

*I don't have enough* FAITH  
*to be an* ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

## Are We Tampering with the Doctrine of Hell? with Kirk Cameron

(February 6, 2026)

**FRANK:**

Ladies and gentlemen, is God unjust if he punishes people for all eternity in hell? And isn't hell, eternal punishment, the traditional view of what Hell is, overkill for temporal sins?

How do you punish somebody for all eternity for temporal sins? But if God is just, can He punish people for eternity in a just way? Or is the eternal conscious torment view that has traditionally been the view of the church actually not the correct view?

Is a conditionalist view, an annihilationist view the correct view? Well, my friend Kirk Cameron, really kind of stirred up a hornet's nest about a month and a half ago when he went public with a conversation he had with his son over this issue.

And a lot of people have spoken about it. So we wanted to have Kirk on the show to get his perspective again on it. So here he is, ladies and gentlemen, the great Kirk Cameron. [Applause] By the way, there'll be no applause in hell, so you're not going to get any more applause, Kirk. But how are you?

**KIRK:**

I'm doing great. I'm doing really well. Frank, it's great to talk to you.

**FRANK:**

And it's always great to talk to you. You're kind of brave for just diving into this topic publicly with your son. Tell us how it originated. Your son and you had a conversation. Did he come to you? Did you go to him? How did this whole idea that maybe eternal conscious torment, hell, is not the proper view according to scripture?

**KIRK:**

Yeah, well, last thing I wanted to do is tango with Dr. Albert Mohler or tango with St.



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Augustine. Tango with the Westminster Confession of Faith. That wasn't my goal. I didn't dive into this topic of controversy. It just-- I fell into it because it was a conversation that I was having with my son. On my show, we have Wednesday dangerous conversations.

And James brings up things to me that he's wondering about. Stuff that's bugging him, you know, hypocrisy within the church. What's the deal about spiritual warfare? Why is it that a guy's porn problem is demonic attacks and not his own lack of integrity? You know, we talk about stuff like this.

What about women pastors? What about AI and relationships? Can I have a virtual wife like this dude over here in Japan does? And this topic came up because he was wrestling with some friends about the nature of punishment in hell.

Is it an eternal barbecue, like some would describe it? Or is it something else like annihilation, where you're snuffed out? Or is it something else like a universalist view where somehow there's this purging of your sin over time?

C.S. Lewis had a really interesting take on hell. And I thought, man, that's a, that's a great topic. It's fiery. And we might catch hell for talking about it, and we certainly did. And then he asked me, well, dad, what do you think? I mean-- And I said, well, I've actually been studying this for about five years, and the whole topic is so distressing when you think about divine wrath.

I can't think of anything that is more taxing to my soul and to my mind when I think about people, I love having a punishment that endures for all of eternity. And I had only heard about one view until I studied it and began to discover that there were some other views that were very robust and persuasive.

And just opening up that topic seemed like it just was taking a baseball bat to a hornet's nest, and man, we just unleashed the stingers.



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**FRANK:**

Why do you think there's been such a strong reaction to you? And correct me if I'm wrong, but when you talked about this, you didn't say you necessarily agree with the conditionalist view, but you're considering it. Am I right about that?

**KIRK:**

Yeah, I said that I'm not exactly sure. I mean, there's a bunch of topics I would say that about. I'm not exactly sure, but I'm leaning this direction. And at the end of the day, God's got it perfectly understood, and I'm not the warden in hell meeting out the punishment. God's going to do a perfect job. Not too strict, not too lenient. It's going to be perfectly in line with His justice, His holiness, His mercy, His wrath, everything.

But I am leaning toward the strength of the conditionalist view. I said I'm open to changing my mind, but the more I look into the topic, the more I understand why Martin Luther was moving in this direction, why some of the early church fathers moved in this direction.

And I wanted to have a deeper dive on the topic with guys smarter than me. So I said, let's get four scholars from around the world, the best and the brightest on these topics. Let's bring them into a room with an open Bible and say, we love tradition and the creeds. We love the confessions of the faith and the catechisms, but at the end of the day, scripture's got to be my north star and my compass.

After all, we are Protestants. We're not just going with church tradition. And so, let's open it up. And I learned so much. I was so humbled. And I was inspired by not only the academic, intellectual horsepower of the men around the table, but the spirit of humility, and intellectual hospitality, and graciousness that was displayed among brothers who sharply disagree. And that's sorely lacking in the church today. And I got the short end of the stick when it came to that.

