

The Character of Hell

by Rolfe Barnard

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a prepared heart to hear from God and the desperate need for Christians to break their hearts over sinners and pray for them.

Duration: 1:12:47

Scripture: Psalm 34:18, Psalm 126:5-6, Proverbs 1:7, Matthew 6:33, Luke 16:19, Luke 16:23

Topics: "Eternal Judgment", "Heaven And Hell"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by referencing Luke's Gospel, chapter 16, and focuses on the character of Hell. He shares a personal anecdote about a friend who became an evangelist and had a luxurious experience before entering Hell. The preacher describes the loneliness and separation from God in Hell, emphasizing the torment and longing for the glory of God. He concludes by stating that Heaven is prepared for those who are prepared for it, and Hell is the best that God could do for those who reject Him.

Transcript

Now we open the word tonight to the book of Luke, at chapter 16. Luke's Gospel, chapter 16. I want to just use three words from the 23rd verse, and speak to you tonight on the character of Hale.

I'm going to have to have a meeting with old brother Caldwell. He and I through the years, about 20 years now, have been very dear friends. Had the joy of holding four evangelistic meetings in his congregation when he was pastor before he got fired and became an evangelist, you know.

Us evangelists, we fellows have failed as pastors and failed as everything else. That's the reason we have to hike to one place and hike to another. But we're going to get together as soon as I can see him, decide whether we're going to let brother Kirkman stay in the ministry or not.

But he's pretty nutty, and we're going to compare notes. And he's always asking me questions. And I tell him, well, brother Caldwell and I know everything, but that particular question he asked me falls in brother Caldwell's department.

And I'll have to wait till I see him. It's been good to be around. He's been asking me for criticism of the congregation.

I've not found but one so far. I've been looking awful hard. I'm going to shut his mouth so he'll only have a little piece.

I'm going to bawl you out just before we come to the message. I believe that you've not yet learned that you're going to have to fight for a hearing heart. You punch a time clock.

You work for the other fellow. The ladies have their duties, the children. And you get in from work and you rush madly to get up to the house of God.

And the criticism I have of you is that you visit one another when you should be in your seat trying to prepare your own heart to hear from God. We desperately need to face the fact that you cannot hear any truth unless you spend some time preparing your own heart. To me, I do not even like to speak to anybody for an hour before I preach because I'm in hell.

I'm in the valley of agony. I don't even like to speak to anybody after I preach unless it's a seeking soul. I'm peculiar that way.

But sometimes I can be about half civil afterwards, but I can't be civil at all because I can bring sermons without preparation of my heart, but I can't bring anything from the Lord. And by the same token, you can't hear a word I say unless you've taken time to prepare your heart. That's good.

You mad at me? Maybe I can find something else I don't like. That's so, isn't it? That's so. Truth just bounces off of you.

I don't care if you're a Christian unless there's a preparation and you have to do as you're said. The Catholics, I like them so much better than the Jewish Baptists. You ever been in the Catholic service? You ought to go sometime.

Do you do it? Do you do it? They raise a lot of hell outside, but when they're inside, they recognize what I'm doing. There's a spirit, reverence, quiet. But I learned a long time ago that truth cannot take lodgment except in prepared heart.

And I'm not flushing at you. I'm telling you the fact you cannot receive truth unless you learn to fight for some time before you get in the house of God, before the words open to prepare your heart so that you'll hear from God. Well, I won't judge anything extra for that, but that's a good word.

That's a good word. Now tonight, the character of hell. I had a student at a seminary in Fort Worth, Texas a few years ago.

They asked me, while I was a student there, I had what's called a student pastor, as we called them in those days. It was 60 miles from Fort Worth, Texas. Ms. Barnard and I, we had a nice little parsonage, completely furnished.

And on Friday evening after the classes were over, we'd get in our Ford and drive out and turn the key and be at home till Monday afternoon. And we called them student pastors because I'd get out there and practice on them, you know, over the weekend, what they taught me that week. And I loved them and they loved me.

They paid me enough money to pay my bills to go to school at the same time. And I loved them and will love them, of course, as long as I'm somewhere because of their graciousness to me. But one time I was asked, while I was a student, to hold evangelistic meetings in the congregation that served the faculty and the student body, the wives, children of the preachers.

