

FIVE AWFUL LESSONS LEARNED IN HELL

LUKE 16:23-24 • TV085A

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By
HENRY T. MAHAN

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Zebulon Baptist Church
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Luke 16:23-24

“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 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.”

I have a very solemn passage of Scripture that I want to read for my text today. The Scripture is found in the **16 chapter of Luke**. I’m going to read **verses 23 and 24 of Luke 16:**

“In hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment and seeing Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom; he cried and said, Father Abraham; have mercy upon me. Send Lazarus that he may dip his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”

Now my subject today is: **“FIVE AWFUL LESSONS LEARNED IN HELL.”**

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Now this is a difficult subject. It's a subject upon which I do not enjoy preaching at all. I don't enjoy preaching on judgment and condemnation and eternal punishment. And I don't expect you to enjoy listening to this message.

I often have people come to me after a message and they say, "I enjoyed your sermon." Well, I know what they mean and I don't mind them saying that. They don't particularly mean that they enjoyed a message on the subject of judgment and condemnation and eternal punishment.

But they mean by that that they've appreciated the message, they have appreciated the warning, and they have appreciated the servant of Christ being faithful to their souls. They approved of the message.

I understand what people are saying when they say, "I enjoyed your sermon." They mean by that, "I appreciated it, or I approved of it."

Well, I don't enjoy preaching a message on judgment and condemnation and I don't expect you to enjoy listening to it but if we are going to be true to the Word of God, if we are going to be true to our hearers, we have to preach on judgment because the Word of God deals with that subject.

I'd much rather talk about the love of Christ for sinners. I'd much rather talk about His substitutionary work on the cross, His resurrection, His ascension, His exaltation, and His Lordship.

I enjoy preaching on those subjects but I must, I must deal with this subject today. I feel impressed of God's Spirit. I feel led of God's Spirit to speak on this subject: **"FIVE AWFUL LESSONS LEARNED IN HELL."**

Now, I want compassion when I preach on a subject like this. I'd like to have the affection and compassion of the apostle Paul who wrote in **Romans 9:1**:

"I say the truth in Christ; I lie not, my conscience bearing me witness. I have great heaviness of heart and continual sorrow for my brethren according to the flesh. I could wish myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren according to the flesh."

You know, Moses stood between an angry God and the people of Israel when God was going to destroy the whole nation. And Moses stood between an angry God and the people of Israel and he cried:

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“Lord; if you’re not going to have mercy on Israel, then blot me out of the book which thou hast written. If you can’t show mercy to these people then blot me out of the book which you have written.”

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we had that kind of intercessor’s heart, if we had that kind of compassion and affection for those to whom we preach? And that’s the way Paul felt and that’s the way Moses felt.

But I recognize that while time changes some things; time doesn’t change all things. And time hasn’t changed the fact that I’m preaching to people as Moses and Paul preached to people who have great hardness of heart.

And not many of them are going to learn the lessons of Scripture, the lessons of grace, the lessons of mercy, and the lessons of the Gospel here on this earth. They are going to have to learn these awful lessons in hell (and these are awful lessons).

These awful truths are going to have to be taught to them at a time when nothing can be done about it because of hardness of heart. What makes men have hardness of heart? What brings about hardness of heart?

Now, you’ll learn something here if you will listen to me. There are five things in the Scripture that the Scriptures tell us causes hardness of heart:

First of all: Ignorance; ignorance causes hardness of heart!

Many people have hardness of heart against the Gospel, against the truth of God, because of ignorance. In other words, our Lord said: *“You do err not knowing the Scriptures.”* You err because you do not know the Scriptures.

That’s the reason you are mistaken and that’s the reason you are wrapped in tradition and custom and ceremony. That’s the reason you don’t know God; is you do not know his Word. *“You do err not knowing the Scriptures.”*

And then, in another portion of God’s Word in **John 12:40**; it says: *“He hath blinded their minds and hardened their hearts.”* Blindness of mind and hardness of heart go together. Where you have blindness of mind; it contributes to a hardness of heart. It’s ignorance.

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Secondly: Hardness of heart; the reason men do not learn and the reason they do not understand is because of unbelief. First, ignorance; you do not know the Scriptures and therefore you err and secondly is unbelief.

Now, Israel in **Hebrews 3** Paul said, “They saw God’s work. They saw the miracles. They saw what God did in Egypt and in the wilderness and yet they didn’t believe.” And then, in the book of **Mark chapter 6:62** the Lord said: “*They considered not the miracles of the loaves and fishes and they hardened their hearts.*”

In other words; these people couldn’t plead ignorance. They sinned against light. They hardened their hearts against what they saw and what they heard. Christ said to the City of Capernaum; He said, “It’s going to be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for you because you’ve sinned against the light.

