



## A Testimony from Hell – The Rich Man and Lazarus Part 3

May 17, 2026

Luke 16:19-31

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Please turn, if you will, if you haven't already, to the Gospel of Luke, Luke chapter 16, the Gospel of Luke. Nothing that has ever been written, of course, is equal to the Word of God. Obviously, it stands alone. It's the only book that God has ever written. He speaks, and every bit of it is critical. Every bit of it is important. Every bit of it needs to be understood, and there are certain subjects in the Word of God that are disturbing. There are certain subjects in the Word of God that are troubling. There are certain subjects in the Word of God that are disturbing and troubling, and they ought to be. They're intended to be. But many of those subjects, because they're troubling and disturbing, are avoided. It behooves us to consider the scriptures in their fullness and to understand all that God has said.

So, having said that, I wanted to share with you what one commentator said with regards to the subject we're on, indeed, in addressing this particular passage in Luke 16:19-31. He said this: *The subject of Hell is not a popular subject by any means, and yet it is a necessary one. Get this. It is a compassionate preacher who preaches on Hell. It is a loving preacher, a sympathetic preacher who warns people of the horrors of eternal punishment. All of that is true because it was a sympathetic God who revealed Hell and a sympathetic Christ who was the primary preacher of Hell. We find Jesus here, our teacher, in Luke 16:19-31, and the lessons He teach is about Hell. Here is a story told by our Lord, created by our Lord, a fictional tale which He Himself designed as a warning to those who were headed for Hell. A reminder, the commentator says, that He is the Lord over heaven, but He's also the Lord over Hell. That He's the one who blesses in heaven. He's also the one who curses in Hell. He's the one who made heaven. He's also the one who made Hell. He's the one who brings people to heaven, and He's the one who ultimately will*



*condemn them to Hell. And so He, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the one to tell us the truth about it, compassionately, lovingly, mercifully.*

That capsulizes it all for me and my perspective. He tells us a parable about a man who went to Hell. A man who went to Hell unintentionally. A man who was shocked to find himself in Hell. And indeed, the reason why this parable is so important, so pertinent to all of us and all people in every generation, is that most people, as a matter of fact, 96% of the people in America describe themselves as, to some extent or another, religious. And guess what? Most people who are religious, religion, by its very definition, is a pathway to God. The whole point of religion is to be pleasing and to ingratiate yourself to Almighty God. And so, people who are religious people are people who, by definition, think they're going to heaven by these religions and religious rituals and beliefs that they practice and possess. And it is an incredible deception. Going to heaven is a confidence, a false confidence, shared by almost all people who consider themselves religious. It was certainly a confidence, a false confidence, possessed by the religious leaders in Israel in Christ's day, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the religious leaders to whom Jesus is speaking in this account. It is addressed to a tremendously religious people, fastidious people, rules and regulations about keeping the Sabbath alone, let alone all this other stuff. Very sincere, in many cases, I might add. What did Paul say? ***I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge***, not according to truth. Better to be shocked, offended, stunned in this life and get it right, than to pass out of this life into the next and be shocked and stunned. It's the most loving thing, that commentators said, Christ or a preacher could ever do. And I'm encouraged by that because it's a hard thing to talk about from a fleshly standpoint. So out of devotion to the Revelation of God, the Word of God, out of devotion to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,



who's merciful and compassionate, the preacher in every generation draws people to this story, or at least he should. Let's look at it.

