



POWERFUL
MESSAGES
ON ETERNITY

The Reality of Heaven and Hell

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Table of Contents

Introduction	ii
Roadblocks on the Road to Hell	1
Bill Anderson	
It's Time to Face the Music	5
Michael Hamlet	
Steps to Eternity	7
Mark Hickman	
Thirty Seconds into Eternity	9
Ray Jones	
It is Appointed to Men Once to Die, and Then	13
Robert E. "Bob" Reccord	
Encouragement from Hell	17
Bailey Smith	
Life and Death in the Twenty-first Century	21
John Yarbrough	
About the Contributors	23

INTRODUCTION . . . An Appeal to Pastors

Although the Bible leaves no question concerning the destiny of a lost soul, it seems that little is being written about it, and even less of it being preached these days. Among the motivating factors that God uses to move believers to go the extra mile to be soul-winners, the eternal prognosis of a lost person is perhaps the most powerful. Nothing moves me personally to witness more than the keen awareness that the people I see and know will spend eternity in that foreboding place, unless I share Jesus with them.

I am praying that you will read the seven sermon outlines in this booklet, and that God's Holy Spirit will call on your heart to preach one or more of them. Instead, He may give you one of your own. We are not preaching the whole counsel of God if we are omitting this subject. The only effective way to preach on hell is with a broken heart.

Consider dedicating the Sunday before "On Mission To Share Jesus Sunday" as an "Eternity Awareness Sunday" to prepare God's people to respond to His call to share the gospel. If you will do this I fully believe that you will see more people surrender to Jesus as "Lighthouse Christians," sharing Jesus with a broken heart. Let it not be said by anyone who attends your church that they never hear you preach on the reality of heaven and hell.

Your Brother in the Harvest,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack R. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ROADBLOCKS ON THE ROAD TO HELL

Romans 1

William E. "Bill" Anderson

Introduction:

I was driving at 5 a.m. one morning to an airport and discovered that a bridge on the causeway was blocked due to repairs being done on the bridge. Distressed because of a tight schedule, I detoured and took "the long way around." As I detoured however, I thought about the significance of the roadblock and began to rejoice that it was there. Had it not been, they would have been fishing my Buick out of the Gulf of Mexico!

Our heavenly Father does not want us to go to hell and has graciously placed not one, but several, formidable roadblocks in our way.

- I. Roadblock 1—The Bible
 - A. The book of Romans is a part of the Bible in which God, from beginning to end, warns us of the horrors of an eternity in hell.
 - B. "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek. 33:11). That is a brief survey of the entire Bible.

- II. Roadblock 2—The Servants of God
 - A. Paul, God's servant, wrote the book of Romans, among other things, that people might not go to hell.
 - B. Consider the fact that every Bible writer is a barrier on the road to hell.
 - C. And, parenthetically, every believer today is either a barrier or a bridge to hell; Paul was a barrier.

- III. Roadblock 3—Prayer
 - A. In verses 8 and 9, Paul engages in prayer for believers, but in Romans 10:1 and following, he prays, specifically for the salvation of unbelievers.
 - B. Heaven may reveal prayer to be the most formidable barrier to people going to hell. "It is better to talk to God about men than to talk to men about God." (E.M. Bounds)

- IV. Roadblock 4—The Gospel
 - A. In verse 16 the apostle calls the gospel the *dunamis* (dynamite) of God.
 - B. The testimony of every saved person is that the gospel of God—the personal acceptance of Jesus who died for our sins—is the spiritual power which keeps us out of hell.

V. Roadblock 5—God’s Wrath

In verse 18 Paul says that God’s wrath has been manifested (perfect tense) in history.

- A. Assyria, Babylonia, the Medes, the Persians, the Romans, and a host of other nations who forgot God and descended into hell rise up and shout the reality of God’s wrath.
- B. The debris of nations in the graveyard of nations is a powerful roadblock to hell for thoughtful men. God’s wrath will, infallibly, be expressed against sin, both personal and national.
- C. The temporal expression of God’s wrath is designed to deliver us from the eternal expression of God’s wrath.

VI. Roadblock 6—Conscience

- A. In verses 19-20 Paul says that all men know, innately, i.e., by means of conscience, of God.
- B. God has not left Himself without witness (see Acts 14:17).
- C. “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11, NKJV).
- D. He who goes to hell does so against the warnings of a God-given inner voice.

