

# A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

## An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 10- Luke 10:1-24**

### 196- The Five Portraits of a Kingdom Ministry- Part 5

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April 7, 2013

#### **Luke 10:1-24**

**1** Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.

**2** And He was saying to them, "**The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.**

**3** Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

**4** Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way.

**5** Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace *be* to this house.'

**6** If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.

**7** Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.

**8** Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you;

**9** and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

**10** But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say,

**11** 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off *in protest* against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'

**12** I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.

**13** "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

**14 But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you.**

**15 And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!**

**16 "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."**

**17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."**

**18 And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.**

**19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.**

**20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."**

**21 At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.**

**22 All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*."**

**23 Turning to the disciples, He said privately, "Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things you see,**

**24 for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see *them*, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear *them*."**

To the Glory of God

Now as I said at the beginning of this small mini-series- this Passage lengthy- but I wanted to take it as a whole in order to get the flavor of what Jesus was teaching here and then divide it up into about five parts.

1. The Characteristics of Biblical Evangelism (**Luke 10:1-4**)
2. The Message of a Biblical Ministry (**Luke 10:5-11**)
3. The Divine Warning of Rejecting the Gospel (**Luke 10:12-16**)
4. The Danger of Pride in Biblical Ministry (**Luke 10:17-20**)

## 5. The Delight of God in Biblical Ministry (Luke 10:21-24)

Now two weeks ago- we finished looking at the second part and today- if God is pleased- I want to begin to examine the third part of what Jesus was teaching in this Passage and that is:

### 3. The Divine Warning of Rejecting the Gospel

#### Luke 10:12-16

**12 I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.**

**13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.**

**14 But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you.**

**15 And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!**

**16 "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."**

Now the English word, "Gospel" comes from a transliteration of the Greek word, "Euangelion" which loosely translated means: Good News or Glad Tidings. And it is Good News indeed that God Almighty has seen fit to forgive us all our sins and to rescue us from the terrible Wrath of God through the finished Work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

However, there is an element of the Biblical "Good News" that is very, very bad news. In fact, the Good News itself is predicated on an understanding of this real bad news. You see, the news about Salvation is only good if one understands the bad news about what happens to those who don't possess that Salvation. In fact, part of the ongoing proclamation of the Biblical Gospel is to tell people the worst news they've ever heard- that God has created a hell- a place of eternal punishment for those who reject Him. And those who do not repent and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ will spend all of eternity punished in that place called hell.

And that is the bad news that is foundational to the good news being good news. In fact, without this "Bad News" the Good News would

simply be News or information. So it is the bad News that makes the Good News to be truly Good indeed.

So true evangelism then, must include the strongest negative reality as part of the motivation of the sinner, not just the attractiveness of Heaven; not just the attractiveness of the Love of God, but also the fear of hell and the dread of the Wrath of God. So all faithful endeavors of preaching the Good News must clearly convey the bad news. So it is not just the glorious Promise of Heaven that we must proclaim- it is also the threat of Hell.

And this emphasis which is very clear in the Bible is being eliminated from most of contemporary, evangelical witness as we know it in our experience today. People don't want to talk about hell anymore. They don't want to talk about Divine Judgment. They don't want to discuss the expectations and the demands that Jesus imposes on all through His Prerogative as being Lord. Many people today want a "Jesus" that rescues them from all harm; blesses them with all wealth; heals them of all diseases; and yet makes no demands whatsoever on their lives or issues any limitations on their behavior.

May I be the first to inform you that no such Jesus exists. The Jesus of Scripture really does think that He is God Almighty in human flesh and as God- He feels entitled to rule in His Kingdom as He sees fit. And as this Jesus- the One that Scripture declares- went about to preach the Gospel- He followed the Pattern set before him by the Old Testament Prophets and that would continue after Him by the NT Apostles. For every one occasion that Jesus preached about God's Love and Mercy and Forgiveness in graciously rescuing repentant sinners from eternal Damnation- Jesus preached five times about Hell; Judgment and the Wrath of God against the *unrepentant* sinners.

