

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

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 16- Luke 16:19-31

275- What Jesus Believed and Taught
About Hell and Salvation- Part 1

April 26, 2015

Luke 16:19-31

19 "Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day.

20 "And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,
21 and longing to be fed with the *crumbs* which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.

22 "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

23 "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'

25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.

26 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.'

27 "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house —

28 for I have five brothers — in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

29 "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

30 "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'"

31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

To the Glory of God

This is the first of what will be a mini-series on "What Jesus Believed and Taught about Hell and Salvation". And so the main focus of this series will be two utterly polar extremes:

1. Eternal Damnation in Hell
2. Eternal Life in Heaven

And after you consider the Absolute Sovereignty of God and the Radical Ruination of Man- no Biblical Doctrine elicits more controversy and more discussion and more bad teaching and more false thinking than the issues of Hell and Salvation. And so this series will focus on what the Lord Jesus Christ Himself believed and taught about these two very important subjects.

Now the issue of hell has become controversial in the modern Church for three main reasons:

- A. The deification of Man
- B. The humanization of God
- C. An unwillingness to trust in the Scripture Record

An entire generation of Church-goers has been fed a steady diet of spiritual food that has been laced with poison. And so for almost two centuries- people who sit on the pews of America's Churches have been fed tainted food that contains a myriad of false teaching that *exalts* Man to a degree that is utterly sinful and that at the same time *de-values* our great God in a way that is blasphemous.

And the culprit that causes the first two things is the fact that more and more leaders of the modern Church see no reason to teach and preach the whole counsel of God and have bought into the notion that tickling ears is more useful and more practical than warning people of the horrors of hell.

And so it is very hard to find a leader in the visible American Church today who is totally committed to expository preaching through an entire Book of the Bible so that the full impact of what God the Holy Spirit put *into* the Scriptures will get *out* of the pages and *into* the minds and hearts and lives of God's people. It is almost impossible to find a Church today where the main focus is the ever increasing holiness of the people in their ongoing sanctification. It is just easier to increase the theatrics and the performances and the psychologically moving sensualness of culturally relevant pep talks in order to "wow the audience" rather than obey Jesus and actually "feed the sheep".

And I say this because the Bible is not silent about hell and neither was Jesus. And so if anybody in the modern Church doesn't understand the full scope and spectrum of this Biblical Truth it is because they are not "in" the Bible as a major ingredient in the normal course of Sunday Worship- which, by default, means that they are "in" something else.

So today I want you to begin this series by dismissing two myths about hell and then seeing hell as being two other things. So this morning we will dismiss two false teachings about hell, namely

1. Annihilationism
2. The notion that people want to go there

... and we will see hell as being two things:

1. An "echo" of God's infinite Worth"
2. As being completely *insufficient* to produce true repentance in anyone

And so to begin I want to look closely for just a moment at a single Biblical admonition found in **Romans 11:22** which says:

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.

This inspired text says,

Behold then the kindness and severity of God...

So here we are commanded to behold- or to pay attention to- or to look closely at- or to see- *two* things. Not only are we to behold the magnificent Kindness of God, which we *love* to do, and which we *ought* to love to do! But we are also commanded here to behold- or to pay close attention to or to look closely at- or to see something else- the frightening Severity of God- which we do *not* like to do so much.

And from this we see that for us *not* to look at the Severity of God is disobedience and it is dangerous and therefore- it is patently unloving. It's like a parent teaching a child how a red hot eye on the stove is *only* "good"- because it makes water boil to cook the spaghetti noodles and it pops popcorn- and therefore- the oven is *only* good; but then never telling that little child that the red hot eye is also very dangerous and that it can hurt him very badly if it is misused or ignored. And most people would agree that for a parent to tell a child only *part* of the Truth about a red hot eye on the stove would be irresponsible and dangerous and unloving.

Therefore I conclude that the Command for us to behold the Severity of God is a very *loving* Command. And so those who would discourage us from seeing and knowing and believing in this Severity- in spite of all their soft and sensitive language- are not doing us any favors. In fact- they are acting in an eternally irresponsible and dangerous and unloving way that is going to hurt us very badly due to our being deceived that God only has one side.

