

23. The Book of Psalms 16:9-11

Lessons From The Grave

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(10-26-25)

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We have come to that time of year when people seem especially fascinated with and even have a celebratory attitude toward—DEATH.

And of course I'm thinking about *Halloween* (Oct. 31); and *The Day of the Dead* (Nov. 1 & 2).

However, most people don't *celebrate* death—they're terrified of death.

As one author said on the subject—

"Death is the specter that haunts the end of the corridor of every person's life. Death is no respecter of persons—it is completely non-discriminating in who it claims. It cares not if a person is small or great, rich or poor, young or old, male or female—no one escapes its grasp.

From the very beginning death has both mystified and terrified man. The Bible tells us that the human race has been taken captive by death which has forced people to live all their lives in bondage to the fear of death.

And yet if death has any benefit here on earth it forces us to grapple with the most important questions about life. Questions like: "Why am I here?", "What is life really all about?", and most importantly, "What happens to me after I die?"

Many centuries ago, Job asked the question, *"If a man dies will he live again?"* (Job 14:14)

That is a question that has burned in the heart of man (unbelievers) ever since the beginning of time.

Since the beginning of humanity, the question that has haunted and hounded man has been, *"What happens after I die? Is death the end or is it merely the doorway into another life?"* But Jesus answered that question once and for all time when He told His disciples, *"Because I live you will live also."* (John 14:19)

That then brings us back to Psalm 16 for today's message—

Psalm 16:9–11 (NKJV)

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest [in the grave] in hope. ¹⁰ For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. ¹¹ You will show me the path of life [resurrection]; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

Commentators have pointed out that even though David was the 'penman' of Psalm 16—it was Jesus who was speaking through him—and especially in verses 9-11. In these verses, Jesus is repeating a promise the Father made to Him about going to the cross, dying for the sins of the world and being buried.

How that the Father promised His Son that He wouldn't leave His soul in Sheol (literally—'the grave')—that He wouldn't allow His earthly body to see corruption (decay) but would raise Him from the dead. And that

afterward, He would receive Jesus back to heaven to sit at His (the Father's) right hand where He would once again experience fullness of joy in His Father's presence!

Now even though Jesus believed His Father's promise—in His humanity there was a certain level of anguish and fear about dying and being delivered from the corruption of the grave.

How do I know this?—Turn to Hebrews 5 and I'll show you:

Hebrews 5:7 (NKJV)

⁷who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,

This is a very powerful and poignant look into Jesus Christ—the Man (the humanity of Christ). This is talking about the night before His crucifixion in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus' prayer that night wasn't that the Father would keep Him from the cross and its physical suffering—He said in John 12:27 that this was the reason He came into the world.

And yes, I believe one the main things that was heavy on His heart was the horror of being separated from His Father for the first time in eternity and having the weight of the whole world's sins laid upon Him—the holy, sinless, and perfectly righteous Son of God.

But as we read in Hebrews 5:7, the thing that He was most terrified of, the thing that prompted His supplication and vehement cries of torment and tears to His Father (so much so that He sweat great drops of blood)—was not to be saved **"from"** death (the cross) but to be saved **"out of death"**—that is that His soul would not be left in hades (Sheol).

How do we know that? In verse 7 we read that Jesus' prayer **"was heard"** (Hebrews 5:7)—in other words, was answered by the Father. Since He *did* die on the cross, this could not have been what He was praying about; for if the Father had answered *that* prayer—Jesus would not have been crucified!

No, the prayer that the Father answered for His Son was the prayer that He would raise Him (Jesus) out of death—out of the grave.

Don't misunderstand, Jesus *did* trust the Father's promise to raise Him from the dead—something He firmly believed and spoke of numerous times during the course of His earthly ministry—

Matthew 12:38-40 (NKJV)

³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." ³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Many believe that when Jesus said that after His crucifixion He would spend *"three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"*—that He was talking about the garden tomb of Joseph of Arimathea where His physical body was going to be laid (Matthew 27:57-60).

