

Call to Obedience #404
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The Great Divide

by Reimar Schultze

There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell [Hades] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And 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. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou are tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence... (Luke 16:19-35).

Today, with heaviness of heart, I feel constrained to tell you about hell. Many preachers will not talk about this. The devil does not want you to know about it. But Jesus does. He not only preached grace, but also the wrath of God as we see in the story of Lazarus and the rich man. There will be a day of reckoning. On that day, we will either be *cast* into hell or *carried* into heaven (Matt. 13:42-43; Matt. 25:30; Luke 12:1-5). And Jesus wants us to know the sad reality that most people will be *cast* for He said: *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it* (Matt. 7:14; Matt. 22:14; Luke 13:24). We also need to know that the casting into hell will not only be the fate of those cold hearts who reject the Lordship of Christ, but also that of the backsliders, the lukewarm, whom He will spit out of His mouth with utter contempt (Rev. 3:15-16; 2 Pet. 2:20-22). It is not easy to talk about this, but we need to know these facts before it is too late.

And whether we will be *cast* or *carried* depends on us, since Christ has already done His part to make us His very own. Of course, at first we must be born again (John 3:3, 5). But in the end, our rebirth alone will not carry us

through. What we are and who we are at the moment of death will determine our eternal destiny. In short, if we die as rebels, we will be rebels forever. If we die as saints, we shall be saints forever. So it is not what we were 10 days before we die, nor 20 years ago when we were born of God, but what and who we are at our last hour. Jesus said regarding this: *...he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; ...he that is holy, let him be holy still* (Rev. 22:11). Again, what we are at the end will fix our eternal destiny. Of course, we can only be holy by the blood and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. And if we die holy, our rewards will be incredible, even unto the giving of a cup of cold water to a needy one (Rev. 22:12). To God be the glory.

We need to understand that conversion does not give us a permit for a mediocre Christian life, nor does it allow us to trample under foot the blood of the Lamb of God and get by with it (Heb. 10:26-31). Conversion makes us accountable for a life given to God. Starting counts nothing if we do not finish. This is why Jesus said: *But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved* (Matt. 24:13). Again, conversion, if it does not lead to abiding in Christ, will cause us to be *cast* instead of *carried* to our final destination. Jesus said: *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit... If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned* (John 15:5-6). Being *cast* or *carried* is a matter of abiding.

What caused the rich man to go to hell was not that he was rich. Abraham was rich, and so was Job and Joseph of Arimathaea. They all went to heaven. The problem with this rich man was that he did not meet a need at his gate. God wanted him to meet that need. Of course, Jesus brings this out as just one glaring proof that the rich man lived for himself. He rejected God's plan for his life and that sent him to hell. Putting it into Abraham's own words in this story, he said to him: *Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things*. Will that be our story? If so, we will be keeping company with this rich man in hell someday.

We either live for God or for ourselves. It is that simple! Now you say: "Can't I have a little for myself and give the rest to God. Isn't that enough?" Indeed this sounds reasonable in the human mind. But what is reasonable to man is not reasonable to God. God's justice does not spring forth from the earth, but is given to us from heaven. Jesus accepts no part-timers. He said that we cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). King Saul was a part-timer. God rejected him because he spared King Agag and the best of the sheep and the

oxen (1 Sam. 15:9). God is a jealous God. Jesus said: *...whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple* (Luke 14:33). Forsaking most is not acceptable. It has to be all because the one thing that we will not forsake will prevent us from connecting with God. It will prevent us from having spiritual understanding, and from receiving life sustaining waters that flow from the throne of God. Remember, just one disobedience took Adam out of the garden of God's presence.

Any man who does not give his all to God is not worthy to live, and it would have been better for him to never have been born. Any man refusing to give his all to God is in a state of rebellion and adds to the darkness of this world, regardless of his earthly accomplishments. God is gracious to all of us, but He will *not always strive with man* (Gen. 6:3). There is a time when God gives up on man (Rom. 1:26). This is what we see in the story of the rich man. He died, he was buried, *And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom* (Luke 16:23).

Now then, notice what added to his agony was that he saw the man he despised and ignored, now living in bliss and glory. He saw the tables were now turned. What we see here is a man, who once denied a beggar a crumb, begging for a drop. (Please note that when Jesus told this story, it being before His resurrection, no human had ever entered heaven as yet. All saints up to the resurrection went to a place called paradise, a temporary place. It is here where Abraham was. It is here where the righteous thief, dying with Jesus, remained until the resurrection day).

In the ensuing conversation between the rich man and Abraham, the wickedness of the rich man's heart is more fully revealed. Many look like people of notable goodness, of dignity and of impeccable good manners. But my friend, there will be a time when the hidden darkness and stubbornness of their hearts will be fully laid bare: their immense wickedness in that they have not lived for Christ. And so it was with the rich man. Being tormented, he had the audacity to ask Abraham to send Lazarus into the fires of hell in order to serve him a drop of water. Preposterous! My friend, mercy stops at the gates of hell. The bridge of grace for the rich man to heaven was no longer there. Abraham said: *...between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence* (Luke 16:26). Forget about anyone ever getting out of hell. Forget it.

Upon hearing this, the rich man made a second request. He did not care about Lazarus, but he had compassion for his brothers, only for his brothers.

This is also wickedness. For divine compassion is no respecter of persons. So, he tries to command Lazarus to preach to his brothers. This second request is also denied. Abraham's response is blunt and simple: *...They have Moses and the prophets...* (Luke 16:29). In other words, they have the Bible. The Bible has the words of life. We will be judged by what is in the Bible.

The rich man rejects Abraham's words and now he petitions Abraham for a miracle of a resurrection for his brothers to see so that they can believe and repent. My friend, Capernaum had more miracles than any town, but she would not repent. (Here you also learn that the rich man knew about repentance all along, but refused to do it). This request for a miracle was also denied. The story ends with these final words of Abraham: *And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead* (Luke 16:31).

There is a hell. There is a great divide between it and heaven. There is no exit from hell. It is removed from God's mercy and love. It is a place of everlasting torment. Justice demands such incredible suffering for the rejection of such a great salvation offered by the Son of God (Heb. 2:2-3). Jesus wants you to know this because He loves you. He wants you in heaven with Him forever.

Dear one, may your soul be so much in unity with God that the angels will not just carry you, but that they will carry you with shouts of joy into the arms of your loving Savior, bringing others with you.

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