

Hell

Heaven and Hell

By Romesh Prakashpalan

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Bible Text: Luke 16:19-31

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Dallas Reformed Presbyterian Church

1008 West Erwin Avenue

McKinney, TX 75069

Website: www.dallasrpf.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/dallasrpf

Please turn, if you would, in your copy of God's word to Luke 16. Luke 16, verses 19 through 31. As you turn there in God's word, this is a doctrinal sermon, one doctrine that is sorely neglected, often by the church, which is the doctrine of hell. And as we open the word of God, I do want to be sensitive. Many of us have lost loved ones, have died in their sin, and this is a hard topic for us to think on. I have lost many myself who are, by all indications, those who have rejected Jesus Christ and it is terrible to think of what awaits or what they have actually received, rather, but we must preach on this doctrine that we would ourselves flee to Jesus and that we, knowing the terror of the Lord, would persuade others to flee the wrath to come.

So with that in view, Luke 16 and verse 19, let us hear the very words of God.

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26 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. 27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not

Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Amen. May God bless the reading of his word to us.

Let us pray.

Holy God, thou art truly holy and we are sinners, and now, as we come to hear this most solemn text preached, we pray that the minister would preach with a sense of sobriety and eternity before all of us, that the Holy Spirit would testify of the truth of the word to the people of God, that the man would not add anything fanciful for hell is horrifying enough, and that in the preaching of the word, truly, men would be persuaded of the terror of the Lord, and they would flee to Jesus Christ this day for salvation, and knowing the terror of the Lord, those of us who are saved would have a burden to see the lost come to salvation. Lord, the man who preaches cannot accomplish these things in his own flesh and so he is dependent on you, O Lord, and we pray now, Father, that you would enable your minister to preach nothing among these dear people save Jesus Christ and him crucified for sinners. We ask this now in his name. Amen.

Flee the wrath to come. This is the very word of God. Flee the wrath to come. God is clear, wrath is coming. It is a certainty. It is a sure thing, beloved. And the wrath to come is seen not abstractly. It is described vividly in the word of God. When we see and read of millions of souls tormented in hell, that even now, at this very moment, there are millions of souls experiencing firsthand the terror and torment of God's holy wrath in a tremendous and eternal agony. and here is the chilling word, forever, without cease, and that is a sobering thought. Hell is a reality, friends, yet it is treated as something of an embarrassment today in much of the church. Many Christians don't even want to talk about it. Instead, in this summer time, which the heat out there should remind us, if nothing else, if we are spiritual of the furnace of hell, which is far greater. What are many pastors preaching on? They're preaching summer movie series, where they're dressing up as "Toy Story" characters and preaching and exegeting a movie, handing out movie tickets to those who come into the congregation so-called. How absurd. when hell and judgment loom over us all.

Paul, on the other hand, said what? Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. Do we know the terror of the Lord? Hardly. We might even say that there is wrath to come but do we know specifically what kind of wrath is coming and for what purpose? Very few of us do because hell in its fullness is rarely preached on. Even today, I cannot preach the fullness of hell. It is so awful and it would require many, many sermons to preach the fullness of it. I simply hope to give you a taste of it that you would flee any taste of it in the life to come. Hell is rarely preached, and if it is preached, sometimes it is done in a fanciful way, in ways that is overly dramatic and imaginative, which is ridiculous considering how awful the truth and reality of hell is. And it is rarely preached so that men would know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to snatch you out of hell if you flee to him.

If we knew the reality of hell, brethren, we would plead with men, "Flee the wrath to come and flee to the arms of Jesus." If we had any heart in us at all, we would say, "Be saved, O poor sinner, be saved by the mercies of God in Jesus Christ. Why should you perish in this terrible and eternal miserable torment for your sin?" And we would certainly make sure, if we are sitting under the preaching of the word, that we ourselves have fled to Christ for refuge from such an awful, awful, terrible reality. We must reclaim the doctrine of hell. It is being forgotten and because of that, Jesus, our Savior, is being forgotten and he is nothing more to people as a kind of good luck charm or a kind of a charm. There is nothing about the Savior anymore that people hear about that shows his glory and his compassion and his love and what he suffered on the cross. Because we don't know hell, the glory of Christ is being forgotten, and so that we would not forget the glory of Christ and we would flee the wrath to come, our theme is, flee God's wrath to come, which is coming in hell. Flee God's wrath which is coming in hell, and we'll consider that under three headings tonight. First is hell's horror; second is hell's necessity; and third is hell's remedy.

