

A Cry From Torment

by Charles Stanley

The sermon explores the reality of torment in hell, emphasizing the urgency of accepting Christ to avoid eternal separation from God.

Duration: 44:23

Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 16:14-15, Luke 16:19-31

Topics: "Hell"

Description

In this sermon, Jesus is addressing the Pharisees who were lovers of money and were scoffing at Him. He tells a story, possibly a parable, about a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. The story emphasizes the eternal separation and the absence of second chances after death. Jesus warns his listeners about the importance of not ignoring those in need and the urgency of sharing the truth of salvation with others before it's too late. The sermon serves as a solemn warning to everyone to prioritize their relationship with Christ and to be mindful of the eternal consequences of their actions.

Transcript

What are the people in torment doing today? If you knew that you were in torment forever and ever and ever, and there would be no escape, no release, and no relief, and no freedom, what is the one thing that you would ask of God if you could make a request of Him? If you were in torment and you could make one request of God, knowing that you'd never get out, what is that one request? Well, that's what I want to talk about today, and I want you to turn, if you will, to Luke chapter 16, and let's read beginning in verse 19 of this chapter through the rest, and it's a passage of Scripture that you are familiar with, and yet I want you to look at it maybe from a little different perspective today. Let me give you a little background. Jesus has been talking about money and materialism, and the Pharisees have been listening, and they're upset.

The 14th verse of the 16th chapter reads like this. Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things, and they were scoffing at Him, and He said to them, you are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts, but that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God. Then He talks about the kingdom and so forth, and then beginning in verse 19, sort of in response to their attitude, He tells this story.

Some people said it's a parable, some not. If it is a parable, it's the only parable Jesus ever told in which He identified anybody by name or named some character in the parable. So whether it is or not, the truth is still here, and listen beginning in verse 19.

He says, now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day. And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with thorns, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table, because, so he says, besides even the dogs were coming and licking his thorns. Now it came about that the poor man died, and he was carried away by the angels, to Abraham's bosom.

And the rich man also died, and was buried, and in Hades, or in torment, he licked up his eyes being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and 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. But Abraham said, Child, remember that during your life you receive your good things, and likewise Lazarus' bad things.

But now he's being comforted, and here, and you're in agony. And beside all this between us and you, there is a great gulf, or great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us. And he said, that is, the rich man said, Then I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.

But Abraham said, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. But he said, No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent. But he said to him, If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if someone rises from the dead.

Now you know, nobody likes to hear about hell, and Hades, and torment, and judgment. If I were lost, neither would I. You wouldn't catch me in the church listening about hell, and Hades, and torment, and judgment, and the great white throne. I wouldn't want to be caught there, unless I was wise enough to know in my heart, that one of these days, unless I receive Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, I'm going to have to deal with all of those.

And so I want you to listen today, as an unbeliever, and ask yourself the question, If this is true, what should be my response to this message? And to you who are believers, you should ask yourself the question, If this is true, what should also be my response? Now Jesus has taken two men, and with the background of their lifestyle, he has couched for us a description, the most thorough description of what torment, of what hell is going to be like, remembering that the final hell is not where people are today, but in torment, that every person who dies without Christ, goes to the same torment today, that people did in the days in which Jesus Christ lived and spoke. And so, what we have here, is Jesus' very thorough description of what it's going to be like. Now what he does, is he couches this in the death of two men.

He said there were two men, one of them was a rich man, who fared sumptuously every day. The Bible says he dressed daily, that is, this was his daily lifestyle, and he says he dressed in purple and fine linen. Now the linen was the undergarment, the purple, the outer garment, both of these very expensive items, and therefore this was the dress of very wealthy people.

It says that gaily, listen, that gaily was his lifestyle, and that if you'll notice, it says here, that he lived in splendor, that is, every day, gaily living in splendor every day. Very selfish, a life of luxury, of indifference to the concern of others. The only thing that mattered to him was pleasure, his own personal pleasure, indifferent to the things of God, not concerned about spiritual things.

