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.
   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.


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.
   2. We are to be watchmen.

D. Many times we don’t act because of fear.
   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?

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.