VII. Roadblock 7—God’s Love

- A. In 2:4, God tells us a very interesting thing—it is His goodness that leads us to repentance.
- B. The incorrect caricature of God is that He desires to punish us in hell. As a preacher of another day grossly said it, “God loves the stench of burning flesh.” In fact, however, God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

While the journey to repentance might seem painful, and often is, it must never be forgotten that God’s love is the prompting presence along the way.

Conclusion:

“If people were morally more sensitive they would direct the whole of their moral will and spirit towards delivering from the torments of hell every being they ever had met in life.” (Nicholas Berdyaev, “The Destiny of Men,” p. 351)

If morally aware people should attempt to keep people out of hell, how much more the immeasurable love of God has done so, and is doing so.

A teenager defiantly told his mother one night that he was going out with his buddies to experiment with drugs. She, a new Christian, was frantic, and finally—standing in the doorway and bracing herself against the doorframe—told him he would have to walk over her dead body to do so.

The boy did not challenge her. Some time later, he went to a Christian summer camp

and received Christ. As a new Christian, he told me that he never forgot that scene of his mother's willingness to die to save his life.

In a real way, one must walk over the goodness of God expressed in the death of His Son to go to hell. Every person who refuses God's gracious offering of salvation in His Son does just that.

IT'S TIME TO FACE THE MUSIC

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

Michael Hamlet

Introduction:

Recently, I read a book on church growth in the new millennium. It was filled with research and ideas, but there was something missing. There was no mention of sin and no mention of hell.

In our culture there is a tendency to shy away from this aspect of the gospel. We are all sinners in need of a Savior. Without an understanding of the consequences of sin and the reality of hell, we have lost the essence of the gospel. The penalty is real, which is why the price had to be paid by the Lord Jesus.

In 2 Thessalonians 1, the apostle Paul deals with this issue.

- I. God is right.
 - A. According to the evidence, verse 5
 - B. According to experience, verses 3-4

- II. Hell is real.
 - A. A place of fairness (All of us deserve death and hell, see Rom. 3:23)
 - B. A place that is forever, verse 9, "shut out forever"

- III. Your response is required.

Paul states very clearly that there are only two types of people—those who respond to Christ and those who do not.

 - A. Recognize the seriousness of your situation.

In the hymn, "It Is Well with My Soul," the third verse says, "My sin—
Oh, the bliss of this glorious tho't: My sin not in part, but the whole Is
nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
O my soul!"
 - B. Repent of your sin. You cannot turn to the Savior unless you are willing to turn from your sin.
 - C. Receive His gift of eternal life through Christ.

Conclusion:

The story is told that many years ago a man somehow got into the orchestra of the emperor of China although he could not play a note. Whenever the group performed, he would hold his flute to his lips and only pretend to make a sound. He enjoyed a comfortable living. One day the emperor requested a solo from each member. He did not have enough time to learn the instrument. He tried to pretend he was sick but that did not work. On the day of the performance he realized his fate, and the imposter took poison and killed himself. The explanation of his death led to the phrase we have in English, "He refused to face the music." Our need for a Savior is real. The consequences of hell are real. His sacrifice for us is real. We must stop playing games and face the music.

STEPS TO ETERNITY

Philippians 3:13-14

Mark Hickman

Introduction:

A tragic story from Yosemite National Park reminds us of a truth we frequently resist. On October 22, 1999, Jan Davis joined three other parachutists to protest a law. The Parks Service banned the extreme sport of jumping from the top of 3,200-foot El Capitan because of its danger. The protest was designed to show that the jumps were safe. After climbing to the top, the first three jumpers floated safely to the ground. Davis, a 60-year-old woman, was the fourth to jump, but her parachute never opened. Although she was a seasoned paratrooper with 70 such jumps and 3,000 sky dives, she did not escape death. This somber and tragic event reminds us of how we approach eternity with God. He has designed guidelines to protect us, but we regularly protest them trying to prove we can navigate safely through life without submitting to His laws. As we step through life towards eternity, in the midst of our protests we discover the truth of His care for us. Let's follow the steps together.