That is, the only reason he lived was to have one more pleasure and to enjoy life one more day. And as a result of that, of course, he had no time for God. Now the only difference in this man and multitudes of people who live today is this, many people who live today have the same attitude about life, they're not interested in spiritual things about God.

The only difference in him and many of them is he had the money, he had the wealth to express his indulgence, he had the finances to be able to do the things that he wanted to do that were expensive, buying expensive clothes and riding an expensive chariot and being able to eat the finest food. Now many people do the same thing today, if they had the money to do it, and then of course there are those who do have the wealth to do it, and that's the way they live, totally indifferent to God and indifferent to the needs of other people. Outside of the gate of his very palatial home was a man that Jesus called the poor man.

The Bible says about him that he was in poverty, that he was hungry, that he was a man who was so sick his whole body was full of sores, he was a piece of the landscape. And so when the rich man rolled out of his gate, he just totally ignored him. But here was a man who was fed, the Bible says, that he waited, longed for the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.

Now let me explain what these crumbs were. These were not crumbs that were sort of leftover, little crumbs leftover from the table where you'd broken a piece of bread or something, fell off the plate. But remember now that these people did not eat with a knife and a fork.

They ate with their hands. And what they did when they finished eating, they took the bread and cleansed their hands with the bread and wiped their hands clean and then threw the bread out. What Lazarus was waiting for was the bread with which they had cleansed their hands and thrown out as garbage.

What a terrible lifestyle, what a tremendous contrast between these two men. Now Jesus said about these two men, they had a different lifestyle, one of them poverty and sickness. In fact, the destitution of this poor man Lazarus, Jesus described when he said his body was full of sores and he was so helpless that he was laid there at his gate.

Somebody else brought him and laid him at the gate every day. And he was so helpless that the scavenger dogs that made their way up and down the streets came and licked his running sores. What a horrible thought.

And then Jesus said both of these men died. The Bible says that the poor man died and the angels came and guided his spirit into Abraham's bosom or paradise, which is the same place that every person who dies with Christ today goes, that is absent from the body, present with the Lord. This poor man died and the Bible says the angels came and took him there.

Now the Bible has a lot to say about angels. Angels are God's ministering servants. And we read in the Old Testament as well as the New, that one of their responsibilities is the protection of the children of God.

The Bible says in the 18th chapter of Matthew about the angels who protect their children. The Bible says that it was the angel who opened the gates of the prison and let the apostles out in Acts chapter 5. And so they have their responsibility. The angels are coming with the Lord Jesus Christ.

When he returns, they have their responsibility. One of which is to guide the spirit of a person who passes away in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. So when one of our loved ones, or if you and I were to pass away today, you say, well, what would happen? Absent from the body, present with the Lord.

The angels of God take our spirit and take us into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, that is exactly what happened to this poor man. Then the Bible says, and the rich man died and was buried and in torment, Hades, which is another word for hell or for torment.

And in Hades or in torment, being in torment, this man begins to cry out for mercy. Now the Bible doesn't even say that the poor man was buried. And it may have been that since he was in such a terrible physical condition, they may have thrown his body on the rubbish heap.

Or he may have had some very quiet, uh, burial somewhere more than likely the wealthy man had a very extensive burial, lots of people mourning and a beautiful attire and everything else. Both men lived a different kind of lifestyle. Both of them died and both of them went to spend eternity somewhere.

Now it is in the description of the death of this rich man, where Jesus gives us the most thorough description of what torment is going to be like. In fact, what it is like right now, now I'm going to say some things that may be a little stinging and a little hurtful for some of you, but remember, I'm just telling you what God says and you want the truth. You don't want me to sort of pacify it down, cool it down, water it down, air condition it and make it better than it is because the simple reason I can't, I will only be lying.

And I'm not going to do that. I'm going to tell you the truth, exactly like God said it. He says, this is what torment is like.

That is every person who dies without Christ is going to torment. Now you have some friends who lost, but let's get a little closer to home. You have some friends who've already died.

You have some relatives who've already passed away. You work with some people that you picked up the newspaper one morning and you read about this automobile crash and you think, my goodness, I work with him. I've been working with her.