First, hell's horror, and I will spend most of my time here, and if I go long on this sermon, I trust you understand why because this is a very weighty, weighty doctrine. Let me begin with this then, according to the word of God hell is assumed to be one of the elementary doctrines, you know. Hebrews 6:1 through 2, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and," what, "of eternal judgment." Eternal judgment. That is considered an elementary principle that you are to know well and yet it is glossed over by most of our churches today. How many churches, in other words, would celebrate the resurrection, yet not once, you know, alongside the resurrection comes eternal judgment in Hebrews 6 verse 2, how come many churches that celebrate the resurrection have never once preached the doctrine of eternal judgment? And I don't mean churches out there. I mean churches here, Reformed and Presbyterian churches, our churches. And because of that, how many unconverted remain in our midst? How few will evangelize because of the neglect of the doctrine of hell? If we had any heart in us, especially one born again, when we meditate on the horror of hell and its eternal nature, we would be driven to plead and pray and weep over souls.

We must reclaim and recover this doctrine. It is not one to be ashamed of. It brings glory to God and it will, by God's grace, when it is preached faithfully, bring sinners into an estate of salvation that they would know Jesus because we think on this, friends, the Savior himself preached it, and he preached it regularly. It is worth remembering that Jesus preached more on hell than anyone else in the Bible. He preached it more than Paul. He preached it more than the prophets. And if you also consider that Jesus gave John the Revelation as we've been reading, hell is one of the great and major themes that Christ preached on and yet, Christian pulpits are often silent when it comes to the doctrine of hell.

Why did Jesus preach it? Maybe we need to understand this. Why did Jesus preach this? Well, when you think on who he is, and you remember how even last week we saw in

Matthew chapter 9, how when he looks on the multitudes, he has compassion on them. Why does he preach on hell? Because he has compassion on sinners. He knows what hell is like, we will read soon that he is the judge of hell, and he knows what the eternal torment of hell is like, and so of course he would preach on it often because he, above all of us, has compassion on sinners. And so with its neglect, let us first remind ourselves of what hell is. Maybe a simple definition. Hell is the place God has prepared for the eternal torment of wicked angels and men. Hell is the place God has prepared for the eternal torment of wicked angels and men. Hell is a true and it is a real place. You see that here in Luke 16. The rich man goes to a true place of torment. And yes, this is a real man in this. This is not a parable. This is not a story. Unlike parables, Lazarus has a name here. He's given a name. This is a person that we are talking about, two people that are set with eternity before them.

This scenario, this conversation, it's all real to impress upon us that hell is real and it looms over us all. God has, and here's the sobering thought, has prepared a real place in his creation called hell. Just as sure as there is a heaven created by God, there is a place called hell created by God and this place is suited for the residents of both soul and body. It is suitable for those who are pure spirits to torment them there like the devil and his angels, his demons, but also suited for wicked men, those who are comprised of both soul and body. Hell's torments are suited to both and it is, as you've read in Luke 16, a place that is defined by this one word, torment. Torment. Torment of both soul and body. There is no relief from it either. There isn't a single solitary moment of relief from torment in hell. Look at the rich man. He is denied every comfort, isn't he? Every comfort of both soul and body denied. Whatever he asks for denied. He will only be tormented. There is no drop of water to cool his tongue, nor will his soul find any comfort. Everything that he wants is denied him. I'll get to that torment a bit later.

Let's continue to ask who the residents of hell are. As I've already said, two types of beings go to hell. First, wicked spirits, the devil and his demons go there. Matthew 25:41 says that hell was actually prepared for the devil and his angels. It's a place prepared for the devil and his angels. In other words, boys and girls, don't think on the way popular culture might portray it. The devil does not rule hell. He is the one being tormented there. God says Satan is tormented there day and night forever and ever, Revelation 20 verse 10. The devil is tormented there. He is not the tormentor. Second, the other kind of residents of hell are humans. Sinful humans. Men, women, and yes, boys and girls, think on this, children too, children who die in their sins too, they will go to hell as well. Why? Because they are sinners and all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. That means, because of original sin and actual sin, every person that is born in this world is liable to hell.

The reward that Adam earned for us all is a room in hell and this is a staggering thought. You know, some men only think men like Hitler go to hell. You even say, "I hope he's in hell," or something like that, but the reality, the sobering reality, friend, is hell is full of people you might perceive to be sweet grandmothers in this life. Hell is full of those who were boy scouts that took little old ladies across the street. Hell is full of those who are very sincere in their false religions. Hell is full of many churchgoers who had gone day

after day to church or week after week to church and never once fled to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in some senses, you might find that the greatest torments of hell are reserved for them. Hell is filled with all those who never sought hell's remedy, which is Jesus Christ. All who stay apart from Christ will find themselves in hell and I'll speak more on that a bit later.