Five to One- that is the Biblical Pattern for preaching and for evangelism and for Ministry. We are to preach and teach and explain and mention the Wrath of God and the Judgment of God and Hell and eternal Damnation *five times* more than you mention or teach or preach about Salvation and Heaven and Mercy and Grace.

And yet somehow there are some in the modern Church who honestly believe that they love people more than Jesus does. They believe that they know better than Jesus does about this and they believe that they have a better way to evangelize and a better way to conduct ministry than that single pattern that is in the Holy Scriptures.

So we can see how that the Biblical Truth about Hell is under assault in our day and so there is a great need to understand and to know and to preach and to believe and to defend the Biblical Doctrine of Hell and Eternal Damnation. And one of the best texts to do that is found here in **Luke 10** that we just read but there is another one found in **Romans 11**- so let's go there this morning. **Romans 11:17-22**:

**17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,**

**18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root *supports* you.**

**19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."**

**20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;**

**21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.**

**22 Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.**

Now look again at the Divine Command of the first part of **Romans 11:22**:

**Behold then the kindness and severity of God...**

Now the word, "Behold" comes from a Greek word that has to do with examination; or study; or contemplation; or meditation; or pondering. So the Bible tells us to ponder or to study or to contemplate or to meditate on two different aspects of God:

A. The Kindness of God

B. The Severity of God

So right off the bat- for us to concentrate only on the Kindness of God to the point where we never seem to get around to pondering the Severity of God is rebelling against what the Bible tells us to do here. And therefore to not look at the Severity of God is disobedience- but it is

more than just disobedience- it is also very dangerous and it is unloving as well. Let me explain why.

To concentrate on the Kindness of God to the exclusion of the Severity of God is like a parent teaching a child how a red hot eye on the stove is a very good thing. That red eye makes water boil to cook the spaghetti noodles; it turns clammy eggs into a tasty white and yellow breakfast; it pops popcorn—so the red eye on the stove is “good” it is a gift; it is productive and it is very useful.

But if you never tell the child that that very same red eye is also very dangerous and that using it foolishly or unwisely can hurt them very badly is in itself a dangerous and unloving thing to do. It is an irresponsible thing to do. So first of all- we must see that the Divine Command for all of us to behold the Severity of God is a very loving and thoughtful Command. And therefore- those who discourage us from seeing this Severity or who discourage us from pondering it or to meditate on it or to believe in this Severity—in spite of all their tender and sensitive language—are not doing us a favor. They are in fact rebelling against the clear Command of Scripture and they are suggesting that their view is more loving or more tender or more compassionate than that of Jesus.

Now the main reason I am dealing with this subject of Hell is because it is the next topic that Jesus dealt with in our verse by verse Journey through the Gospel of Luke. I am going through every word and every verse and every sentence and every chapter of the Gospel that was written by Dr. Luke and Luke deals with the Divine consequences of rejecting the Gospel in this Passage. So that is the main reason why I am dealing with the issue of Eternal Damnation.

But the second reason is because I want to warn you that more and more well-known and respected Christian leaders in the modern Church are rejecting the historic Biblical understanding of Hell. And they are doing it sweetly and boldly and they are doing it with nuances and they are doing it in your face- but they are, nonetheless, attacking and challenging and rejecting what the Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches about Hell and Damnation and God’s Wrath and Judgment against unrepentant sinners.

And so now more than ever- we need to know what the Bible teaches about this important issue so that we may please the Lord with a Biblical view of all of life.

Now what I mean by "historic Biblical understanding of hell" is simply what is written in our own Church Doctrinal Statement which says:

“We believe and teach that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the Second Resurrection (Luke 16:19-26; The Revelation 20:13-15), when the soul and the resurrected body will be united (John 5:28-29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne Judgment (The Revelation 20:11-15) and shall be cast into a literal hell, the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41-46), cut off from the life of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2Thessalonians 1:7-9).”