Death comes suddenly sometimes and sometimes after a long, prolonged period of illness. In describing the lifestyle of these two men and their death, Jesus gives us this description of torment and listen to it. It hadn't changed.

All the liberal theology in the world cannot air condition torment. All of the rationalization of the philosophers, all of the unbelief of those who refuse to believe God, none of their unbelief, none of their rationalization, none of their doubts, none of that can take away one single descriptive word of how Jesus described torment because Jesus not only describes it here, but Jesus, God, the father, God, the son, God, the Holy spirit are the ones who created it. So therefore, when Jesus says, this is what it's like, this is what it's like.

So listen, first of all, it's a real place. It isn't some figment of the imagination. This isn't some theological jargon.

This isn't some, the result of some philosophical idea about justice on earth and justice in the future. And therefore, if men are not had not treated justly here, one of these days, uh, they'll have their justice, justice. And if they're evil and wicked here, one of these days, they're going to pay for it.

This isn't the idea of man. This is the witness and the testimony of the revealed word of the living God, which cannot be denied. It is a real place.

And this is what Jesus is saying here. When he says that in torment, he lifted up his eyes being in torment and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. It is also a place of consciousness.

You see, torment is not some place of unconscious existence, but it is a place of conscious existence. Being in torment, being in this flame, suffering in this agony, that is a description of the place of torment where people go today. Then he describes it as a place of suffering and pain.

He says, being in this agony, in pain, in suffering, do you know what part of the agony and the pain and the suffering is of those who are in torment today? And those who will go one of these days because they rejected Christ. One of the aspects of their torment, one of the aspects of their suffering is to have to live eternally separated from God, remembering how many times somebody said to you, you need to receive Christ as your savior. How many times you listen to the gospel? How many times somebody witnessed to you? How many times you looked at a Bible and said, should I read it? How many opportunities you had to receive Jesus Christ? One of the agonizing torments of separation from God and spending eternal eternity in hell is remembering, remembering opportunities, remembering the pleas, remembering the invitations, remembering the sermons and remembering the times you said, no, no, no, I don't need God.

I don't want God. And in your foolish blindness, you rejected your opportunity. What a horrible thought that for all eternity future with no hope of escape whatsoever, you have to live with the awesome pain and agony.

Oh, if I had only listened, if I'd only changed, why didn't I listen? Why didn't I open my eyes? Why didn't I hear? Why did I mock? Why did I scoff at these men who preach the gospel of Christ? But it'll be too late. A conscious existence, as he describes here, being in torment of pain. Then he talks about, then he talks about the flame in this flame.

Cool my tongue. I'm in agony in this flame. Many times in the new Testament, the Bible speaks of darkness and a flame cast into outer darkness, where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth and the flames and the fire of eternal separation from God.

Somebody says, well, now wait a minute. That's one of the reasons I don't believe in hell because there can be no such thing as flames and darkness. Are you telling God that he can't create a place where there is both flame and darkness? In essence, what Jesus is saying here is the awesome separation from God will be darkness.

And in that awesome separation from him, there is the agonizing, painful suffering. Whether you want to believe it is literal flames or not, I'll leave that up to you. But remember this, anytime Jesus used any term symbolical, that meant that the reality of what he was saying was far more intense than any human word could describe.

So flames and darkness can never begin to describe the intensity of the pain and the suffering of those who have already passed away and who are in torment right now and the very place that those who die without Christ are going to. It is a place, he says, of agony, a place of suffering, a place of flames. Notice what he said, please send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue.

Do you know how intense this is? Why didn't he say send Lazarus with a 50-gallon drum of water in order that I may have a moment of relief? Or what about a gallon pail? What Jesus is describing here in torment is this, that the intensity of the pain is such that one drop of water would have been released. One drop of

water would have meant something of comfort, one single drop on the tip of his tongue. And my friend, whether you believe it or not, it's interesting to me that Jesus told this story and went into such detail as a warning, listen, as a warning to those who reject him, a warning to those who committed to pleasure and have no part of God in their life.

Then if you'll notice, he said he saw Abraham afar off. What is he telling us here? That is that paradise and torment are greatly separated. He says, in fact, there is a great gulf fixed, a great chasm fixed, so that there is no relationship between paradise and torment.