So hell is a prepared place, suitable for the torment of soul and body, and as we sin as men and women in both soul and body, both soul and body are tormented in hell. It is our just reward. We sin in the body, we are tormented in the body. We sin in our soul, and so we are tormented in our soul. And before the general resurrection then, the souls that are in hell presently are tormented only in soul, but after the general resurrection, Jesus said those in hell will experience, and these are sobering words, the resurrection of damnation, John 5:29. Meaning they will be resurrected too and there's something grotesque about their body which will reflect their sinfulness, and they will be tormented in the body as well as soul forever.

And so hell is a place filled with demons and men, and it is a place devoid of any comfort. It is devoid of what we might call the comfortable presence of God. Here on earth, in other words, wicked men receive comfort from God. This is what we might call common grace. The rain is being sent on both the just and the unjust alike. Yet in hell, the rich man could not find even a drop of water to cool his tongue. No comfort. He was told, "Thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things but now Lazarus is comforted." If heaven is defined by anything, it is by the comfort of God, "and thou art tormented," which is how hell is defined. How many times when you read your Bible and you think on hell, or you read about hell rather, you're going to hear that word torment. Torment. Let's not mince words. It's torment. Not a solitary comfort will be given, no matter how slight that comfort is denied. Men, even today, right, in this world, you think of men in great agony and pain, maybe on the deathbed, maybe you've known somebody who's been in a fire, and they're even going to perish because so much of their skin is burned, and they're in agonizing, heart-wrenching pain. We give them morphine. There is no morphine in hell. This is how unbearable it is. There is no pain relief because the sinner is cast away from the comfortable presence of God, the source of all comfort in hell.

What does Jesus say to sinners when they are cast away from him in the judgment? "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Cast away from my comfortable presence with all blessing, go ye cursed into," what fire, "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels," Matthew 25:41. You are taken away, and we don't appreciate it that as bad as this world is, there are many comforts that we receive from God in this world. Even this fallen world at its worst, brethren, is not as bad as hell. I say this trembling: Auschwitz is infinitely better than hell. The comfortable presence, all of it, is gone in hell but does that mean that God is absent from hell? Some people teach this kind of thing. No, he is very present in hell. After all, there is no place where he is not present. But you might say, "Well, Pastor, Jesus said, 'Depart from me.'" Well, what does that mean then? He says, "Depart from my blessed presence, the presence in which I give every blessing, from all that is light and comfortable and blessed." In fact, it might stagger you and I don't think we appreciate this, he is the one

who torments those in hell. Revelation 14:10 through 11, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." The devil and the souls in hell are in the presence of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. He administers the cup of God's wrath in hell. And this is, in a sense, if you want to use the expression, poetic, isn't it? He drank the cup of God's wrath for his people and now he administers it to those who would not take of his blessing and his mercy. He will administer that cup to those who do not flee to him for refuge. And worst of all, and this bends the mind and it is disheartening or it ought to be, this torment never, ever, ever ends. You heard from Revelation 14, their torment. Their torment, don't divorce what that means, their torment ascendeth up forever and ever. Matthew 25, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." And because of this, we must never get the wrong impression. Hell is not remedial. In other words, there is no curing of the sinner by the fire of hell. Not like that unbiblical notion of purgatory, right, which the papists have come up with, which is nowhere found in the Bible. This fire in hell, it has one purpose. It is to punish and not to purge. It doesn't cleanse. It's not cleansing fire. It is punish. It is punishing fire. And there is no way out of it. That's what makes it so awful. It is everlasting. It never ends, the fire, the torment, the pain. And no one can escape from hell once they are found in it. There is no refuge. It is sealed up by the power of Almighty God. None will escape it. Nowhere to go. Their torment ascendeth up forever and ever. Eternity. Never ending. Moment by moment, torment, torment, torment. We'll consider what some of those torments are. But forever. This ought to make us already weep for the lost. Hell is the place God has prepared, here's that definition again, for the eternal torment of wicked angels and men.

Now I don't have much time tonight to develop out the revelation of hell through the Bible, but let me at least say this much, it is found surely in your Old Testament as much as in the New. That is important to remember because some say, "Well, the New Testament has invented this doctrine, but the Old Testament doesn't speak about it." No, not at all. The Old Testament word for the grave, the Hebrew word sheol, often, not always, often speaks of hell. In fact, many take umbrage to our Authorized Version because it very often translates sheol as hell. It doesn't do it always, but when the translators do see hell in view, they rightly translated hell because it's not just the grave that's in view. For instance, one of the very first books of the Bible, Deuteronomy, shows us that sheol must at times be translated hell. Deuteronomy 32:22, "For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell." That word there is "grave" and some translators will translate it sheol or grave, but there's no fire, everlasting fire in a physical grave. That doesn't happen. And so, we rightly see hell in Deuteronomy 32:22.