- I. The First Step—Salvation
The world is confused on the matter of salvation. Instead of looking to the Bible, we look to our own power.
 - A. Salvation indicates a lost condition
 - B. Salvation indicates a consciousness of that lost condition (conviction)
 - C. Salvation involves a turning from sin
 - D. Salvation involves trusting Jesus Christ as Savior (illustration: Zacchaeus meets Jesus—Luke 19)

- II. The Second Step—Separation
 - A. Not like Pharisees . . . “Lord deliver us from the Christian who thinks that everybody else falls short and that only he is perfect before God.”
 - B. Separation means there are places Christians should not be. The world needs to see a difference in us (illustration: You don't see the Queen of England in the pub drinking and telling vulgar stories)

- III. The Third Step—Consecration
What would it be like if everyone in our church followed God's plan and purpose for their lives? (Examples: tithed, serve, went on outreach, etc.)
 - A. In consecration there should be a dedication of life
 - B. In consecration there should be dedicated talents
 - C. In consecration there should be a dedication of time
 - D. In consecration there should be a dedication of money (illustration: The preacher saw a little boy in the candy store with no money so he bought him some candy. As the boy was eating it, the preacher asked for some. The boy ran from store yelling, “MINE, MINE!”)

IV. The Last Step—Glorification

An old song says, “He will give me grace and glory.” Another says, “O that will be glory for me . . . When by his grace I shall look on his face, That will be glory, be glory for me.” Jesus promises to share His heavenly glory with us. Will you step to glory with me today?

THIRTY SECONDS INTO ETERNITY

Revelation 20:11-21:9

Ray Jones

(Optional Opening)

A little boy got on the elevator in the Empire State Building in New York City. He and his daddy started to the top. The boy watched the signs flashing as they went by the floors: 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70. They kept going, and he got nervous. He took his daddy's hand and said, "Daddy, does God know we're coming?" Leighton Ford

Indiana tombstone epitaph: "PAUSE STRANGER, WHEN YOU PASS ME BY . . . AS YOU ARE NOW, SO ONCE WAS I . . . AS I AM NOW, SO YOU WILL BE . . . SO PREPARE FOR DEATH AND FOLLOW ME! A passerby read those words and underneath scratched this response: TO FOLLOW YOU I'LL NOT CONSENT . . . UNTIL I KNOW WHICH WAY YOU WENT!"

When Fred arrived at the "Pearly Gates," there was a very short line and he did not have to wait more than a minute before his interview. Naturally, he was a little nervous about getting through the gates and into the heavenly city. Quickly he found himself standing before an impressive angelic being with a clipboard who started recording his entry data. After name, address, and a few other particulars, the angelic being said, "Fred, it would help the process if you could share with me some experience from your life on earth when you did a purely unselfish, kindly deed." Fred thought about it for a minute and then said, "Oh, yes. I think I have something you might be interested in. One day I was walking along and I came upon a little old lady who was being mercilessly beaten up by a huge motorcycle gang type of fellow. He was smacking her back and forth. Well, I just stepped right up and first I pushed over his motorcycle—just to distract his attention. And then I kicked him real hard in the shins and told the old lady to run for help. And then I hauled off and gave the guy a great shot right to the gut with my fist." The being looked at Fred with a great deal of interest and said, "Wow, that's quite a story. I'm very impressed. Could you tell me just when this happened?" Fred looked at his watch and said, "Oh, about two or three minutes ago."

There are many myths about heaven and hell, but the Bible is very clear about the facts of our eternal destiny.

Thirty seconds into eternity what will be your destiny?

It might be:

- I. The retribution of hell (Rev. 21:8)
 - A. A place of eternal sensation
"He also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire

and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (Rev. 14:10-11, NASB).

1. Eternally tormented with fire.
 2. Eternally tormented with fatigue. Note that the writer said “they have no rest day or night!”
- B. A place of eternal separation (Rev. 20:15; 21:8)

It doesn't have to be this way . . . 30 seconds into eternity can be:

II. The reward of heaven (Rev. 21:3-4,22-25)

A. Heaven's provisions

The Bible teaches that heaven will be a place where we experience the:

1. Fullness of knowledge (see 1 Cor. 13:9-10)
2. Fullness of joy (see Ps. 16:11)
3. Fullness of body (see 2 Cor. 5:1)
4. Fullness of worship (see Rev. 19:5-6)
5. Fullness of service (see Rev. 22:3-4)

B. Heaven's preventions

There are some things that heaven will not tolerate! There will be:

1. No death
2. No tears
3. No grief
4. No pain
5. No temptation
6. No sun/moon (they are not needed)
7. No night

III. The redemption of history

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:16-18, NASB).