They perished in ignorance but you’ve sinned against the light. If the mighty works had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah which are done in Capernaum; they would have repented but you’ve sinned against the light.”

And this is another thing that contributes to a hardness of heart and keeps men from acknowledging the truth and that is unbelief. And I’ll tell you something else that contributes to hardness of heart and that is:

Thirdly: The deceitfulness of sin!

Sin is a deceitful thing. And over in **Ecclesiastes** the wise man wrote in **chapter 8:11:** “*Because judgment against an evil work is not executed speedily*” because God does not come down upon a man the moment he sins, because God is patient and longsuffering and does not execute judgment immediately upon our offense or our transgression; “*Therefore, the hearts of men are set in them, hardened in them to do evil.*” They go along and commit sin and evil and do it again the next day, the next week, the next month, and the next year.

And God doesn’t step in and stop them or arrest them or judge them or cast them into hell and they just go right on in sin, the deceitfulness of sin, until finally, “*their feet shall slide in due time.*”

And when the cup is filled with transgressions and iniquity then God judges them. But that (their transgressions and iniquity) develops a hardness of heart. Why don’t men learn? Why must they wait until Judgment and eternal hell to learn things? It is because of ignorance, unbelief, the

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deceitfulness of sin and then because judgment against an evil work is not executed right now. The hearts of men are hardened and set in them to do evil.

I'll tell you another thing that contributes to hardness of heart and that is:

Fourthly: Religious tradition, religious custom!

“The Pharisee stood in the temple and he prayed thus with himself.” Now, he didn't pray to God. There was no prayer or anything that he said but he prayed with himself: *“Lord; I thank thee I'm not like other men. I'm not an adulterer, I'm not an extortioner, and I'm not unjust: I pay my tithes. I fast twice a week. (I read the scriptures). I give alms to the poor.”* He was set in his religious pattern, in his religious custom, and in his religious tradition and his ears were not open to the voice of God or to the Word of God.

His heart was not open. It was hardened by tradition and custom. He was hardened by custom in religion. Religious duties hardened him in his rebellion against God.

I'll tell you the last thing, these five things cause hardness of heart and keep men from learning what they ought to learn and keeps them from learning now what they will learn in hell, and that is:

Fifthly: Pride, *“Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before the fall.”*

How terrible it is, how tragic it is, what a terrible thought to be hardened in ignorance, unbelief, and by deceitfulness of sin, and by custom and tradition in religious duties and by pride of heart that closes my ears and shuts my eyes and hardens my heart against the voice of God. And then I will be forced to learn these lessons when it's eternally too late to do anything about them.

Now, what are these lessons that this man learned in hell, these five, awful lessons, learned in hell?

First of all: Well, the first lesson he learned and he tells us this there in **Luke 16:23:** *“And in hell he lifted up his eyes.”*

The first thing this man learned is there is a hell. Do you believe in hell? Well, the disciples of our Lord did not have a lot to say about hell. Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke often of hell but the disciples themselves had little to say about it. They had something to say; I suppose it was because they knew so little about hell.

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Our Lord knows about it. Our Lord warned us about it. Paul in **2 Thessalonians 1:7**; he said this: *“And to you who are troubled; rest with us. When the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angel in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Christ shall appear in flaming fire taking vengeance, *“For vengeance is mine saith the Lord.”*

And then Peter said in **2 Peter 2:4**: *“For if God spared not the angels that sinned but cast them down to hell.”* And then John in the book of **Revelation** mentions hell several times. In **Revelation 21:8** he said: *“But the fearful and the unbelieving and the abominable and murderers shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone which is the second death.”*

Well, the disciples had something to say about it didn't they? They believed that there is a hell. They taught that there is a hell. They preached that there is a hell. They warned men about hell.

But our Lord Jesus Christ had a lot to say about it. In fact, He said more about hell than He said about the eternal city, the New Jerusalem, heaven. He described hell more often than He described heaven.

He said here in **Matthew 10:28**: *“Fear not them which kill the body and have no more that they can do. But I'll tell you whom you shall fear; fear him who is able to cast you soul and body into hell.”*

And on another occasion our Lord said: *“If your right hand offends you; cut it off. It's better to go through life maimed than having two hands to be cast into hell where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.”*

“If thy right eye offend thee; pluck it out. It's better to go through life with one eye than having two to be cast into hell where the worm dieth not and the fire's not quenched.” These are the words of Christ the Lord.