Now one of the motivations for choosing to preach on this subject is that it is the very next subject in our verse by verse "journey" through Luke. And so I had nothing to do it- in that sense- it is the next thing that we come to. But another motivation is that I see the need to warn you that more and more well-known and respected Christian leaders are rejecting and distorting the historic and orthodox and Biblical understanding of hell.

And what I mean by "historic, orthodox Biblical understanding of hell" is that for 2,000 consecutive years- the Christian Church has taught that hell is:

... a place of endless suffering for the unrepentant.

And all three words are Biblical and very important:

1. "Place" hell is a real place- different from this earth- and not merely a "state of mind"
2. "Endless"- hell is forever and never has an end
3. "Suffering"- in that endless place- unrepentant human beings are in conscious torment

Now the almost total abandonment of Sound Doctrine is following the pattern of how other unpopular Biblical teachings are being abandoned. And the *impulse* of this abandonment of is *not* coming from a better and more accurate understanding of the Bible- but from the culture and from the subjective emotional impulses of particular individuals who patently *disbelieve* the Bible and who either ignore it or mitigate it.

For example, back in 1990, the Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at McMaster Divinity College, Clark Pinnock wrote this,

"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."¹

Now the term "Annihilation" refers to an unbiblical teaching that says that people in hell literally just burn up rather than are tormented forever. And this false teaching came about as the modern Church moved from being orthodox to unorthodox. Personal emotions and desires combine with speculative reasonings about general ideas gradually took precedence over specific Biblical texts and teachings. And you can see this process at work leading people to abandon other unpopular Biblical teachings that from time to time don't "fit in" with "the spirit of the age"- and seem unacceptable to "enlightened modern people".

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

I regret to inform you that several years ago, one of my own former heroes in the Faith, John Stott wrote this about hell,

“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.”²

Both Pinnock and Stott (and several others) argue that no one goes to a hell of “endless suffering.” Instead, if people do not believe in Christ- they are “annihilated”. Which means they simply “cease to exist” in any real sense at all. They have no consciousness and experience nothing. They are simply “no more”.

So in response to these recent challenges- I see the need of revisiting what Jesus Himself believed and taught about hell- because it really makes a tremendous difference. The difference between suffering in hell forever if you don't trust in Christ and simply ceasing to exist is an infinite difference. So this is no slight adjustment in understanding Biblical Truth. This is a massive change. The difference between not existing at all and existing in forever in torment is an infinite difference.

Imagine God meeting Adolf Hitler at the Judgment Day and saying: *“For all your arrogance and unbelief and hatred and for all the torture and misery that you brought on millions of people My Judgment of you is that from now on you will cease to exist. You will feel nothing.”* And if you think that would be a terrible thing for Adolf Hitler (or anyone else), ask yourself if you were in any way miserable during any of the thousands of years that you did not exist before you were ever born. The pain you experienced for not being born would be the pain Hitler experiences if he ceased to exist- which is none at all.

But the main problem with the view that unbelievers simply go out of existence is *not* whether Adolf Hitler would simply cease to exist or burn but that the Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that those who do not trust in Christ will be punished with eternal suffering. In other words, the false teaching of “Annihilationism” leads the Church *away*

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

from Biblical Truth. And that *always* hurts people and it *always* dishonors God.

So I'll simply use the Warning from Jesus Himself from **Matthew 18:8&9** to set the tone:

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 think about how terrible hell must be that Jesus would say that it is infinitely better to purposefully maim or blind yourself than it is to go there.

Now I want to urge you to follow a process of thought about the Bible that is the reverse of the one that is common today. Instead of coming to the Bible and saying, *"I feel that endless suffering cannot be just, and so therefore the Bible cannot be teaching it,"* rather say, *"Since the Bible clearly teaches both the horrors of hell and the Goodness of God- therefore hell must be just and therefore, O how infinitely dreadful sin must be! How infinitely blameworthy it must be for anyone 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!"*

Annihilationism reduces sin from being Celestial High Treason to a misdemeanor. Hell is meant to fill us with awe at the Glory we have scorned. And it is to fill us with wonder that the Death of one Man- the God-Man, Jesus Christ- could bear the infinite Penalty as a substitute for everyone who repents and trusts in Him.

