

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 5 July 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Atheism of Hell

In **Romans chapter 1**, the Apostle Paul gives us a description of the spiritual apostasy that began to unfold very quickly after the Flood, as Noah's descendants turned away from God. Paul says, ***"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."*** They began to worship graven images, and birds and animals; and they ***"changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator."*** When people refuse to worship the true God, there is *only* one course left to them: they will worship themselves. Worshipping self comes naturally to us, because as sinners, we are bent on going our own way. Mankind naturally enthrones himself in his heart. Yet, man also knows, deep down inside, that there is a Creator who demands our worship.

How, then, does man justify worshipping himself instead of his Creator? Simple. Man makes himself into *his own* "creator"—his *own* "god." Man convinces himself that nature is its own creator, and that we are "one" with nature. Man convinces himself that matter is somehow eternal, and that it somehow arranged itself. He convinces himself that matter is "evolving" into higher life forms, and that there is some kind of impersonal "force" in matter which is driving it all. These ideas are not new: they are very ancient. They have been entrenched in pagan religions ever since the Tower of Babel; and they are now simply re-packaged for our "scientific" age. In the end, mankind always tends toward some form of pantheism (the belief that "all is God"), because this belief suits man's fancy that he is his own "god." Sooner or later, people always end up worshipping nature. And why not? After all, if everything be "god" (including myself), then everything (including me) deserves to be worshipped.

Folks, do not think, for one minute, that our "enlightened," scientific society couldn't go back to crass superstition and nature worship. We *are already* reverting back to nature worship! For example, about a decade ago in the U.S., many public schools were playing the series *Cosmos* in their science classrooms. In this series, the host, **Neil deGrasse Tyson**, makes this statement: "Our ancestors worshipped the sun. They were far from foolish. It makes good sense to revere the sun and the stars, because we are their children. The silicon in the rocks, the oxygen in the air, the carbon in our DNA, the iron in our skyscrapers, the silver in our jewellery—were all made in stars, billions of years ago. Our planet, our society, and we ourselves are stardust."¹ Around the same time as the *Cosmos* series, at Arizona State University, a professor named **Lawrence Krauss** told his students, "You are all stardust. You couldn't be here if the stars hadn't exploded, because the elements—the carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, iron, all the things that matter for evolution—weren't created at the beginning of time. They were created in the nuclear furnace of stars. And the only way they could get into your body is if those stars were kind enough to explode. So, forget Jesus. The stars died so you could be here today."² This mocking remark about Jesus was met with roaring laughter from the students.

Folks, we live in a world in which God is not wanted. However, this is nothing new. Sinful mankind has *never* wanted God—not the *true* God of the Bible, that is. Man always opts to worship some *false* god; and whether that “god” be a stone statue, or nature, or money, or power, or pleasure, or the quack “science” of evolution, the bottom line is that man ultimately worships *self* instead of God. We are all, in our natural state, *without* God; and unless a sinner repent of his sin and believe on Christ, he will one day be *eternally* without God, in a real place called Hell. The title of this message is ***The Atheism of Hell***.

Read Ephesians 2:11-13.

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

I. The Bible’s definition of an “atheist”

Many people have the idea that “As long as you believe in God, you’ll make it to Heaven.” Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. **James 2:19** says, ***“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”*** In other words, merely believing in God’s existence isn’t enough to save you! Satan and his demons know very well that there is a God, because they once served God in His very presence, before they rebelled against Him, and were cast down from Heaven. However, Satan and his demons’ *belief in God’s existence* doesn’t earn them one *iota* of favour with God. They are doomed to an eternity of conscious torment and punishment, away from the presence of the Lord.

And *that*, my friends, is what makes Hell “Hell”—the fact that God’s presence, His mercy, and His love, will never be known or felt in that place. The inhabitants of the Lake of Fire will be barred from God’s holy habitation forever. As Paul put it, they will be ***“punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”*** They will be “atheists” for all eternity.