And some of the preachers didn't have student churches. So they had a church home there on what was called Seminary Hill. And at the same time I was taking a course in homiletics.

That's a big word that never did take with me. Learn how to outline sermons, you know, and prepare sermons. I never had.

That didn't take. They passed me in it, but I never learned how to outline sermons on this good day. Old Brother Caldwell, he has them, you know.

You heard him, in the next place. But I never could do that. But, and so in the class in homiletics, the instructor would assign that all the students in that class would go hear me preach at night and they'd take down my sermon and outline and they'd put it up on the blackboard in my presence.

They'd take it to pieces and they'd do a pretty good job. And so all the preachers under instruction would come rushing in to the service with their little pencils and notebooks, except one. There's a fellow there by the name of Joe Wilhelm and his church that he pastored.

He'd get in this car and Friday afternoon he'd drive 320 miles. Day Saturday and preach all day Sunday and then Monday here he'd ski the hill back. He had a family.

He was up in his late thirties even at that time, just busy as a duck in water. And he'd come into the service and he'd come up to me and he'd say, Preacher, show me somebody that don't know the Lord. And I'd say, well, you see that redhead fellow back there on the fourth row and so on, so on, so on, so on.

And he'd arrange to sit beside that person, not to say anything to him, but to open his heart and get so full of the word that he would thus be full of the Spirit. And thus the Spirit who works through his people could splash off and bless that lost sinner. That's what it means, quench not the sin.

We who claim to believe that salvation is of the Lord, I think most of us have not yet learned that the Spirit can only bless through the overflow and we're not to quench that flow. And every night during that campaign that preacher managed to sit by somebody. Wouldn't it be terrible that somebody here tonight who's sitting beside a Christian, who didn't come here for the purpose of getting so full of the word, and thus full of the Spirit, that through the overflow the Spirit would deal with that unsaved person.

I'm talking sensible. I just don't believe we're after souls. I don't believe our eyes are looking for souls.

I don't believe that's what we got down to business about yet. I believe this is it. I'm not for the methods of the flesh, but this is the method of the Spirit.

This is the overflow of the Spirit, looking. Well, not to ever come to the house of God, expecting God to send those who are lost, inviting them to come, unless when they're here we come expecting that through us, hear me, the Spirit might break loose. Is that good doctrine? It's so.

We have no idea, even in these terrible days, how many people are brokenhearted and wounded. If we had eyes looking for them, we'd find so many more people than we think exist, I believe, who need a helping hand. Amen? I went back to the hotel.

I think it was Tuesday night. I was completely crushed. My sermon had gone in on me.

I'm walking down the corridor, and I passed a man. After we passed, we said hello, and then he said, Is that a Bible in your hand? I said, Yes, sir. He said, Would you come to my room? I'm in trouble.

Sometimes just having a Bible in your hand to walk down the street will open the door. I've found it so on planes and trains. Isn't that right? Let us be constantly looking, and surely we ought to adopt that attitude when we come to the house of God.

Amen? All right. Now I've criticized you. That's all I can find wrong.

But that's wrong with most of us, isn't it? My greatest battle is yours if you're a Christian. The desperateness of the times. God help me not to accept it.

It's still true that he that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again. Rejoicing, isn't it? That's still in the Bible. And I have quoted to myself, these are desperate days.

I don't want to let the spirit of this day defeat us. Do you? Well, God bless you. Here in this text tonight, in verse 23 of the book of Luke, chapter 16, a man whom the Holy Spirit thought so little of he doesn't even give us his name.

Just called a rich man. And he lived sumptuously and finally died. And after he died, that wasn't the last of him because verse 23 says, In hell, after he was buried, in hell, he lift up his eyes, being in torment.

Being in torment. I have a preacher friend who says that since the responsibility has been laid upon us to break our own heart, to tender our own heart, that a man who is a Christian ought to read the 16th chapter of Luke at least once a day. It will help you to break your heart.

I sometimes wonder, beloved, whether the condition of the world is as desperate as the hardness of my own heart. And I'm persuaded, and this is just bread and butter proposition, I'm persuaded that I've joined the ranks of people who believe the Bible in their head but they've never got it in their heart. And since I believe the shed blood of Christ and the doctrine of hell are twin brothers, you can't have one without the other, they go together.