That is, they are distanced, and a distance that you and I cannot describe because he did not describe it. He said, far away, because there is no comparison between the two places and there is nothing in them that has any compatibility whatsoever. Another thing he says about it is that there is no second chance.

Isn't it interesting? And would you not have thought that the rich man's one request would have been, oh God, get me out of this place. Have mercy upon me and get me out of here. Why do you suppose the rich man made no request for release from the prison of torment? Real simple, because every single person in torment knows there's no second chance.

The idea of a second chance after death always comes from those who do not believe. Nobody in torment today believes in a second chance. That comes from those who do not want to believe, who cannot bring themselves to believe that what Jesus Christ said about hell and about torment and about judgment and about justice is true.

It is reality. It isn't some simple story. It is reality.

And the words within this parable of a story here are trying to convey to us the intensity of the pain. And the fact that this is eternal separation, there's no such thing as a second chance. Listen, every single one of us who's ever been saved had one chance, two chance, three chance, four chance, five chances.

My friends, you've had many, many chances to give your life to Christ. And you have another one right now, which I trust. God, you will not refuse to receive Christ as your Savior and turn down one more time another chance to give your life to Christ.

Because when you get to torment, there are not going to be any more chances. If there were a place for a second chance, and if those in torment believe that they can have a second chance, this man would have been crying out, not for one single drop of water, but get me out of here now. Not one single inference of that whatsoever.

And then listen to this. Not only is there no second chance, but I want you to look at this verse, verse 26 and verse 27. And beside all this, he says, between us and you, there is a great gulf or great chasm fixed in order that those who wish to come home from here, to you may not be able and that none may cross over from there to us.

Once a person is in torment, they're always in torment until they reach the final place of eternal lake of fire. Those of us who pass on to go with the Lord Jesus Christ now are going to be in the presence of God. But our eternal home is being prepared.

And that we're going to enjoy after the judgment seat of Christ for the believers, the great white throne judgment for those who are lost. So there's no passing from one place to the other, no getting in for a

while and suffering and getting out once they're always there. But I want you to Mark this one down very clearly that lots of folks running around the country today with all kinds of cults or whether they're Hollywood stars or whoever they may be talking about talking to spirits and talking to those who've gone before and listening to the dead and all the rest.

Let's settle that once and for all right here, look at this verse 27. And he said, that is the rich man. I beg you father, that you send him Lazarus to my father's house.

Send somebody from the dead to talk to those who are alive. He said, I can't do it. The truth is nobody's ever been back from the dead to talk to those who are alive.

And those who talk about that today, that's strictly satanic, strictly from the devil. You know why they believe that? Because they also believe they're going to have a second chance and you see the world's theology and the world's idea of the future life naturally painted beautiful. And that somehow we are all going to get them this universalism that one of these days, somehow this great God of love and kindness and mercy is going to get us.

They don't believe all this judgment hell bit brother. Are you going to be eternally surprised? Because I want to tell you something, either Jesus Christ is the biggest liar who ever walked the face of this earth or you are in eternal trouble. One of the two.

It's interesting that I don't meet lost people who say that Jesus Christ was nothing but a liar. That Jesus Christ was nothing but a fake. He was a counterfeit.

There's nothing of it. You know, it's interesting. I don't ever hear lost folks saying that.

Oh, Jesus, good man. Great man. Listen, I want to tell you something.

What a contradiction. Either he's the world's biggest liar and fraud or you are lost and going to hell. One of the two, he can't be a good man.

He can't be just God's son. And then you eliminate all these things he said, because either he was telling the truth or he was not telling the truth. If he were telling the truth, then he's certainly God.

If he told all these lies, how in the world could God be accused of lying and be guilty of lying and still be God? My lost friend, you're not reasoning. You're not being logical. You're not being honest with yourself.

Either Jesus Christ is the son of God and you're in trouble or there is no God. And you know better than that. There's no talking with the dead.

