

Persuaded of His Love and Persuaded of Hell

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Bible Text: Romans 8:38,39; Luke 16:31

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Let us pray.

Dear heavenly Father and most gracious and holy Lord, we praise thy name this morning, Lord. We thank thee, Lord, for this place to worship thee. Most of all, Lord, we thank thee for thy presence. Lord, I pray this morning for thy people in this room that thou would convince us of thy presence with us today. Lord, may you lift our eyes far from our infirmities, far from the thoughts that easily beset us, far from our sin and, Lord, may you lay us down at thy feet to be instructed in thy gospel this day. Lord, may you be pleased to bring forth thy word in the messages today that we glorify your name and for your name's sake. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

About a couple of weeks ago, I was sitting at my desk at the end of the day and it was one of them harder days of the week and I kind of sat back and looked around and I looked up over the top of my desk and I saw a framed picture. My wife likes to frame Scriptures and I have a gold frame up there and she framed for me Romans 8:35-39. Up in the top of this framed picture, in the right hand corner, there is a little flock of sheep and on the left hand corner, there is a big red heart for the love of Christ to his sheep. So I started just sitting there reading all of that, Romans 8:35-39, and I came to verse 38. Paul begins verse 38 with, "For I am persuaded." That stopped me in my tracks. I thought right then for a moment, if I could just be persuaded as Paul was. At that moment, when the Holy Spirit authored these words, Paul with all of his soul, with all of his being, with all of his inner man, said, "Lord, I am persuaded. I've been brought to this place in my life that I am persuaded."

Then he went on to say "that I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, not things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." I thought about that. I thought about what Paul was persuaded about. He was persuaded about love, the love of Christ. The love of Christ being greater than everything that he had faced in his life, that he was facing in his life and that he would face in his life.

Then I started to fix my eyes upon each one of these things: death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present. But then I started to really think about things to

come. Things to come. But the Lord didn't take me to things to come as in, in my life, in the near future. He took me to eternity and I thought about that once again, I know from this pulpit the Lord has laid on my heart many times to speak to you about the sinfulness of sin, the wickedness of Satan. Sin, Satan, even death and those things are very much enemies to the rest in our souls.

Then I thought about another one and the two things here that stuck out to me: nor things to come and nor depth. I started to think about depth and my Lord took me to the depths of hell. Not to the depths of hell but to thinking about him. You know, I've watched a few specials on tv on the History Channel and other things that have debated whether there really is a hell. Man still is debating that. Is it just a figure that's used or a word that's used in the Bible? Or is there a place of hell?

This morning my prayer for us in this room, is twofold: that the Lord persuades us of his presence, his love, the depth of his love that has saved us from hell but also that he persuades us that there is a hell and I can't think of any better place to go than the Lord's words themselves. If you'll turn with me over to Luke 16. We're going to speak of physicalities today but we're also going to speak of experiential things. What does it mean to the child of God?

In Luke 16 the Lord Jesus Christ began this parable in answer to the Pharisees. 14 tells us that the Pharisees were covetous, they heard the things that Jesus said about not serving God, you can't serve two masters. When they heard these things, they derided him. They basically condemned him; they rebuked him. They said these things cannot be the truth. And in verse 19, the Lord tells them there was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen and he fared sumptuously every day.

So, there is our first character in this account that the Lord wants to reveal to us today that there is a hell. And the first one that we have is a rich man. Well, he's rich in the things of this world. How many of us in here today can say this does not apply to us? We all have an abundance of things in this world. We have abundance of things. The Lord has been so bountiful to us; he's been such a merciful, benevolent Lord in the things that he's given us. I can say that none of us really have a lack or a want of anything.

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores.” We've got one end of the spectrum and one all the way at the other end. This one had nothing. He was laying at the gate of the rich man and he was full of sores so we see their relationship, that they knew each other.

“And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.” What we're shown here is the desperateness of the situation of the one. Or is it? Is it a desperate situation because all we're told about these two is that one had no lack of anything from the world, the other one, we're told, had nothing of the world.