And since I believe that God has only one motive to which he can appeal to lost men and women, that's fear. I believe in all of my heart that we as God's people, I hope most of you are, maybe all, I don't know about that, need to face, and face it not until we go crazy but until our hearts are broken. And once again, we honestly believe that men need a savior to keep them out of hell.

And a Lord to change them into his own image. Being in torment. I know how desperate things are.

God give us tend to heart. God help us to break our heart. All this afternoon I've been begging God let me change my tune.

I have not been able to do it. Being in torment. In hell he lifted up his eyes.

Being in torment. Thorough. Since the fastest growing doctrine, religious wise in the world, is that man's so valuable and God's so good and powerful that there really isn't any hell and people have nothing to worry about.

That's where we better camp in our day. The issue of this hour is not the doctrines of grace. That's the foundation.

The issue of this hour is that this generation believes it ought to be religious but doesn't believe it needs to be saved. People don't need to be saved now. And if there isn't anything like this being in torment, then there's nothing to be desperate much about.

But under God, if this is the word of God, if this is true, if this that professes to come from the very lips of bloodstained Jesus be the eternal God's truth, that even a rich man after he dies and after they go to the trouble of burying him, that the next thing about him is that he finds himself in torment. If that's so, it will help you as you face the task of living in a hard world to break your own heart and be able to weep in your heart over men and women. May I ask you this question? How long has it been since you've been able to weep over anybody? Do you think this is silly? It isn't.

How long has it been since you've been able to weep over somebody? Huh? Being in torment. I understand the ministry of intercession. And in the book of Revelation it says we've been made a kingdom of priests that a Christian is an intercessor.

And I understand that you can't be an intercessor unless you identify yourself with whoever you're interceding for. Daniel did with the nation of Israel. I understand in order to pray for sinners, to intercede for sinners, you've got to identify yourself with them.

And I'm not big enough to do that for a lot of people. And since I go from place to place, I do not stay in one place long enough to get much of a burden for any particular person. Because I'm not big enough to be a burden much for somebody unless I'm able to identify myself with them.

I don't think you are either. And an intercessor therefore has to come to the place that since the sinner will not pray for himself, I'll pray instead. And for you shoot at me, think this through, since the sinner will not repent, I'll repent for him.

And since the sinner will not call on God, I'll call on God for him. And since the sinner feels no sense of his danger, I'll feel it for him. We're getting ready to pray now.

That's intercessory prayer. And oh my how we shut up it seems to that today. And so whatever else may be said of the professing child of God now, our prayer life will dead sure be pretty sterile unless we can in the sinner's stead bear the terrible darts of the torments of hell in their sleep.

Hell scares me. And since it doesn't, the lost sinner, oh God, increase my fear. Being in torment.

What kind of place is hell? In the first place, we need to face fresh the fact that God in Jesus Christ sends men to hell. I have run across it all the days of my life and there's a half truth in it that God doesn't send men to hell if they send themselves. But that is as silly as saying a man breaks the law, arrests himself, takes himself to jail, sits as judge and pronounces a sentence and executes it.

No, my Lord said that all judgment has been given to him and power, authority to execute judgment. And it seems like very elemental, but I wonder if we ought not pause a little while tonight and just face the fact that God sends men to hell and pray. Men don't go to hell willingly.

If anybody winds up in hell, God will send them there. That's an awful thing to face. I have a dear preacher friend who had three blessed children.

The middle boy had a boy and a boy and a girl, and the middle boy was 16 years old. He had made a profession of faith and was a member of the church and all of that, but he was off for a while. His preacher friend and his wife found out, and it seemed like the exceptions to all the rules about children.

They just weren't getting the job done. He's breaking their hearts. And one Sunday, one Lord's Day, the boy showed up for Sunday school in his daddy's own congregation and went in and signed up so that he is present and then slipped out the door and got on his motorcycle and went down to a certain southern city and entered the motorcycle races on the Lord's Day.

That afternoon about three o'clock the telephone rang, and on the other end came a voice telling this pastor that his 16-year-old boy was dead, that he had had an accident, and telling him they were bringing his crushed and broken mangle body in an ambulance back home. Got there about five or six o'clock. My friend said, Brother Barnard, for three long years, I never used the word hell in my pulpit, for three long years I would not, I could not face it.