It was:

A. An intentional redemption

Jesus purposely died to secure your destiny!

B. An inclusive redemption

- IV. The response of humanity
 - A. Reception that leads to eternal joy
 - B. Rejection that leads to eternal judgment
 - Thirty seconds into eternity there will be . . .
 1. No choice!
 2. No change!
 3. No chance!

Illustration: Dr. Tony Evans, “Have a good time at my funeral, because I’m not going to be there.”

Can you say the same with confidence, knowing that the eternal issues of your life have already been resolved and that 30 seconds into eternity everything will be all right for you?

(Optional Closing)

William Cowper sums it best in his song of redemption when he wrote:

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

When this poor lisping, stamm’ring tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then in a nobler; sweeter song,
I will sing Thy pow’r to save.

IT IS APPOINTED TO MEN ONCE TO DIE, AND THEN . . .

Hebrews 9:27 (1 Corinthians 3:10b-15, Revelation 20:11-15)

Robert E. "Bob" Reccord

Introduction:

David Blatner's friend, Irv Thomas, hiked across the country as a senior citizen and then at 63 years of age, he began his work on his bachelor's degree. Thomas's amazing late life journey was posted on his home Web page. But then suddenly the question dawned, "What happens to the Web page after I die?"

The inevitable result would be permanent deletion from the Internet.

It was that unsettling fact that propelled Blatner into action. He developed a Seattle-based non-profit organization that exists for the sole purpose of archiving personal Web sites of deceased owners assuring them, "their life will live on after they are gone." But God already promised that. Web sites are only the representation of the person's life. Scripture tells us that the soul of every person's life lives on and where it exists is determined by the judgments the person makes . . . while they are still alive. Look at three critical judgments in the accountability each person has in life. Jesus' parables were filled with the teaching that everyone's life will be held accountable to the Master (see Matt. 18, 25; Luke 16).

- I. The Judgment Seat of Christ
 - A. The Court Date—After the Rapture
(1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 22:12)
 - B. Assigned Judge—Jesus Christ
 1. "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God . . ." (1 Thess. 4:16, NIV).
 2. See Revelation 2:18-19. Here John describes the reigning Christ as one with fiery eyes which can see through life's surface issues and judge the critical issues.
 - C. Courthouse Location—Heaven
(John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:17)
 - D. Persons to be Tried—Raptured Christians
(1 Cor. 15:51-52; 2 Cor. 5:9-10)
The "we" referred to in each of these verses refers to Christians. Some of them died during life and are raised again at the rapture. Others are caught up with Christ in the air still alive when he returns (see 1 Thess. 4:17). Every Christian will give an account to Christ for his life of service and faith.

E. Judgment Rendered—The judgment seat of Christ in Scripture is referred to as the *bema*. The *bema* is simply the seat of authority and honor. It was at times used of the place in the arena where the ruling statesman sat to award the winner of games their crown of oak leaf, laurel, or garland. It was also used as a military review stand where the commanding leader stood reviewing the troops.

1. This is not a judgment of sin—that was taken care of at the cross (see 2 Cor. 5:17-19, 21; Heb. 8:12; 1 John 2:12). The judgment seat of Christ is *not* a judgment of unconfessed sin. Christ's crucifixion for sin led to our forgiveness, our confession of sin leads to fellowship (with Christ).
2. It *is* a judgment of service (see Rom. 13:12). So then, each of *us* (every believer) will give an account of himself to God. Second Corinthians 5:10 (NIV) says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."

The words good and bad used here do not refer primarily to moral issues, but to that which is worthy and that which is worthless. First Corinthians 4:1-2 teaches that God gives the Christian life as a trust. Since every Christian is a steward of the grace of God, it is critical that a steward's life "be found faithful."