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.” Quickly, we're faced with some terminology that we wouldn't use today if we were describing what heaven would be like. I don't think any of us would say, “Well, we're taken up to be with Abraham,” but we have to understand that the Lord was speaking to them, the Pharisees. Who are they going to understand that's in heaven? The Lord certainly wouldn't use himself because they wouldn't count that as a place they'd want to be. So he uses Abraham and he says, “You know, the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.” It shows us communion. As soon as the life of this beggar was over in this life where it seems as though he had nothing, immediately, immediately, as soon as death passed, he was carried into the bosom, into the communion with his Lord, his Triune Lord.

I hope you saw that when we read that in Romans 8, the 38th and 39th? “I am persuaded, I am convinced.” That's what persuasion means. It means influenced or drawn to an opinion, convinced. He was convinced that the Lord had revealed it to him and then revealed what? At the end, he said, “The love of the Father that's in Christ Jesus.” Perfect Trinity. Convinced of the Holy Ghost. Revealed of the Father's love. Revealed it through Christ, the keeper of all of his sheep.

Now, we have that he's carried into Abraham's bosom but we have this great picture of it that everything that he lacked in this life, it really didn't mean anything because as soon as this life was over, this life that we're cumbered about so much. We're even told that he desired the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table so he did have desires. He had desires just to be fed day by day. We also see that he was afflicted. Afflicted badly.

But “the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried.” That's it. It's interesting that to the Jews who were so fixated on burial and so fixated on the finality of how one would be buried and would they have a proper burial, and we do that today. We'll turn on our tv when somebody prominent dies and there are just people lined up from everywhere to go and pay their final respects. We have these huge funerals and people lined up if it's a President or a world leader or some kind of icon that's in society. People just flock and they flock because they're mesmerized by death and they want to see that last time that that person is here on earth.

And all we're told was that he died and was buried. There's not much difference between the two burials: one is dead and he was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, but the rich man died and was buried. That's kind of a sobering thought. We just sit there and we say, “Well, is that the end for the rich man?”

Then, if you think that's sobering, we get hit with these first three words right here of the next verse which are very scary words, “And in hell.” In hell. That's a reality. That is a reality that anyone outside of Christ, this is your place in eternity. In hell. People debate every day, “Is there a hell?” And the Lord himself says, “You know what? In hell.” “Well, Jesus, didn't you come to save everyone?” No. In fact, you can clearly see that here: the sovereignty of election of one, the sovereignty in damnation of another.

In hell. Those are sobering words. Today I say, “Are you persuaded of Christ’s love?” I can’t persuade you of that. I can’t persuade you of the depth of Christ’s love to save everyone in this room if we be God’s children. If we be his children, to save us from the wretchedness that is ourselves. Now, stop and think about that a minute because each one of us, as the Lord leads us to examine ourselves, what have we done that’s worthy of hell? Sin. How many of us are sinless? How many of us go day by day by day and don’t sin? How many of us have this spotless progressive sanctification that we keep getting better and better and better? I don’t think I’d have any takers on that one.

In hell. Those are sobering, sobering words. I want to be persuaded that my Lord, today, has saved me from this place that he’s just about to explain to me what it’s all about. I want to be persuaded today that the depth of his love and the laying down of his life is what saved me from this place that he’s going to describe today. I want to be persuaded each day that as I partake in things in this life that seem like hell on earth: the unbelief, the wretchedness to be in a society that hates my Lord, the actual looking into self and seeing the wretchedness of my depravity. To see that I could be sitting in a seat for five minutes and be thinking of my Lord or reading the very Scriptures and in that five minute’s time can have some of the worst thoughts just jet right into my mind. That’s hell experientially. It robs me of that communion. Are you persuaded today that the Lord that you believe, has saved you from your sin? Has saved you from hell?

I can’t make it any deeper. Rich man, you’re dead, you’re buried and in hell immediately. You are known as you are known. I sit back and I watch life and I watch men and I watch athletes and I look at people strive to better themselves, to better themselves for this life. Athletes trying to get the biggest contract they can and they always say the same thing, “It’s to set me up in this life. I’ll have no more worries.” I think of the rich man, is that all you have? Is that all you have is this life? This life that we try so hard to preserve or to get ahead in this life.