So when the Bible says in **Romans 11**, **"Behold the severity of God,"** we should do that. And that makes it wrong to *only* look at the Kindness of God. And the Severity of God includes the Truth about hell as being a place of endless suffering and eternal Punishment.

So it is my goal in this mini-series to behold the severity of God and to portray hell to you as being what the Bible says that it is- a profound and dreadful reality. And therefore for anyone to speak of it

lightly, or not to speak of it at all, or to speak of it in a way that changes eternal suffering into feeling nothing- simply proves that those who do so- do not grasp its horror and do not believe the Bible. And as far as I am concerned to go to such lengths to diffuse or to hide or to confuse this issue has to be associated on some level with being ashamed of the Gospel.

So I will tell you that I know of no one who has overstated the terrors of hell. I do not think it is humanly possible for anyone to ever in any way- overstate the danger and the horror of hell. We can scarcely surpass the horrid images Jesus used. So I want to be the first one to say that the great overarching danger that we face today in the modern Church is *not* because we emphasize hell too much but that we *minimize* its horror or outright *ignore* its reality too little.

But sadly, Annihilationism is not the only false teaching associated with hell today. Many of you have heard of and maybe even love CS Lewis. Lewis is probably one of the top 5 people who have died during my lifetime that God has used to shape the way I see and respond to the world. I quote from Lewis rather frequently as I do Jonathan Edwards and Augustine and John Owen and Charles Spurgeon because these men have radically shaped my world. They have helped me to understand Divine Truth and I am a better Christian and I pray a better Pastor because of them teaching me.

But I think that I have been fair about these men and always quote them with the understanding that what they said and what they wrote was never in any way inspired or infallible- and the truth is- they were sometimes- just flat out wrong about very important matters of Biblical Truth- and I have said that. So as a man with clay feet- CS Lewis is *not* a reliable guide on a number of important theological matters. And the subject of Hell is one of them.

For example- Lewis repeatedly stresses that people are not “sent” to hell but that they “become their *own* hell”. His emphasis is that we should think of

“A bad man’s perdition not as a sentence imposed on him but as the mere fact of being what he is.” (For all the relevant quotes, see Martindale and Root, *The Quotable Lewis*, 288-295.)

And this inclined him to say,

“All that are in hell choose it.”

.. which I hear a lot of these days. I hear a lot of people say that God doesn't "send" anyone to hell- He simply "allows" them to go- presumably because they want to go so badly. Which I suggest they didn't get from the Bible- but they got this logic from Lewis. And this logic has led many who follow Lewis to go on and say things like,

“All God does in the end with people is to give them what they want the most.”

But I come away from the Words of Jesus in the Passage that Brother Andy just read to us with a very different understanding and sentiment than that. I think it is entirely misleading to say that hell is *“giving people what they want the most”*. And I'm not saying you can't find *some* Biblical basis for a statement like that- perhaps from **Romans 1:24-32**- which describes something frightening called, “The Judgement of Abandonment”, where God judges people by no longer sovereignly and actively restraining their sinful impulses and “turns them over” to do whatever is in their hearts to do- especially as it pertains to sexual depravity.

And so in *this* Judgment- these various sexually perverse sins are *not* something that the Lord will judge at some point in the future- the manifestation of these sins and the proliferation of them along with their wholesale acceptance *is* the Judgment- a horrible Judgment where God no imposes Himself on them to convict them and *allows* them to continue on in their sins- undisturbed until they face Him on Judgment Day.

And so while I will say to you that even though we are actually seeing this particular kind of Judgment in our day- I would remind us that *this* particular Judgment occurs here on the earth and *not* after death. And so- as bad as this is- the Judgment described in **Romans 1** is *not* meant to shed any light on what hell really is.