**FRANK:**

Okay, before we get into that, because that, that discussion which you call Hellgate is on your YouTube channel, and we will put that in the show notes. It's over two hours long.



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**KIRK:**

Thank you.

**FRANK:**

If I remember correctly, you had Paul Copan on there. You had Chris Date on there. You had, who else have you had?

**KIRK:**

Yeah, Gavin Ortlund.

**FRANK:**

Oh, yeah. Of course. Gavin Ortlund and—

**KIRK:**

Dan Patterson from—

**FRANK:**

I hadn't heard of Dan Patterson. I knew of the other three. Okay? So Gavin and Paul are eternal conscious torment supporters in the sense they think that's what the scriptures teach.

**KIRK:**

That's right.

**FRANK:**

And Dan and Chris are the folks that teach conditionalism. And for those that don't know what that is, can you kind of give us a quick overview as to what that means?

**KIRK:**

Yeah, yeah. I didn't know what it meant either until somebody explained it to me. So there's this idea that eternal conscious torment is the result of the belief that the soul is eternal, that God creates souls, He gives them to you and me, and we last forever.



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Our body will die, but the soul continues on for eternity. And so the logic goes, if the righteous will be in eternity for heaven, where will the unrighteous, the wicked be? Well, they will be in hell, and their soul doesn't die, so it is there forever. And that seems to fit with what Jesus talked about and what Revelation talks about, with eternal fire and so on.

But if you really get into the biblical teaching on the soul, we learn and everyone around the table conceded to this, that God alone is immortal and He grants immortality to people, that we are actually mortals, that actually means that we die.

And that conditional immortality is this notion that the soul will live on eternally when it is granted immortality by God as a gift for believing the gospel. But apart from that, they would say, the soul that sins, it shall die.

That we die physically, we die in our sins. And then there is the second death, which is the lake of fire, which is the final execution and elimination of the wicked and the ungodly. So that's the conditional immortality.

It's not automatic. It is something granted as a gift from God. And I thought, wow, I never really thought about that. But there's guys all throughout the church, throughout history, and the Reformation and then into modern day scholars like John Stott, and F.F. Bruce, and others, Edward Fudge, who hold to this view of God being a consuming fire, and there is justice and punishment for the wicked according to God's perfect wisdom and will, but that in the end He's not going to preserve people in some place prepared to torment them forever and ever.

So these are the two, these are the two sides. And we had a roundtable and we dove in and didn't dodge the hard questions.

**FRANK:**

We're going to talk about that right after the break with my friend Kirk Cameron. This issue of hell has raised some strong reactions on all sides of the debate. And we'll get into some of the scriptures on it. But I also want to mention that this week, ladies and gentlemen, we're starting our 'Change My Mind' college tour. We're going to hit 15 colleges this semester. Fifteen colleges and universities. We're going to start at Elon University on the 10th of February.



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Next day, NC State, 11th of February. And then the next day after that, University of Northern Florida on the 12th. All that's going to be live streamed, Lord willing, on our YouTube channel. But if you're in any of those areas, love to see you there. Come on out for it.

We'll have plenty of time for questions. All right, you're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, back in just a couple of minutes. What is the proper biblical view of eternal punishment? Is it that people are conscious for all eternity and being punished, or does eternal punishment mean that you die, when you die physically, you're also going to die spiritually, and you will never have any sort of consciousness again?

You will be gone. That is the debate that Kirk Cameron sort of waded into when his son asked him a question on his podcast. And it created some pretty strong reactions. In fact, let's show you a very short clip from Al Mohler, who is the president of Southern Seminary, and does a podcast every day that a lot of people listen to.

It's very informative. Anyway, here's Al discussing-- It's a very short clip. We'll put his entire clip in the show notes. But here's a short clip of Al talking about Kirk and his position on hell.

**AL:**

Comes down to a podcast, the Kirk Cameron Show, in which Kirk and James Cameron, well, they released a program in which they talk about hell, and now that they've talked about it, we've got to talk about it. Tampering with the doctrine of hell is actually tampering with the gospel. It's actually tampering with the gospel and tampering with the doctrine of God.

**FRANK:**

Tampering with the doctrine of God. Tampering with the gospel. I'd love him to unpack what he means by that more. It seems that the debate here is not over whether hell actually exists, but what is the nature of eternal punishment?

That might be the issue here. And what is the proper interpretation? In the scholars that I've read, I, and I think I agree with them, that the doctrine of hell is not an essential of the faith in the sense that you have to believe a certain doctrine in order to be saved, although it is important to get it right.