The historic Biblical view of Hell is that it is

*"Endless, Continual, and Indescribable Suffering."*

And all four of these words are Biblical and all four of them are important:

"Endless"	Hell is forever and never has an end
"Continual"	There is never a single second of relief from the Agony of Hell
"Indescribable"	The Pain and Agony of Hell is beyond Human Understanding
"Suffering"	In this endless condition- people are in conscious Torment.

Now the abandonment of this Biblical Truth is following a 150 year old pattern of unpopular Biblical teachings being relentlessly and systematically abandoned by the visible Church that started with the "Downgrade Controversy of Charles Spurgeon's day and has evolved to what we have in our day. And we must know that the impulse of this abandonment is not coming from the Bible- but it is coming directly from our own pagan culture led by the subjective emotional impulses of certain individuals.

For example, back in 1990- Clark Pinnock- who was a respected Theologian and one of the main proponents of the heresy of Open Theism wrote this as President of McMaster Theological Seminary,

“I was led to question the traditional belief in everlasting conscious torment because of moral revulsion and broader theological considerations, not first of all on scriptural grounds. It just does not make any sense to say that a God of love will torture people forever for sins done in the context of a finite life . . . It's time for evangelicals to come out and say that the biblical and morally appropriate doctrine of hell is annihilation, not everlasting torment.”<sup>1</sup>

This is the classic process for how a person moves from being orthodox to unorthodox; from being Biblical to being Unbiblical; from believing and teaching what God says to believing and teaching what Man says. Personal emotions and desires combine with speculative reasonings about general ideas, and they take precedence over specific Biblical texts and teachings.

And you can see the process at work leading people to abandon other Biblical teachings that from time to time don't fit the spirit of the age—and seem unacceptable to enlightened modern people. For example- about 15 years ago- John Stott- one of my *former* heroes wrote this,

“Emotionally, I find the concept [of eternal conscious torment] intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterizing their feelings or cracking under the strain . . . Scripture points in the direction of annihilation.”<sup>2</sup>

Now both Pinnock and Stott (and many others today) argue that no one goes to a hell of “endless, continual, and indescribable suffering.” Instead, if people do not believe in Christ they are simply “annihilated”. And that is a man-made theological term that means that the unrepentant do not suffer at all- but that they simply “cease to exist”. They have no consciousness and they experience nothing. They are simply no more.

And of course both of these men were hailed as being “courageous” and “bold” for bucking the “dictatorial and outdated notions that have

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<sup>1</sup> Clark Pinnock and Delwin Brown, *Theological Crossfire: An Evangelical/Liberal Dialogue*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), pp. 226–227.

<sup>2</sup> David Edwards, *Evangelical Essentials*, with a Response from John Stott, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988), pp. 314–320.



kept the Church in worn out ideologies that drive many thinking people away from Christianity".

But these men were not courageous or bold- they were either lazy or they are evil. And if they are lazy it is because they have not taken the time to actually study what the Word of God says about the Severity of God and they are simply talking off the top of their heads. But if they have read what the Bible says and they just don't like it and they are putting forth this unbiblical notion of annihilationism because they are rebelling against what God has spoken- then they are both evil.

But I pray that you see that the difference between suffering in hell forever if you don't trust in Jesus Christ and simply ceasing to exist is an infinite difference. So this is not simply a different way to look at the same thing; it is not a matter of personal opinion or personal preference; and it has nothing to do with style or approach. This is a real and substantive difference that really matters. It is massive. The difference between a person not existing and him existing in continual torment forever is an infinite difference.

Now there are a thousand reasons why Annihilationism is wrong- but the main problem with it is that the Bible teaches clearly and repeatedly that those who do not trust in Christ will be punished with a continual and an eternal suffering. In other words, the concept of "annihilation" leads the Church away from clear Biblical Truth. And that always hurts people and it always dishonors God. So when the Bible says,

**"Behold the severity of God,"**

... we should do that- even if we do not want to; *especially* when we do not want to do that. And the Severity of God includes the Truth about Hell as endless suffering. So this is not an isolated vague or irrelevant doctrine. Scripture paints a dreadful and terrifying portrait of Hell.