Now, Christ was not teaching that would should maim and mutilate our bodies. He didn't teach that at all. And anyone who accepts it that way is a fool. The Lord Jesus is saying no matter how precious a thing is to you, no matter how valuable you may consider a thing; it's not worth perishing for, even if it's your right hand or your right eye.

There's nothing worth going to hell for, anything in this life that comes between you and God. That's the reason our Lord said, *“He that comes to me must hate his mother, father, brother, sister, husband, wife, yea, his own life if he will be my disciple.”*

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So, Christ must be first; whoever or whatever stands between you and a personal relationship by faith with Jesus Christ must go, it must be cut off. It must be cast aside because it's not worth perishing for, nothing is. Christ is first. Christ is the only one, the only foundation.

And then He said in **Matthew 13:49**: *“So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just and shall cast them into a furnace of fire.”*

The first thing that the rich man learned was that there is a hell. It's not just a curse word; it's a place. It's not just a by-word; it's a place. It's not just some place you want people to go with whom you don't agree; it's a real and awful place. He found out there's a hell. *“In hell he lifted up his eyes.”*

Secondly: And then the second lesson he learned in hell was this, that hell is a place of misery and torment.

Now listen to him; he says: *“Father Abraham; send Lazarus that he may dip his finger in water and cool my tongue. I'm tormented in this flame.”*

You know, I've had people ask this question: “Well, why can't the unbeliever, the wicked, just be annihilated? Why must God send men to hell? Why can't men just cease to exist?”

In other words; here's a man who hates God and hates the truth and the Gospel and lives for his own selfish pleasure, mistreats others and has no use for the Gospel, and he dies. Why cast him into hell? Why not just let him cease to exist? Why not just annihilate him?

Well, I maybe can talk to you on that if you will listen carefully. Now, there are several forms of life. There's mineral life and there's vegetable life and there's animal life and then there's mental life.

God almighty made life in the mental stage and he made life in the vegetable stage and he gave life to animals. They have life. But when the mineral dies or a vegetable dies or an animal dies it is annihilated; it does cease to be.

That's the reason there's no penalty for killing an animal. There's no penalty for plucking up a rose. There's no penalty for cutting down a tree. An animal dies or a vegetable dies, then it is annihilated; it ceases to exist.

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But man's life is from God. Man was created in the image of God. When God made Adam from the dust he breathed into Adam the breath of God, and, "*He became a living soul.*"

An animal's not a living soul or a living spirit. The vegetables are not living souls. The minerals are not living souls, but man is. Man got his life from the soul of God. And as God can't die man can't die. That's so!

The Scripture says: "*When a man dies the body goes back to the dust from whence it came and the spirit, (the soul) to God who gave it,*" either to God to be accepted or received through Christ in righteousness or it goes back to God for judgment and condemnation and to be separated or cast away from God.

But man cannot cease to exist. He cannot be annihilated. Even so the devils and the fallen angels; they are living spirits, they are living souls. And we have living souls and we cannot cease to exist.

That's the reason you talk about hell being eternal death because they never die, they are never annihilated, they never are consumed; they never cease to exist, that living soul. A living spirit lives on either separated from God or with God. Everybody's going to live always somewhere after this life.

What is hell like, the misery of hell? He said, "*I'm tormented in this flame.*" I don't know so much about actual fire in hell. I don't think that's really the issue. First of all hell is a place of memory: "*Son remember.*" It's mental anguish. It's emotional anguish, you've got eternity to remember.

Secondly: Then hell is separation from God.

God is light. There's no light in hell; its darkness, outer darkness. God is love. There's no love in hell. God is compassionate in mercy. There's no compassion or mercy in hell.

Hell is separation from God. God is good. There's no goodness in hell. You see, everything in hell is opposite from God. And in hell we are separated eternally from all that God is and all that God gives.

And then hell is truth realized too late, truth realized too late!

This man realized when he went to hell that he had five brothers on earth that were coming to this same place. There are no unbelievers in hell; everybody there knows there's a hell.

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They know that Christ is the only way of salvation. They know *“that the blood maketh atonement for the soul.”* They know that by faith a man is justified. They know that there is life after death. They know these things now but it’s too late, truth realized too late.

And then hell is unfulfilled lust and unfulfilled desires!

Now, the person who has evil compassions and evil desires on this earth, an evil lust can find a source of fulfillment but not in hell. *“He that is filthy let him be filthy still. He that is ungodly; let him be ungodly still. He that’s unholy; let him be unholy still.”*

And your companions in hell will be the fearful, the unbelieving, the abominable, the murderers; these are your companions in hell. It’s unfulfilled lust. And this man learned hell is a place of misery.