And so I'm saying that the way that Lewis and others dealt with the issue of hell and the way that Jesus dealt with it are very different. And that makes Lewis and others to be wrong, and Jesus to be right. And so we would do well to hear from Jesus on this matter and *reject* what CS Lewis and others have said. And so in this minis-series my

goal will be for us to develop a Biblical understanding of this important Doctrine.

I would suggest that the misery of hell will be so great that *no one* will *want* to be there. Jesus said in **Matthew 8:12** that those who go into hell will engage in “**weeping and gnashing their teeth**”. And so in-between their uncontrollable sobbing and bearing their teeth- either in horrendous pain or in actually biting other people- perhaps the ones who deceived them- those in hell will never utter these words:

“I wanted this.”

They will not be able to say amid the flames of the lake of fire described in **The Revelation 20:14**:

“I wanted this.”

Those of whom it will be true of what **The Revelation 14:11** says, and “**The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night**” will not say,

“I wanted this”.

So I would tell you that when there are only two choices, and you choose *against* the one- that does *not* automatically mean that you *wanted* the other- as long as you are ignorant of the outcome of both. And the Bible repeatedly tells us that unbelieving people have neither the knowledge of God or the knowledge of hell. And this ignorance is not innocent. Apart from Sovereign Grace, *all* people

Romans 1:18b

... suppress the truth in unrighteousness

But the person who consciously rejects God has no idea about the literal horrors of hell. And this may be only because he does not believe hell exists, or it may be because he convinces himself that it would be tolerably preferable to Heaven.

But whatever he believes or does not believe, when he chooses *against* God- he is *wrong* about God. But he is also wrong about hell.

And so he is not, at that point, *preferring* the *real* hell over the real God. He is simply blind to both. As a lost unsaved creature- he does not perceive the true Glories of God and he does not perceive the true horrors of hell.

So when a person chooses against God and, therefore, *de facto* chooses hell- or when he jokes about preferring hell over heaven with his friends and with lukewarm religious people- he does not know what he is doing. And so what he rejects is not the real heaven (*nobody* will be lukewarm in heaven), and what he “wants” is not the real hell, but the tolerable hell of his own imagination.

And so when a person like this dies and lifts up his eyes- he will be shocked beyond any words. The miseries of hell are so great, so impossible for finite minds to conceive that he will do *anything* in his power to escape. And the fact that it is not in his power to ever escape his damnation or to ever repent means that he certainly does not *want* to be there.

The Bible tells us in **Hebrews 12:17** that Esau wept bitterly that he could not repent. Esau found the place that he was entering into to be totally miserable, and he wanted out. So the sound that you hear from hell is the scream:

“I hate this and I want out.”

... or in the words of the rich man in **Luke 16:24**:

Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.

So what lost sinners want is *not* hell- but sin. What they love is their sin- *not* God’s eternal Wrath against their sins. In fact, the way that many people today look at things like Medicine and Technology and Government and Science is that these are simply ways in which they may indulge in their sinful urges and yet not have to suffer the immediate consequences that people before them had to suffer.

For example, the man who lusts doesn’t have to stand in line at the porno theatre waiting to buy a ticket and risk being seen by his passing neighbor who then tells his wife. With modern technology- he

can avoid repenting and valuing Jesus more than he loves sinful sex, and he can simply access his filth in the safety and security of his home with various technological devices after everybody has gone to bed and nobody else besides God knows. The man who engages in adultery and fornication and sodomy may now look to science rather than a merciful Savior to give him a vaccine that will keep him from getting sick or heal him after he gets sick- rather than repent and remain pure. And if their sin results in the creation of a life- Government will provide them with a method to murder their living breathing child, and then disguise this racist and sexist holocaust under the nonsense of "reproductive rights".

So we have not advanced as a culture- we have gone down- back to the brutal and unmerciful paganism of the people of Nineveh- who- rather than repent of their transgressions and turn to God for Mercy- built a wall around their city that they foolishly thought would protect them from the consequences of their sin- namely God's Judgment. And what was the final testimony of their folly? God took wall and all down and utterly destroyed them.