Now, perhaps I caught some of you off guard with that last statement. If so, please allow me to explain what I mean by “atheists.” Remember what we read in **Ephesians 2:12**? Paul reminded the Gentile believers in the church of Ephesus that before they believed on Christ, they had been ***“aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.”*** What this means is that for centuries, *Israel alone* had possessed God’s holy Word, God’s covenants, and the knowledge of the true God. That is why the LORD said to Israel, ***“You only have I known of all the families of the earth.”*** In contrast, the overwhelming majority of Gentiles were in spiritual darkness. Whatever lingering memory of the true God that had been handed to them from their ancestors had been so twisted and perverted, that they no longer knew who the true God is, or how to be reconciled to Him. As Paul put it, they were ***“without hope,”*** and ***“without God in the world.”***

Now, that phrase **“without God”** is what I particularly wish to point out. In Greek, the phrase **“without God”** is actually one word. It is the word *atheoi*; and *atheoi* simply means “without God.” Paul wasn’t saying that these Ephesians had once denied the *existence* of God, or of a spiritual world. They had, in fact, worshipped a whole pantheon of “gods” before they believed on the one true God. Like the believers in the church of Corinth, they had once been **“carried away unto these dumb idols.”** As for the God of the Jews, they had viewed Him as just one more “god” out there, alongside their own gods. Clearly, then, Paul didn’t mean that these Gentiles had once denied the *existence* of God, or of any supernatural spirit beings: they were simply **“without”** God in their lives. Though God is the One in whom we all **“live, and move, and have our being,”** the Ephesians did not know Him. Though we are all God’s **“offspring”** (in the sense that we were all created by God), and though God is **“not far from every one of us,”** these Ephesians nevertheless were cut off from God, and were not His children.

Read Acts 17:22-31.

Through the years, many unsaved folks have told me, “I’ve always felt that Jesus was with me.” Others have told me that they have “always loved Jesus.” As I pressed them about what they meant by this, I found that they had been *taught* that Jesus loves them, and that *they* were supposed to love *Him*; and so, they *did* try to love Him. Yet, I’ve found that many of these same folks will, in a moment of honesty, admit that they do *not* feel that they are truly connected to God, and to the Lord Jesus Christ. I remember one time when a lost lady told me, “I’ve always felt that Jesus was **nearby**. I’ve always sensed that He was **protecting me**. Yet, I always felt that He was **‘over there,’** and that I was **‘over here.’** Even though I prayed, I never felt as though I could actually communicate with Him.”

When this lady told me this, I couldn’t help but think of this verse in **Acts 17**. In this Scripture, Paul was speaking to pagan idolaters in the city of Athens. These people knew little to nothing of the true God. Yet, Paul told these pagan idolaters that God is **“not far from every one of us.”** Now, please don’t misunderstand what Paul is saying. The Bible says that there is an impassable gulf of sin that separates every sinner from God—*unless and until* the sinner crosses over the Bridge of Jesus Christ, to eternal life. *All* of us are barred from a relationship with God, from the moment we enter this world. Yet, there *is* a sense in which God is **“not far”** from lost people. Some lost people are “farther” away from God than other lost folk are, depending upon the amount of truth to which they’ve been exposed; but they are all separated from God nonetheless. For example, in **Ephesians 2**, Paul described the Gentiles as being **“far off,”** and the Jews as being **“nigh.”** Both Jews and the Gentiles were born into this world naturally separated from God because of their sin; yet, the Jews were *nearer* to God, in that they had more *knowledge* of God available to them, through the Scriptures. Yet, even those who have *not* heard the Scriptures have the testimony of their conscience, and the

testimony of nature, to show them that there is a Creator whom they have offended by their sin. Even people who have never heard a word of Scripture somehow sense that they don't know the true God, and that they had better find out who He is, and be reconciled to Him. In *this* sense, God is **“near”** even those who seem hopelessly far away from Him. God even protects lost people from physical dangers every single day, so that they might have the chance to repent and believe on Him at a later time. In this sense, God is **“near”** to the lost. As Paul said, **“In him we live, and move, and have our being.”** By the way, at this point in the sermon, Paul was appealing to the little bit of knowledge of the true God that the pagans *did* still have. When he said that said that **“In him we live, and move, and have our being,”** and **“We are all of his offspring,”** He was citing the Greek philosophers **Arastus** and **Cleanthes**. Even pagans know, deep down inside, that there is a God who created all mankind, and that we could not live even one second longer if this God were not mercifully protecting and providing for us. None of us (whether saved or lost) could live one more second were God not graciously sustaining our lives. Even *lost people* can sense this fact!

