hurts me more than it hurts you" ... And I remember thinking "I don't think so" ... If I was quicker and cheekier, maybe I

*should've said, well hand the strap to me, and I'll hit you...
That way I'll get the worse punishment... I wouldn't dare...*

But you know what – When I became a Dad, I understood – It does hurt, a loving father, to have to punish their child...

- That's why Jesus wept over Jerusalem.
- That's why our Heavenly Father sent so many prophets to warn Israel, before He finally allowed Assyria to take the North, and Babylon to take the South, and these were terrible times...

In Ezekiel, 18, it says: ²³ *Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord YHWH, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?*

God doesn't take any pleasure in the death of the wicked...

You see:

There **has** to be a day of judgment – there **has** to be a punishment for sins... Why?? Because **justice** demands it...

*Even in our lawcourts, when justice **isn't** delivered, and when punishment seems weak, don't we as a society cry out, “Where's the justice?” And don't we demand that our judges start to get tough on crime...*

There **has** to be a day of judgment – there **has** to be a punishment for sins – justice demands it... And our God is a god of complete Justice...

But The Lord our God, is also a God of mercy... How can our Heavenly Father, at the same time, be a God of both justice and mercy??? I love the image in Psalm 85:10, where it gives us the image, that in God, **Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; and righteousness and peace kiss each other.**

Our God is righteous, but He also brings peace. In Him, righteousness and peace, kiss...

5. And so our 5th point, is “In God’s mercy, He bore the punishment Himself”

That’s why Jesus died on the cross... The crucifixion of Jesus Christ, wasn’t a picture of “the powerless being stamped upon by the corrupt, powerful rulers”... There was no one more powerful than Jesus... It was the case of the Lord God almighty, voluntarily paying the penalty that I deserved, and paying the penalty that you deserved...

There is no forgiveness of sins without sacrifice – without the shedding of bloodⁱⁱⁱ. But not just any blood – it has to be pure blood – it has to be holy blood...

The shedding of my own blood, doesn’t provide forgiveness – that’s justice... But the shedding of the blood of Christ – innocent blood, provides forgiveness... The Judge Himself, shed His own blood for us...

6. Sixthly, those who repent of sin, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, are forgiven...

Now, we talked about this briefly last week, and we're going to talk about it more next week – without repentance, there is no forgiveness of sin...

Repentance, begins with the change in our attitude toward Christ... If we continue to reject Christ – even if we're sorry for our sins – even if we're sorry for our wrong-doing – but we continue to reject Christ, we reject the one who is merciful – we reject the mercy of the one who is merciful... We'd rather trust in our own foolish pride, than trust in the one who loves us, and will save us, if only we turn to Him, and bow before Him, and worship Him , and be saved...

Repentance begins, when we turn our hearts towards Jesus Christ...

“Sin”, is our rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ... But our rejection of Christ, is also demonstrated, by the things we do... Repentance of Sin, is to stop rejecting Christ, **and** to turn, from the wrong things we do...

If I say “I love Jesus”, but I don't keep His commandments, I don't love Jesus at all – I love myself...

John, that wonderful apostle, who taught us so much about love, said:

¹ John 2:3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his

commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,
⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Those who repent of sin, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, are forgiven.

Repentance... Belief...

Let's come back. I asked earlier, "What are we to think of "Hell"?"

1. It's a real place;
2. Of eternal torment; and
3. The Day of Judgment is coming.

4. But we know that our Loving Heavenly Father, does not delight in the destruction of the wicked...
Because He is a just God, the day of judgment is coming, and the punishment must fit the crime...

5. But because God is a merciful God, He took the punishment Himself...
6. And so those who repent of Sin, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, are forgiven and receive eternal life...

If God did this, at enormous personal cost (the death of His Son on the cross); If Jesus died on the cross to save the many; What do we do???

Our Heavenly Father so loved the world, and was moved with compassion for the world, that He gave His only Son.

We know John 3:16 so well:

16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Some people even know the next verse:

17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

But how often do we quote the next 4 verses, because Jesus' words don't stop there. God did something, now, what do we need to do???:

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

The Good news, is: Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, is not condemned... But the good news is only good news, because without it, there's bad news: whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Coming from Romans 10:

- Everyone who calls on the Name of The Lord will be saved;
- But how will they call on Him if they haven't believed;
- And how are they going to believe if they haven't heard;
- And how are they going to hear, unless someone preaches it;
- And how are they going to preach, unless they are sent????

- How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news...

Who does God send? He sends us... He sends you; He sends me; He sends Israel Folau;

Does it grieve you, that those who **don't** repent of sin and give their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ, are on their way to Hell???

If that doesn't grieve me, I don't have a heart like Jesus' heart...

But does it grieve us enough:

- that we will dare to do what Israel did

- to love the world like God loves the world; and
- even though the world will hate us; and
- accuse us of hate speech; and
- use its laws and legalities to restrain us; and
- punish us; and
- silence us....

Do we love them enough to bear this, so that:

- the truth will be told;
- The Gospel will be heard;
- that some will be saved; and
- The Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified

Do we love them enough???

Because people like me have been gutless Christians...
because we've been too ashamed, to share the full Gospel out
into the world, „„, when somebody did publicly, there was:

- a level of shock;
- a level of disdain...
- a whole lot of offence...
- and persecution...

Jesus told us to expect this... Will we be witnesses for Jesus
Christ, in spite of it...

But very important for us today, is to begin with the question,
“Am I right with Jesus?” Let’s begin with that question.

The light came into the world, but do I love darkness more
than I love the light???

There is a cost to following Jesus, you see... The prideful self tells me:

- I'm OK;
- I don't need Jesus; or
- My pride tells me "I do need Jesus", but what I do, is not sin", even though God's righteous law says it is...

Am I so full of pride, that I would reject God's means of mercy and salvation, just so I can continue in my pride???

There's a word for someone like that, you know...

Psalm 14:1 (ESV)

¹ The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds;
there is none who does good.

Am I a fool? Am I someone who rejects God's means of mercy? Or am I a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ...

I know I promised it would be this week, but now it's next week, we're going to talk more about the transformed life of a Christian, as we leave sin behind, and we follow the path of righteousness...

Let's pray:
Lord Jesus Christ,

Give us a heart like your heart, that we can shout out “Hallelujah” – (YHWH be praised), that judgment is coming...

And yet at the same time, to be grieved for those who are on the path to Hell.

Lord, we praise you, that you are a God of Justice;

- that You give righteous judgment...

But we also praise You, that You are a God of mercy...

Lord, we thank you, that our Lord Jesus Christ, - He who was sinless, became sin, and died for our sin, so that we could be forgiven...

Lord, we thank you for those who have given **us** this message of good news, so that **we** might repent and believe...

And Lord, we know You send us;

Lord, fill us with Your Holy Spirit, and give us a Holy boldness;

Give us a Godly courage, to be prepared to be hated by the world;

To be accused of ‘hate speech’;

To be accused of being judgmental;

To be accused of not caring for others...

Oh, the injustice of the accusations, Lord,

Give us Love...

And give us strength to do this, because we love...

And Lord, may many be saved,

And the Lord Jesus Christ receive glory;

Amen.

ⁱ NZ PM <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/rugby-union/israel-folau-comments-unfit-for-wallabies-michael-cheika/news-story/d08cf3440e26076845247924355d1f1a>

Tim Horan <https://www.rugby.com.au/news/2019/04/10/rugby-folau-posts>

ⁱⁱ Rev 6:9-11

ⁱⁱⁱ Heb 9:22