Now the devil can conjure up all kinds of things. Listen, the devil has the power to do all kinds of things, but I'm here to tell you, there's nobody who's ever been back, who's ever been to the, who's ever died and gone to torment coming back, telling us how it is. Not only that, according to what Jesus is saying here.

Now this man is acknowledged. There's a God. Father Abraham.

Now the reason he uses that terminology, he's talking to a bunch of Pharisees. Father Abraham, every person in torment today believes in God. And one of their regrets is that all of their reasoning and logic was wrong.

And now in torment, being punished for their sin of rejecting Christ. Oh yes, they believe in God. Not the way you believe in him to receive Christ as you say it, but they believe there's a God.

Now we might go a step further and say that the biggest prayer meeting going on today is in, is in torment. I don't know whether you'd call this a prayer or not, so I'll leave that to you, but here is certainly a man crying out to God to do something. But I want to show you something, one of the most interesting things here, and that is that you know what people in torment are doing today? Besides suffering, here's what they're doing.

They are worried, deeply worried and tormented by the possibility that some of you may follow them there. So how do you know that? Listen to this. Verse 27.

Then I beg you father that you send him to my, that is send Lazarus to my father's house from the dead. For I have five brothers that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment. But Abraham said, or God would say, that have Moses and the prophets let them hear them.

But he said, no father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent. God says, no. If they don't listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.

Now I want you to listen very carefully. Jesus has very carefully described the condition, the environment, and what is taking place in torment at this very moment. Every person who's ever passed away without Christ refused to believe the witness of God in the Old Testament.

They are in torment, suffering for their unbelief. That's what gets you there. Drinking doesn't get you there.

Adultery doesn't get you there. Lying and sinning and cheating are all sins for which we have to pay. None of them get you to torment.

What gets a person to torment is to reject the person of Jesus Christ personally as your savior. That's what gets you there. Here's what I want you to see.

Jesus gives us a little glimpse of the activity. This man cries out. This man cries out, out of torment, and he cries out for three things.

He says, first of all, father Abraham have mercy upon me. Here's what I want you to see. God had been having mercy.

People to die, people today who die and go to torment and wanting God's mercy. Listen, the mercy of God is everywhere. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was an expression of mercy.

Every time a sermon is preached and you have the opportunity of hearing it, that is the mercy of God being extended to you. Every time someone with whom you work or some of your friends or your family try to witness to you, that's the mercy of God. Every time you hear a message, every time you hear a witness, every time you have the opportunity to read the Bible, every time you're convicted deep down inside that you need God, every single one of these is an expression of the mercy of God.

And if you die without Christ, it is because you have absolutely refused to listen to and to heed the mercy of God. He's crying out for mercy. He had mercy.

And the very idea that God is no longer a merciful God, God is indeed a God of mercy. Look what he's done. The truth is that God could not do anything that he's already done to express his loving forgiveness and kindness and mercy toward humanity.

What else could God do and still respect man's personhood and respect man's right to make choices in life? He could either make us all a robot and make us function a certain way or he could give us the awesome privilege of making a decision and making a choice in life. And God in his infinite wisdom says it is better to give men a choice even though many of them will make the wrong choice and make an eternal disastrous choice. He cried out for mercy.

The second thing he cried out for was a moment of comfort. He said just send Abraham, just send Lazarus and let him dip the tip of his thing in water for a moment of relief, but he wouldn't do that. This is not a time for comfort.

It is a time for justice and punishment. Isn't God cruel to do that? My friend, you don't understand human character. When a man dies without Christ, that character in opposition and rebellion toward God is fixed forever.

You say, but this man certainly had lots of compassion. He didn't want his family there and it went away just a minute. It was that his real motive? Because his third cry out of torment was simply this.

Send the messenger. First of all, mercy. Secondly, a moment of relief.

Thirdly, send the messenger from the dead that my five brothers would not come here. What was his motivation? Because he loved God? No, but because that man knew to see any one or all five of his brothers, his family in torment with him would only intensify the pain and the agony. I want to ask you a question, Dad.

You're not saved and you're on your way to torment and you don't like anybody to tell you about it, but I'm telling you because I care. Let's say that you die without Christ and you go to torment. You've got five children.

