

A Tour of Hell
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When I was a little boy I visited a museum in Chicago and in that museum was an exhibit which fascinated me. It was called “The Coal Mine” and it was like an amusement park ride. You got to an elevator and it gave you the sensation of going deep into the ground to a coal mine. The elevator became darker and colder and the walls of the elevator were a conveyor belt which looked like rock walls and the walls of the elevator moved and you believed you were deep into the bowels of the earth. All your sensations told you that you were going deep into a coal mine beneath the ground.

Well today I’m going to be your tour guide and escort you into the nether regions underground. For I’m going to take you on a tour of hell. We don’t hear much about hell these days and many do not believe in a literal hell. But Jesus did and that’s good enough for me. Amen?

I bring this message for two reasons. Number one ,to bring glory to the Father. Number two, to warn those outside of Christ to flee from an eternal punishment called hell and seek to refuge in your only hope Jesus Christ.

Our text today is from Luke, chapter 16 and verse 23. I will read it to you, “And in hell he lift up his eyes being in torments.” You see friends, hell is a place of torments, a place of everlasting burnings where the worm dieth not. I must issue a disclaimer here before we proceed on this tour of hell. This message is not for the faint of heart but it is for the stony heart. For people must be warned of hell.

What happens to a person when they die? Is it just a blank void of nothingness? Is there some kind of life after death? Some people believe in reincarnation where a person gets several chances in life to get it right. But my Bible says we only have one life to live and after that we face the judge of all the earth.

This is what it says in Hebrews, “And it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment.” When a believer dies, he or she goes to heaven to be with Jesus. My Bible tells me so, “To be absent in the body is to be present with the Lord.” When an unbeliever dies, they awake in a terrible place called hell.

There is a book I read about hell, it was written by a cardiologist at the UT School of Medicine in Tennessee. His name is Dr. Maurice Rawlings. He was an avowed atheist

until he witnessed some near-death experiences of his patients, patients who had been clinically dead on the operating table. They had come back to life and what these patients experienced during that time of death startled Dr. Rawlings. Some of his patients went to hell and back hence the title of his book, "To Hell And Back."

But what he witnessed in these patients disturbed him because their faces would be twisted in a grimace of terror. At times they would shriek in horror and cry out in agony and their eyes would dilate as they described horrific scenes of tortured souls and a burning hell.

This so shocked Dr. Rawlings that he began to wonder if there really was a heaven and hell after all. So he began to study the Bible and what it said about hell and the afterlife and through his study he got saved and became a Christian and he wrote several books on this topic of hell and its torments.

We don't hear much preaching today on the subject of hell. You know, old time preachers used to preach on hell often as a means to awaken the lost to see their real condition and perilous position outside of Christ. But we preach nice little messages today that don't disturb anybody. Well, Jesus preached about hell and warns us not to go there. See there's an invisible world all around us.

There's a story about Charles Spurgeon, the famous British preacher. Spurgeon was in a hotel room in France where he lay dying. His close friend then, aide Joseph Harrold, related the following story. He said that as he gazed out the window toward the hills beyond under a cloudless sky, he was astonished at what he saw. To his dying day Joseph Harrold claimed he saw out on the hillside that day a company of angels hovering above the hills looking as though they were waiting for someone. They did not have long to wait, Spurgeon died shortly thereafter.

I believe that. I believe that when we die as believers angels take us up to heaven. Does not Jesus himself say so? In our passage of scripture today from Luke's gospel, the Lord Jesus is describing the beggar Lazarus who dies and Jesus said, "And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." I believe that. I also believe that when an unsaved person dies demons drag that person down to hell.

Come with me now as we descend into the nether regions and see what the Bible has to say about the existence of a literal hell. What the Bible says is these things, it says that hell is a place of punishment for sin, hell is inhabited by demons, hell is an abode for the wicked dead and hell is a place of eternal suffering.