And it is a profound and dreadful reality. So to speak of it lightly, or not to speak of it at all, or to speak of it in a way that changes suffering into feeling nothing, simply proves that we either do not grasp its horror or that we disagree with the Owner and the Creator of the Universe about it- both of which are real bad.

Now there has been a lot spoken and written about Hell over the last 2,000 years- but I know of no one that I have ever read or listened

to- who has ever in any way *overstated* the terrors of hell. I don't think you can really do that.

But no matter how vividly we try to describe Hell- we could never surpass the horrid images that Jesus Himself used:

- ✓ "Weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12; Luke 13:28)
- ✓ "Their worm shall not die" (Mark 9:48)
- ✓ "Unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12; Mark 9:43)
- ✓ "Eternal fire" (Matthew 25:41)
- ✓ "The hell of fire" (Matthew 18:9)
- ✓ "Eternal punishment" (Matthew 25:46)
- ✓ "Anguish in the flame" (Luke 16:24).

The point of all these phrases and words is that when we "Behold" these images in our minds- they are designed on purpose by God to make us shudder. We are meant to tremble and feel dread when we ponder them. And we are meant to recoil from the reality of them- not by denying them or rationalizing them but by fleeing from them into the Arms of Jesus- Who died to save us from all of them.

The **Revelation 14:11** is probably the most graphic New Testament statement of the eternal suffering of the unrepentant. And it says this:

#### **The Revelation 14:11**

**"And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night..."**

**Torment forever and ever.**

The endless suffering of unrepentant sinners is a reality that is taught in Scripture and therefore it is good for us to know about. Hell is so bad and so horrific that this is how Jesus talked about it in **Matthew 18:8&9:**

**8 "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire.**

**9 "If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.**

So Jesus said that Hell is so bad that losing your eye or your foot is nothing by comparison and making yourself cripple or blind in this life to avoid entering into it was preferable than to live nonchalant about it and be cast into the eternal fiery hell. So instead of coming to the Bible and saying,

*"I feel that endless suffering cannot be just, and so the Bible cannot be teaching it or else the Bible is not true,"*

We should say this:

*"Since the Bible teaches about the continual and eternal suffering of the unrepentant in hell- it, it must be just and therefore, O how infinitely dreadful sin must be! How infinitely blameworthy it must be to treat the Glory of God with contempt! How infinite must be the insult to God when we do not trust His Promises! What infinite Beauty and Glory and Purity and Holiness God must have, that endless suffering is a just and fitting punishment for disobeying His Word!"*

The concept of Annihilationism reduces sin from being high treason to a simple misdemeanor. But Hell is meant to fill us with awe at the Glory that we have scorned.

And Hell is also meant to lead us to be filled with wonder that the death of one single Man—the God-Man- Jesus Christ—could bear the infinite penalty of Hell as the substitute for everyone who repents and trusts in Him.

So I pray that you can see that from *that* perspective- Hell is simply an "Echo of the Glory of God". The horror of Hell reveals the Greatness and the Value and the Worth of the Glory of God that has been rejected and the Greatness and Value and Worth of Jesus' Suffering because He bore that Hell for all who believe.

So the fear of Hell is a good and useful thing. Jesus said in **Luke 12:4&5,**

**4 "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.**

**5 "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!"**

... in other words, behold the Severity of God. Now look again at **Romans 11:19- 21** that says:

**Romans 11:19-21**

**19** You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."

**20** Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;

**21** for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.

**Hebrews 10:31** says:

**It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**

So we have seen Hell as a horrible reality. As something fearful beyond expression or imagination. And we have seen how that this awesomely terrible reality is an Echo of the Glory of God. The Bible is written from the perspective that assumes that Hell is a Just and Righteous Recompense to all who sin and refuse to repent. And for that to be true- how infinitely valuable and worthy must be the Glory of God that our sin belittles and scorns! In other words the horror of Hell is an Echo of the infinite Worth of God's Glory.

And if the death of Jesus Christ can justly deliver millions of people from that deserved eternal torment- how infinite must have been the torment of the Son of God when He took our place.