And all throughout the Old Testament, you will find revelations of the miseries of hell, perhaps no clearer than Isaiah, which we often call, what? The fifth gospel. The ending of Isaiah gives you the very words Jesus would later preach on in Mark 9:44 through 48 concerning hell. "And they shall go forth," this is Isaiah 66:24, "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all

flesh." That is what Jesus preached in Mark chapter 9. Their worm doesn't die. Their fire is not quenched. Hell is not a novel doctrine in the New Testament. It is very present in the Old.

So with that understanding of its doctrine, let's meditate on what the Bible has to say of some of hell's horrifying torments. We've already considered some of its torments. Let's dive more into some of the imagery Jesus used. Now, Some of us, or some, some not of us, but some will say that the imagery that Jesus uses is just fantastic, right? He's just scaring us with this imagery. And if hell exists, even if they grant that, they'll say this is just poetic. It's not like eternal fire. And really what they don't consider is this truth of interpretation of the scripture. When there is a symbolic representation, the reality is far greater. The bread and the wine represent in the Lord's Supper something far greater than bread and wine. It represents something really glorious, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus. The water of baptism is not representing purely water. It represents the washing away of our sins by the blood of Jesus Christ totally and purely. And so the imagery, you think of the imagery of heaven before we talk about hell, the gold streets and pearl gates in Revelation 21, that is less than the reality of the glory of heaven. These images, because of our dullness and our inability to grasp spiritual truth, are actually given to us to tell you that the reality is far greater than the symbol used. And so when you think of the eternal hell fire and so on, you need to think, if that is bad to my mind, it is far worse. It is far worse in reality. Hell has no differing hermeneutic or interpretive principle than heaven or the Lord's Supper or baptism. Absolutely not.

So how is the torment of hell described in the Bible? First and most familiar to us, it is described by fire, by the sinner burning. Jesus called it hell fire in Matthew 5:22, "whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." And the word translated hell fire there is the word gehenna. which is an actual place in Judea. Much can be said about the history of Gehenna, especially in the Old Testament, much that could be said. But let me say this much, at the time of Christ, it was a garbage dump and it was perpetually on fire. Garbage refuse thrown in, and the fire never ended and the smoke of that, that ascends forever, the putrid nature of what is in it, as well as the burning of it, forever is the picture that Jesus used to picture the torments of hell, sinners burning endlessly.

Now, if any of you have experienced a burn in this life, you know the pain of it lingers for quite some time, especially if it is a severe burn. And you know that this is one of the greatest pains that you probably have ever received on Earth, is burning. And maybe you've even seen those trapped in a burning building. You remember the imagery in 9/11 as the towers burned, what do men do? They jump out. Because the fire is so hot, they would rather have a quick, relatively painless death on the ground than to endure the fire that is coming. This is what is signified by hellfire, something that awful, that you would rather jump off of many stories tall building than to confront it. But in hell, there is no escape from the fire. There's no place to run. There's no place to flee.

The rich man asked for a drop of water, even a drop to cool his tongue and it never came. It was totally denied him because the gulf between God's blessed presence and God's

tormenting presence could not be crossed. And this fire never ends. It never ceases on the sinner and that makes it even harder to comprehend, doesn't it? You know, our minds ought to shatter at the thought. It really should. That there is eternity of no relief whatsoever. The pain and agony of our bodies burning if we're found in hell. Jesus said in Mark 9, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into hellfire," gehenna, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, for everyone shall be salted with fire," and so on. The fire, he is very clear to you, is not quenched. It's not quenched. It never ends. And you might even ask, boys and girls, how can a body burn forever and not be burned up, because even today, right, even though we're mostly water, we will eventually burn up if we are burned by a fire. Well, what appears to be the case, and you need to understand this, is God will preserve your body in a perpetual state of misery. Jesus said in Mark 9:49, "for everyone shall be salted with fire." Salt is a preservative. Salt is a preservative and so the fire of hell preserves as well as burns.

It has two functions. Remember, this is not normal fire. This is a picture for us. But this fire, the fire of hell, preserves and burns the fire of God's wrath. The damned, we have to be clear, will never be annihilated by it. They will never sleep unaware of it. They will burn forever and ever and ever and ever in conscious torment. No relief. They will never say, "Well, the pain is so great, I can't feel it anymore." They will feel it. They are tormented. Hell is also called a furnace of fire, "shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth," Matthew 13:42. You know, if you go to hell, friend, this is what awaits you and this is what never ends, a furnace of fire, a lake of fire, wailing and gnashing of teeth in agony that never ever ends. You will never grind down your teeth. You will always be wailing and gnashing.