In 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, it refers to the fire of God testing each believer's work. It could well be here that the fire referred to is the eyes of fire attributed to the Savior in Revelation 2:18. This enables Christ as judge to see through the surface issues of actions done to the internal issues of the motives of why they were done. Some works will prove to be consumed by the fire of His penetrating gaze just like a fire consumes wood, hay, and stubble. John MacArthur says, "There are many things we do in the Christian life that aren't morally evil or bad—they are merely inconsequential." (The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ study guide by John MacArthur, 1981, Grace Communications)

Matthew 6:1-2,5 teaches that those who do things for recognition while on earth will receive all the reward they will ever get—merely the recognition of men.

F. Verdict—Scripture lists several crowns of reward, which believers will have the opportunity to receive at the judgment seat of Christ. Some works will come through the fire as gold, silver, and costly stones (see 1 Cor. 3:12).

1. Crown of Life (see James 1:12, Rev. 2:10). This is given to those who went through persecution and trials, even to the point of mar-

- tyrdom for the sake of their faith in Christ.
2. Crown of Righteousness (see 2 Tim. 4:8). This is given to those who look forward to the appearing of Jesus Christ and that life is focused on His return.
 3. Incorruptible Crown (see 1 Cor. 9:25-27). This is given to those who were faithful to Scripture and obeyed God's commands for holy living.
 4. Crown of Rejoicing (see 1 Thess. 2:19-20). This crown is for the soul-winner who has led other people to faith in Jesus Christ.
 5. Crown of Glory (see 1 Pet. 5:1-4). This is the crown for those who were charged in their ministry with the shepherding of Christ's church.
 6. Overcomer's Crown (see Rev. 3:11). This is for those who have persevered in difficulties and have remained faithful regardless of the cost.
 7. Crown of Changed Lives (see 1 Thess. 2:19). This refers to the changed lives of those who will be in heaven because of our witness and ministry.
- G. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul never worried about losing his salvation, but he was concerned about the possibility of losing his reward. He understood that the security of eternal reward is based on the continual faithfulness of Christian living and ministry driven by scriptural rather than personal motives.

II. The Great White Throne

- A. The Court Date—At the end of the thousand year millennial reign (see Rev. 20:7).
- B. Assigned Judge—Jesus Christ (see Rev. 20:11)
- C. Courthouse Location—Heaven (see Rev. 20:11b).
- D. Persons to be Tried—Those who never accepted Christ (see Rev. 20:12)
- E. Judgment Rendered—Christ will look at the evidence. He will open “the books” (see Rev. 20:12). In the books are listed every act of the unbeliever's life. As a result, Christ will judge:
 1. Secret acts—Romans 2:16
 2. Ungodly activities—Jude 1:14-15
 3. Idle words—Matthew 12:36
 4. Lack of fulfillment of every requirement of the Law—Galatians 2:16, 3:10
 (Since these have not accepted Jesus Christ and therefore cannot be judged by grace, they can only be judged by law. Therefore, they will be judged “according to their own works” which would require them to fulfill every aspect of the law of God. Yet, Scripture clearly claims that no one can be saved by his or her own works (see Matt. 7:22-23; Rom. 3:3; Titus 3:5-6).
- F. The Verdict

1. The book of life will be opened (see Dan. 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3).
2. Every person has had all they need to know God personally.
3. God has given to every person the wonder of creation (see Rom. 1:19).
4. God has given to every person the conviction of conscience (see Rom. 2:14-15).
5. Those who have refused Him will be cast into an eternal hell (see Rev. 20:15).
 - a. They will have full possession of conscience and memory
 - b. They will realize that salvation is lost
 - c. There will be incredible suffering
 - d. There will be a keen awareness of the absence of any hope
 - e. No soul can ever leave the place of torment (see Matt. 25:41,26; Luke 16:23-31).

You Be the Judge

Scripture is clear that every person will give an account of his or her life to God. It is not a matter of *IF* but rather a matter of *WHEN* and *WHERE* (The judgment seat of Christ for believers or the great white throne for unbelievers). Only one person has the ability to make the determination of where you will spend your eternity and where you will give your account to God—**THAT PERSON IS YOU**. Today, what will you do with Christ?

Conclusion

Someone asked the great Daniel Webster, “What would you consider to be the greatest single thought that ever occupied your mind?” Without a moment’s hesitation, the great statesman said, “The greatest single thought that ever occupied my mind is that one day I will have to give an account of myself to Almighty God.”