Let's look at the first of these: hell is a place of punishment for sin. The fact that God punishes sin is found throughout our Bibles. My Bible states that God is angry with the wicked every day. Look at the biblical record. In Genesis we find the following evidence that God punishes sin, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it

repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth.”

In the biblical record found again in Genesis we see that God will punish sin. God told Abraham that he would destroy the wicked inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Bible record says, “Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous.” And the word of God proves that a holy God will punish sin, the text reads, “Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven and he overthrew those cities and all the inhabitants of the cities and that which grew upon the ground.” See the trouble with our society today is that people sleep well at night because they don’t believe God will punish sin. Even many church members today don’t believe in a God that will punish sin. They did not believe in that kind of God, their god wouldn’t act that way and send people to hell. But listen friends, the God of the Bible will because the God of the Bible punishes sin.

But some church members don’t let their profession of faith interfere with their daily living because they just don’t believe God will punish sin. Even when you witness to people today and you talk about Jesus dying on the cross, they’re not interested because they don’t believe God will punish sin. And no one will be interested in what Christ did on the cross until they believe that God will punish sin.

We have forgotten what the message of the gospel is, in your day and mine, in our generation we are fed a diluted gospel message of the cross that speaks only about an offered Christ but there is no use to offer a remedy to people who don’t need a remedy. There is no use to preach the second message of the cross, the forgiveness of sins through Christ’s blood. Listen friend, this generation doesn’t need its sins forgiven, they just don’t think there’s any need. But we still go on and only offer the second message of the cross, Christ and his forgiveness of sins.

But this generation of hell bound sinners needs to hear the *first* message of that bloody cross and that message is, God will punish sin. Listen to me friends, every time they nail those nails into the flesh of the Son of God, every stroke of the hammer said, God will punish sin, God will punish sin, God will punish sin.

But in our day of weak evangelism we beg people to come to Jesus but they don’t feel like they need him. A man won’t go to the doctor unless he discovers he’s deathly ill. When a man is sick to the point of death and the doctor has a remedy that will cure him that man will give that doctor every cent he has to get well and live. But he doesn’t need a cure if he doesn’t think he’s sick.

Listen to me dear ones, if you do not hear anything else I say today, remember this, God *will* punish sin. That’s the first message of the cross and after somebody believes that you can come in with the second message of the cross, that substitute who hangs there in my stead. Christ is God’s sacrifice and my substitute.

So the first thing you need to accept on this tour of hell is the fact that hell is a place of punishment for sin. People go to hell because God sends them there to punish them for sin. People do not send themselves to hell, that's a ridiculous statement. Listen, Jesus hung on a bloody cross for sinful man. God was reconciling the world through the death of his son. Jesus said that, "Men are cast into hell, wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee. It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire."

Hell itself exists because of sin. Hell is a place of punishment for sin. Sin is not sent to hell but sinners are sent to hell to be punished for their sins and rebellion against a holy God who hates sin so much he cannot look upon it. That's why God looked away from his precious son on the cross and Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Jesus took our sins upon himself and took the wrath of God upon him. "For those who believe in him shall not see death but have everlasting life." Listen, "He that believeth not the son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him." The wrath of God. God will pour out his wrath on those Christless individuals in hell for all eternity.

Well let's continue our tour of hell and notice this that hell is inhabited by demons. When I was a teenager my family moved into a haunted house. There was an evil presence in that house. Right after we moved in, my parents and I were sitting in the living room and upstairs above us we heard very strong footsteps walking down the hall. We looked at each other alarmed. My father tried to laugh it off but it happened again and again. We came to accept the fact that our house was haunted.

One night as we were sitting downstairs in the living room, we heard those heavy footsteps walking up and down the hall upstairs and I ran upstairs to see if there was an intruder up there, but there was no one there, at least no one I could see with my eyes. It was an eerie feeling.

But even worse than that occasionally in that house, something horrible, something frightening would occur suddenly and without warning. There was a door beneath the stairwell which without warning a loud pounding would begin on that closed door so loud it would startle you and stop you in your tracks. After that loud pounding one day I slowly crept over to that door and opened it and I felt cold air come out on me even though it was a warm summer day. Demons inhabited that house. There was an unseen evil presence there. I sure was glad when we finally moved away.