He said, I sent out to Kansas City to a bunch of baptists, a group out there that have made a wonderful discovery that the word everlasting does not mean everlasting, and the word eternal does not mean eternal. He said, I read those books and I tried my best to believe them, and I searched the scripture, and I tried my best to take out of the scripture what is there and read into it what the cry of longing of my soul was. And he said, after three years I had to get out on my face and say, Lord, help me.

You sent my boy to hell. God sends people to hell. That's awful.

That's awful. But he does. The wicked shall be turned into hell.

Death and hell will tear him to the lake of fire. God help us living in a world where people don't believe it. Our only weapon is to believe it until our hearts break.

I don't find any place for anything except brokenhearted people of God. I make no apology. I know this danger from any approach, but a professing Christian without a broken heart! Because the crown rites of Christ are ignored and men are plunging into hell.

It's awful to claim to be one of Christ's little ones and be so like him who loved the world of sinners enough to pour out his soul unto death for them. God give us the faith afresh. God sends people to hell.

In the second place, that's the best God can do for men and women who are not prepared to enjoy his presence and his glory. Hell would be much more comfortable for a person who's not head over heels in love with Christ than would heaven. Instead of God being a monster to send people to hell, it's the kindest thing he can do, since he has himself only two places to send men to spend eternity.

One's a holy place called heaven, inhabited by holy people who would be comfortable in the atmosphere of holiness. How miserable an unholy person would be in a holy place forever and ever. It's an act of kindness that a loving God, unable by the use of the means he's a part, to plant the germ of holiness in a man that will seek his search, that will cause him to make it his lifelong pursuit, make him to where he could enjoy the presence of a Christ-holy God.

It's the kind act of such a God not to make an unholy person spend eternity in a holy place. Far better to be in the atmosphere of rebellion and contempt, which is the description of hell, than to be in the atmosphere of holiness, which describes God's holy place. Some people seem to have the impression

that they rock along pretty well and finally they'll die, and in the article of death something wonderful will happen, they're unholy, but when they die they'll become holy.

No, no. Wouldn't it be awful to be condemned throughout all eternity to spend your time, won't be any time in eternity, in a place that's just characterized by holiness. Hell is a whole lot better than heaven.

I have a dear Jewish friend who's a blessed preacher of the word of God. He was converted in a cell in the penitentiary in the city of Philadelphia. His cellmate was a Negro by the name of John, and John had a gospel of John with him.

My Jewish friend reared to believe the New Testament, nothing to it. Reared to believe that this fellow Jesus was the illegitimate child of a bad woman. Reared and nurtured in the sidewalks of the Bronx and New York sitting all the squalor and everything else there.

Learned to steal so he could eat. Wound up in eastern penitentiary under sentence. Heart of heart, godless, Christless, hopeless, name it.

After a while just to relieve the tedium he'd listen to the Negro read out of the gospel of John. And in God's good time the work was done. This Jew was able as the scales were taken from his blinded eyes to behold Jesus Christ in his glory on that bloodied cross and that exalted throne.

After he was saved, a Christian gentleman down south got acquainted with him some way and took an interest in him and thought his life was savable. And he pulled some wires and in the course of time got this Jewish boy a pardon. Sent him the money to buy some clothes, railroad ticket, and asked him when he's dismissed from jail to come and spend a few days in his own home in the southern state.

My friend said he got off the train down in that southern city and there was an automobile waiting for him with a black, Negro, pearly teethed man sitting at the wheel. The king got his little suitcase, treated him like a king, put him in that limousine that drove through the country to a great southern plantation. And the chauffeur said, you go right in.

He said, I'll bring the luggage. And he said, I walked up the stateless steps and used that knocker and directly a liberated uniformed butler came to the door and said, yes, sir. He said, I'm Mr. So-and-so.

I think I'm expected. Yes, sir. Come right in, sir.

The master's been eagerly awaiting your arrival. Come right in, sir. And he said, I went in to a richly decorated pointed room.

Looked to me like the rug with two feet thick. Said, I'd never seen anything like it. He said, the butler said, if you'll be seated, I'll tell the master you're here.

And he said, I sat there and here came that finely groomed, southern aristocratic gentleman. And he walked up to me and took my hand and said, oh, you've honored us by coming to be our guest. He said, I'd never been in that sort of an atmosphere.

