

BLOCKING HEAVEN'S GATE **(Matthew 23:13)**

I. By denying what the Bible teaches about hell.

- A. Many people deny the existence of hell.
 - 1. They say a loving God would never condemn people to hell.
 - 2. In an article in U.S. News and World Report, professor Stephen Patterson of the Eden Theological Seminary stated a literal hell is “part of an understanding of the cosmos that just doesn’t exist anymore.”
 - 3. They teach this despite what the Bible says.
 - a. 2 Peter 2:4.
 - b. Matthew 5:22.
- B. Some do not deny hell’s existence but deny the Biblical explanation of it.
 - 1. Some say it is just the grave.
 - a. This is what Jehovah’s Witnesses teach.
 - b. They call it annihilation.
 - 2. Others deny that torment will not take place.
 - a. Notice the language of scripture:
 - (1) Weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 - (2) Outer darkness.
 - (3) A never dying worm.
 - (4) Fire.
 - (5) Torment.
 - b. The Bible plainly teaches that there will be punishment in hell.
 - c. It is described for us in Luke 16:19-31.
 - 3. Others deny how long it will last.
 - a. They try to tell us that it will only last until the sinner is rehabilitated.
 - b. In Matthew 25:31-46, the phrase “everlasting fire” is used for hell, and the phrase “eternal life” is used for heaven.
 - (1) Why would God make one eternal and one not?
 - (2) The doctrine of eternal punishment was taught by the Jews a long time before Jesus enforced it in the gospels.
 - 4. Some teach that hell is only for the devil and his angels.
 - a. Matthew 13:49-50.
 - b. Revelation 21:8.
- C. God has clearly spoken through His word that there is a hell just as surely as there is a heaven.

II. By being indifferent towards soul winning.

- A. Some do not believe that those who don’t know about the gospel will be lost.
 - 1. If this were true, why would God give us the command to go and make disciples - this would be unloving of us to do so in the case of those who were saved by ignorance but were lost because of their

- refusal to obey that of which they were previously ignorant.
 - 2. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 contains two groups of people who will be lost.
 - a. Those who don't know;
 - b. Those who don't obey.
 - 3. John 8:21-24.
- B. Some are indifferent to their erring brethren.
 - 1. We have a duty towards our brethren who have left the Lord (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).
 - 2. It is amazing to me the number of people in Walker County who will say that they used to be members of the Lord's church.
- C. We must realize that our own souls depend on our getting out the message.
 - 1. Ezekiel 3:17-21.
 - 2. We are to be watchmen.
- D. Many times we don't act because of fear.
 - 1. Leighton Ford wrote a book entitled "Good News Is For Sharing."
 - 2. He said time after time when speaking with people, the fear issue came up.
 - 3. Notice some of their fears.
 - a. I am afraid I might do more harm than good.
 - b. I don't know what to say.
 - c. I may not be able to give quick answers to tricky questions.
 - d. I may seem bigoted.
 - e. I may invade someone's privacy.
 - f. I might fail.
 - g. I might be a hypocrite.
- E. We have got to realize that there is a world full of lost people and we have the map to help them.

III. **By being a hypocritical church member.**

- A. We have all heard the saying over and over again: "You may be the only Bible someone may read."
- B. One of us may be the only Christian someone in the world knows: would they think being a Christian is a good thing by watching us?
- C. If others see us putting things ahead of the church, even though we are good, moral people, what will they think of Christianity?
- D. We need to make sure that our priorities are in the right place (1 John 2:15-17).
- E. We can also be hypocritical by compromising the things we profess to believe.
 - 1. The church at Pergamos was held accountable for having those that held the doctrine of Balaam.
 - 2. The doctrine of Balaam is the doctrine of compromise.

IV. **By robbing people of needed encouragement.**

- A. Some people are not sure God wants them.
 - 1. If we don't convey to them that God wants them, they will never

- obey the gospel.
- 2. Would Zaccheus have been saved if Jesus had not gone to him?
- 3. Matthew 11:28-30.
- B. Some are convinced they are too sinful.
 - 1. There are many people who have given up on being saved because they have committed some terrible acts.
 - 2. Did Jesus give up on the woman caught in adultery in John 8?
 - 3. Jesus came to save sinners and we need not give up on people just because they have done terrible things.
- C. We need more Barnabas' in the church.
 - 1. His name means "son of consolation."
 - 2. What if he had turned his back on Paul when Paul first came to Jerusalem?
- D. We must never judge anyone unworthy of the gospel.
- E. We should give encouragement to all.