So the Justice of Hell stands as an everlasting witness to the infinite Greatness of the Glory of God, and the infinite Greatness of the Suffering and Righteousness of Christ to redeem all who repent and believe in Him. And that is why I say that Hell is an Echo of the Glory of God.

But we must also understand that Hell is utterly insufficient to save anyone. Hell is completely insufficient to save anybody. Just like the law of God- Hell was not designed to rescue a single person from God's Wrath. Hell does not scare a single person into Heaven- precisely because Heaven is a place for those who love God- not for those who simply fear Hell- and loving God is a gracious and merciful Gift from God to His elect.

We must understand that the fear of Hell by itself is no proof of love for God. Desiring to be rescued by the lifeboats before you drown does not prove that you love the captain of the ship. **James 2:5** says:

**Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?**

The pathway to Heaven is the path of Love to and for God. And as I have told you many, many times- you cannot rub the two sticks of your own will power and your own human intelligence together to produce love for God. Love for God is as foreign and unnatural to lost and fallen Man as living on Jupiter. Human beings do not love God naturally or normally in our fallen state. Therefore- our love *for* God is a wondrous gift *from* God. We who are saved love God- to be sure- but **1John 4:19** teaches that the only reason *why* we love God is because God loved us *first*- from before the foundation of the world- before we were born and before we did anything good or bad.

The Bible says that before God made the Universe- He determined to set His Love upon those whom He chose to save and so while we were ungodly wretched wicked sinners who cared nothing for God or the things of God- God mercifully and graciously granted to us His Love. And that is the *only reason* why we love God at all.

So simply because you fear Hell doesn't mean that you love God. The fear of Hell is granted to people who are already saved to show you that you are on the wrong path and to point you to the right one. But we must know that the fear of Hell is not the path itself or the gate that leads to eternal life. Fear is what you should feel when you wander *off* the path.

About 25 years ago- I made a remarkable discovery while getting ready to lead a group of people into repentance during a time of all night prayer. I learned that the tears of genuine repentance do not flow from the fear of Hell but from the joys of Heaven. I learned that you have to fall in love with the Holiness of God Himself before you can ever weep over your own sins. Let me take you on the path of my discovery.

Back then- I was reading some of David Brainerd's Diary. David Brainerd was a powerful missionary to the American Indians during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. And I read where Brainerd had seen great

repentance and contrition among the Indians at several times in his preaching. And on August 9, 1745, he preached to the Indians of Crossweeksung, New Jersey, and made this observation:

“There were many tears among them while I was discoursing publicly . . . Yet some were much affected with a few words spoken to them in a powerful manner, which caused the persons to cry out in anguish of soul, although I spoke not a word of terror, but on the contrary, set before them the fullness and all-sufficiency of Christ's merits, and his willingness to save all that come to him; and thereupon pressed them to come without delay.”<sup>3</sup>

He had written earlier on August 6,

“It was surprising to see how their hearts seemed to be pierced with the tender and melting invitations of the Gospel, when there was not a word of terror spoken to them.”<sup>4</sup>

Again on November 30 Brainerd preached on **Luke 16:19–26** concerning the rich man and Lazarus and he wrote this:

“The Word made powerful impressions upon many in the assembly, especially while I discoursed of the blessedness of Lazarus 'in Abraham's bosom' [**Luke 16:22**]. This, I could perceive, affected them much more than what I spoke of the rich man's misery and torments. And thus it has been usually with them . . . They have almost always appeared much more affected with the comfortable than the dreadful truths of God's Word. And that which has distressed many of them under convictions, is that they found they wanted, and could not obtain, the happiness of the godly.”<sup>5</sup>

Now what Brainerd is saying here is that Hell itself and even the fear of Hell is insufficient to save anyone. It is insufficient to bring about what is really needed- which is a deep, spiritual sorrow for sin- which he called,

“Evangelical Contrition”

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<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, ed. by Norman Pettit, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 7, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, p. 310.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, p. 307.

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, p. 342.