Do you think when you get to torment that you won't think about them in the more that you won't care anymore, that you won't be concerned anymore? Oh yes, you will. You know what this passage tells us? This passage is a solemn warning to every single one of us. And here's a man crying out for God to send somebody to his family unless they come there.

Do you have any friend who's passed away and you know they're lost? Do you suppose that person is crying out today in torment? Oh, somebody go to my friends. Somebody go to my family. Somebody tell them the truth lest they come to this place.

You had a father or mother pass away, son or daughter. I know you don't like to think about this and I know that it's very human to reason. Well, you know, I believe that somehow God's going to take care of them.

God isn't going to break his own law. And when a person dies without Christ, they go into torment and they're going to suffer forever. And one of the things in the mind of those in torment not only agony of past memories, but the agony and the torment of others whom they have known and who have had a relationship with them, following them to the same place.

Now listen to God's reply. He said, send Lazarus to my brothers lest they come to this place. He says, I'm not going to do that because they had Moses and the prophets.

Now what he was saying is this. They had the message. They had the message of the law of God through Moses and they had the prophets.

They had the messengers of God. If they won't hear them, they're not going to hear somebody. If they came from there, he said, oh yes.

If somebody rose from the dead, it would be a whole different story. I'm sure that if somebody rose from the dead, then they certainly would listen to them. You remember the 11th chapter of John, when Lazarus, the other Lazarus married Martha's brother, passed away.

You remember what happens later on that chapter when the Pharisees understand that Jesus has raised this man from the dead. They plot to kill the Christ who raised this man from the dead. Everybody didn't come flocking to Jesus to be saved and to follow him.

They decided to kill Jesus. When Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, did everybody go rushing up to the apostles to say, tell us how to be saved. Tell us how to be saved.

Jesus rose man. Tell us how to be saved. They mocked and they jeered and the Pharisees and the Romans got together and they paid off the guards to say, look, if somebody tells you, somebody asks you about it, we're paying you.

Don't you tell them this man just disappeared. You don't have an explanation. Do you realize that if God raised from the dead, some people that you and I know that that would not put this whole society of ours in turmoil, rushing to the churches, kneeling at the altar, crying out to be saved because they'd seen someone from the dead.

You know what we'd do? We would come up with some rationalization, some explanation for it. We always have an explanation. Now my friend, listen to me very carefully.

If you don't listen to anything else, I want you to hear this. You know what Jesus was saying, what God was saying to this rich man, they have the law of Moses and the prophets of God. And if they're not willing to hear them, they're going to follow you to torment.

Let's put that in modern day language, whether you like it or not, here's all you've got left. The law of God, that is the message of God and the messengers of God, not going to be the big miracles. Nobody's coming back from the dead to change your mind.

All you have is the message of God and the messengers of God. I'm not limiting that to preachers. I'm talking about every person who comes across your path with a witness of what God's done in their heart, the message of the gospel of Christ in their life.

God's redeeming, forgiving love in their life. That's all you've got. And if you reject the message and the messenger, you are going to torment.

There is no third place absent from the body, present with the Lord, for those are in Christ, for those are out of Christ, absent from the body, present in torment. Your only hope is the message and the messenger. That's all you've got.

That's all there is. If you're waiting for God to write it in the sky, you're going to wait till a kingdom comes. It's not going to happen.

And so when men reject the message of the cross and when people reject the messengers of God, whether it's a woman knocking on your door and saying, listen, I want to tell you what Jesus Christ means to me, or sitting across the desk where you work or in your home, let me tell you what Christ has done in my life to reject the message and the messenger is to reject every single bit of hope you have. That's all you've got. God is going to work some great miracle in the sky and he's not going to resurrect anybody from the dead to persuade you in order to be saved.

Because listen, who do you think you are? That God is going to violate his own law? That God's going to change his whole plan in order to get you saved? You have the offer of mercy. You have the message of the gospel of Christ. You have the messages of God all over this nation, all around this world, speaking the truth, preaching the gospel, sharing the love of God.