However, the garden tomb wasn't located in the *'heart of the earth'*.

➤ *So then what was He talking about?*

He was talking about a place in the center of the earth called *hades* in the New Testament, and *sheol* in the Old Testament—both words mean “*the grave*.”

Don’t confuse *hades* with *hell*—they are not the same place.

Hades is in the center of the earth—whereas *hell* (also known as the ‘*Lake of Fire*’) is in the ‘*outer darkness*.’

Jesus talked about *hades* in Luke 16—

Luke 16:19-23 (NKJV—not a parable)

¹⁹ "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. ²⁰ But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, ²¹ desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ And being in torments in *hades*, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

A. The Punishment Side of Hades—the Temporary Abode of Unbelievers—Luke 16:23a, 24-25

The first thing we learn about *hades* (the grave) is:

1. There is consciousness after death—verses 24-26

Luke 16:24–25 (NKJV)

²⁴ "Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ ²⁵ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.

a. The rich man knew Abraham and Lazarus—verse 24a

Sometimes people ask me, “*Will we know each other in heaven?*” and I tell them, *if unbelievers know each other in hades, then certainly we will know each other in heaven.*

b. The rich man felt thirst and pain—verse 24b

There is a teaching that used to be very popular in Christian circles called ‘*soul-sleep*.’ There is no such thing as ‘*soul sleep*’—this man was fully conscience.

c. The rich man was able to remember his former life—verse 25

One of the things that will make *hades* (and ultimately *hell*) so horrible is to remember all the chances God gave them to be saved but they refused. And those thoughts (among other things) will torment them for all eternity that—they didn’t have to go to *hell*!

2. There are no more chances after death—verse 26

Luke 16:26 (NKJV)

And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

We learn here that hades is divided into 2 compartments—a side for Old Testament believers and one for unbelievers.

- a. **We learn here that the choices we make during our earthly lives** determine our eternal destiny, and once death has taken place, that destiny is permanent (there is no purgatory and chance of parole).
- b. **A person who has gone to hades** (and eventually to hell) will never have another chance to go to heaven, and a person who goes to heaven will never be removed and sent to hell.
- c. **A person who winds up in hades** will remain there until the Great White Throne Judgment of God—Revelation 20:11-15

B. The Paradise Side of Hades—the Temporary Abode of Old Testament Believers—verses 22a, 25

Luke 16:22a, 25 (NKJV)

²² So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom...

²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is *comforted* and you are tormented.'

1. **We learn here that the paradise side of hades called 'Abraham's Bosom' is a place of comfort.**
2. **We learn that this is the place where only Old Testament believers went**—that's why it is called '*Abraham's Bosom*'—because it was a place where those who were the believing children of Abraham went after they died.
3. **We learn from Scripture that this was also a temporary place for Old Testament believers.**

You see, even though this was a place of comfort and paradise—it was still a *prison* because Jesus had not yet died for their sins.

Ephesians 4:8–10 tells us that before Jesus ascended into heaven, He first descended into the lower parts of the earth (hades) and '*set the captives free*' taking those to heaven who were in Abraham's Bosom (their souls).

That is why Abraham's Bosom is empty today because—'*to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord*' (2 Corinthians 5:8) for all those who die in Christ now that Jesus has paid for our sins. However, the torment side of hades is still being populated by the souls of unbelievers who continue to go there when they die.

As I said earlier, they will remain in this place of torment (hades) through the Millennial Kingdom (the thousand-year reign of Christ upon the earth)—until the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15).

Here's something very interesting with regard to the unbelievers who wind up in hades—a great '*revival*' takes place, and they suddenly have a great passion for souls!

Luke 16:27-28 (NKJV)

²⁷ Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house,

²⁸ for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'

It's interesting how in life this man had no thought of spiritual things; he had no desire for the things of God—he was too busy living it up and indulging his flesh while on earth. However, in death, the rich man suddenly became *evangelistic*—he wanted someone to go to his five brothers and warn them against coming to that place of torment.