And he said, directly in a finely coiffured and decorated and dainty southern gentlewoman came in and said, I rose with the master, watched him. And he said, Mr. So-and-so, may I produce my wife? And he said, she said, oh, young man, what a delightful pleasure it is to have you in our home. He said, in the course of time, a black butler came and said, dinner is served.

He said, didn't know what that meant. It was evening. And he didn't know that.

But he said, I followed the man to a richly pointed table. And he said, they sat me down and began to serve. And he said, I had four or five different knives and five or six different forks and four or five different spoons.

I didn't know what on God's earth they were for. He said, I never had seen anything like that. I've lived on the sidewalks of New York stealing for Sunday.

And he said, I watched the master of the house. I got along fairly well until they served the main entree, which was a whole quail deliciously boiled, sitting there on the plate. I'd never seen anything like that.

And I didn't know what to do. And I watched the master. And he picked up a certain fork.

And I picked up one I think he did. And then he picked up his knife. And he began to carve.

He said, I tried to do it. And he said, I stuck my fork in it and began to carve. And the next thing I knew, that quail jumped out of the plate into my lap and onto the floor.

And he said, I got up and ran out and ran out of the house. I couldn't stand it any longer. I didn't know how to act.

Ladies and gentlemen, a feather that amazes the fact that this wife has given us to learn which knife and which fork and which spoon to use and be comfortable about it when we get to go. Heaven is a prepared place for folks who are prepared for it. And hell would be the very best that God could do for you.

If in this life you haven't got time to be prepared to know how to behave yet, you know what kind of place is hell. Hell will just be a continuation of the way it did down here. You'll keep on doing in hell what you did on earth.

You'll have the same attitudes in hell that you've had down here. Hell is just a continuation of a life of sin on earth. Heaven, well, that's a place where you'll continue to do like you did on earth, where you'll have the same attitudes that you had on earth, where you enjoy the same things that you did on earth, where you'll be comfortable in the same atmosphere in which you were comfortable on this earth.

Hell isn't something different from life here. It's just more so. Heaven isn't something different than life here.

It's just a continuation of it. There's a lot of hell on the road to hell. I have people tell me, Preacher, I believe all the hell a man will experience, he'll experience right here on earth.

Well, that'd be enough. There's enough hell on this earth to me. There's plenty of hell on this earth.

There are people living in hell on this earth, and bless God there are people in heaven on this earth. Bless the Lord. If the Lord's got anything in heaven better than he's got for his people on this earth, he's going to have to get up mighty early in the morning to fix it.

There's a lot of heaven on the way to heaven. That person that thinks that we're going to heaven, blessed brother, if you're a child of God, you're already there. You just may move and get a different body.

But heaven, just some more, only more so. My mother had seven children on the salary of a small-town school superintendent in the days when \$100 a month salary was a big salary, brother. And I can hear my mother going about the chores of the home.

She wasn't conscious of it. And her favorite song, I can hear her sing it right now. She's been in glory these years.

I can shut my eyes and hear her sing it and I can see her going about making the bed, creeping the floor, putting stove wood in the cook's stove, doing something. And she'd sing, I'm going home. I'm going home.

I'm going home. I'm going home. To sin no more.

And she actually believed that the day would come when the deepest desire of her soul would be without sin. There's a lot of heaven on the way to heaven. And there's a lot of hell on the way to hell.

In the last book of the Bible, in the last chapter, the 11th verse, we miss it in the King James. It's not quite the right translation, but it seems that when the wind of time comes, the Lord Jesus Christ stands and has him open the cap of hell. And he stands over the uncapped place called hell, cups his hands to his mouth, and delivers an eternal judgment on the people in hell.

And the judgment is this. He condemns men and women throughout the long reaches of eternity in language like this. Let him that doeth unjustly keep on doing unjustly.

Let him that doeth filthily keep on doing filthily. Let him that doeth unrighteously keep on doing unrighteously. That's the worst thing I can think about.

What on God's earth is the condemnation that men are under, the awful judgment they'll have to undergo throughout eternity? Is to keep on sinning, I think. Keep on, sin on, sin on, sin on, sin on, sin on, sin on. Ten billion times worse than any literal suffering from any literal fire.