Let's pick it up again right here in Luke 16:19. **Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen**, and we explained that, fabulously dressed, **gaily living in splendor**, throwing a fatted calf party, if you will, every day. Every day. Christ sets out these two extremes purposely in this story to show you the extreme. He wants to make these dramatic contrasts. **And a certain poor man named Lazarus**, remember what Lazarus means? God is my refuge. God rescues me. Lazarus **was laid at his gate...** thrown, as it were, at his gate because he could not fend for himself, most likely paralyzed, couldn't walk. **...covered with sores, ...** most likely bed sores, we would call them, from laying constantly in one position. **...and longing**, the word there means a passionate craving, longing **to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table**; And we discussed what that means, most likely the dry crusted bread that was used to wipe off the liquid and the juices or whatever from eating with your fingers because they didn't have napkins and was thrown under the table. And they would call in the dogs, remember we discussed all that as sort of the cleanup crew, to eat all those crumbs. And there's a guy who would give anything if he could just get those dirty crumbs, the garbage that the dogs were able to get, falling from the rich man's table. And **even the dogs were coming and licking his sores**. One commentator said, "It was if he was roadkill, and the dogs were just chewing on roadkill." It's so sad. **Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels...** It doesn't talk about his funeral or anything like that. It just says he was carried away bodily by the angels. Another reason why you know it's a story and not a real-life account. But don't miss this: A story made up by Christ to convey a real message. What is the real message? The reality of what Hell is like and how people go there. That's the whole point of this. So what's it say?



He's carried away by the angels ... **to Abraham's bosom**; a euphemism for heaven. This is the first shocking jolt in the story. This is not what the Pharisees and the religious people and the leaders of Israel in Christ's day were expecting. They literally were expecting the total opposite. The rich man would go to heaven, but not this poor beggar. That's why I asked Ben if he would read John chapter 9. What did they ask that blind man who was cured? Christ's own disciples, the whole culture believed this, the Jewish culture. Christ's own disciples say to him, whose sin that this guy would be born blind? His parents or himself? In other words, if you got a physical problem, if you got a malady in your life, if you got heartache and struggles and bad things financially, physically, whatever going on in your life, you're obviously cursed by God, so they thought; that was their teaching. But if you had wealth and prosperity and were loaded with money and everything was going great and you had health, you clearly were a holy righteous person because look how God was blessing you. They had no concept of what God's heart view really was. And so they're shocked to think that this beggar, who clearly was cursed by God and was going to be cursed forever, would end up in heaven, fellowshiping with their hero of heroes, Abraham, not only the father of their race genetically, but the father of the Hebrew nation spiritually. Abraham believed God and it was a credit to him, reckoned him as righteousness. He's the hero spiritually and the hero physically. So he's in Abraham's bosom. He's in heaven. ...**and the rich man also died**, and look, **and was buried**. He got a funeral. He got a funeral. And here we go. Now we're getting to the new material, that was all review. **In Hades...**, remember I said every Hades is the Greek translation of the Old Testament word Sheol. And while Sheol could mean the grave or the pit or the realm of the dead, good or bad or whatever, Hades in the New Testament, except for Acts chapter 2, Hades always means Hell, meaning a place of eternal torment. And the one exception in Acts 2 is when Peter stands upon Pentecost and he's preaching and he quotes



Psalm 16 where it says, "Thou will not allow Your Holy one to undergo decay." Thou will not leave my soul in Hell, in Sheol. It says "Hades", it means you won't leave me in the grave is what it's translated. Everywhere else it means Hell. Okay, so this is the other shocker. The rich man dies and goes to Hell. That jolts them. This is totally reversed. Everything's reversed in the mindset of the religious leaders of Jesus' day. The beggar is in heaven. The rich man is in Hell. This can't be. Jesus goes on. ***In Hades, he lifted up his eyes, ...*** That's simply a euphemism for "he had consciousness". He had awareness. He had an awakening. What's the point? Brian, I couldn't have paid you \$50 to say it any better than when you were up here making your initial remarks. There's no such thing as soul sleep as Seventh-day Adventists and others want to teach. There's no such thing as annihilation after death as Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventists and others also want to teach. There is a life after death which is a conscious life. He lifted up his eyes. There's an awareness. There's an awakening here. There's no purgatory, by the way. It's not a mild fire that sort of purges you a little bit. And so he's in Hades, in Hell. He lifts up his eyes. It says ***being in torment***, we'll talk about that, ***and he saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom***. At his side, fellowshiping with him. And so what does he do? By the way, how do you describe Hell? He describes it here as torment, being in torment. It's a conscious torment. A conscious kind of torment. And we're going to talk more about that. Well, you know it's fantasy. You know it's not a real story account. You know our Lord, however, is crafting it to make a point or Jesus wouldn't be saying it. Because those in Hell can't see into heaven and those in heaven can't see into Hell. If those in heaven were dealing with anything in Hell, it would diminish the glory of heaven. And those in Hell would be diminishing the torment there. It is clearly a parable and not reality. But everything about the person confined to Hell is experienced in Hell. But in the story, verse 24, ***And he cried out and said***, what? ***'Father Abraham'***. Maybe he went