Please notice that in his prayer for his brothers he didn't say, *"Hey when my brothers get here we'll be able to party..."*

Occasionally you hear an unbeliever say, *"I don't mind if I go to hell—I'd rather be partying in hell with all of my friends than in heaven with all those hypocrites!"* But there is no friendship or *"company"* in hell—hell is a place of torment and loneliness (no fellowship or contact with anyone—an eternal 'solitary confinement').

It is ***not*** an eternal New Year's Eve party where sinners have a good time doing what they used to do on earth—it's a place of perpetual torment resulting in weeping, wailing and gnashing:

Revelation 14:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night...

The idea of a literal place called **hell** where there will be eternal torment is not a very popular idea with most people in our society today.

They ask, *"How can a God of love allow people whom He created in His own image to suffer eternal torment?"*

So, because people can't reconcile the concept of a loving God sending people to hell—they tend to fall into one of three categories with regard to hell:

- a. ***They ignore it*** by living in denial concerning the reality of hell (76% of people believe in heaven but only 6% believe in hell).
- b. ***They try to get around it***—Annihilationism, Universalism. (Both of these are rooted in wishful thinking rather than in biblical truth.)
- c. ***They joke about it***—*"I'd rather be partying in hell with all my friends than bored in heaven with all those hypocrites."*

Seventeen years ago, Cyndi and I spent some time in the Cayman Islands for our 30th anniversary. We actually stayed on Grand Cayman Island where there is a town called "Hell". And it's kind of a novelty thing—the people of the town get a lot of mileage out of it and it's good for tourism—everyone wants to visit 'Hell' and tell their friends they've been to Hell.

They sell Tee-shirts that say things like: *"Let's all party in Hell"; "Go to Hell"; "I live in Hell"; "I've been to Hell and back"*, etc.

The devil loves it when people joke about hell and not take it seriously—but the Bible tells us that hell is real and it's no joke!

Jesus talked about hell more than anyone else; in fact, He talked about it more than He talked about heaven or even love because—He didn't want anyone to go there! He often talked about hell in the

same passage that He talked about heaven—“*And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.*” (Matthew 25:46) In that verse, not only did the Lord Jesus talk about both heaven and hell in the same sentence but—He said that they were both eternal.

Luke 16:27-31 (NKJV)

²⁷ Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house,
²⁸ for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' ²⁹ **Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'**
³⁰ **And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'** ³¹ **But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'** "

The rich man didn't have any faith in the power of the Word of God to save his brothers ("*They have Moses and the prophets* (the Word of God)" but said a miracle would certainly convert them—especially something as spectacular as someone coming back from the dead!

It's interesting that Jesus *did* raise someone from the dead, and his name happened to be 'Lazarus' (not the same Lazarus as here in Luke 16).

Did the Jewish leaders believe? No.

Jesus Himself rose from the dead—do people believe because of it? Some, but not many.

A miracle can bring faith where there is a willingness to believe—a miracle will strengthen faith where it already exists—but a miracle will never force someone to believe who is unwilling and hardhearted.

The idea that we need miracles today to effectively reach the lost, because the simple proclamation of the gospel won't do it is put to rest right here.

Romans 10:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Conclusion

Someday death and hades are going to be cast into the Lake of Fire (Hell)—

Revelation 20:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

The good news is that no one has to go to hell—everyone can go to heaven because Jesus died for the sins of the whole world!

John 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ 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.

When you except Jesus as your Savior, at that moment your name is written in the Book of Life, and you have a place reserved for you in heaven that will never change—

John 5:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

We can now say like David and Jesus with all certainty—

Psalm 16:9–11 (NKJV)

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. ¹⁰ For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. ¹¹ You will show me the path of life; In Your presence *is* fullness of joy; At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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