

# Paste Pan Monologue

this sin will become for you  
like a high wall,  
cracked  
and bulging,  
whose collapse comes suddenly  
in an instant."

There is a crack,  
and if we don't fix that crack,  
it doesn't matter how solid this building is,

we  
will

crumble,

and we will  
fall in on ourselves.

So today we're going to talk a little about that crack  
and we're going to talk about what we have to do  
to save ourselves from collapse.

*(Title appears on the screen: "Part Two: A Powerful Urge.")*

Twenty-two years ago, I was a young man on an airplane flight  
from L.A. to Florida. I'm sitting in my seat, and I see a  
woman pass me by. I see this woman, and I think to myself:  
Lord, that is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen.

And the Lord said, that's right.

And I said to myself:

Paul,  
that is the most beautiful woman you have ever seen. And my  
self said to its self: well you better do something about it.

And I looked down the length of the plane and I saw her sitting  
on the aisle. She was far away, at the other end of the airplane.

Had to lean to see her, could barely catch her eye. I took out  
a little scrap of paper, and took out a pen. And I wrote down,

"I have a powerful urge to communicate with you,  
but I find the distance between us insurmountable."

I folded the paper, gave the note to the stewardess. I said, you  
see that woman in the pink pantsuit. Will you give this to  
her. And the stewardess said yes. And I waited. I watched  
and I waited and I saw,

I saw her lean,  
into the aisle.

And she looked back,  
and she said:

*(He waits.)*

and I said:

*(He waits.)*

And that's all we needed to say, that was it, so easy, so easy you  
might call it

grace.

"I have a powerful urge to communicate with you, but I find  
the distance between us insurmountable."

*(Pause.)*

START

*(Another title appears on the screen: "Part Three: The Fires of Hell")*

I was —  
oh about  
two weeks ago, I was

at a conference for pastors of churches like this church,





it was a uh conference where you go and hear missionaries speak, to hear about the "good" work our church is doing in other places.

Now I go to these conferences because I am told to go to these conferences —

I get a little letter in the mail from the powers that be saying you should go to this, and I go, I don't think about it much — I just go.

And here I am at this conference at the Orlando Marriott, and I'm eating my free continental breakfast, and I'm listening to a missionary speak.

This missionary that's talking, he works overseas in one of those countries that we hear about on the news, but if you were asked where it was or what that country was all about, you probably wouldn't be able to point to it on a map.

And this missionary, he's trying to start a church there like the church we have here in a place — a country — where there's a lot of fighting, a lot of violence, a lot of chaos, gun fights and bombs and

and he talks about one day, he's in a market, people going about their business, shopping, buying food, and a bomb goes off — I think it was a car bomb. A grocery store lights on fire. And people run, they scatter off into —

there's a boy, sixteen, seventeen years old, a young man, and instead of running *away* from the burning grocery store, he runs into it.

He runs *into* the fire. And some time passes, the store is still on fire, and eventually the boy comes out of the store, and his whole body is shielding a girl, maybe seven years old, this girl —

he's helped her to safety, saved her from the burning building, but his own body is on fire. His clothes are burning, his arms are burning, his face is burning, his skin is melting. He helps the girl to safety, and she's okay. But he, the boy, is dying. And there's no one to put out his fire. And he lies down on the street, body gone into shock, and he burns until he's dead.

The missionary tells us that the boy — that that was his sister that he ran into the store to save. And the missionary tells us that this boy — he didn't know him personally, but talked to the boy's family enough to know that the boy was not a Christian. He did not believe in the God we believe in. He did not believe in Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. He believed in a different set of beliefs, and attended a church that did not talk about the cross, and prayed a different set of prayers than the prayers we pray.

And the missionary said: isn't it a shame that we lost that boy, what a man of Christ he might have been. And and and I thought — I thought that he meant, "What a shame the boy died," and I thought, "Yes, what a shame that boy died,"





but the missionary, he meant,  
"What a shame, I didn't save this boy for Christ,  
what a shame I didn't convert him into a Christian,  
what a shame he went to Hell."

The missionary said, "We need help."

He said, "We need money  
to save these souls,  
we need people,  
an' we need your prayers  
to save these souls,  
because without that,  
they all go to Hell."

This boy, by all accounts,  
was a good boy.

And yet, he went to Hell.

And what do we say, we say

Amen.

And all the pastors at the conference say — they said  
Amen.

And here I am, thinking about this image,

that boy,  
the body on fire,

and the thought of him  
going from one fire  
into another.

I went back to my hotel room that night.  
I sat on the toilet, and I cried.

Convulsively.

I cried.

I said,  
"God, I don't understand."

And he said, "That's not your problem."  
And I said,

"Well it kinda is."  
And he said, "Why?"

And I said, "Because I'm a pastor."

And he said, "Oh you're a pastor, what does *that* mean?"  
And he said,

"No,  
no, it's not your problem because you haven't made it your  
problem,  
you haven't gone over there and done anything,  
you're just sittin' on the toilet."

And I said, "You're right. I am. Just sittin' on the toilet."

And he said, "What are you gonna do?"

And I said, "Well after I'm done here on the toilet,

I'm gonna brush my teeth,

and then I'll go to bed."

And he said, "Why?"

And I said — I said ...

And he said,  
"Why?"

And I said, "Because you have already done so much."

And he said,  
"Exactly."

And he said that he's saved us, he's taken care of us,  
he said, "Why don't you listen when I tell you that."

And he said, "You think the Devil is a little man with horns."

He said, "You think that?"

An' I said, "I don't know."

An' he said, "You really think that?"

Do you really really really think that?"

And I said, "No  
not really."



And he said,  
"There is no little man.  
There is only you  
and your fellow man.  
You wanna see Satan — ?  
there's your Satan.  
You wanna see Hell,  
you look around."

And he said, "There is no Hell.  
And there is no reason to tell people  
that they're going to Hell.  
Because they *are* in Hell.

They are already there.  
You gotta take them out of the Hell they're already in.  
That boy," the Lord tells me — he says,  
"That boy, he is standing next to me right now.  
And anyone who tells you otherwise  
lies."

I know  
you *all* have a powerful urge to communicate.  
I know it. I see it. Your urge  
to communicate God's love,  
to bring people into this church,  
to help them,  
to save them,  
to make their lives better,  
and their afterlives  
everlasting.  
You have that powerful urge to communicate.  
But you are failing  
because the distance between  
you  
and everyone else  
is  
insurmountable.

But I'm here to tell you,  
the distance  
is you.  
It's me.

It's all of us.

We put the distance there.  
When we shun our neighbors,  
when we judge our friends,  
when we look down at people  
from other places  
and other religions,  
we create

an insurmountable distance  
where there is no distance at all.

Where are we today?  
Where are we  
today?  
I say

we are no longer a congregation that believes in Hell.  
A radical change: we are no longer a congregation that says,  
"My way is the only way."  
We are no longer

that kind of church.

(End of sermon.) — **END**

(Pastor nods to Music Director ... Off-mic.)

Go ahead.

(Organ plays. If there's a band, then the whole band plays.)