Hell is inhabited by demons. In hell you will be surrounded by demon entities and you will not be able to get away from them but they will brush up against you, tear you and attack you and there will be no one to help you. Not only will you not be able to move away from them, rather you will be at their mercy.

That hell is inhabited by demons is seen from the words of Christ, “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Several of the patients of Dr. Rawlings, the cardiologist, spoke of seeing demons in their near-death experiences. They described them as dark shrouded entities, slimy and disfigured, grotesque in appearance and smell. These demon entities were the first ones you saw in hell. In Dr. Rawlings book “Beyond Death’s Door” he writes about it in a chapter called “Descending to Hell” about the description of what his patients saw there. He described the experience of a patient dying with a heart attack and she came back to life. She attended church every Sunday and considered herself an average Christian. These are her words, “I remember getting short of breath and then I must’ve blacked out. Then I saw that I was getting out of my body. The next thing I remember was entering this gloomy room where I saw in one of the windows this huge giant with a grotesque face that was watching me. Running around the windowsill were little imps or elves that seemed to be with this giant. The giant beckoned me to come with him. I didn’t want to go but I had to. Outside was darkness but I could hear people moaning all around me, I could feel things moving about my feet. As we moved on through this tunnel or cave things were getting worse. I remember I was crying. Then for some reason the giant turned me loose and sent me back. I felt I was being spared.”

Listen friends, so not only is hell inhabited by demons, as we go deeper into this tour of hell we see it is also an abode for the wicked dead. Psalm 9, verse 17 tells us, “The wicked shall be turned into hell and all nations which forget God.” Hell is crowded right now with wicked individuals. Since the beginning of civilization think of all the mankind that have died. The wicked in each generation have been cast into hell. All the idolaters and adulterers, drunkards and atheists, thieves and murderers. The most vile of humankind are in hell right now. Hitler is there, serial killers are there, rapists are there, perverts are there. All of the wicked who are on the earth in the days of Noah are there. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah are there. The evil Roman emperors are there. Hell is crawling with the refuse of mankind. God haters and every sociopath from every generation of man is there. People that you would be afraid to be left in a room alone with will rub up against you in hell. Their sweat will get on you and there won’t be a thing you can do about it. Hell is a very crowded place.

Listen friends, it’s been estimated that 83 people a minute die apart from Christ. Do the math and that comes to almost 5,000 an hour. Every day 120,000 people fall into hell. That’s over 800,000 a week. Every month that adds up to 3.3 million people falling into the terrors of hell. Through the course of a year, 40 million new people populate the regions of hell. Let ten years go by and another 400 million souls are shut in there to scream and in agony. Now, think back in your mind of how of all the generations since the time of Adam and add all the hordes of people who have died apart from Christ and occupy hell right this moment. I repeat, hell is a very crowded place.

Jesus spoke of the narrow way and the broad way. Jesus said, “Enter ye in at the straight gate for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there

be which go in thereat because straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it." Jesus calls it a straight gate because of the difficulty of the passage. If you are truly regenerated, if you make the attempt to go through the straight passage or if they attempt they are quickly discouraged and get off on that easier broader road which leads to hell.

That's where the world is friends. There's a vast crowd on that road today. This is the road of sin, unrighteousness and disobedience. The majority travel this wider road and the have in every generation. Few are they who travel along the narrow way of true salvation which is self-denial, mortification and gospel obedience. Few passengers take this course, they love their sin and stay on the broad way and are led like animals into a snare and a net. Sudden death takes them away and without warning. Just turn on the tv and see how sudden death takes people away in America today through tragedy, through sudden accidents.

Listen what the Bible says in Ecclesiastes, chapter 9, verse 12, "For man also knoweth not his time. As the fishes that are taken in an evil net and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time when it falls suddenly upon them."