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What is your view on that, Kirk?

**KIRK:**

Well, first of all, let me say with regard to Dr. Albert Mohler, he is a hero of heroes of mine, and so deeply grateful for the important work that he has done. I was disappointed in his response because I agree with your other point that this is not a top shelf primary issue like the gospel, like the resurrection, like the authority of scripture.

We're talking about people like Martin Luther disagreeing with other giants of the faith like Augustine and early church fathers on how hell actually unfolds. We have guys like C.S. Lewis who had a view of hell that departed from the traditional view. And so we're trying to wrestle with this imagery, and revelation, and all this. So to say that it is to attack the gospel and to attack-- What did he say? The nature of God or the gospel?

**FRANK:**

Yeah, the nature of God or the doctrine of God I think he put it that way. Yeah.

**KIRK:**

No, I would strongly disagree and say that that isn't the case. But who am I? I'm just a, I'm just a dumb actor from Hollywood. And I wanted to talk about this with Dr. Mohler, and we briefly spoke on the phone. I really wanted to bring him to the roundtable discussion that I had called Hellgate, where we could bring three other scholars, one that would agree with him and then two others that disagreed so that as brothers, we could be Bereans and search these things.

But that for whatever reason, he wasn't available to be able to do that. But if you want to hear Dr. Al Mohler actually debate this topic with Chris Date, one of the guys who was at my roundtable, you could listen to that on the radio from years ago and get an idea of all of that.

**FRANK:**

But it would have been good to have him on. And then when he said something you played—

**[Trump]:**

Wrong.

**CROSS  
EXAMINED  
.ORG**



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**FRANK:**

That would have been good if you had that.

**KIRK:**

And listen, I'm a student trying to learn. I'm trying to understand all sorts of topics. I see all those books behind you, Frank, and I read your book, 'I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.' And there's so many topics that we have faith in, and we don't even know why we believe certain things.

Many people I have found, don't know why they hold the position on hell that they do. It's just what they've always heard. So if you've only heard one view, that hell is like Dante's Inferno, it's an eternal barbecue, you just believe well that's what the Bible says.

So that's what I believe. And for me to deny that view is to deny hell itself, which is to deny the Bible, which is to deny the God of the gospel. Well that's not the case. That is an overly simplistic view of this. There is far more nuance when it comes to these secondary issues.

Now—

**FRANK:**

I want to get some clarity on one thing though, Kirk. And I don't know the answer to this. You've been studying it longer than I have. I want to know if the conditional view, the view that, say, Chris Date, and Dan Patterson, the Hellgate show, held or hold, if they mean that—

And maybe this is F.F. Bruce's position and also John Stott's position. When somebody dies who is not in Christ, is there any period of consciousness where they are meted out some justice or some punishment?

Or is the justice that they just-- They just lose consciousness. What is their view on that? In other words, do they exist for a period of time in order to be punished and then annihilated, or are they just annihilated when they draw their last breath?



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KIRK:

The way that it was explained and articulated by these guys-- By the way, Chris Date has a ministry called, Rethinking Hell.

I mean, so like, he's like, deep into this, and he's writing a book with Paul Copan on the eternal punishment side together called the Two Views of Hell, with Wes Huff writing the foreword for InterVarsity Press. Right? So these guys are like heavy hitters on this topic.

And I'm going to try to explain the way that I remember him explaining it. You could see this for yourself on Hellgate, but he was saying, no, the view is not just that you're snuffed out like a candle wick when you die, like you're gone. Right? You just cease to exist. That's not the view.

The view is that the punishment is a capital punishment, and that capital punishment is death. It is a full and final judgment of God. And within that full and final punishment, there is the justice of God.

So that could be a time, a period of punishment that involves pain, weeping, gnashing of teeth, all of these things. However God decides for all of that to play itself out. And the way he illustrated it was that if someone is given capital punishment as a judgment here on earth, there are various forms of execution.

And you have things that are quick and allegedly painless, like lethal injection, or a firing squad with 10 bullets going into your heart, apparently painless. Or there's long and protracted agonizing execution methods, like Roman crucifixion and other means, but that the ultimate result of all of it is the same.

You're dead, you are no longer living, and you are deprived of life itself, of goodness, of God, of anything. And that is the point of the punishment. So you're gone for all of eternity. And now, if people want to weigh in and say, well, that's not punishment enough. But again, we've got to let God decide what's punishment enough. And what do the scriptures actually say?