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM HELL

Matthew 22:11

Bailey Smith

Introduction:

In biblical times, when a person went to a wedding they were given, at the entrance of the wedding feast, a large white scarf. Those attending the wedding were to wear that white garment across their shoulder. It was called a wedding garment—it was white to symbolize the purity of the bride. If someone was there without the wedding garment, they were considered an uninvited guest.

In this story one man did not have on the wedding garment and the person in charge noticed it. He spoke to him and said, “Friend, why did you come in here without a wedding garment?” The Bible says the man was so stunned that he could not open his mouth to speak, because he knew he was about to be removed from the feast.

Many people who expect to go to heaven will not. The man expected to be a part of the wedding festivities—he was not. He was uninvited.

My purpose is to help you know without a doubt that one day you will go to heaven—to make sure you have the necessary “wedding garment”—which is salvation through Jesus Christ.

Encouragements from the devil to keep you hell bound.

The devil says, “You must be saved because you are a church member, you joined the church.”

The truth: Not everything that is religious is godly and not everything that is spiritual is Christian. The biggest curse that ever came to mankind is religion. You must be a born-again Christian to get to heaven.

The devil says, “You must be saved because you were baptized.”

The truth: The only people for whom baptism is truly meaningful are born-again Christians. If you were not a believer when you went under the water, you went down a dry sinner and came up a wet sinner.

The devil says, “You must be saved because only Christians get their prayers answered.”

The truth: It is scriptural that only Christians have their prayers answered. If you reject Jesus Christ, then you do not have a prayer, because Christ is the only access to God. The only prayer of a non-Christian that God will answer is the prayer of repentance requesting salvation through Jesus Christ. Some think that God has answered their

prayers, but in reality, it was probably an answer to the prayers of a Christian praying for the same thing. Know also that the devil can perform miracles. The devil can so arrange your life to make it appear your prayers are answered.

The devil says, “Well, you know Acts 16:31, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’ If you will just believe that one day you did believe, that’s all you need to do.”

The truth: Intellectual assent or intellectual agreement does not save you. To believe is to adhere to, to commit to, and to trust in.

The devil says, “Well, you must be saved because one day you prayed that prayer the preacher talked about.”

The truth: It is possible to get a person to say yes to man’s plan and no to God. You are not saved by the plan of salvation; you are saved by the Man of salvation. Matthew 15:8 says, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.” It is possible to speak a prayer inviting Christ into one’s heart but have no life changing affect. He must be Lord; He must be Savior.

The devil says, “Well, you must be saved because when you came forward in that service, you cried.”

The truth: You can have many tears and not be born again. You are not saved by remorse; you are saved by repentance.

What are the ways that I can know I am saved?

If you are really saved, you are a new creature in Jesus Christ; old things passed away (see 2 Cor. 5:17). You do not enjoy sin anymore. Read John 5:18; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 John 2:4, 3:8-10.

Closing Illustration

Years ago in London, there was a man by the name of Archibald Boyle, the president of the Hell Club. To be a member of the Hell Club a man had to live an ungodly, unholy, and degrading life.

Archibald Boyle was a handsome man with wavy black hair. His complexion was as clear as the noonday sun. But, he lived a perverted, degraded animal-like existence.

One night after presiding over the Hell Club, he was riding his black horse home. That night he dreamed he was on a black steed. As he was riding, the devil reached up, grabbed the reigns of his horse, and said, “You are going to go to hell with me!” Archibald replied, “Mr. Devil, I do not want to go to hell with you.” In his dream, the

devil grabbed him and took him into the pits of hell. Archibald saw all of his old friends there. He saw one of the women with whom he had committed perverted acts. He saw snakes and scorpions biting into her body. He said to the devil, "Get me away from this woman." She kept screaming to Archibald, "Oh, these are the joys of hell, these are the joys of hell." He then saw one of the men who had been a member of the Hell Club. Oil droplets were falling into his skeletal head. The man was screaming in unbelievable pain, "Oh, these are the joys of hell." Finally Archibald said to the devil, "Devil, get me out of here, I do not want to be here." The devil said, "I will get you out of here, but a year and a day from now you must answer to me." Archibald awakened from his sleep.

The books written about Archibald Boyle said that his cold black hair turned snow white. The complexion of a handsome man was now twisted and broken in acne. He was frozen with fear.

