

A CRY FROM HELL

Luke 16:19-31

INTRODUCTION

- In 2018, a 26 year old missionary, John Allen Chau, was martyred by savages on North Sentinel Island
- What we need in the church today is for men and women to be stirred up with that same zeal to take the gospel to a lost and dying world
- What is going to move us out of our apathy?
 - ✓ First and foremost, our love to Christ for redeeming us by his blood should be the prime motivation to witness to the lost
 - ✓ Our love to our fellow man should be another motivation
 - ✓ Our duty to Christ's command should motivate us further
- All those should be more than enough to move us to witness; yet too often, we are not moved by these things.
- Imagine if we could open a portal to hell and ask one of the damned there, in between his screams of agony, to speak a motivating word to us on this matter; to tell us what he would wish we might say and do for those who are yet alive that they might not suffer the same eternal judgment he faces
- Can you imagine how helpful and motivating that would be?
- Well there is such a record of a voice from hell in Luke chapter 16

- Hell is real, despite many contemporary preachers who deny its existence whether explicitly or implicitly (cf. 2 Timothy 4:3-4)
- The Bible teaches that the fire in hell is literal physical fire, not metaphorical
- Note “flame” (*phlox*) in v.24, not “fire”
- What is hell really like?
 - ✓ A place of torment (Luke 16:23; Revelation 20:10)
 - ✓ A place of consciousness and feeling (Luke 16:23)
 - ✓ A place of fire (Luke 16:24; Matthew 13:42,50; Mark 9:44-48; Revelation 20:15; 14:10)
 - ✓ A place of no comfort or help or mercy (Luke 16:24-25)
 - ✓ A place of unfulfilled desires and unanswered prayers (Luke 16:27-31)
 - ✓ A place of isolation (Luke 16:26)
 - ✓ A place without hope of escape (Luke 16:26)
 - ✓ A place of remembrance and regret (Luke 16:27-28)
 - ✓ A place of punishment (Matthew 25:46)
 - ✓ A place of wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30; 24:51)
 - ✓ A place of worms (Mark 9:44,46,48; Isaiah 66:24)
 - ✓ A place of banishment (2 Thessalonians 1:9)
 - ✓ A place of darkness (2 Peter 2:17; Jude 1:13)
- Catholics believe in “purgatory” where people will burn temporarily, then released, but the Bible teaches of no such place – once a person dies, their eternity is fixed; just as heaven is everlasting, so is hell (2 Thessalonians 1:9)

- The cults like JW's and SDAs reject the truth regarding hell and teach annihilation; they often call this passage a "parable" but there is no reason to read it as a parable:
 - ✓ It uses personal names
 - ✓ It has none of the typical expressions used to identify parables: "like," "as," "like unto," or "likened unto"
 - ✓ The account accords with the rest of Scripture regarding the afterlife
 - ✓ Even if it were a parable, it would not diminish it from being a real event – all parables describe events that could and did happen

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- Many ask, "How can a loving God send people to a fiery hell to burn forever?"

- The confusion comes from a failure to understand God's holiness, as well as man's sinfulness

- The difficult question is not "how could God send people to hell", but "how could he love sinners like us and offer us salvation from hell?"

- Today we will consider this rich man, his terrible state, his desire for himself, but more importantly, his desire for those who are still alive
- He is representative of all those who are in hell right now; knowing what they now know, what do they wish for those who are yet alive?
- Note that the rich man in hell was consumed with his own self-interest, and had no love to Christ or concern for his kingdom
- His first thought was for himself, as it had been during his life (Luke 16:24)
- But when it became clear there was no escape or relief, his thoughts turned to others (Luke 16:27)
- He desired that one would “testify” to his brethren (Luke 16:28)
- The word for “testify” denotes a solemn and thorough witness; to attest and charge earnestly

I. TESTIFY OF THE REALITY OF THE SUFFERING (28)

A. We have a duty to warn the wicked

1. It is callous negligence to fail to warn others of coming judgment (Ezekiel 3:17-18)
2. We are to warn them to “flee from the wrath to come” (Matthew 3:7)
3. We are to “save with fear, pulling them out of the fire” (Jude 23)

4. We are to warn “every man” (Colossians 1:28)

B. Most will not listen but we must warn still

1. Blinded by Satan, most people reject the warnings of the gospel
2. Yet the Christian’s commission is to preach the gospel, and leave the results to God (Ezekiel 2:3-5; 3:7)
3. The damned souls in hell want us to warn the living that place
 - a. We ought not think that the rich man’s desire for the salvation of his family was motivated by love for them
 - i. Their presence with him in hell would increase his torment, perhaps as his conduct had contributed to their damnation
 - ii. Reasoning that people would repent if one went back from the dead, he may have been attempting to claim his damnation was unfair or unjustified
 - b. Nevertheless, his wish was that the living would be warned of hell and delivered from it

II. TESTIFY REVELATION OF SCRIPTURE (29,31)

A. All that is needed for man’s conversion is available in the word of God

1. The rich man was under the delusion that sinners would listen to one who returned from the dead
 2. Yet they have a more sure word of prophecy that they reject (2 Peter 1:19)
 3. It is the word of God that converts the soul (Psalms 19:7)
 4. Faith comes by the word of God (Romans 10:17)
 5. We are born again by the word of God (1 Peter 1:23)
- B. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8)
- C. We must be proficient in the word of God
1. Be ready always to give an answer (1 Peter 3:15)
 2. There are so many false views out there regarding death and the afterlife, we must be able to correct them

III. TESTIFY REPENTANCE FROM SIN (30)

- A. It was preached throughout the Bible and history
- B. Repentance is necessary for salvation
1. The conditions for salvation are “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21)
 2. Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of life

3. Omitting repentance is an incomplete gospel

IV. TESTIFY WITH RELENTLESS STRIVING (30)

A. We need a burden for souls (1 Corinthians 9:22)

B. We need a heart like God's (Luke 15:4)

C. We need a sight and view of harvest of souls around us (John 4:35)

1. Remember that all of us will spend eternity somewhere

2. "If sinners be dammed, at least let them leap to Hell over our bodies. If they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let no one go there unwarned and unprayed for." – Charles Spurgeon

3. "A foolish physician he is, and a most unfaithful friend, that will let a sick man die for fear of troubling him; and cruel wretches are we to our friends, that will rather suffer them to go quietly to hell, than we will anger them, or hazard our reputation with them." – Richard Baxter

D. Trust God to give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:7)

CONCLUSION

1. Have you come to the place where you have acknowledged yourself to be a guilty sinner before God, deserving nothing but the torments of hell forever?

2. Have you fled to Christ in repentance and faith for salvation and life?

3. If so, what are you doing to warn others of the hell they are about to be cast into?
4. The Christian should need nothing more than the love of Christ to constrain him to fervently witness to the lost (2 Corinthians 5:14)
5. But the reality of hell should serve as a further motivation for every Christian to do everything in their power to warn their lost family, friends and all people of the torments that await them unless they repent.
6. “If I had my choice, I wouldn’t send you to school, I’d send you to Hell for five minutes, and you’d come back real soul winners.” (William Booth)
7. Are you not thankful that someone cared enough for your soul to warn you of the fires of hell and show you the means of escape through Christ?
8. Do you care enough for others to warn them of the eternal misery they will suffer without Christ?
9. When was the last time you used the word “hell” in a conversation with an unbeliever?
10. “This is not a pointless thing – the eternal lives of this tribe are at hand and I can't wait to see them around the throne of god worshipping in their own language as Revelation 7:9-10 states. I love you all and I pray none of you love anything in this world more than Jesus Christ.” – John Chau