You might also have heard in Mark 9 that Jesus said that their worm dieth not. That's a fitting illustration connected to the garbage dump that is Gehenna. Maggots. You're so putrid, it's almost like your worm dieth not, as though you see that picture of the maggots feasting on the refuse, which is signifying what the sinner is sort of like in hell. But we must not think of literal maggots feasting on hell's inhabitants. That was an illustration, again, to something far worse, something very worse than a maggot feasting on your body. Jesus said that their worm dieth not. In other words, there's something about this worm that is yours personally. It is your worm. It is not their worm, or it's not shared. It is peculiar, it is singular, and it is yours. And what seems to be in view is that if you are in hell, this worm is your own conscience. If you have glimpsed the body's torment, now you start to understand the soul's torment. Even today, what do we speak of our conscience? It gnaws at us, it eats at us, right? It's that same imagery, a guilty conscience. That's the picture here of the worm portrayed in Romans 2:15, "their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." God gave you a conscience so that your own thoughts will accuse you. Imagine that for all of eternity, you yourself pointing the finger at yourself. That is your just reward for all eternity, every sinful thing you have done, gnawing at you for eternity. "I did that and now I am here." And how God will show you as well for your conscience, "I made a way of escape for you and you never took it." Every unclean thought will claw at you for eternity. Every time, especially for those of you here, every time you heard the

gospel and you turned away from it. "Why did I not turn to the Lord when I had the chance and I could have kept myself from this dread place?" That will gnaw at you and it will never end. Your own thoughts will torment you and you will remember these things more and more. You remember in our reading, in verse 25, the rich man had his memory. Abraham said, "Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things." You will know all that you have done and those thoughts will accuse you, and your conscience, the worm, never dies, your conscience will never, ever die and really in view of that, who needs Satan to torment you? The Lord will have you witness against yourself and that will be part of his justice.

Another way hell is described is by what Jesus calls outer darkness. Matthew 25:30, "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Outer darkness. This is a place devoid of light, the light of God. Sin is portrayed in the Bible as, what? Darkness. And how great the darkness is. Hell is full of sinners. and how great the darkness of hell is. In fact, it is so dark that it seems to be a solitary place; you're not going to be communing with the other wicked. Lazarus is conscious of no one else in hell but himself. He is the only one there, it seems, though he is not. You think of our own prison system. We put notorious men in a place called solitary confinement. This is what hell is like, a place of solitary confinement. And then we remember the very beginning of our Bible, "It is not good for man to be alone," and this is one of the torments of hell. There is no community in hell. You are all alone, left to your conscience and left to your torments. Be alone. Be with your own thoughts. Be with your own misery forever. No companionship in hell. There's no league for sinners. They will not commiserate over their own wickedness in hell.

And Jesus will say there is weeping. You will weep over your misery. You will pity yourself with never-ending pity with a pitiful wail that will give you no comfort. It's not a cry that comforts. It's like Rachel weeping, refusing to be comforted. Shrieking, not sobbing, "How could I have ended up here?" And the worm of conscience will remind you why and you will weep and shriek all the more.

But you will not just weep, Jesus says you will gnash your teeth. In pain, sure, because the pain is unbearable and we do gnash our teeth in pain, but also out of our anger, your anger towards Christ who has put you here. You will hate him. You will never love him. You will never adore him in hell and that is a sad and sinful thing.

And you will also be tormented, as the rich man was, by seeing the righteous in heaven. It is all darkness for you, and yet you see light for the saints and the blessedness of the redeemed. You know, the rich man now saw Lazarus' blessedness. He saw Lazarus' gospel feast. And that will torment him for eternity, knowing there is absolutely no way for him to get there. "There is a fixed gulf between us," Abraham said. And part of hell's torment is to see that you are removed from the source of every blessing.

And then in Revelation 9 verse 2, hell is called the bottomless pit. What is that? The sensation of your heart is like you are sinking. And forever. And ever. And ever. You know, you have likely experienced a sinking feeling, haven't you, when things go awry in

your life. Sometimes anxiety, sometimes worry is so great you say, "I feel as though the floor has dropped from under me. I'm in free fall." The anxiety in hell is that you are lost forever and ever and ever and ever. You feel like you are in free fall and it will never ever end. There will be no floor to hit.