Thirdly: He learned in hell, an awful truth; he learned that on earth, poverty with God is better than prosperity without God!

Some of you haven’t learned that and you are going to learn it too late. You know, Abraham said: *“Son, remember that on the earth you had good things and Lazarus had evil things. And now for eternity he is comforted and you are tormented.”*

When will we learn that a man’s happiness does not consist in material things but in knowing God? When will we learn that a man’s life consisteth not in the things he possesses but in the Saviour that he possesses and knows?

“What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?” This man here that went to hell; he had everything in life on this earth that the natural body could desire and enjoy, everything.

And when he died he had nothing because he didn’t have God. It’s better to know Christ, it’s better to have Christ, it’s better to have eternal life than to have anything. Our Lord said: *“Why take ye thought for things that ye shall eat, what shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed, what shall we wear? The gentiles, the heathens seek these things. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.”*

The so-called good things that we give ourselves to attain in this world (that do not contribute to a fellowship with God), we will find in hell that they’ll be like in the ancient mariner, an albatross around our necks.

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All of these so-called good things; we are so materialistic. We are like the rich young man who said: *“Soul; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. I’ll build bigger barns tomorrow and I’ll tear down the old barns and I’m just going to enjoy life.”*

And God said to him: *“Tonight thy soul shall be required of thee and then who shall these things be that you’ve acquired and that you have accomplished?”* Worldly fame is fleeting. Worldly possessions are decaying. Worldly relationships will someday end. Eternity goes on, and on, and on.

Poverty with God is a lot better than prosperity without God; I’ll tell you that and you’ll learn that someday. I wish we could turn loose of these things. I wish you were as concerned about your soul as you are about your new house, new car, about your body, about your appetite, and about all these things that you’re given to pursuing if you were just concerned about your relationship with God. Well, someday you will be.

Fourthly: The fourth lesson this man learned in hell is there’s no second chance after death!

Spiritual matters are decided right here, not then. I don’t care what men teach. They can teach that there’s a Purgatory and they can teach all of these other things that later on a man can be prayed out or rescued or someday.

But you know, Abraham said to the man in hell: *“Between us and you there’s a great gulf fixed and no one can come from you to us and no one can go from us to you.”* That gulf is fixed.

In hell there is no Gospel preached. In hell there’s no call of grace. In hell there’s no repentance and faith. Men may talk of Purgatory but God doesn’t.

Did you ever hear that song?

**“I dreamed that the great judgment morning
Had dawned and the trumpet had blown
I dreamed that the nations had gathered
At the Judgment before God’s great throne.**

**And from the throne came a bright, shining, angel
And he stood on the land and the sea
And he swore with his hands raised to heaven
That time was no longer to be.**

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And oh what a weeping and wailing
As the lost were told of their fate
They cried for the rocks and the mountains
They prayed but their prayers were too late.

The moral man stood at the judgment
But his self-righteous rags would not do
For the men who had crucified Jesus
They had passed off as moral men too.

The religious man was there
But his good deeds when death came
Were left far behind
The angel who opened the record
Not a trace of his good deeds could find.

The rich man was there
But his riches had melted and vanished away
A pauper he stood at the judgment
His debt was too heavy to pay.

The man who had put off salvation,
Not tonight, I'll get saved by and by,
No time now to think of religion
Well, at last he found time to die.

And oh what a weeping and wailing
Of the lost who were told of their fate
They cried for the rocks and the mountains
They prayed but their prayers was too late.”

Fifthly: This man learned in hell that the only way men are saved is by the Word of God!

He said, *“Father Abraham; I’ve got five brothers on the earth. Send Lazarus down to preach to them.”* Abraham said, *“They’ve got Moses and the prophets. (They’ve got the Word of God).”* No he said; *“They don’t believe the word of God but if somebody came back from the dead they would repent (believe).”*

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And Abraham said: *“If they do not hear Moses and the prophets (believe the Word of God) they won’t believe though one rose from the dead.”* Miracles don’t save people, visions, dreams, signs, and wonders; it’s the Word of God: *“Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”*

Israel saw the miracles in the wilderness but they died in unbelief. Capernaum, Bethesda, all of these cities in which our Lord preached they saw Him raise the dead and heal the sick and give sight to the blind and make the lame to walk but they died in unbelief.

The only thing that will convince a man of sin is the Word of God. *“I’m not ashamed of the gospel; it’s the power of God unto salvation.”* This is the way God saves men. *“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”* for the Bible convicts us of sin, reveals Christ and brings us to repentance and faith.

It’s by the Word of God that faith is born: *“Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God!”*