But we must understand that while hell is the inevitable consequence of unforgiven sin- that does not make the consequence itself desirable. So hell is not what people *want*- certainly not what they *"want the most."* Wanting sin is no more equal to wanting hell than wanting chocolate is equal to wanting obesity. Or wanting cigarettes is equal to wanting cancer. The two do not connect directly.

And so I would tell you that beneath this misleading emphasis on hell being what people "want the most" lies the false notion that God does not "send" anyone to hell. And as comforting as this may be to those who seem to be very good at just making stuff up about God- the notion that God doesn't send anybody to hell is simply not true. The Holy Scriptures don't teach that. And the fact that this logic is now the *dominant* logic in the modern Church about how people get into hell is simply another manifestation of how unbiblical the modern Church has become.

We must understand, dear friends, that we don't have to feel any pressure to try to make God "look better" than the Bible says that He is. And so whether we are talking about Sovereign Election, or God showing Mercy to some and withholding it from others, or how people get into hell- we simply need to be faithful to repeat what God Himself

has revealed about Himself in Scripture and not be ashamed of that. We do not help people long term by putting up false notions about God and His Character- even if we are doing so out of some "urgency" to "rescue" God from being looked down on by lost, unsaved, or lukewarm people. God is and God does what He Himself has revealed in the pages of sacred Scripture and that is that. And woe unto anyone who thinks less of God after finding out Who He really is.

The Bible tells us repeatedly and clearly that God absolutely *does* send people to hell. He absolutely *does* pass Judgment on them, and He absolutely executes that Judgment. Which is why the Bible calls God "**the Righteous Judge**" (2Timothy 4:8) rather than the "Divine Spectator".

In fact- it is actually far worse than that. God does not just "send," people to hell- He "throws" them:

The Revelation 20:15

And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

... where the English word "**thrown**" comes from the Greek word *eblethe*, which was used in **Mark 9:47&48** where Jesus said:

**47 "If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell,
48 where *THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.***

And **Matthew 25:30** where Jesus said:

Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

... where *nobody* is confused with the action of "throwing", and in **Matthew 13:41-43** where the precious Lamb of God said

41 The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,

42 and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

43 "Then *THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN* in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

... where linguistically and grammatically the unspoken “**He**” (Jesus) goes before the word “**throw**” in verse 42- referring to Jesus *Himself* and *not* the angels.

But even if we ignore the grammar and linguistics of this verse and say that it is the angels who actually do the throwing- we then would also have to say that the angels do *not* operate on their own. Angels do as they are *commanded*, and thus they act as Divine instruments in accord with God’s Command to throw people into hell.

And I would also suggest that the reason the Bible speaks of people being “thrown” into hell is that no one will willingly go there- once they understand what it really is. No one standing on the shore of the lake of fire jumps in willingly. They do not *choose* hell and they will not *want* it. They have *chosen* sin, yes. And they have *wanted* sin, absolutely. But they do *not* want *this* Punishment. So when they come to the shore of this fiery lake- the Bible says that people have to be *thrown* in.

When someone says that no one is in hell who doesn’t want to be there, they give the false impression that hell is somehow within the limits of what humans can tolerate. And that, inevitably, gives the false impression that hell is less horrible than Jesus says it is. Instead, we should ask,

How did Jesus expect His audience to think about hell because of the words He used to describe it?

And so what we have to say right off “jump street” is that the words our Lord chose were *not* chosen to in any way “soften” the horror of hell by being accommodating to cultural sensibilities. Referring to eternal damnation in hell- the sweet Savior used these words and terms:

- ✓ A “**fiery furnace**” (Matthew 13:42),
- ✓ Where there will be “**weeping and gnashing teeth**” (Luke 13:28)

- ✓ “Outer darkness” (Matthew 25:30)
- ✓ Where “their worm does not die” (Mark 9:48)
- ✓ “Eternal punishment” (Matthew 25:46)
- ✓ “Unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43)
- ✓ Where people will be “cut in pieces” (Matthew 24:51).