And I do not deny, I suppose, of the physical suffering in hell. It causes physical suffering, yes, I suppose it will. But ten billion times worse would be to have to live throughout eternity under the judgment of God that all on God's earth I'll do, is keep on sinning.

Keep on, keep on, as long as God lives. That's the binding judgment that falls on men and women who spend eternity in the other place, not the holy place. That's hell.

That's hell. Just keep on sinning. The Bible says that the very plowing of the wicked is sin.

In other words, the Bible says everything a man does outside of Christ in this life is sin in the sight of God. And the awful judgment of hell is, just keep on. And so hell is a place where people have nothing to do but aside in sin.

That's all. Enforce sin. Condemned.

Bound by the decree of the Lord Jesus Christ to sin on. Sin on. Sin on.

That's hell. The loneliness of it. Nothing to do but amuse yourself.

To be separated from God. But to be so separated from God that you're compelled to see Him as the thirst a man sees water that he dare not drink. To be forced to see the glory of God.

To have no access to it. Where everything is forfeited. Land in hell and listen for one quarter of an hour.

And then hear, I am the door locked forever. The road which leads nowhere. The everlasting lie.

That's hell. That's what this generation is headed for. So says this book.

There will be two things in hell that is different than this. I said that hell will just be a continuation. And now I seem to reverse myself and close this message by reminding you that in hell there are two things different about being in hell and the way it is with you now.

First, on earth, a man or woman, boy or girl, can hide from the truth. But not in hell. You can stuff your ears and refuse to hear.

You can gouge out your eyes and refuse to see. You can meet a fact in the road and go around it. You can live all the days of your life whistling by the cemetery to keep the ghosts away.

You can hide from the truth on earth, but you can't in hell. You have to face it. I'm here, and there's a way in, but no way out.

And there's a second difference in the life of this earth and the existence in hell. In hell, all your vows will have already been made. All your decisions will already have been decided.

The tree will be fallen, and as it falls, so will it lie. There are many things an unsaved man can't decide and change. But there are a lot of decisions that the vilest sinner out of hell ought to make and can make.

You'll not make any decisions in hell. What decisions you make, you'll make in this life. I scream out that salvation is not at the end of a man's decision, and yet our decisions are tremendously important.

And we make them, many of them, every day of our lives. But we won't make a single one in hell. You know it's a solemn thing to face the fact that including the preacher and everybody here, not a single one of you are here human beings living between the eternities of your own choosing.

You are the children brought into this world by your mother and father. You didn't decide to be a human being. That was somebody else's decision.

And by and large, you'll not make any decisions about departing from this earth. Yeah, yeah. You're not here of your own choice, and you're not going to die by deciding, I believe I'll die.

And in between, that's what we call life. You're here. You can fuss about it and say, I wish I hadn't been born, and curse your mother and father for bringing you into the world.

But it doesn't affect the fact that you're here. And argue about death and say, I'm not going to do it, and I don't think it's fair, and I don't believe it's right. And get your clothes and try to put God out of business.

But you're still going to die. And you'll die at God's time, not yours. And there's something out yonder, the Bible says, and whatever's out yonder, whether it's good or bad, is going to be settled in this what we call life, that you didn't begin and you will not end.

How important our decisions are. A sinner can't decide to give himself a new heart, but a sinner could make a definite vow and decision, if you want to call it that, to seek the Lord to give him a new heart. You could do that.

You cannot change yourself. But there's nothing to keep you from coming to a crisis. And say from this hour, I'm going to be clinging to the enthroned, as crying, Lord, change thou me.

You could do that. Our decisions are so important, because all of them will be made in this time of what the old preachers called probation. Where it is ever settled, where we'll spend eternity.

We're not going to be saved when we die. We've got to be saved before we die, or not saved. The old timers used to say, when thou art done with us, at last on earth, save us in heaven.

But they were wrong there, weren't they? We don't get saved in heaven. Whoever gets saved, we get saved down here in the world that's on fire for it's hatred of the holiness of God. Our decisions are so important.

When I was a senior in a godly Baptist Christian college, as much as any can be Christian, I think, out in the city of Abilene, Texas, I organized an infidel's club. And I got a few over 300 of those young Baptist students to join my infidel's club. And each Friday evening we'd meet, and we'd have a speaker.