After about six months, he began to get over his dream. At the annual meeting of the Hell Club, Archibald was still in a very shaken condition. When he walked in, the new president was presiding. The president said, "We are glad to have Archibald Boyle back. All of us know the trauma that he has experienced. As you know, it has been a year and a day since we have met together." When Archibald Boyle heard these words, he remembered what the devil had told him. He ran out of the meeting, got on his black horse, and began to ride toward his little cottage. He never made it home. The next morning they found the horse nibbling on the grass. About 50 yards away they found nothing but burned grass. Witnesses said burned to the ground was the shape of a man.

LIFE AND DEATH IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Luke 16:19-31

John Yarbrough

Introduction:

In an attempt to be positive and culturally sensitive, we often hear the gospel reduced to peace, love, and joy. While these are true and a part of the reality of life in Jesus Christ, they do not represent the whole truth. The reality of faith in Christ is a matter of life and death. We must teach the life side of faith, but we must not forsake sounding the alarm and shouting the warning to this generation concerning death and judgment.

While modern advances in technology and moral declines may have changed life in the twenty-first century and while medical advances may prolong life, death is inevitable. Jesus Christ is still the *only* answer to life's ultimate certainty—death. The question is, “Where will you spend eternity—heaven or hell?”

The rich man and Lazarus show an intriguing contrast in this matter of life and death.

- I. Life's Priorities
 - A. What is life about?
 - 1. Life with much (rich man)
 - 2. Life with meaning (Lazarus)
 - B. What do we really have?
 - 1. Everything in life, nothing in death (rich man)
 - 2. Nothing in life, everything in death (Lazarus)
 - C. What matters in life?
 - 1. What we have (rich man)
 - 2. What we are (Lazarus)
- II. Death's Finalities
 - A. What determines destination?
 - 1. What we do with Jesus
 - 2. Our sin issue
 - B. What do we have after death?
 - 1. Both men left everything they owned behind
 - 2. The only thing we take with us into eternity is guilt or grace
 - C. What matters in death?
 - 1. Death makes things we thought were so important in life disappear
 - 2. The things of God become most important to us
- III. God's Realities
 - A. Death is certain.
 - 1. We live as if death is not going to catch us

2. You cannot buy your way out of it
 3. The question is not if, but when
- B. Judgment is sure.
1. There are only two destinations—heaven or hell
 2. Both are eternal
- C. Grace is available and free.
1. As certain as hell and heaven are, God's grace is sufficient and free this side of death.
 2. What we do with this gift determines our eternal destination

Conclusion:

“Life is fragile, handle with prayer.” John 3:16 (NKJV) is so simple and yet so profound. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him *should not perish but have everlasting life.*”

In the biblical example, the rich man had everything but Jesus. In death, having Jesus is *all* that matters. The old saying, “some things never change,” is really true. In a changing culture some things are still certain, heaven or hell, life or death.

Illustration of God's grace: A certain man had a son who died in a war. His son had joined his father in a love for fine art. The son even began painting some during the days of battle. One of his son's fellow soldiers brought the father a painting that the son had done during the days just before his death. The father cherished the painting and hung it prominently with the fine paintings he had collected by renowned artists.

Upon the father's death, an auction of all the fine art was held. The first painting the auctioneer presented was that of the collector's son. The only bidder for this work was the servant of the father who had also loved the son and knew of the father's love for the son. After the bidding closed on this first work, the auctioneer read a letter. “The person who purchases my son's painting gets the rest my collection as a gift. You see, if they love my son, they can have all I own.”

Illustration of our responsibility: April 19, 1995 at 9:02 a.m., the Federal Building in Oklahoma City was bombed resulting in the death of 168 people. Three men were ultimately arrested and tried in this worst act of terrorism ever on United States soil, Timothy McVeigh, Terry Nichols, and Michael Fortier. Timothy McVeigh was found guilty and sentenced to death, Terry Nichols was found guilty as a coconspirator and sentenced to life in prison.

The third defendant, Michael Fortier, was found guilty and sentenced to pay a \$200,000 fine and serve 12 years in prison. He was not found guilty of developing, deploying, or detonating the bomb. His crime was that he knew about the bombing before it occurred and failed to inform anyone.

Are we guilty of knowing the reality of hell and the opportunity of heaven and failing to warn others of the coming judgment?

About the Contributors

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