My friends, this is just a taste of how the Bible describes hell and it is a dreadful place. It is an awful place. It is the worst place. Imagine the torments of your body, a fire that never ends. the torment of your soul, conscience that constantly accuses you, you're plagued by your own evil, seeing blessedness ever out of your grasp, you're just sinking away from it, clutching for it, never receiving it, seeing over you the blessed saints enraptured in the joy of Christ and each other, but you have no place to rest your feet. So lonely, left to your own worm, to your own thoughts, gnawing away at you, no conversation. You would go mad if the Lord would let you. But he won't let you. That is his torment. You will not lose sense or reason. The sinner's just reward, an eternity of this never, ever ending. It is too awful and the mind reels at it, doesn't it? You might say this is too much. This is too much for sin. That sinners would get this as their reward. But that is really because, unlike how Jesus preached, we don't see sin for how evil it is. And so let's consider that in our second heading, which is hell's necessity. Why is this awful place of eternal torment necessary and just and why is it that so many will go there, even those that we might say are nice? Even people who have gone to church all their days, why? Why when the Bible says, and this is often the charge, God is love, how can a loving God do this? You've seen its horror and I trust the Holy Spirit brought some of it. I know I cannot do that in my flesh but I trust the Holy Spirit has given you a sense of the horror of hell. Why is it so awful when God is love? You must know why, lest you think this doctrine is unreasonable and you avoid it, or you see hell as unnecessary. You must see hell is necessary, it is needed, and we are to embrace the doctrine.

Now it is absolutely true that God is love. We praise God for it. Our problem is this, we scarcely understand and recognize true love. God is holy. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty," Revelation 4 verse 8, and his love is a true love, which is a holy love, a holy love that is constrained to hate sin because sin is evil. Sin is the worst. We forget that sin is wicked. Love cannot countenance sin. In God's own definition of love, not yours, not mine, he says that love or charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, 1 Corinthians 13 verse 6. We often think on that chapter as the great chapter of love, and it is in many ways, but we forget, love rejoiceth not in iniquity. And the holiness and the love of God is also bound up with his justice. God is just. In Exodus 34, what did he say? He will by no means clear the guilty. Sin is lawlessness, 1 John 3:4, and God must punish the sinner as a sinner. Sin isn't punished in hell, sinners are punished in hell. We have to get that right.

Let me ask this question: would it be loving if sinners escaped justice? No. Just think of how many you might even think and say have supposedly gotten away with things on the earth. How many rapists and thieves and serial killers seem to have prospered? And just think on this, if the very worst thing that happened to Adolf Hitler is that he shot himself in the head after taking a cyanide tablet, we would say there is no justice because that

hardly is just. We recognize that. Even many atheists will say, "I hope he is rotting in hell." Justice demands a hell.

But you say, "Fine, why is the punishment of hell eternal? Why does God not mete out a sentence for a certain number of years? You committed these sins, well, you get this number of years in hell. And then when they are punished for that, maybe he'll annihilate the sinner, and that's the end of the story." Because I think, you know, for us, rightly so, hell's awfulness is amplified by the fact it never ever ends. This is your existence forever. Even if it went on for a billion years only, there would be hope, wouldn't there, for the sinner in hell. But there is no hope. You would say, "Give me a billion years in hell rather than an eternity. I can maybe take that." Well, the problem with all of that kind of thinking is we don't understand who sin is against. Sin is against God. What was the horror in Joseph's mind when he thought about sinning? He said, "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Genesis 39:9. Even the slightest of our sins is against the Almighty, who is himself infinite and eternal, and so our transgression is against an infinite and eternal God and so the punishment for the slightest of our sin is infinitely long, eternally long.

In the 51st Psalm, David's grief was, what? That he sinned against God. That must mean something to us, that our sin is against God. When you sin, you sin against your Creator, your Maker. You do evil against the one pure and holy being that is perfect. You say God is love and you grasp ahold of that and you say he is perfect love, he is pure love. You sin against pure and perfect love and that is your evil. The very thing that you think will acquit you is actually what condemns you, that you sin against love. Imagine doing wickedly against such a one and as God is infinite, as I've said, even the least sin requires unending punishment. You grasp something of that. You can approximate that on the earth, right? We grasp that sins or crimes, I should say on earth, are worse against the one that you offend against. Fine, you threaten my life, okay, maybe you'll get a slap on the wrist. You threaten President Biden's life, you're going away because you are sinning against his office. You're committing a crime potentially against him. Same crime, the difference, the person being offended. Now you consider your crime, your sin against God, against an infinitely holy and perfect being and your crime is unspeakable. You sin against your Creator. That's why Jesus said, it would be better to pluck out your eye and cut your hand off than sin and enter hell because that is how awful your sin is.

And worse, and I alluded to this, the residents of hell never stop sinning. So the punishment must continue. The gnashing of teeth in hell is further sin. Further anger and hatred against God. "Why am I here," is the shriek, in a sense. But never once will a denizen of hell say, "God have mercy on me!" They won't do it because they never did it here and they won't do it there. And eternal punishment, as I have said, is punishment, it is not meant to be remedial. They are really going to be punished, and they will never once look for mercy. None of the arrogance in your life that refused mercy from Jesus will change.