However, the fact that God is **“near”** lost souls, and is willing and ready to save them, does not mean that they *are* saved. In order to miss Hell and go to Heaven, sinners must humble themselves, admit they are not good, repent of their sin in their heart, and place their trust in Christ's sacrifice for them. Christian, the next time you share the Gospel with someone, and he (or she) says that “I know I'm saved because I've always believed that God is near me, and with me,” don't allow yourself to be stumped. God *is* nearby to every soul, and He *does* sustain our lives, and provide materially for us: but that doesn't mean that a person is saved! We are all God's “offspring,” in that we were all created by God; but being God's **“offspring”** (His creation) doesn't make you His *child*. To be a child of God, you must be “born again” spiritually into God's kingdom; and the way to be “born again” is to trust in Jesus, the Son of God, *plus nothing else*. The Bible says, **“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”** It isn't, “Believe on His name, be baptised, go through catechisms and rituals, and live a good and holy life, and eventually you'll secure a place in Heaven.” No, salvation is by simply *believing on Jesus' name*. Stop trusting in your own goodness, because your own goodness is like a pile of filthy rags to God. Instead, trust in what Jesus did for you on the cross, plus nothing else!

Now, by this point, you've probably guessed that that Greek word ***atheoi*** is the basis of our English word **“atheist.”** However, the Bible defines an “atheist” very differently from the way we define it today. When *we* speak of an “atheist” today, we're talking about someone who doesn't believe that there is a God, or any kind of supernatural realm. However, God defines an “atheist” is someone who is **“without” God**—whether that person believe that there *is* a God, or not. A person may believe that there *is* a God; yet, if that person have not been saved from his sin, that person is an *atheos*—an atheist—someone who is “without God” in his life. You may *intellectually* accept the doctrines of the Bible, and be very well versed in the Bible, yet still be lost in your sin, and without God.

Nicodemus was a man who was steeped in religion. In the eyes of men, he was a morally “good” man. Yet, he knew, deep down inside, that all was not truly well with his soul, and that he did not truly have a relationship with God. That is why he sneaked to the house where Jesus was staying at *nighttime*, under cover of darkness. He was afraid of what others would think if they knew that a religious man such as himself was having questions and doubts about his salvation. Yet, he knew that *Jesus* was the Man who could answer his questions: and he was right! Before Nicodemus had even asked his question, Jesus cut him right to the heart. He told him that his birth into the Jewish nation and religion could not save him, and that he *must* be born again. When Nicodemus asked Jesus what this meant, Jesus explained, “***And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.***” Only a few years later, Jesus *was*, indeed, lifted up on a cross, to die for our sins; and all who simply “look” to the Jesus who died on that cross, and believe (*truly* believe, and trust) that what He did on that cross is all they need to be saved, will receive eternal life, and no longer have any condemnation upon them.

Friends, merely believing that there is a God is not enough. *Satan* believes there is a God; but he certainly isn’t saved! To be saved, you must repent of your sin, and believe, with full trust and confidence, that Christ’s finished sacrifice on the cross is all that you need to be forgiven and accepted by God. Jesus said, “***Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.***”

Read Luke 13:1-5.

II. God’s decree concerning atheists

Read Matthew 7:21-23.