to Hell because he was a Gentile. No, Jesus takes that away because the Jews thought that Hell was reserved for the Gentiles. He takes that away. He calls Abraham his father. He's going to call Abraham his father two more times in here. And Abraham in the story that the Lord is sharing in this parable is going to refer to him ethnically as a child, as his child. But he cries out and says, **'Father Abraham, have mercy on me,...** Interestingly enough, he can only plead his race. He says, look, I'm a Jew. Isn't that good for something? And what does he ask for? He asks for mercy. He asks for mercy. Note, he doesn't complain about his position. He doesn't say, there's got to be a mistake. I shouldn't be here. We're going to see why he doesn't in a moment. But this will be the first time that this man probably ever asked for mercy. He had everything he needed all his life long. He never asked for mercy. And now he's looking for mercy from the one to whom he extended no mercy. This would be shocking to the Pharisees that Jesus is talking to. They assumed that their status as Jews, and Pharisees especially, and the righteousness that they supposedly possessed guaranteed them heaven. The story goes on. He cries out and he says, Father Abraham, have mercy on me. And look at this. ... **send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in** (*odynaō* [G3600]) **agony in this flame.**" One thing about Hell, why doesn't he say, obviously a mistake. I shouldn't be here. Immediately when he goes to Hell, he's shocked to be there, but there's a reality. He knows he is deserving of it. When the soul who doesn't know Christ passes out of this life and goes into Hell, the conscience is fully active.

You get a fully active conscience. I want to develop that. You appreciate your total depravity. You appreciate your true wretchedness. All that illusion about you being a good person, better than the other individual, your self-worth, all that illusion about the things you "did for God". You were a good husband, a good father, a good wife, a good mother, a good grandmother, a good aunt, a good citizen. You paid your taxes. You gave some money to the



church. You helped the poor, whatever it might be. All illusion of innate goodness and self-righteousness is gone. You have a fully informed, acutely aware, sensitive conscience, and that conscience becomes your eternal constant tormentor. Tormentor. He doesn't say, how did I end up here? He knows he should be there. And that's the first point about Hell. You need to get this. Anyone who goes there is sentenced there justly. God is totally just, totally righteous, totally fair. No one goes to Hell that doesn't deserve to be there. And when they get there, their conscience knows it. The second point is that while they'll be surprised initially to be there, like I said, they will know that they're deserving of it. He doesn't ask for justice. He asks for mercy. He wants some relief, some relief.

Here's another point, too. Hell is pure confrontation. Hell is not remedial. Hell is not rehabilitatory. Hell is pure punishment. Pure punishment. He's not saying, isn't this over the top? Isn't this a little extreme? Isn't this unfair? No, it's punitive. It doesn't fix anybody. It doesn't purge anybody. It doesn't make anybody better. And by the way, notice he doesn't say, oh, God, forgive me. I was clearly wrong. That never comes out of his mouth. Nobody—see, we have this concept of thinking anybody would go to Hell would immediately become a believer and a follower and a lover of God. No. You don't change. They remain haters of God. They'll be angry and shake their fist at God forever. It is a place of torment, mental, physical, and emotional torment. Let me show you how the man has not changed whatsoever. What does he say? He wants mercy. He wants, symbolically speaking, a drop of water to soothe this torment. But what's he say? Oh, Father Abraham, have mercy on me. Send Lazarus. He's still thinking, man, if there's anybody who's worthless in heaven and who still should be serving me, it's Lazarus. Hell doesn't change you. You remain the sinner that you are. He's still expecting Lazarus to serve him. He's not remediated at all. He does not have heaven's assessment of Lazarus. And as a matter of fact, people in Hell do not have heaven's assessment