And what **2Corinthians 7:11** calls:

"Godly Sorrow"

The same dynamic seems to occur in **Luke 5:1–10**. In that Passage that we covered a few years ago- After teaching the crowds from a boat off land in the lake of Gennesaret- Jesus told the fishermen to push out into the deep and let down their nets for a catch (v. 4). Simon protested,

**Luke 5:5b-7**

**5 ... "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say *and* let down the nets."**

**6 When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets *began* to break;**

**7 so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink.**

And Peter's response to this was remarkable and it was very unlike our more modern response to grace. **Luke 5:8–10** says:

**Luke 5:8-10**

**8 But when Simon Peter saw *that*, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!"**

**9 For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken;**

**10 and so also *were* James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "**Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.**"**

Now what is remarkable here is that it was a miracle of Grace- not a Word of Judgment- that broke Peter's heart and brought him to contrite, evangelical repentance or godly sorrow.

We must understand that genuine evangelical contrition for sin or godly sorrow is a supernatural Work of God the Holy Spirit to bring sorrow to an individual for not having Holiness. But we have to be careful here. Because it is possible human beings to genuinely weep over not having Holiness- NOT because we love God and want to enjoy

all that he is for us in Christ- but simply because we fear the punishment that comes for *not having* that Holiness.

Many a criminal will weep when his sentence is read- not because he has come to love God and His Glory- but simply because his freedom to do even more unrighteousness is being taken away from him. *That* kind of weeping is *not* true godly sorrow.

The only true sorrow for not having Holiness comes from a love for God's Holiness- not from simply a fear of the consequences of not having it. Or a more precise way to say it is this:

True remorse over not having Holiness is remorse over not enjoying God and living by the impulse of that Divine Joy.

To cry over the punishment one is about to receive for wrongdoing is no sign of hating the wrong- but only of hating the pain. For crying and contrition to be real and evangelical and Biblical- it must come from the brokenhearted feelings a person has for lacking a life of joy in God- not just from the fearful feelings of being threatened with eternal pain.

So think what this means. This was the startling discovery I made about 25 years ago. In order to cry over not having something- you must really want to have it. And the more you *want* to have it- the more you feel distressed over *not* having it. This means that true evangelical contrition; true repentance; genuine Holy Spirit conviction; a true brokenness of sin- must be *preceded* by a falling in love with God. In other words- we must be Sovereignly *granted* with the Life of God first- and it is that Life- that awakens us to our own sinfulness.

Another way of saying this is that we must be "Born Again" before we become convicted of our sin. And that may sound backward to you- but we must be able to see and hear and understand the Truth about God and Hell before we can ever believe and repent. So we must be *regenerated* by a Sovereign Act of God the Holy Spirit *before* we can ever begin to understand that we are lost and sinful and in need of forgiveness. And that is why the Reformers put forth this formula:

Regeneration Precedes Justification



You see, what lost and fallen Man needs before he needs anything else is Life- the Life of God. The Bible says that all lost people are dead in trespasses and sins and therefore if *anyone* is *ever* going to be convicted of his sins and repent of them and believe the Gospel and trust in Jesus Christ- he must first be able to see and hear and believe- and that ability comes only from the Sovereign Act of Regeneration or being born again.

Once he is born again- once he has Sovereignly been given eyes to see and ears to hear and an heart to believe- the lost man can now understand his lost condition; hear the Gospel; fear Hell; repent of his sins and trust in the finished Work of Jesus Christ. Whereby the shed Blood of Jesus forgives him of all his sins and the sinless Life of Jesus Christ imparts to him the perfect Righteousness that he needs to enter into Heaven.

And that is called, "Justification" and it comes *after* being "Born Again" or *after* what is called "Regeneration". Which is why they taught:

#### Regeneration Precedes Justification.

So even though most of us were taught that we must believe to be Born Again- the Truth is that we must be Born Again in order to believe.

So to truly weep at not having God's Holiness- to fear Hell- you must first long for God's Holiness. To truly weep over not possessing it- it must be attractive to you. So you see how strange this seems at first:

God and His way of Holiness must become your Joy  
before you can weep over not having that Joy.