In this portion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus solemnly warned His hearers that when He returns to earth, and all nations stand before Him to be judged, many people will plead with Him, and say, “***Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name have done many wonderful works?***” They will then hear the most chilling words imaginable: “***I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.***”

Now, before we go any further, I would ask: “*Who* are the particular people that Jesus singled out here?” Are they “atheists,” in the sense that we think of today—people who don’t believe

that there is any God, or any angels, spirits, afterlife, or supernatural miracles? No! The doomed souls that Jesus is talking about here are *theists*—people who *believe* in God, the supernatural, and miracles. These are very religious people—people who were even religious leaders. They *actually believed* that they had power to “*prophecy*” (to utter new revelations from God), to perform miracles, and to cast out devils in Jesus' name—when, in fact, they didn't have these powers at all. Whatever “powers” they may have experienced were either the lying wonders of Satan, or were simply the product of their own imagination. Either way, these souls will be self-deceived; and they will find out, too late, that their religion and “good works” were nothing but a pile of filthy rags, which God cannot accept.

By the way, you'll notice that these people whom Jesus will address at the judgment will *not* be people who were once saved and on their way to Heaven, but who then lost their salvation. Rather, they will be people who were *never* saved. Jesus says that He will profess to these people, “*I never knew you.*” Though God was “near” them during their lives, and was calling them to repent of their self-righteousness and believe on Him, He was never actually in their hearts, because they never received Him. They never came to Him on His terms of simple repentance and faith in Him. Though God had *mercifully intervened* in their lives (as He does for *everyone*) by providing them with sunshine and rain, food, jobs, health, protection from physical danger, and sometimes even exceptionally long lives—and though He had given them opportunities to hear the Gospel and believe on Him—they chose instead to place their hope for eternity on a false gospel of salvation through good works, which could not save them.

Read Matthew 5:44-45.

Read Acts 14:8-18.

Read Romans 2:1-4.

In the **Matthew** and **Acts** passages that we just read, the **Lord Jesus Christ**, and the Apostles **Paul and Barnabas**, all said the same thing: that God is *merciful and gracious* to all men, whether they be “just” or “unjust” (saved or unsaved). He provides rain, fruitful seasons, and food for rebellious, undeserving sinners. Yet, the fact that He is good to us doesn't mean that we are all saved. It doesn't matter whether you are a “theist” (one who *believes* in God's existence), or an “atheist,” in the modern sense of the word (someone who *doesn't* believe in God's existence). According to the Bible, you are “atheist” (“without God in your life”) *unless and until* you personally repent of your sin, and place your faith in Jesus. God *is* good and kind to all of us; but the realisation of God's goodness should lead you to **repent**, so that you might be saved from God's wrath against sin! If you keep thinking that you are a good person, and that you will make it into Heaven by being good, you will split the gates of Hell

wide open. **Titus 3:5** says, “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration [the new birth], and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*” By the way, the “washing” of which Paul speaks is not baptism: it is a *spiritual washing* that takes place inwardly at the moment when you repent and believe on Jesus. *Christ* cleans your heart, and makes you a new creation. Without this new birth, you cannot enter Heaven. That is why countless people who had believed in God all their lives, and who had tried to keep “the golden rule,” will be shocked, at the judgment, to hear the Lord say, “*I never knew you.*” They will then be shocked beyond measure to hear Christ say the horrifying words, “*Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*” Friend, don’t be one of those damned souls! Repent, and believe on Christ!

III. The devoid spiritual condition of atheists

Hell is a place of eternal separation from God. Yet, separation from God does not begin at the moment when one is cast into Hell. Separation from God is a condition that most people *already* experience, and *have* been experiencing, for their entire lives. We all entered this world already separated from God, on account of our sin nature. **Romans 5:12** says, “*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*”; and **Isaiah 59:1-2** says, “*Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*”

We enter this world in a state of separation from God; and as we progress through our sinful lives, we *don't even miss* God's presence, because we've never known what His presence is like! We sin with impunity, because we are not sensitive to the fact that we are offending God. Though we may have been taught all *about* God, and instructed in His Word, we do not personally know Him; and though we may even pray to Him, we do not really love Him, or sense our need of Him. We live our lives just fine without Him (or so it seems) because our sin has blinded our hearts, and alienated us from Him. As the Apostle Paul put it, we are “*dead*” to Him—“*dead in trespasses and sins.*”

Yet, there *is* that gnawing feeling that “something is missing”; and this feeling grows as the years wear on. That is because God has placed the sense of our need of Him inside every one of us; and even our deceitful, sinful hearts cannot erase that sense of emptiness. There is also that occasional, fearful sense that “I just might be in trouble with God”—especially after hearing a portion of Scripture read. That is the Holy Spirit speaking to your heart, convicting you “*of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment,*” and drawing you toward Christ.