of anything. And just so you know, nobody who goes to Hell is going to have a conversation with anybody in heaven. As a matter of fact, you're going to see in a little bit that the people who go to Hell don't have conversations with anybody. You hear flippant foolishness. Well, if I go to Hell, at least I'll be with all my friends. You may be with all your friends, but you won't know it. You won't know it. We'll get to that. So for the sake of the story, powerful, powerful stuff, Jesus is using powerful, powerful language here.

So, he doesn't ask anything from God. He goes on. *...send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.* Now, what is the response? *But Abraham said*, notice he doesn't mention God or cry out to God at all. Abraham says to him, child, again, his lineage, his bloodline, *'Child, remember that during your life you received*, now this is a key word, *your good things, and likewise Lazarus*, notice it says, *bad things*; It doesn't say Lazarus's bad things or Lazarus got his bad things. It says *during your life you received your good things*. The point is you sought only the things of this earthly world, not the things of God. And you got those. I keep thinking of that phrase, (Matthew 16:26 and Mark 8:36) *For what will/does it profit a man if he gains/to gain the whole world and forfeits his soul?* This is a guy in this parable who did just that. And while it's a parable, it is a story, again, crafted by Jesus Himself, told to us in Scripture by Christ Himself for us to get the point, like He wants us to get of all parables. And what's the point? Hell is a real place and it's a horrific place. And by the way, remember last week, it's *aiōnios* (G 166), eternal Hell. And some want to water that down and say, well, it doesn't really mean forever. Well, guess what? You got a problem because heaven is described by the same word, *aiōnios*, eternal heaven. And God is described by the same word, *aiōnios*, eternal God. It's an eternity in Hell. This is sobering stuff. *Abraham said, 'Child, remember during your life you received your good things and likewise Lazarus's bad things; but now he is being*



***comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you, there is a great chasm, stērizō (G4741), fixed, permanent, fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'***

Let me read what one commentator says: *There's no repentance here. There's no remorse here. There's no humility in Hell. There's no brokenness in Hell. All he wants is one thing. He's not asking to get out. His conscience would never release him from that. He knows that he can't. He knows he doesn't deserve to be released. He only wants one thing: **Send, Lazarus, he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue for I'm agony in this flame.** Couldn't you send just a little relief? That's what he's asking for. He's tortured. The metaphor is thirst and water, but the point is relief. He wouldn't give Lazarus a crumb, but he wants Lazarus to give him a drop. The souls of the damned know they're doomed to suffer. They know they are suffering justly and all they ask for in the lips of this man are small moments of relief in this eternal unending horror, but relief will never, never come.*

Like we said before, no hope, no hope. Now he goes on and talks about your good things. We talked about that. He says, a chasm is fixed. There's another point. Hell is not only eternal, but there's no escape. There's never an escape. Those who go there will never, ever, ever get out. What does the damned soul in Hell experience? Well, you've already told us, John, you said it's torment. They keep using this phrase, fire. Verse 23, verse 24, verse 25 keeps talking about agony and fire. How does the Bible describe this endless torment? Mark 9:43, it's called **unquenchable fire**. Remember we said that one of the imports of the resurrection of Christ was that he not only saves your soul, but he's going to give us all new bodies. Well, the damned, the lost are going to be raised as well. In Revelation 20, they will be sentenced to Hell and they'll have a rarefied new body as well, a physical body that is fit in some manner, just like ours to live for eternity in heaven, theirs will be particularly and peculiarly adapted



to live forever in Hell. And so I think it's not an accident that the Lord uses the metaphor and the word of God uses the symbolism of fire, of burning. I can't think of a more intense physical pain the human being and human flesh can endure than to be lit on fire. And that's exactly why I think, but it's an unquenchable fire. It obviously doesn't consume him. Mark 9:48 and 49 is a powerful passage of scripture. In Mark 9:48, it says, those who in Hell, **their worm**, they're in sentence to Hell where **THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED**. And in Mark 9:49, he goes on and says, they will be **salted with fire**. Salt is a preservative. And what they're going to say is they're going to be preserved for fiery torment forever.