You have no guarantee of tomorrow. Your plans for the future may not be realized. You may be like the rich man of whom Jesus spoke, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully and he thought within himself saying, what shall I do because I have no room, where do I bestow my fruits? And he said, this will I do, I will pull down my barns and build greater and there I will bestow all my fruits and all my goods and I will say to my soul, soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

Sudden death happens every day in this country. A car crash, a murder, an accident, a heart attack. Listen, God can remove you in an instant without notice and you can suddenly enter eternity. If you are truly born again, if you die you will be carried by angels into his presence but if you are unsaved you will die in your sins and be thrown into hell. You have no guarantee of tomorrow. You are in grave danger if you have been living in known sin and living in rebellion to the God who made you. You are like the person spoken of in Ecclesiastes, "He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it and whoso breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him."

The Bible declares that God is a righteous judge who acts justly and by no means clearing the guilty. The great danger of suddenly dying and dropping into hell should awaken everybody out of their spiritual slumbers for it is far better to repent immediately and beg for God's mercy now than die apart from Christ and awaken to torments of the prison of hell.

Listen to our next stop on this tour of hell and that is hell is a place of eternal suffering. Physical suffering in this world eventually ends if we are Christians and we are suffering

a terrible slow death, when we die there's an end to that suffering. Often we hear of a loved one who has passed away and we hear, "Well, at least they're no longer suffering. They are now with the Lord." But for the unsaved this is not so. Their suffering continues into the next world, a world of eternal misery and physical torments to which there is no relief, no end.

The following images may give you a glimpse into hell. Think of your worst fear, think of your absolute worst fear. Some people are afraid of the dark, well hell is called outer darkness, there's no light there, only deep darkness. You will not be able to see your hand in front of your face but you will be able to hear the cries of the damned all around you, you will be able to smell their putrefying burning flesh, you will be able to feel pain, experience a thirst that is never quenched.

Listen, hell is a lonely place. You will have no friend there to talk to, you'll not be able to get out your cell phone and send texts to one another. There's no cell phone signals in hell. You are cut off from your companions. You will long for someone to be kind to you, someone to talk to you. There'll be loneliness all around you. Hell is a place of immense agony and separation.

Jesus describes hell as a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Listen, we can speak to great loss and grief and gnashing of teeth signifies great anger and regret. In hell you will regret the day that you spurned the love of Christ, that you turned away from the invitations of the gospel, that you did not lay hold of Christ in a saving way while you had a chance. You will hate the evangelist or the preacher who fed you a false gospel and told you you were saved when you were still lost. His name will be a curse word to you for all eternity. You will hate yourself for not seeking Christ while he was to be found. You will hate your sins because while on earth you took pleasure in them but in hell there is no pleasure in sin only torment.

Listen friends, if you die in your sins you *will* wake up in hell. Imagine your shock, your confusion, your tongue is so dry it feels like it'll fall right out of your mouth, your heart is breaking because of your foolishness and sin. But you were overtaken in hell by demons and that tear at you and rend you and come again upon you and they do not stop. Your cries are drowned by the awful shrieks around you. Look if you went to every hospital in your city tonight and took every patient off of their pain medication and did not give them anything for pain, not even an aspirin, their cries of agony would keep your town awake tonight.

Another terrible thing about hell is the physical pain. To be burned to death is the worst way to die. It is said to be the most painful. That is why when you see a building on fire people often leap to their deaths rather than stay inside and be burned in the flames. During the tragedy of 9/11 when the Twin Towers were on fire, many leaped to their deaths from a hundred stories down rather than be burned up in the flames.

But hell is everlasting burnings. The Bible declares from the book of Isaiah, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting

burnings?” Hell is said to be a lake of fire. Revelation speaks to this, “And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Jesus tells us that hell is prepared for the devil and his angels, “Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

The torments in hell are forever, friends. Listen, “And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever.” Listen friends, hell is continual, it is an unquenchable fire. Matthew tells us, “He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Jesus tells us hell is a place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

Once you are in hell there is no appeasing God’s wrath upon you and that terrible furnace of fire which our Lord spoke of in Matthew, “And shall cast them into a furnace of fire.” There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Listen, that furnace is terrible.