My friends, you have no excuse. Now listen, you can sit here week after week and listen to sermons and you can enjoy them and you can join the Lord and learn more information about the truth and apply it to your life and things get better. But I want to ask you a question.

You know, the rich man drove out of his palatial home every day through his gates and ignored totally Lazarus, except he looked like a piece of landscape and he was an eyesore. Do you know how you and I copied the same kind of conduct? You work around people, you live with people, you know people, you have friendships. You talk about everything else in the world, but Christ, it's as if the better part of that person, you ignore them.

Because you don't want to be misunderstood. Let me tell you something. Everybody in torment today wishes those who are fearful of being misunderstood had gone ahead and been misunderstood.

Can you and I justify knowing what we know and keeping it to ourselves when there are multiple, there are thousands and hundreds of thousands of people in the city of Atlanta, in your city where you live, in your community where you live, who are dying and going to hell, who would not go if you would simply extend them an invitation. It may be just to go to church. You say, I don't know what to say.

My friend, even if all you do is to go with someone else and sit as a silent partner and pray while the other person does the talking, God will use you. And it may be that you're a simple, stumbling, frail testimony of God's forgiveness and grace in your heart. You may not use the right terms.

You may not tell it exactly the way it ought to be told, but you know what? The fellow, the woman sitting out there who's hurting and looking for hope, they're not going to be concerned about how well you said. What they want to know is tell me the truth. So I want to ask you a question today as a member of the First Baptist Church of Atlanta.

And then I want to ask you a question, whatever church you belong to, how can you and I keep to ourselves the only message and how can we refrain from being a messenger? Listen to me, the message we have and the messages we are, this is the only hope the unbeliever has. Now, if you keep the message to yourself and you keep your conversation light and frothy and pleasurable and entertaining, and you don't get serious about people with people who are about to die and go to hell, then my friend, how can you and I justify who we say we are followers of Jesus? You know what he said? Go into all the

earth, preach and teach the gospel. He said, I've read that before.

And this is the way we read it. When Jesus said, as you go make disciples of all nations, well, first of all, first of all, I don't know how to make a disciple. Secondly, I can't go to all nations baptizing them in the name of the father, the son, the Holy Spirit.

I can't baptize it. So we just absolutely rationalize ourselves right out of that. Listen, every single believer knows what it takes to be saved.

We've already become disciples. We want to share what he's taught us. You know, we're starting going with all nations right across the street where I live, right next door.

Baptizing them, you don't have to worry about that. God will take care of that with his messengers who are pastors of the churches and so forth. What he's simply saying is this, torment is inhabited by people who are crying out to God for people like you and me to go tell the message.

Less their family and their friends and those who are dear to them, follow them to eternal torment. So I want to make this appeal to you. If you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your savior, no matter what you think, no matter who you've talked to, no matter what preaching you've heard, I'm telling you the gospel truth before which I'll have to stand before God and give an account for every word.

And I'm willing to give an account to God for this message. This is all you have, the message and the messengers. If you're not willing to believe the message and you reject the messenger, you're going to spend eternity in torment and you will have no acceptable excuse.

And you will spend the rest of eternity in the darkness of separation from God in the awesome punishment and agony and pain of having acted foolish, unwisely and choosing to live your life according to your own standards rather than the standard by which you're going to be judged. How foolish! You will never be able to tell God you didn't know any better. You'll never be able to tell God you never heard the truth because you've heard it again and again.

With the truth of the gospel in mind, can you really justify any longer listening to sermons without becoming God's messenger with his message? The people for whom those in torment are crying out, send somebody to my home. You and I are all the lowest folks have, the message and the messenger. And my friend, if you've never received Christ, the choice is eternal and it's your choice.

And Lord Jesus, we humble ourselves before you when we think of being a messenger of the gospel of Christ, when we think of being a messenger of truth, when we think of being the one who stands between someone else and eternal separation from God, all of a sudden life takes on a seriousness about it. Our conversation needs to be altered, our interest needs to be redefined, our priorities need to be reset and our commitment to follow you, Lord Jesus needs to be reaffirmed and that we do this morning in Jesus' name, amen.

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