So let me put it this way then, in order for God to not deny himself, hell must exist. It is not optional. If God is holy, if God is love, if God is just and if sin must be punished, hell

and all of its parameters must exist else God would cease to be God and he would deny himself. So we are called to have a holy fear of hell, which is really a holy fear of God. That's how Jesus summed it up, "Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," Matthew 10:28. And as you understand the doctrine of hell, I pray that your fear of God increases. And so while we do not endorse the picture of hell in Dante's "Inferno," surely the words that Dante ascribes to the entrance of hell, "Abandon all hope ye who enter into it," surely those are true words. That is the sentiment. When you are in hell, hope is gone. There is no future. There is no hope for you. It is just never ending misery.

So it all seems rather hopeless, friends, that we are all sinners, all liable to the eternal misery of hell, but we praise God that the reason hell is preached is because God has given a way of escape if you will take it in this life. There is a remedy in hell. This remedy is singular and it is also urgent. The way out of hell must be taken before you make your way in, "For it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment." When the judgment comes and if you haven't taken the remedy before your last breath, that's Hebrews 9:27, then all hope is gone and you are without hope and you are without God. So let's consider the one and only remedy to hell as our final heading. Let me ask, why did the Savior, and we call him the Savior, why did the Savior, Jesus Christ, preach on hell more than anyone else? It is so that you would flee into his arms, that you might run to him, you would be drawn unto him. He is the Savior. You say, yes, he is the Savior. Well, what does he save men from? From God's wrath in hell, from the wrath to come. He is also the singular remedy to hell. There is no other. You cannot find any other escape from hell but him, and it must be in this life. There is a gospel, there is good news in the face of this horrendous news of hell and the good news, the gospel is for you who believe in Jesus Christ.

He saves you from hell's grasp. How? By having undergone it himself for you. And this is why, knowing the terror of the Lord in hell, it causes us who believe in him to magnify Christ all the more. All of these things that I have demonstrated to you out of the word of God, our Savior on the cross experienced himself. In your place, believer, if you would call on his name, you would know that the Savior has experienced all the torments of hell which are so awful for you. Just think on it. The cup of God's indignation in Revelation 14, did he not drink of it? Did he not plead in Gethsemane that the Lord might remove this cup from him? Yet he drank it, saying, "Not my will but thy will be done." It is this cup the Savior staggered at in the face of Gethsemane. Now, knowing the terror of hell, do you see why he sweated blood? You know, if we were in our right sense, when we think on hell and the wrath to come, if we were outside of Christ, we ought to sweat great drops of blood, knowing what is in view. But he, blessedly, drank that cup to its dregs, for you who believe in him. For you who believe in him, he drank it to the very end. He emptied that awful cup that was reserved for you by drinking it himself and he cried on the cross, "It is finished. The cup is empty. I have drank all of it for my people."

And on the cross, the fire of God's wrath burned up his soul. He had no comfort on the cross. You know that he was in agony. The rich man here in hell, he asks for a drop of water to cool his tongue. What is one of the seven sayings of the Lord on the cross? "I thirst," because he has experienced the torment of hell for you, believer. Then the world

goes dark for three hours when Jesus is on the cross, why? Outer darkness comes to the earth. Christ, and you think on this, all alone those three hours, without any comfort from men, just as it is in hell. He took that for you, believer. No comfort. He knew. He underwent these things. You think of outer darkness and the lack of comfort. Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" No comfort from God for the very first time in his life. But also Psalm 22, the same Psalm on the cross says, "I am a worm and not a man." Christ took on himself the worm that would gnaw away at our conscience in hell. Think of all of our sins poured out on the head of the Savior. What an awful thing. And he calls your worm his worm. And he's made as low as a worm, not a man. What of the bottomless pit? Our Lord, you remember, was hung and suspended on a Roman cross. Even his breathing was agony. Slowly he was being suffocated, wasn't he? No firm place to stand. His legs slowly, slowly, his human legs losing strength and giving out. Hell was truly experienced by our Lord for all those who will call on his name.

God as God, he could bear up his humanity by his divinity so that in his three hours of suffering, he could bear an innumerable number of sins for an innumerable number of elect on the cross, yet he did truly endure all of it. And you think of how poetic, as I said earlier, for suffering for sinners, Jesus is rewarded as he has taken his place at the right hand of God and now he is the judge of all, and he is even the administrator of God's wrath in hell, having tasted it himself. In other words, hell glorifies Jesus. He preached on it very regularly, more than we do here even. He is not ashamed of hell, and neither must you and I. You must glorify him for it, especially if you have cast yourself on him for mercy.