In other words- You must fall in love with God *before* being separated from God really hurts.

Therefore we must understand that Hell is insufficient by itself to produce tears of genuine repentance. For the tears to be real- they have to come from really missing God- not just missing Heaven. Brainerd found that words of winsome attractiveness toward God and His Holiness and His Glory produced more broken-heartedness in the Indians than did the words of warning.

And if we stopped right here- you would get the wrong idea that we never need to preach about Hell or Damnation- but you would be wrong. Even though everything I just told you is true- the Biblical ratio for Preaching is still five to one- we should spend five times more time talking about hell and damnation than we do talking about heaven and salvation.

That was the pattern of the OT Prophets; it was the pattern of Jesus; and it is was the pattern of the NT Apostles and interestingly enough- it was also the pattern of the leaders of the American Church until about 150 years ago.

Clear and passionate warnings about Hell and the dangers of rejecting the Gospel have value in stirring people to take the Glory of God seriously so that we come to see Him for what He is and eventually delight ourselves in Him.

So the only reason I am saying these things this morning is to stress to you that it is the delight in God Himself and His Holiness that produces true grief when we fall short because no one cries over missing what they don't know about or don't want to have.

Peter saw in the miracle of the Person of Jesus Christ- a Treasure of hope and joy that was so wonderful he was overwhelmed with how out of sync his life was with such a Treasure. If this much power and this much goodness is in Jesus for those who trust him, then O how different would be my life if I truly believed! How radical would be my obedience! What abandon would I feel in my living for such a Christ! What freedom from petty grievances and from fleeting pleasures of sin would I enjoy!

So the discovery I made was that true remorse and contrition and repentance flow from falling in love with all that God is for us in Jesus. And until God Himself becomes our Treasure- we will not grieve over our falling short of being satisfied in Him and living in a way that shows that satisfaction.

Hell cannot produce satisfaction in God by itself. And so it cannot produce remorse for not having God. And so it cannot produce gospel repentance. And so it cannot save. And that is why it is insufficient. It is dreadfully true; it is horrifically true; it is frighteningly true- and it can warn us and it can alter the way we live our lives- but it is insufficient to save.

If we want to bring about tears of gospel repentance- we have to say things that make God Himself and His Holiness and His Glory- not simply the comforts of heaven or the escape of hell—but God himself and all that he is for us in Christ—look alluringly attractive.

The Holy Spirit takes this alluring portrait of God and Christ and causes people to fall in love with God. That's called regeneration, or new birth, or effectual calling. And when a person falls in love with all that God is for them in Christ, then the tears for sin will come. And they will be tears of remorse that God had been missed and spurned and that we have fallen short- of God's Glory and they will be tears of joy that finally there is something infinitely satisfying to live for and not just something to fear and to flee from.

The most striking way to put this is that the pain of genuine repentance flows from the pleasure of seeing God for Who He really is. And as paradoxical as it may sound- genuine grief over sin flows from genuine joy in God and His Glory.

And we must know that Hell is powerless to produce this. The tears that hell can produce are only the tears of remorse and fear that the sin we love will destroy us. So the practical Purpose of Hell is to shock us out of our love affair with the world and send us running to the Fountain of Eternal Life- Who is Jesus.

But it is only a taste of that Fountain that will give us a passion for God and break our hearts that we have loved anything else.

So we must understand that there is as much false teaching about Hell today as there is about just about every other subject. And the wrong way to preach about Hell comes in two forms:

- ✓ Ignoring it or Minimizing it smaller than the Bible does
- ✓ Overemphasizing it or Maximizing it more than the Bible does

And we must understand that neither one of these is right; both are wrong; neither one is closer to the Truth and both of these are perversions of the Truth.

There is some hellfire and brimstone preaching going on today that I am very angry about while there is some hellfire and brimstone preaching that I am very thankful for and want to emulate in my own Ministry.