I used to work in a grocery store when I was a teenager. One of my jobs was to take the boxes that the produce came in and bring it to the back of the store and throw them into a cast iron furnace. When I would open the door to that furnace the flame in there was so hot it was a white flame. And the heat was so intense it would singe my face just to be near it.

Malachi tells us that, “God’s anger shall burn as an oven and all the proud and all that do wickedly shall be stubble and the day that cometh should burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts.” Hell is prepared for you if you are outside of Christ.

Listen friends, in the state of Florida there is a phenomenon called sinkholes. The ground is sand and it gives way and it caves in, entire houses have sunken without warning into these deep sinkholes. If you are outside of Christ, you are sitting on a sinkhole for beneath you is hell and its torments and only the grace of God can keep you out of hell at this moment. God could end your life this minute if he chose to and open the ground beneath you and drag you down to hell.

We are warned by God of the danger that lay in our surrender to the claims of Christ and to the gospel, “He that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.” If you have ignored the invitations of the gospel and have rejected the Christ of the gospel, you are on slippery ground.

Listen to what God says, “To me belongeth vengeance and recompense. Their foot shall slide in due time for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them, make haste.” Listen again to what God says in his word, “Surely, thou didst set them in slippery places. Thou castest them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment they are utterly consumed with terrors.”

Listen friends, to die suddenly and wake up in hell is to be utterly consumed with terrors. Death is even called the King of Terror. I beg you, examine yourself right now. The Apostle Paul warns us in 2 Corinthians, chapter 13 and verse 5 he says, “Examine

yourselves whether ye be in the faith. Prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates?"

I ask you now if Jesus Christ is in you, are you truly born again? Are you washed in the blood and borne of the spirit? Do you know that your sins are forgiven? Have you been under conviction to sin? Have you ever experienced contrition with sound humiliation of the soul where sin is seen to you to be very odious and yourself vile in your own eyes because of your sin? Are you seeking Christ and his righteousness? Is your heart prepared to seek him? Can you renounce your own righteousness and cast yourself upon Christ alone and his righteousness? Coming to him in complete and utter surrender where you lay down your arms of rebellion, putting your neck under his yoke and following a crucified Savior? He must be the risen Lord of your life, you cannot have Jesus apart from his Lordship. The Bible does not say believe on Jesus and be saved it says rather believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. You are a rebel. You must throw down your shotgun of rebellion and come to Christ in total surrender, in repentance and faith. I earnestly implore you on behalf of Christ to reconcile yourself to God if you are apart from him. Listen to Paul's words in 2 Corinthians, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you and Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God."

Listen friends, I speak to you seriously today because of the words of God in Ezekiel, chapter 3, verse 18 and 19, listen to these solemn words, "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."

Listen, I do not want your blood on my hands, therefore, I have faithfully declared to you the full counsel of God. Repent from your sins, turn to Christ, ask him for the faith that brings you to Christ. I have given you this tour of hell today through the scriptures with the express hope and prayer that you do not tour it in person yourself. Listen friends, hell is a one stop prison. Once you get in there you cannot get out. There is no doorway out, there is no exit sign outside of hell. It is a bottomless pit which you cannot climb out of. Do not go there friend. Seek Christ and seek him now.

Listen to the pleas of the gospel, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Jesus stood and cried saying, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me as the scripture has said out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. And the spirit and the bride say, come and let him that heareth say, come and let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

My friends, listen, the gospel is for the hungry, the weary and the thirsty. Are you hungry for salvation? Are you weary of your sins? Are you thirsty for Christ? Then come. There is a promise to those who come to Christ in a sincere way and with a sincere heart, they will not be turned away, "For all that the Father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

This tour of hell is now over and I pray that you will never, ever have to go there in person. Listen friend, repent and seek Christ now. He is your only hope.