Friends, let me repeat something I said earlier. The only way out of hell is to be loosed from it before you find yourself in it. That's it. The only way out is to call on his name and call on the name of the Lord Jesus. Now, if you're hearing all of this wrath, you might ask and you think of how awful hell is, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?" What is the answer from Acts chapter 16? You know, a man asked that very question almost 2,000 years ago and the answer was simple, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house." It's that simple and it's that sure. No doubt for you that believe on Jesus that you are rescued from hell's clutches. You repent of your sin, you believe in him, you cast yourself on his mercy, you say, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner," and you are saved if you are in Christ. There's no good works for you to do to earn it. There's no atoning that you can do to earn the salvation. Hell is forever because no one in hell can atone for their sin. Their fire which burns them up will never atone for their sin. Only Jesus can. Flee the wrath to come. Be converted and believe on the Lord. And blessedly, instead of the never-ending torments in hell, here is the flip side. Here is the lure, so to speak, what is the never-ending state for you, believer? Thou wilt show me the path of life that you have just heard. In thy presence is fullness of joy. At thy right hand there are not torments, pleasures forevermore.

That is the stark difference between hell and heaven and all of you can have heaven freely in the Savior. Why should you perish? Isn't this the question? Why should you perish when you can simply have light and life and blessedness forever and ever and ever? You know, if the torments of hell never cease, then the joys of heaven never cease

in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord. Our joy increases day by day or however time is measured there. You will never know anything but love and peace and joy and it was all the work of your Savior on your behalf. Nothing you did. You cast yourself on him for mercy and he has given you everything, the fire of hell turned into the refreshment of everlasting joy. The loneliness of hell. You think of the mirror image here, right, the flip side of the coin, the loneliness of hell. The fellowship of God and all of his people forever. This is the stark difference. Some say that they do not understand how God is love if there is a hell but instead I say, and you ought to say, it is unfathomable to grasp the love of God for his people that God would subject himself to the torments of hell in the person of the Son in the Incarnation because he loves his people.

Now you see why Jesus preached on hell so often. It is because of that word that we often glory in, his compassion, his compassion to save sinners. No one preached on hell more than him because no one was more compassionate than him. Friend, the Bible says this, knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. Nothing is more terrifying than the horror of the reality of hell, and so I have poorly in any way that I have preached poorly, I trust the Holy Spirit will do the persuading. The terror of hell is awful and so we persuade men to close with Christ and to take him. In fact, you might recall, you might even get a sense of the context here, 2 Corinthians 5, right, verse 11 says, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." How does that chapter end? "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

We plead you in Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. Why should you die? You know, in the Revelation, hell is called the second death. That is what makes sense of Ezekiel 33. Why will ye die? Why will ye die? God says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." And as churchgoers, I'm going to press this, I know I'm going long tonight, but in Luke 10:14, we'll get to it soon, Jesus says there are varying torments in hell and the greatest torments in hell are reserved for those who have heard the gospel and refused it. Those who have heard the gospel for years and years and years and have refused to come to Christ are probably, and it staggers the mind, in greater torment than many serial killers because they have refused the Son of God. That's why Jesus says it will be better on that day for Sodom and Gomorrah than those who have rejected the word of the Lord. There are many churchgoers in hell. The rich man in our text was a churchgoer. Judas was a churchgoer. What will hell be like for those of you who have heard this word preached today and have slapped the hand of Christ away? I tremble to think on what hell would be like for you, friend.

So I beg you and take that as God begging through me or pleading through me, don't leave this place without being reconciled to God in Christ. The thought of any of you in eternal torment is too much to bear. All one must do is call on the name of the Lord, and you will avoid this dread place of never-ending torment of both body and soul. He has

shown you the path of life, O man, O woman, O child. Choose life and live forever. Choose Christ. And may God help us all do so.

Let us pray. Arise if able for prayer.

Lord our God, the word has been preached and we pray that the seed of the word has landed in fertile ground. Keep that devil far away from snatching up the seed of the word on this most dreadful doctrine and yet a doctrine that brings such great glory to God and gives hope to sinners that they may flee the wrath to come and flee to the arms of Jesus. O Lord, we pray that none here, oh, not a single one would be lost to everlasting torment. Lord, would you save all here? Would you give them saving faith? And having known the terror of the Lord, would they themselves be used to persuade other men to flee the wrath to come? And would you cause this church to never lose sight of the glorious gospel and all Christ has done? We bless you especially for the work of Christ and that now we see the great love of God to give his only begotten Son for those of us who would believe on him. How you loved the world, O God, to give us Jesus, that he would suffer so greatly for an innumerable amount of elect. We pray, Lord, that this word would never leave us unmoved. So move us, Father, and give glory to Jesus through our lives for what he has done for us. We pray this now in his name. Amen.