So what would is the difference? It isn't the volume or the amount of times a preacher says the words, "Hell" or "Damnation" that is the problem- it is the concept that he is teaching that is either the blessing or the problem.

There is the kind of preaching about Hell where these things are made clear:

- 1) Where Hell and Eternal Damnation does not reflect the majestic Glory of God and His Justice- but is simply vindictive.
- 2) Where there is no grief for the loss of human beings who go there.

That would be a real *bad* way to preach about Hell and one that does infinitely more damage than good. The Apostle Paul said in **Romans 10:1:**

**Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation.**

... and he said that about the Jews on whom the hardening of God had already come. And then he went on to say:

**Romans 9:1-3**

**I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,**

**<sup>2</sup> that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.**

**<sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,**

That is how we should preach about Hell. Unrepentant sinners are going to burn in hell forever- to be sure- but it should break our hearts that that is true. We should not want a dog to go to hell. Anyone who is happy that God has judged people to hell is evil himself. Charles Spurgeon said,

“If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees,

implored them to stay. If Hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for.”<sup>6</sup>

So anytime there is an emotional over-the-top-ness of anger against the sinner that is not compensated for by a similar kind of sweet, wonderful, affectionate emotion for forgiveness and for the Gospel and for the Cross- that kind of preaching is a problem.

That kind of preaching about Hell is terribly imbalanced in a real unhealthy way. And those who engage in it are simply mad at sinners and not thankful that they have been saved from the very same sins! Correct preaching about Hell must always include a broken-hearted confession,

*"I deserve to be in hell myself!"*

... and that *always* produces a Biblical and godly tenderness and humility towards those who are on their way to everlasting torment.

We must understand and continue to tell one another constantly that the only reason why we are not going to hell is because God violated our will and imposed His Grace upon us to give us the gift of repentance and the gift of love for Himself. And the knowledge of that Truth will humble us as we correctly preach hell to unrepentant sinners.

But what will help more than anything else is that we must stop simply *talking* about hell! Having a theoretical or abstract religious discussion about eternal Damnation rarely does anyone any good.

What we need to do is to loudly and continually *warn* people about the certainty and the reality and the horror of Hell! We need to show that the God of the Bible is infinitely Righteous and the way that God Righteousness is vindicated is through His Justice towards those who will not repent.

God's Mercy is unfathomable- but God's Righteousness is every bit as equal with His Mercy. God is not more Merciful than He is Righteous and He is not more Righteous than He is Merciful. God's Mercy and His Righteousness are in perfect balance. And this is how God Almighty described Himself in **Exodus 34:6&7**:

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/74181-if-sinners-be-damned-at-least-let-them-leap-to>

**6 ... "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;**

**7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."**

And even though- because of our guilt- we are infinitely more interested in God's Mercy than His Righteousness- God is not. God is just as interested that the Glory of His Righteousness be displayed on the unrepentant in Hell as He is that the Glory of His Grace be displayed on those who repent in Heaven. And when you consider that the only reason that anyone repents is because God mercifully allows them to- then the subject of Hell correctly brings about a humility like nothing else.

So if we only talk about soft, light, and tender things because they are more compelling in certain people's minds- then we will distort the Gospel- which is horrible- because then people don't repent and don't escape the hell that we don't want to talk about.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ and the Worth and Value of that Atonement vanishes when the preaching of and the knowledge of Hell vanishes- because the only reason Christ went to the Cross was to bear the Wrath of God and everlasting punishment in Hell. And so if you don't believe in Hell or if you don't want to talk about hell- then you turn the Cross into something else- and whatever else you turn it into- it isn't true.

And so hellfire preaching is absolutely necessary for the sake of the Gospel and the Glory of God. It just needs to be as Biblical as everything else.

So I urge you this morning: Don't let the fear of Hell be your only motive for wanting heaven. Instead, come to the living waters of God's Love and Truth and Goodness and Wisdom and Power and Justice and Grace and Glory. Taste and see that the Lord is Good. His steadfast Love is better than life itself. Let the fearful insufficiency of Hell drive you to the all-sufficiency of God.

Let's pray.