... where dishonest people have to go through “exegetical gymnastics” to read words and phrases like this and then think that “hell” could in any way be compared to having a bad hair day or losing a promotion or being fired or having the IRS audit you or going through a divorce or losing a child.

These words were purposefully chosen by the sinless Incarnate God to portray hell as an eternal, conscious, horrendous experience that no one would or could ever “want” in a million years- if they really understood what they were choosing. Therefore, if someone is going to emphasize that people freely “choose” hell, or that no one is there who doesn’t “want” to be there- then at a minimum- they should then make every effort to clarify that, when the people are finally thrown into hell- they will *not* want that.

Surely the pattern of Jesus’ blazing Words were chosen on purpose to shock the hell-bent blindness out of everyone- and it is those very same Words that we should echo today when talking about hell.

And so surely, when we discuss the terror of God’s Wrath in hell today- we should grope for words that show that no one, no one, *no one* will *want* to be in hell when they experience what it really is. And surely *anyone* who desires to save people from hell will not mainly stress that it is “wantable” or “chooseable,” but that it is horrible beyond description—**weeping, gnashing teeth, darkness, worm-eaten, fiery, furnace-like, dismembering, eternal, punishment,** and “**an abhorrence to all flesh**” (Isaiah 66:24).

So unlike many of the leaders of the modern Church- I will say to you that the fear of hell is a good and useful thing. In **Luke 12:4&5**- Jesus Himself said,

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!

So it is not proper for a genuine believer to fear a terrorist who might capture us and cut off our head- but it *is* proper that we should fear the Judgment of God. Now we have already learned a lot- but there are yet two more things that I want you to understand about hell this morning:

1. Hell is an echo of the Glory of God
2. Hell is insufficient to save anybody

Hebrews 10:31 says:

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

So hell is a horrible reality. It is fearful beyond expression or imagination. And the Bible was written in such a way that assumes that hell is a Just and Righteous recompense to all who sin. And for that to be true- how infinitely Valuable and Worthy must be the Glory of God that 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 deserved eternal torment- how infinite must have been the torment of the Son of God when He took our place on the Cross!

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. So hell is an echo of the Glory of God.

But, in addition to you seeing that hell is an echo of the Glory of God- I also want to stress the *insufficiency* of hell. Hell is not sufficient to save a single soul. I mean the terror of hell cannot scare a single person into Heaven. Because Heaven is a place for those who love God- not for those who simply fear hell. And that is what we hear in **Psalms 63:1-3**:

1 O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water.

2 Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.

3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.

The fear of hell 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 that God promised the crown of life to those who love Him- not those who fear hell- but those who love God. **James 2:12** says that God promised the Kingdom of God to those who love Him.

So the pathway to Heaven is the path of Love to God. And the Bible teaches that our love for God is a gift from God. So while fear of hell may show you that you are on the wrong path, and it may even point you to the right path- but we must know that fear is *not* the path itself or even the gate that leads to life because fear of hell- in and of itself- does not possess the ability to produce any love for God in an unsaved heart. So fear is what saved people should feel when they wander off the path.

Now I recently made a remarkable discovery in my own prayer closet shut in with God. I learned with my face on the floor next to my open Bible that 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 Heaven way before you can truly weep over your own sins.

I was re-reading some portions of David Brainerd's Diary. And I recalled that he had seen great repentance and contrition among the American Indians at several times during his ministry. 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.”³

Now Brainerd had said earlier on August 6,

³ 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.

“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.”⁴

Again on November 30 he preached on the very Passage that we are dealing with now- **Luke 16:19–31** concerning the rich man and Lazarus. And Brainerd wrote,

“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.”⁵

Now what Brainerd was saying is that hell is insufficient. It is insufficient to bring about what is really needed, namely, a deep, spiritual sorrow for sin- that he called “Biblical Contrition”.