If we couldn't get an outside speaker, a lot of times I'd speak. Boy, we gave God pretty hard time. We'd make fun of him and dare him, curse him, name it.

I was graduated and went to the panhandle of Texas to teach school, and I ran right smack dab into God. And I believe he saved me. And I sent two telegrams when I got saved, one to my mother and one to the head of the English department of that college, who was the human instrument in keeping this infidel out of hell.

And the head of the department of English told the president, and within an hour the superintendent of the school where I was teaching got a telephone call from the president of the school where I'd been and had been president of an infidel's club there in that Baptist. And pretty soon I was called into the office of the superintendent and said, the president of your alma mater has been on the phone, and he's asked that I grant you a week's leave. They'll take care of the expenses and your salary.

You want me to release you to come back to school and speak in chapel and every night. And about that time the telephone rang again, and it was the president, and he asked for me. And as to the hellos, he said, Rothmuses, come our way, that the Lord has saved you.

I said, I believe he has, Prexy. We called him Prexy, a term of endearment. He said, well, I've asked your superintendent.

He said, it's all right, now I want your word. He said, I demand that you come next week, speak to us. He said, we'll turn the chapel over to you, and we'll meet every night.

Why don't you talk to us? He said, I want you to undo as much of the hell as you caused here as you can. That's a pretty hard job to do. And I went back.

They still had an infidel's club. The young man who'd been the vice president of it the year before when I started, he's now the president. He and I were almost blood brothers.

He heard me speak in chapel. He had to. He heard me every night when they didn't have to come.

All I could do was stand up there and sort of give what we call our testimony, what I believe the Lord has done for me. I didn't know no doctrine or nothing, but they listened. And I was facing not all of the youngsters who'd been in the infidel club, some of them the year before had been seniors, and they'd gone to spread their poison out down there.

But there was still a lot of them, you know, four classes, freshmen through seniors, still a lot of them. And that year the infidel's club was bigger than it was the year I was there. And I stood up there and tried to watch strikes.

That's in the Bible, isn't it? And when the last service was over, my buddy, now president of the club, he'd asked me, he said, Ralph, I want the privilege of taking you to the train. And we left early and went down and got the ticket, the ring, the luggage, sat in his car, and he said, Ralph, you've gone off your rocker. He said, you used to be a brain.

He said, I hope you'll recover and come back to your senses. Get rid of all that stuff. I played with him that week, Monday through Friday.

I preached to him, I witnessed to him, I testified, I listened. And I got nowhere. And we shook hands and I got on the train.

And five months later, a man put five bullets in him right there. And I have terrible reason to believe that five seconds later, in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torn. Two young men organized an infidel's club 39 years ago.

Since I shook hands and told that boy goodbye, I'm here speaking to you. I'm afraid he's been in torment these 39 years. What's the difference? Of course, the difference is God.

But somewhere in there, in the good providence of God, I began to spend time in a cold room, crying to the Lord. And he never did. And he fell.

And he's still in the same condition he was when he fell. And I believe God changed me. Your decision to become a seeker or to keep your ears deaf is tremendously important.

For all the decisions you'll ever make, you'll make them in this life. Not in the last. Are you a lifelong seeker of the Lord? Or have you kept your ears closed and your eyes closed? Stood guard over your heart and kept assigned there no trespass? Especially Jesus Christ.

Hell is a place where you make no decisions, but where you reap the harvest of the decisions that were made in this life. Citizens, close our eyes, will you? While your eyes are closed, will you quietly stand to your seat? While the peoness comes and the singer will sing the song you seem to know and like just as I do. And before we do, with eyes closed and heads bowed, this part of the service now is for you entirely.

I will not take for granted anything. I would press this as much as if there were 10,000 people here and I knew all of them were lost. Without attempting to be God, I would attempt to not take anybody's salvation for granted.

I would press a solemn invitation on you tonight to become a seeker of the Lord Jesus Christ. To begin to inquire as to the way to glory. And I would entreat you and beg you not to go out of this building, back into the atmosphere of a world where the fear is stopped to the message of truth.

I beg you tonight, right there where you stand, to say there's one thing I'm going to do. From now on out, brother, I'm going to be hanging on to the Lord, crying to him for mercy. And I'd like for you to walk down here and so express that.

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