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**FRANK:**

In your view, and we can't cover the waterfront here. We have limited time here, ladies and gentlemen. There's a two and a half hour conversation that we'll put in the show notes called Hellgate that Kirk moderated with four scholars. But what, in your view, is the most convincing scriptures that you think lean toward a conditional view of the afterlife?

**KIRK:**

Well, we covered so much in two and a half hours.

**FRANK:**

Just pick anyone.

**KIRK:**

In Hellgate. Well, one of the things that I falsely believed was this idea that the soul just automatically lives on forever. And I've come to believe that no, that was a teaching that Plato believed and taught coming out of Greek philosophy, but that the Bible teaches we're actually mortal, and that immortality is granted as a gift only to the saved, and that the wages of sin is death.

So you think, well, what about all of this language about eternal fire, where the worm doesn't die and then the flames are not quenched? And you see that in Revelation, you see that, Jesus, speaking of it in Matthew 25, I believe it is. And if you look at that imagery and Revelation is full of it, you know, we have dragons, and horns, and heads, and a woman on the moon clothed in the sun, and we have all of this stuff.

And you take that language, and you find this kind of destruction language back in Isaiah 66 and in other places. And Jesus spoke of Gehenna, and if you go back and you look at places like Sodom and Gomorrah, you look at places like Edom, where that same kind of eternal fire language is used to describe its destruction. If you go there, it's not still burning, it's not still smoking. The cities aren't—

They're not there. And it appears that in the Old Testament, the final fate of the wicked, individuals, cities, everything, is not to be preserved alive forever in a place of torment.

**CROSS  
EXAMINED  
.ORG**



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At least it seems to me. It is to die, it is to perish, it is to be destroyed, it is to be remembered no more. And the picture that's described is like what happens when I go in my backyard, and I make one of my campfires.

The wood is consumed and the smoke rises, and it rises forever. It's never turning back into wood again. It's over, it's gone, it's done, it is perished, it is destroyed. And so, it's very compelling. If you start in the Old Testament, and you work your way up, and you start to recognize all of the Old Testament imagery being used in the New Testament to describe the judgment of God on the wicked. I don't think that's a conclusive proof, but it's persuasive.

And then it has very, it has very compelling implications when it comes to questions that my son and others are having. Like if, you know, if my 13 year old son rejects the gospel, and in those 13 years has committed sin, should I expect for him to be punished for all of eternity by a holy God in the way that some traditionalists describe?

And I say I don't think it would be unjust. I don't think it would be against the character of God for him to do so. Because to fail to worship, and honor, and obey an infinitely holy God is an infinite offense. And to argue that that is deserving of an infinite punishment, I agree.

I'm just not convinced that the Bible actually says that, and that Jesus actually taught that. So that's why I wanted to study it deeply. And all of church history has been debating this very topic. So it's really not heresy at all.

It is history, and it's actually a primary issue for some unbelievers. And Frank, I know you've had this question come up from people on college campuses. How could I possibly believe in your God? Even if the resurrection is true, even if it takes more faith to be an atheist, I can't wrap my mind around a loving God who's going to torment people for eternity. And so, for them it could be a primary issue obstacle, and we've got to be able answer it.

**FRANK:**

And in the Hellgate conversation, you all agreed that, well, you can consider this other view. But I might also point out, and I will so right after the break that I think that idea from the skeptic misunderstands who God is and the nature of justice.



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And we'll cover that right after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network and other stations around the country. Don't go anywhere. We're back right after the break.

**AD:**

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**FRANK:**

Ladies and gentlemen, what is the biblical nature of hell? Is it eternal conscious torment? Or is hell something that people go to for a brief period of time, get punished, and then are annihilated? That's what we're talking about today with my friend Kirk Cameron. And a lot has been said on this in the past couple of months.

We have some videos in the show notes to go further. But I want to address something we talked about just before the break, Kirk, and that is the idea that people think that they are more merciful than God and more just than God.

So when they look at the scriptures, and they can't quite understand how eternal conscious torment could operate, I think their mistake is not realizing that if God is infinite, and He is. If He's infinite in justice and He's also infinite in love, there's nobody in the afterlife that's going to be treated unfairly.

In other words, they're going to be degrees of punishment in hell and there's going to be degrees of reward in heaven. And the only two things you can get in the afterlife are either justice or grace. Those are the only two. I don't want justice from an infinitely just God.