Now that phrase, **their worm does not die**. There's a twofold meaning in that. What happens when a physical body goes into the grave or goes into the ground, it rots, it decays and the bugs and so forth, the worms, start feeding on it. But eventually the body completely decays and disappears, and the worms are gone. They got nothing else to feed on. But the body that goes to Hell, its worm, euphemistically speaking, the worm that it feeds on, it doesn't die, meaning that new body fit for Hell will last forever. But that concept, the worm, has a totally alternative meaning as well. John Flavel, a Puritan, wrote this: *Conscience becomes the whip that must lash the sinner's soul in Hell, the seat and center of all torments*. In Revelation 14:11, it says the sinner will have **no rest day or night**. The conscience, fully informed, fully activated, fully aware of its sin, will release its relentless power to condemn on the sinner who will be tortured by endless guilt forever. The worm, if you will, is a euphemism for the conscience, constantly, constantly, constantly, constantly pouring your guilt, your guilt, your guilt, your shame, and your contempt for your sin. And it will never be eased. In this life, you can take drugs and alcohol, you can throw yourself into promiscuity, you can buy bigger houses, bigger cars, and buy entertainment for a period of time, as a salve on your conscience, to try to numb your conscience, to try to get the guilt of your sin out of your presence. But in



Hell, your conscience will be fully activated. There will be nothing to stem the absolute constant gnawing, gnawing, gnawing of guilt.

We get a little taste of Hell in Psalm 5[1]. David says when he does his adulterous affair with Bathsheba and he kills her husband Uriah and all of that, he says in Psalm [51:3], ***my sin is ever before me***. I was so guilty, it was like having the fever, heat of summer, my bones were going to wax away the guilt and the pressure on me was so great. In Hell, that will be played out to the max. Guilt that is not felt in this life will be felt to the max. Daniel 12:2, describes the torture of Hell as shame [***disgrace***] and ***everlasting contempt***. That word shame means a self-hate. Daniel 12:2. And the word ***contempt*** there basically is the Hebrew word for loathsome. You will loathe yourself in Hell. You'll have contempt for yourself in Hell. You'll have a self-hate and a self-shame.

In any event, because the conscience is fully active and informed as to the person's sin, that's why the rich man doesn't say, "What am I doing here? I shouldn't be here." He knows he's here. He's rightfully there.

Another description of Hell that you'll see is Jesus in Matthew 8:12 and other places refers to it as ***outer darkness***. Well, how can you have a burning fire and be in darkness? Because that fire is a euphemism trying to convey to you and me the most intense pain, intense torture, intense suffering that is known to the human existence. What does outer darkness mean? It's a picture of abandonment. It's a picture of banishment. You're not going to interact with any of your buddies in Hell. You're going to be totally alone, totally alone with your guilt, totally alone with your pain forever. You're not going to relate to another soul. You're not going to see another soul. It's a picture of abandonment. It's a picture of banishment. You're outside



from God. You're away from anything and everything that is remotely good. There'll be no communion of any kind with others.