In hell. That’s some real words. Some powerful words. But it tells us something about hell too. We’re going to explore what the Lord has to say here. “And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.” Being in torments. You want to know what hell is all about? Being in torments. Being a slave to torments. Being tormented in your soul every second of your life, if you can call it a life.

“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off.” There is torment #1. There is no communion there with the Lord. You say, “Well, the man don’t care about communion with the Lord.” He will. Oh, he will. That’s part of the torment, that there is a Savior that saved wretched sinners but you aren’t one of them. That’s what hell is. That’s what torments are. Don’t you understand that when Satan tempts you with that? Isn’t it a torment to your soul? The Lord has come to save sinners and maybe I’m not one of them. Maybe he hasn’t saved me. Maybe I’m too much of a sinner to be saved. It’s a torment.

But the Lord has not given us a spirit of fear. He’s given us love. He’s given us power. He’s given us a sound mind. That’s what he does. That’s what he’s faithful to bring the

child of God out of this. That is the danger of preaching a message like this. I hope for the children of God, that you're not left in that place to say, "That's what I deserve. I deserve hell." It's true you deserve it, but I pray to God that he shows you deliverance today. Deliverance and persuades you as he persuaded the Apostle Paul of the depth of his love.

Why do I speak about hell? To exalt the love of my Lord. Not to exalt hell, to exalt the love of Christ to save us from this place that we deserve. If this word is true, we deserve it. We've transgressed the law. We've transgressed everything. We've transgressed the holiness of our God.

"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." Torment #2. The very one who had everything in this life now has nothing but torments and the one that the dogs came and licked, he's up in heaven enjoying eternal bliss with no more sores and no more pain and in communion with the Lord and he has nothing to fear.

Have we been convinced of this hell? Have we been convinced of the reality of hell? The reality of no communion ever again with our Lord? Would that be hell to you? Would it be hell? That's another question. That's another question this morning: would it be hell to you? Young ones in this room: would it be hell to you if you never had communion with the Lord and all you had was the world's things? Would it be hell? I can't answer that for you.

"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried." You know, there are no tears in heaven. But in hell, there are plenty of tears. "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy." You know, there is no mercy in hell either. "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus." Oh, send that one now that has everything, the one that I never had a thought of in my entire life. I never cared about him. I never wanted to be around him.

"Send him to me." Well, why do you want him? "So that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." It's physical too. The fires of hell are kindled against sin. It's kindled against unrighteousness. It's kindled against iniquity. It's kindled against all nations that forget him. Nations of people of every tribe. Hell is full of them.

So we go from torments of mind and soul to physical torments. Oh, if I could just have just a finger of cold water to get on my tongue. I'm burning. Are we convinced of this place? As I said, I admit, I don't speak about it much. I don't speak about the darkness of it, the tormenting nature of it and how truly lost a place it is. But, of course, this is another torment because he has a desire that can't be fulfilled.

"But Abraham said, Son," that's not a term of love but a term of identification of man, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things," remember the prosperity. Dear ones, remember the prosperity. Remember the prosperity that we're in

right now. Remember what we have each day. Remember all that God opens his storehouses to give us on the physical realm. How does it stack up? How does it measure? Can you measure it in your soul? Can you measure it in communion with the Lord? Is he in those things?

“In thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.” And I’ll tell you something too: the reason the Lord used these parables and he used one end of the spectrum to the other, is he showed over and over to the Jews that he was not a respecter of persons. This is not an indictment today against rich people. It’s not. It’s not an indictment against the things that the Lord has given us. It’s not. And it’s not looking and saying, “Okay, the heaven is made up of just poor beggars.” It’s not because we know that that’s not true. In the sovereignty of our Lord, he has a vast number and that number is made up of whoever he is pleased to reveal himself to. Rich, poor, whatever station in life. We’ve seen kings, David, and we’ve seen the beggars. We’ve seen all in between. So, let’s not make this about the things in this life but where your treasure is, there will heart will be also.