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Whether hell is eternal conscious torment, or it's annihilationism, I don't want that, even though it would be fair if I got it, because that's what justice is.

So I guess what, what I would say about this debate, first of all, it's always good to debate issues. It's very bad, particularly for young people, to shut them down to say to them, well, you can't even ask that question. You want to put everything on the table and work it out intellectually.

But I do think that if this idea, that conditionalism is the proper view is primarily motivated by saying I can't understand how eternal conscious torment could be fair, I don't think you have the right view of God.

You know, I think you're misunderstanding who God is, regardless of the nature of hell. Whatever we, however we get that nature from the scriptures, we know that God is going to be just.

So the idea that we're going to try and soften hell by making it not eternal is a misunderstanding of God's nature. It could be that people don't just suffer for the sins they committed on earth. They continue to sin in hell and hell goes on forever.

There's gnashing of teeth at God. Right? If the eternal conscious torment view is true. So, and as we all know, the length of the punishment always exceeds the length of the crime. I mean, you could, you could kill somebody in a second, but you're not going to serve just a second of punishment. That wouldn't be just. So, I guess—

**KIRK:**

Well, unless it was the electric chair. Unless it was a firing squad, or a lethal injection, it may take a half a second. And that's capital punishment. That's the position is that we can't really have a one to one ratio on duration of sin and duration of punishment. We could also just talk about the result of the punishment, which is, no. You're not spending 20 years in prison. You're gonna die. You're on death row. You're gonna get executed.



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**FRANK:**

Right. But I think that in our justice system, which is imperfect, even somebody that goes to the electric chair or firing squad, and if Tyler Robinson is Charlie's true killer, which it seems to be, that's where he should go.

It's not just being executed that is the punishment. It's knowing you're being executed and living with that until the execution date. If the annihilationist view is true and as soon as you die you just go out of existence, how is that just? You don't even get any recompense. You don't even know you've been punished because you no longer exist.

**KIRK:**

Well, I think that's a caricature of the annihilationist view.

**FRANK:**

Well, that's why I was asking you earlier.

**KIRK:**

That's right.

**FRANK:**

Yeah. You're not just snuffed out. There's something, there's some kind of punishment.

**KIRK:**

That's really important. Just like there are caricatures of the eternal conscious torment view. And the guys during Hellgate in the debate were, they were quick to point out that there are caricatures of both of these views. So when you create these straw men and then we knock them down, we haven't really helped anybody because that's really not what we were supposed to be talking about in the first place.

But, you know, for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years, there was a view of hell that was about literal flames, and about burning, and about literal weeping, gnashing of teeth, fire, and darkness and all of these things.



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But they pointed out, you know, that, hey, I think it was John Stott, an annihilationist, who actually pointed out, if you take fire and darkness literally, they would cancel each other out. And so, everybody seems to believe that this is figurative language that is describing misery, and torment, and destruction, and death, and separation from God, and from life.

And what does that imagery actually represent in reality? What is the real thing behind that imagery? That's what they're trying to understand. But you're right. At the end of the day, God is going to be just.

And if ever we have a view that takes us down a road where we think God is a moral monster, or God is being way too lenient over here, well, then our view is wrong, because God is just. God is holy. He is merciful and gracious, and nothing He does is going to be outside of His character.

All we're trying to figure out is what does the Bible actually say? Right? I mean thousands and thousands of years ago, the Pharisees and other religious leaders thought the Bible said all sorts of stuff, that Jesus came in and said, no, it doesn't. Hello! Time out.

You've actually taken the commands of God, and you've replaced them with the traditions of men. I need to reset a whole bunch of this stuff. And boom, you know, we're into a new covenant. We're into a whole new deal. And so today we have the scriptures.

We can look deeply into them. We don't just have to rely on a priest, or somebody to tell us what they said and believe them. And that's why I'm thankful for the guys that came to the table so we could actually look into this stuff.

**FRANK:**

There are a few scriptures that the folks that take the traditional view, the eternal conscious torment view, will point to. One is in Matthew chapter 25 and verse 46, just to summarize the argument quickly, because we have very little time to cover this in detail. Jesus says that basically at the judgment, that these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.



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And the word eternal there is the same word, in both those instances. So we're talking about eternal punishment and eternal life. It's the same word. So the eternal conscious torment folks would say, if you're going to say that eternal punishment is temporary, then you'd have to say eternal life is temporary.

And nobody believes that. The whole point of eternal life is that you have it forever. So how might a conditionalist respond to that passage?