By the way, God is present in Hell. People ask the question, wait a minute, God's omnipresent? Was God in Hell? Well, God surely can't be in Hell. God is in Hell. He's in Hell in the character of His wrath. It is His wrath that's being visited out on nonbelievers in Hell. Revelation 14:11 says, ***they have no rest day and night...*** Revelation 20:10 says, ***they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.***

Is this sobering? Is it a little scary? Does it make you concerned for loved ones who don't know Christ? Let me tell you something. One of the reasons why I think it's so important to talk about abandonment, darkness, pain, torment, lostness, guilt, shame, pressure, because guess what? That is exactly times a gazillion the Lord Jesus Christ experienced for your salvation on that cross. He took Hell for you and me. That is just a lot. That's just all that we can even begin to try to understand of the price that was paid to rescue your soul. Forget the glories and the splendor and the wonder of heaven for a minute. Just think of what God Himself did in the person of Christ in terms of the Hell He took and saved you from. Not an hour's worth. If you stuck my hand over a flame for two seconds, I want to pull it away. You're talking about that kind of torment that we truly can't really get a grasp on. It's going to last forever. He's an eternal God, an eternal being, and in some supernatural cosmic way at that high point of atonement on the cross when He cries out, ***My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?*** That's banishment. That's separation in the Godhead. That's outer darkness. That's torment. That's guilt and shame and everything that is laid upon the sinner for his sin is laid upon Him who knew no sin, who became sin for us. We should have such a deep appreciation for the price that was paid to rescue us from this, from this.



And people say, well, God's so unfair to send anyone to Hell. God is not unfair. And by the way, what's He say? I have a heavenly home. All, any and all, may come. All He says is, use the door. Jesus says, I'm the way, I'm the truth, I'm the life. No one comes with the Father except through Me. And they sit there and say, you Bible-believing Christians are so narrow-minded. How dare you say there's only one way to God? I don't say that. God says there's only one way to God. And who says He's unfair? Terri and I invite all of you. Come to our house any time you want to, but please do us the courtesy of using the front door. You don't think we're narrow-minded. You don't think we're selfish, insulting. If we say, "If you come over to our house, would you please use the front door?" But man, if God says it, He's narrow-minded, because that's the depravity of the human heart. That's what maybe one or more of you are thinking right now. I can't believe that's true. That can't be the only way to God. God would never do that. I'm telling you on the authority of the word of God, that is exactly what God says. And He's right and He's fair and He's just. It's His house. And He can determine how we get there. And whatever you can say about whatever your heartache and your suffering and your sadness might be, you can never shake your fist at God and say He doesn't really understand the pain of my situation. First of all, He became a man and lived a life in this earth just like you and me. We do not have a high priest who cannot empathize with our suffering, but one who was tested, tempted in all points exactly like us. And we don't have a high priest who doesn't know what pain is all about. He literally took this Hell in all its horror for you and for me.

Weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth is another description of Hell. Weeping implies an agony. Wailing implies a regret. Gnashing of teeth is anger and frustration. Constantly. Constantly. Constantly. Jonathan Edwards said this: *For the unrighteous and the righteous,*



*eternity will be spent in the immediate presence of God. God will be present in His wrath in Hell for the non-believer, and God will be the heaven of the believer.*

As Brian comes to lead us in his closing song, Hymn, let's pray and next week, Lord willing, we'll answer the question: What sent this man, what sends any soul, to Hell? Let's pray.

Father, even now as I stand behind this podium and lead this congregation in prayer, I think of those, Terri and I love, who do not know Christ as their Lord and Savior. I think of those whom we love that if they would breathe their last breath this day, they would spend forever in the place I just described, a horrific eternity in Hell. Father, You said in Your word, You desire that none of them should perish. We don't either, Lord, and we pray that by Your grace and mercy, You would open the spiritual eyes of those whom we love, open the spiritual eyes of those whom we go to school with or work alongside that we know do not know Christ. Open the spiritual eyes of our president, Donald Trump, and everybody along the line on down. Oh God, may You cause the reality of Your holiness, the reality of our sinfulness, the reality of heaven, and the reality of Hell to strike home to human hearts all across our land that many, many, many souls would come into Your glorious kingdom through the shed blood and the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We ask it all in His matchless name, the matchless name of the suffering Savior, the matchless name of the Lamb of God who took Hell for us, the matchless name of Jesus the Christ. Amen and amen.