Lazarus, all he had was the evil things and, boy, did the Pharisees despise that. You know they despised this story because they always looked at the rich or the ones that had. That’s how God showed favor, he gave you things. If you were the chief priest, if you were in the Sanhedrin, if you were the high religious leaders, God loved you but those guys in the street, God cursed you. How many times did they come to Jesus? “Who did this? Why is he blind? Was that the parent’s sin or his?” And “Why did that tower fall and them in the Pool of Siloam there? Is that because they were evil and wicked?” That’s always how man looks at it. They look at the station in this life and they say, “There you go. Those are the ones that have the Lord and those are the ones that don’t. Prosperity means God is there.” And we as a people of God, by him and him only, are revealed that he’s in both. He’s in the prosperity and he’s in the hardship. He is. And he’s in them perfectly to glorify his name, to show the depth of his love, to show the height of his love, to show the breadth of his love, to show what he has saved us from.

And if you thought those words “in hell” were tough, verse 26, I’m going to be honest with you, I’ve been a Bible reader probably since I could read and these words have always scared me, “A great gulf fixed.” Those are some terrifying words. Abraham speaks and he says, of course, we know this is not Abraham but our Triune Lord, “And beside all this, between us and you,” between us and you, “there is a great gulf fixed.” Oh Lord, persuade us of this right now in this hour. Persuade us that there is a great gulf fixed between the sheep and the goats. We have to be persuaded of that because if we’re not, we have that Arminian thought to save our neighbor. It’s the same thought you’re going to see here in a minute. It’s a torment. It’s a torment.

Are you going to make it sheep? No. There is a great gulf fixed. Fixed. Predestined. Decreed. It’s fixed. Do you understand that, rich man? It’s fixed. It’s fixed. Lazarus can’t come to you, I can’t come to you. It’s fixed. “Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.” You can’t mix the two. If the Lord has pronounced

one lost, he will always be lost. You and I aren't going to change that. The preachers of the gospel are not going to change that. There is a great gulf fixed.

But I want to tell you about another great gulf fixed and this is something that I want to be persuaded of today. I want to be persuaded that the Lord has put a great gulf between me and my sin and he's put it there by his Son and he's put it there by his surety, the one who has paid the debt of that sin. That there is a great gulf fixed between sin and me because of his righteousness, because of his perfect obedience, because of his efficacious blood and that sin has no rulership over me and the fear of hell has no rulership over me and the bondage of the law that I "have to" and I "must do" and to do something for a perfect God, has no hold over me. That's the great gulf fixed that Christ is for his people. He puts it away and he has to because all we'll do is gravitate back to it. We'll put ourselves back under the law. We'll put ourselves back into fear and bondage. We'll dwell on our sin every time we can. He must take that away. He must be the one who has fixed this gulf between us and our sin. And he has to be the one that fills in between and he has to be the one that we only see. And he's taken off that ephah that was full of sin that Zechariah tells us about and it has flown as far as the east is the west.

There is a great gulf fixed. I want to be convinced of that today. I want to be convinced of that every day. There are a lot of things in this life we get convinced of in a day's time. We make up our own minds; we make up our own thoughts; we're persuaded one way or the other. We hear reports from the health world, we're persuaded that way. We hear them from the political world, we're persuaded that way. We hear them from our own loved ones and we're persuaded that way. I don't want to be persuaded that way. I want to be persuaded in the truth of my Lord. I want to be persuaded today that there is a great gulf fixed. I want to be persuaded that his love has put me on the side of the "us." I want to be persuaded that I'm in the bosom of my Lord safe and secure. I want to be persuaded that it's eternal. I want to be persuaded of all that he's done.

That's what I have to ask you about Lazarus here: what has he done? What has he done to merit all that he has now? Nothing. He's a beggar. And the people of God by nature are beggars. By his nature, not our nature. Believe me, we're content with ourselves but the child of God is brought to beg the crumbs of the table of his Lord. He's brought to see that everything is in his Lord and he needs a daily, hourly, minute by minute supply of everything his Lord has.