**KIRK:**

Oh, well, first of all, if I were an eternal conscious punishment guy, I would be like, high five. You know, well done. You put a point on the board. But annihilationists would say, well, hold on, timeout. Think of eternal redemption, all right? For example, we have eternal salvation. We have eternal punishment there in Matthew 25.

Think of eternal redemption. Eternal redemption is not the same as eternal redeeming. God is not redeeming people forever and ever and ever and ever. It is a redemption that is eternal. It is redemption whose result is everlasting.

It endures forever. And they would say, just like your salvation and your life, you're not being saved forever and ever and ever. You have a salvation that is eternal. And they would say that your punishment is not eternal punishing.

It is a punishment that is by definition eternal because you are dead forever, fully, finally, never coming back. Same word, eternal, referring to the result of the punishment of according to your deeds or according to the grace of God, not the experience of that salvation, or redemption, or that punishing.

**FRANK:**

I see that argument. I'm sorry, I just don't buy that, okay? Because, and look, I'm open to the conditional view, but this passage in particular makes me say, if God wanted to communicate that you're gone forever, he wouldn't say eternal punishment.



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He would say those would go away to final death, but the righteous to eternal life. And so that passage, along with Revelation 14 and Revelation 20, also create problems, as Chris Date himself admitted, that when you look at, say Revelation 14.

Let me just read Revelation 14:9-11. It says this. And another angel, a third, follow them, saying with a loud voice, if anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or his hand, he will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels, in the presence of the Lamb.

And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. And they will have no rest day or night. These worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name, they will have no rest day or night. If you're dead, you're resting.

I mean, if your consciousness is gone, you're at rest in the sense you don't exist anymore. This seems to me, a plain reading means this is going on forever and ever. So how might a Chris Date, or a Dan Patterson, or John Stott, or somebody else answer that? Kirk, what do you think?

**KIRK:**

Frank, you're bringing up very strong, powerful arguments and from the scriptures. And that's why I brought these guys in. I mean, you know, I'm a lightweight. I brought in the heavyweights to talk about those exact scriptures.

So, I would recommend that you just listen to what Chris Date said. Listen to what Dan Patterson said. Listen to why Wes Huff said he was so excited, he was so grateful for this discussion and hopes that we can have more like these, because there are robust arguments on both sides.

So I don't want to make the argument for them. But it would have been cool to have you at the round table. And you know, you know why you believe what you believe, and these other guys know why they believe what they believe. But that's not the case for many Christians. And so, that's why I wanted to have it.

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And I hope everybody will watch Hellgate and have your question in mind as they listen to those answers.

**FRANK:**

Yeah, and I also want to add that the conditional view has a lot more for it than the average person believes. The average person doesn't know about the conditional view, and they think that people are just trying to make this up in order to make God seem less mean.

**KIRK:**

Yeah, that's not the case.

**FRANK:**

But that's not the case because there are passages that you mentioned earlier that seem to imply, even John 3:16. I'm just playing the other side here, ladies and gentlemen. Just to—

You know, John 3:16 says that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Okay, well, why didn't it say, shall not live in hell but have eternal life with Jesus? So, I mean, there are passages that support the conditional view.

And what you have to do is try and figure out where the weight of the evidence leads and what those passages might mean from an eternal conscious torment perspective. Or if you take the other view, what passages like we just read, how they're explained from a conditional viewpoint.

**KIRK:**

Right.

**FRANK:**

So we're going to cover more of that with the great Kirk Cameron right after the break. You're listening to *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*. Don't forget we're on the 'Change My Mind' college tour. A lot of this in honor of Charlie Kirk.



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We're going to start at Elon on February 10th. February 11th will be at NC State. February 12th, we're going to be at Northern Florida. Then a couple of weeks later in Northern Michigan. Much more after the break. Don't go anywhere.

What is the nature of hell, ladies and gentlemen? That's the conversation that many evangelicals have been having over the past couple of months, thanks to a podcast that Kirk Cameron, who's my guest today, and his son had, bringing up the question, what is the real nature?

Is it forever and ever? Is it for a short period of time and then you're annihilated? That's what we're talking about now. We're not going into a lot of detail. We don't have that kind of time. But Kirk moderated a discussion between four scholars, two for the conditional view, and two for what's called eternal conscious torment.

And you can see that on his YouTube channel, the Kirk Cameron Show. It's called 'Hellgate: The Christian Debate We're Afraid to Have.' It's episode 102. It's over two and a half hours long. It's well worth watching. I just watched it today.