The very same dynamic seems to occur back in **Luke 5:1–10**. Go there with me. **Luke 5:1-10**. 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, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." When the nets went down, they filled with so much fish that they started to break. Both boats were filled and started to sink from the catch. But notice that Peter's response was remarkable and it was very *unlike* our modern responses to God's Grace. Look at verses 8–10:

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;

⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, p. 307.

⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, p. 342.

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 and *not* a word of Judgment that broke Peter's heart and brought him to contrite repentance. So it was the same with the Indians of Crossweeksung and the fisherman of Galilee. Now why is that?

Genuine contrition for sin is a sorrow for *not* having holiness. But you have to be careful here. It is possible to weep over not having holiness NOT because you love God and want to enjoy all that He is for you in Christ, but simply because you fear the punishment that comes for not having holiness. Many a criminal will weep when his sentence is read- not because he has come to love righteousness but because his freedom to do more unrighteousness is being taken away. That kind of weeping is not true repentance.

The only true sorrow for not having holiness comes from a love for God's Holiness and *not* from 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 joy.

For someone to cry over the punishment one is about to receive for wrongdoing is no sign of hating wrong- but only of hating pain. For crying and contrition to be real and transforming- it must come from the brokenhearted feelings you have for lacking a life of Joy in God and *not* just from the fearful feelings of being threatened with the pain of hell.

But now think what this means. This was the startling discovery I made this past January. In order to cry over *not* having something- requires that you 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 Biblical contrition, true repentance must be preceded by a falling in love with God. So to truly weep at not having God's Holiness- requires that you must first long for God's Holiness. To truly weep over not possessing it- it must have been made attractive to you in the first place.

So you see how strange this seems at first: God and His Way of Holiness must first become your Joy way before you can ever weep over

not having it. So you must fall in love with a Person, before estrangement from that Person really hurts.

So, while hell is real and very frightening- it is utterly *insufficient* to produce tears of genuine repentance. For the tears to be real- they have to come from really missing God- not simply missing heaven. Brainerd found that words of winsome attractiveness for God and His Glory produced more brokenheartedness in the Indians than did all his words of warning.

But warning has value- absolutely- in stirring up already saved people to take the glories of Holiness and Heaven seriously so that we come to see them for what they are and delight in them. But it is the delight in them that causes true grief when we fall short. No one cries over missing what they don't want to have in the first place.

Peter saw in the miracle of Jesus- a Treasure of hope and joy that was so wonderful he was overwhelmed with how out of sync his life was with such a magnificent Treasure. Which is why Peter, in essence, said,

“If this much Power and this much Goodness is there 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 flows from falling in love with all that God is for us in Jesus Christ. Until God is our Treasure- we will not grieve over our falling short of delighting in Him and living in a way that shows that delight.

And hell simply cannot produce a delight for God. And so it cannot produce remorse for not having Him. And so it cannot produce true Gospel Repentance. And so it cannot save. And so it is insufficient.

If we want to bring about tears of Gospel Repentance to lost people- we have to say things that make God and His Holiness- not either the comforts of Heaven or the escape of hell- but God Himself and all that He is for us in Christ- look irresistibly attractive. The Bible says that through preaching the whole Gospel- God the Holy Spirit takes this alluring Portrait of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ and opens their eyes so they can see it, and that seeing causes people to fall in love with God. And that's called the miracle of “Regeneration”, or the

miracle of the new birth, or Effectual Calling, or "Something Got Ahold of Me". 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 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.

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 the Glory of God.

And hell is powerless to produce this. The tears that hell can produce are the tears of remorse and fear that the sin we love- will destroy us. So the practical purpose of hell is to shock *saved* people out of our love affair with the world and send us running to the Fountain of Living Waters. But only the taste of that Fountain will give a passion for God and break our hearts that we have loved anything else.

So I urge you: 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.

And as a hell deserving sinner myself- I thank God for Jesus Christ, my Savior, Who became a Curse for me and suffered hellish pain that He might deliver me from the Wrath that is certain to come. And while there is yet time- Jesus will do that for *anyone* and *everyone* who turns from sin and who treasures Him and His Work above all.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.