"And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." Let me tell you something: you and I today can assent to that and nod our heads and say, "I understand it," but in this place, in hell, you'll never understand it. It's a torment. You will continuously believe that you're going to get out. You will continuously. He just told them, "There is a great gulf fixed. There is no hope for you. You are outside of me. You have no life in you." Then listen to what he says.

"Then he said, I pray thee," he's a religious man all of a sudden, "I pray thee." Isn't that a good thing that I pray? Isn't that a meritorious thing? "I pray thee therefore, father, that

thou wouldest send him,” Lazarus, “to my father's house.” Send him there. I pray thee. I’m asking for mercy again. Tormented again. There is no mercy. It’s never-ending unquenchable torment of the flames of hell and the never quenchable desires that you have to get out, to not be tormented anymore. This now is transferred over to his loved ones, the ones that he loves in this life. He says, “Oh, my goodness! Look now where I’m at. Maybe I understand I’m not going to get out but I can save those up there because I know, I know, they’re just like me.”

“I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.” I have five others that I know are not convinced, they’re not persuaded, of this place and they sure don’t care about salvation from this place. That brings us back to our question: are you? Are you persuaded that his love has saved you from this death? Because these five, they’re not either. Once again, another torment: he believes he can save his brethren. Unquenchable torment.

“Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” Moses spoke of him. The prophets spoke of him. How hard is man? How hard are you and I without grace? Do you know how hard you are? I know how hard I am. I’ve been allowed to see a little bit of it. I’ve been allowed to see how wicked it is. They have Moses and the prophets. Isn’t that all we need? All we need is to hear preaching? All we need is the law? All we need is to hear?

What is the answer of the rich man? “And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead,” meaning Lazarus, “they will repent.” You really don’t know anything do you? You really don’t. Do you think the sign of a cross is going to make man repent? Do you think that knowing that there’s death and hell, it’s going to make man repent? You might be frightened by some of the things that you’ve heard today, is it going to make you repent? No. No, it’s not.

Do you want to hear the very truth of the matter? It comes in the Lord’s words in verse 31, “And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded,” there is that word again, “neither will they be convinced though one rose from the dead.” And he spoke of himself.

Thousands upon thousands upon thousands sit in places like we sit today, in chairs, in pews and they’ve heard about one who died and they’ve heard about one who rose again and they’ve heard about hell and they’ve heard about sin but they’ve never been convinced that it’s true. They’ve never been persuaded by the love of Christ, by the love of the Father and by the love of the Holy Ghost, that they’ve been saved from it or they even need to be saved from it. I pray that none of us in this room are in that number.

I’d like to end by going to 2 Timothy 1. I was going to read just verse 12 but let me start at 8, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God,” as the Lord gives you strength, be thou partaker of his afflictions, the afflictions of soul, the

afflictions of body. “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace.” Lord, persuade us of that this hour, that it is by grace alone. “Which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” Has the gospel revealed those things to you? The light of Christ and the immortality, the eternal life in Christ? That’s what that love persuades the child of God. The eternal security in his Lord. “Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.” Here’s the verse that I wanted to get to, “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed.” I know whom I have believed, “and am persuaded,” I’m convinced. Here he is again, Paul you’re convinced by the Holy Ghost. I’m convinced and I’m persuaded, “that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” Why have I committed anything? Because of him. Are you persuaded now that he is able? Not only is he able but that he’s willing? That he has saved you from what we’ve spoken of today?

You know, that little clause right there at the end “that which I have committed unto him against that day,” I want to read you the Greek. The Greek says this: he is the deposit of me to guard unto that day. That’s beautiful. He is the deposit of me. He’s done it. He’s made it. He is my surety. He is my strength. He is my revealer. He is my Savior. He is the deposit of me to guard unto that day. And that day that we talked about today is a day of finality, so we think, in this life. Oh, but a beginning of a life so much greater.

To be persuaded, to be convinced of his love and of hell is truly a blessing.

Lord, dear heavenly Father, add thy power and thy strength for thy name’s sake. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.