Very fine scholars on there that get in, and go back and forth and, and deal with all the different, possible interpretations of certain passages. But, Kirk, if there's one takeaway you want people to take away, especially parents and younger Christians after they watch Hellgate, what would that one takeaway be?

**KIRK:**

It is that the Gospel is our North Star, and that the Bible is our map for living. Everything we need to know is right there, and we must be unified on these topics. And good and godly men are. And those same good and godly men have different points of view and have disagreed on secondary issues. So when it comes to something like this, what is the nature of God's punishment for the wicked?

I want you to say, you can roll up your sleeves and have some wrestling matches with your brothers over these things. And it's fun. It's invigorating. It's stimulating. And I believe that God wants us to wrestle with these things. I believe.



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And that as we do so, that's iron sharpening iron, and we can do it with gentleness and respect toward one another. We need to follow Ephesians 4:29, not letting any unwholesome words come out of our mouth, but only that which is helpful for the building up of the people who hear it.

We should be the best at that. So that when outsiders look at us arguing about hell as the family of faith, we hug it out at the end and we're like, bro, that was awesome. I see how you landed where you landed, and I have such respect for you. I love you. And I'm here to serve you. This is like, remember George--?

Wasn't it George Whitfield? Who was he talking to with regard to Calvinism and Arminianism? Those wonderfully gracious letters that were written back and forth between two guys who just said, I have so much respect for you, I'm so thankful for you, but the doctrines you teach are awful, and I want us to be able to disagree with brotherly love and respect, with intellectual hospitality, so that we can better honor God, better present the gospel to the lost. And we're not afraid to have these conversations. It's the only way we're going to know why we believe what we believe, by studying the Scriptures.

**FRANK:**

Kirk, some people say that, well, evangelism might be blunted if you take a conditional viewpoint. What are they misunderstanding when they say that?

**KIRK:**

Well, I don't think evangelism is blunted by that. In fact, there are some people in some cultures who are so terrified of non-existence that many of the old writers said that people, if given the choice, would gladly prefer to be preserved forever and tormented, and still have some kind of agency than to be completely annihilated and disappear.

**FRANK:**

Yeah. Who was it that said hell, the doors of hell are locked on the inside? I know Lewis said that, but I think he was quoting somebody else. I think he was quoting somebody else when he said it. In any event, I get the idea that I'd rather-- Who said I'd rather reign in hell than serve in heaven? That could have been Nietzsche or some unbeliever.



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**KIRK:**

You know, we've got-- And we've got Billy Joel. He'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints.

**FRANK:**

That's right. Yeah.

**KIRK:**

We joke about hell. We make it a light laughing matter. What the hell? Hell of a ride. Hey, you know, that was a hell of a good time. But the truth is, hell is the just eternal punishment of a holy God against sin, and the rejection of the cure that cost the life of the Son of God.

Avoid it at all costs, and the cure is the gospel. That's where we've all got to go. And we can't avoid the hard questions. That's what I appreciate about you, Frank, is you're engaging people with these questions. So if your kids have these questions, show them that there are rich and robust answers.

And if there are stumbling blocks that are keeping them from even opening the Bible to learn about the God of hell-- Because remember, hell is God's hell. Right? This is God's hell for the wicked, and for the devil, and for his angels.

But we have to say there are various positions within the pale of orthodoxy that have been held throughout the church. So don't let this one trip you up. Because maybe Martin Luther was correct, maybe Augustine had it wrong based on some things that he learned from Plato.

Have you ever heard these other perspectives? They're not heresy, they're history. That could open a door to a conversation that could lead them to faith in Jesus Christ.

**FRANK:**

And there are other ways to get kids more engaged in questions. You can make them intellectually curious. I wrote a book with Brave Books. You've got several books with Brave Books. And you've also got this program, which I love because I've seen it for my grandkids. I

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play it for them. 'Iggy and Mr. Kirk', you do that with-- It's kind of like a Mr. Rogers thing, but better. Tell us about Brave Books and Iggy and Mr. Kirk.

**KIRK:**

Well, I'm so thankful for Brave Books. Not only did they sponsor Hellgate so that we could have this roundtable, but they've been engaged from the beginning in getting parents to have important conversations with their children about topics that matter, like the sanctity of life, like identity, like sexuality.