Furthermore (as we have already seen), God intervenes in our lives countless times—protecting us from danger, or from death; restoring health when we are sick; providing physical needs, and so on. **Yet, this does not mean that one is saved.** I remember when one of my college professors, Dr. Chapman, told his class about an experience that he had when was about eight years old. He was running down a footpath, and was starting to dart into the street, when he felt someone grab his arm, and yank him back onto the footpath. A car then went zooming past, right over the spot where he would have been, had a hand not pulled him to safety. He immediately turned around to thank whoever had saved his life; but no one was there. In fact, no one was anywhere nearby him in any direction. There was no logical explanation for this, except that he had been saved by an angel. I have heard similar accounts from other people across the years, as well. Surely they were all Christians, then, right? No, they weren't! I know a man in this area who experienced a very similar miracle in his childhood; and he is convinced that he is saved because he experienced this angelic intervention. However, his salvation testimony does not match up with the Bible. Yes, he was saved from *physical* death, by God's mercy, decades ago; but being *physically* saved and being *saved from sin* are two different things. Both kinds of deliverances are by God's mercy; but *salvation from sin* must be *received* by the sinner on God's terms, which are repentance and faith in Christ alone.

Most people are completely ungrateful to God for His countless acts of mercy. They *don't* have God in their lives, and they don't *want* Him in their lives; and someday, they will get their wish. One day, they will go to the eternal prison called the Lake of Fire, where God's love, and His presence, will *never* be felt again. Yet, some people *do* see God's goodness in their lives, and *do* acknowledge it. However, the fact that God has mercifully intervened in your life to protect you (perhaps multiple times), or to provide some need, does not mean that you are a child of God. I have asked countless people the question, "Are you saved, and on your way to Heaven?"; and many times people have said, "Oh, yes, I know I'm saved, because God healed me when I was deathly sick, or brought me through a near-death experience." My friend, that is not salvation! God may have provided you with a physical need in this world; but that doesn't make you reconciled to God. Salvation from sin's penalty is *only* through the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Until you repent of your sin, and place your complete trust in Jesus, you will remain in a condition of spiritual separation from God, and under His condemnation. You don't have to do something "really bad" to be condemned: you are already condemned by your sin, and will continue to be condemned, unless you repent and believe on Jesus, and receive His gift of salvation.

Read John 3:17-18

Conclusion: My friends, God is "near" every one of us—*for now*. Right now, during this lifetime on earth, God silently calls people to repent and believe on Him. He intervenes in our lives daily, in more ways than we can imagine. Yet, if you have not placed your faith in Christ, you are "***without God***"; and if you *pass out of this life* without God, you will be *eternally* without Him. If you already feel hopeless in

this life, how much more hopeless will you be when you lift up your eyes in the dark, fiery prison of Hell—in the place where God will *never* again mercifully call you to Himself, or show love or mercy to you? If you have never received God's gift of salvation, what is keeping you from doing so? God wants to give you eternal life through His Son! He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. ***“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”*** Christ will come into your heart to abide; and He will never leave you, nor forsake you.

If you do know Christ as your Saviour, then you *do* have God in your heart, and you *do* have a sure hope for eternity. *Don't ever forget this!* Let Christ's love shine forth from your life! Be a beacon of life and hope to all the lost souls around you!

¹ "Students Told to Worship the Sun?," by Ken Ham, Answers in Genesis, January 27, 2015

² *Ibid.*