All of these things are being taught to children from the secular progressive side as early as four years old, five years old, on cartoons, and TV shows, and in books, and movies, and music. And so, we've got to talk to our children about this. And one of the best ways is to get a hold of Brave Books. They have pro God, pro American values. And they're on things like the priority of family, of trusting your parents, of reading God's word, identity from God's perspective.

And then at the back of the book, there's these discussion questions with scripture, and challenges, and games that bring the whole family together to make these core memories, and to invite these dangerous conversations with your kids, which turns out they're not going to be that dangerous for your kids to have with their friends later because you took the time to have them with them early, and teach them God's perspective on those topics.

**FRANK:**

And 'Iggy and Mr. Kirk', I love that you have a, a vulture in there that you call culture.

**KIRK:**

Yeah, it's a vulture named Culture.

**FRANK:**

Culture the vulture. What does culture the vulture bring up in 'Iggy and Mr. Kirk'? And 'Iggy and Mr. Kirk' is for what ages would you say?

**KIRK:**

Like four to seven years old?



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**FRANK:**

Okay.

**KIRK:**

I'm Mr. Kirk and I'm raising my five year old little adorable green puppet iguana in my backyard treehouse. And he's got lots of friends that live in the forest, including this vulture named Culture who's always deceiving him, lying to him.

And he's got to learn the truth from his mom and dad, from the Bible, and from a non-woke supercomputer. So it's like a base ChatGPT that's always going to source the Bible for the answers. And he learns all of these great things, and he's got to learn, not only how to resist culture's temptations, but I'm also trying to teach him that culture is not irredeemable, that culture can turn around.

And I think that's an important lesson for us in the church, is not to pit culture against the family of faith, but to remind the family of faith that we're the ones who have been tasked by God to create the culture. It's called the cultural mandate. We got it in the garden. And when we abandon it, no wonder it's going to go bad.

That's why we're supposed to be the light and the salt, to shine in the darkness, shine the light of Christ, and to be salt, to purify, and to preserve, and bring out all of the beauty, and the color, and the flavor for our children. And we do that by engaging in these kinds of conversations.

**FRANK:**

Yeah, we need to do that. And I was just with a friend of mine who said he was brought up in a fundamentalist home in West Virginia, and he said if he ever expressed a question he would be batted down and berated for not having enough faith.

Like nobody ever gave him any apologetic answers. Nobody ever gave him any evidence. They berated him for not having enough faith. And it wasn't until he discovered apologetics that was his world revolutionized. He went from an agnostic because his mind could not rejoice. Or his,



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let me put another way. His heart could not rejoice in what his mind doubted until he got answers.

And once he got answers, now he can be fully devoted to the Lord. And that's what we're trying to do. That's what you're trying to do by bringing up these questions and also, through Brave Books. Let's just circle back for a minute with just a couple minutes to go. Because people are going to be curious.

After you went through this whole Hellgate thing, Kirk, and you had these scholars around the table, and I assume you're still studying it. Where do you lean right now? What's your position right now? If you had to say, this is where I'm leaning, what would you say?

**KIRK:**

Well, first of all, I would say that if you started out on one side, you're going to get great, solid reasons that will bolster your opinion. If you had never heard of the conditionalist position before, like, that was just totally foreign to you, I think you're going to be kind of surprised. Add the scriptural support for it, and to learn that so many people have believed it and do believe it.

Today I continue to lean toward the conditional immortality view. I think it has-- I think it's a-- What can I say? I think the scripture is there to support it. It makes sense of things for me in a way that puts the whole picture together for me.

And when you talk about the soul and whether or not it's immortal, that's a really big thing. And then when you look at the imagery in the Old Testament and the fate of the wicked, it never talked about living forever and ever in a place that God has prepared for the purpose of your torment.

And so, I get how I got there. All my heroes taught me that. I believed it for years. But I find this other position to be really solid and persuasive. And we'll just have to continue to battle it out until we get to heaven, I think.



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**FRANK:**

All right. And check out much more at Hellgate. The link will be in the show notes. And also check out Kirk at The Kirk Cameron Show. And lastly, where can they see 'Iggy and Mr. Kirk'? Where do they sign up for? Where do they go?

**KIRK:**

Go to [bravebooks.com](http://bravebooks.com), [bravebooks.com](http://bravebooks.com) and you can see 'Iggy and Mr. Kirk' and get all the book stuff.

**FRANK:**

It's great. It's great stuff. All right, thanks for being with us, Kirk. Appreciate it. God bless you guys. See you next time. All right, bye bye.

