

Title: **SEVEN LESSONS**
LEARNED TOO LATE

Subject: *The Rich Man and Lazarus*

Text: Luke 16:19-31

Introduction:

In Luke 16:19-31 our Lord is **continuing to address religious Pharisees**, those who justify themselves before men. He said to them, in verse 15, — “*Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.*”

These are the men to whom the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son was spoken in chapter 15. In that parable they are described as the elder brother who despised the goodness and grace of God by which poor sinners are saved. They scorned the Lord Jesus saying, “*This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them*” (15:2). Our Lord’s message in Luke 16:19-31 is specifically addressed to all who attempt to justify themselves before men, to all who

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despise the grace of God in Christ. **Let's read the story together.**

(Luke 16:19-31) “There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: (20) And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, (21) And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. (22) 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; (23) And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (24) 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. (25) 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 art

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tormented. (26) 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. (27) Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: (28) For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. (29) Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. (30) And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. (31) And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

A GREAT CHANGE

The first thing we see in this parable is the fact that **eternity brings about a great change**. Things were not the same for the rich man after he died, and things were not the same for Lazarus (vv. 19-24).

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(Luke 16:19-24) “There was a certain rich man (**a certain, notable, distinguished man, who thought himself rich before God and was highly esteemed as such**), which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day (**a man who never had a trouble in his soul**): (20) And there was a certain (**poor, helpless**) beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores (**full of trouble**), (21) And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. (22) 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 was forgotten**); (23) And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (24) 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.”

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What great changes are made when breath is taken from our bodies! Here are two men. One was very rich, and the other very poor. The one “*fared sumptuously every day.*” The other was a “*beggar...full of sores,*” who had nothing that he could call his own. Yet, **it was Lazarus, the poor beggar, who possessed all things,** who was born of God, and had true riches in Christ. **The rich man,** though clothed in purple and fine linen, (long robes, showing himself to be a distinctly righteous man) **had nothing.** Lazarus, the poor man lived by faith, and walked in the steps of Abraham. The rich man was a thoughtless, self-righteous, selfish worldling, dead in trespasses and sins. While on earth, the rich man was at the top of the world and Lazarus on the bottom. Now, Lazarus is above in glory and the rich man below in hell.

We ought never to imagine that men are blessed because they are wealthy, in good health, and appear to be happy. That which appears to be the blessing of God is often his curse. And **we must**

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never imagine that those who are poor, plagued with disease, and troubled are unbelieving and cursed. Earthly woe is often an indication of divine favor.

(Jeremiah 9:23-24) “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: (24) But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD.”

Wealth and worldly honor are not marks of God’s favor. Poverty and adversity are not marks of God’s displeasure. Those whom God justifies and glorifies are seldom the rich and honorable of this world.

ONE END

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Learn this, too — **death is the common end of all men.** The trials of the “*beggar*” and the sumptuous living of the “*rich man*” both ceased at the appointed hour. At God’s appointed time both men died. Both went to the grave. — “*All go to one place*” (Ecclesiastes 3:20).

You and I are dying creatures. Few like to think about it, but it is a fact. — Soon we must die!

(Hebrews 9:27) “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”

Death is the one thing common to all. Yet, most people eat, and drink, and talk, and plan, as if they were going to live in this world forever. How foolish! **Someone once said,** “He that would live well should often think of his last day, and make it his company-keeper.”

“Please view my tomb as you pass by,
For as you are, so once was I;
And as I am soon you shall be. —,

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So make your plans to follow me.”

“*The beggar died,*” and his pains, sorrows and needs died. — “*The rich man also died,*” and his sumptuous living, all his delight, all his wealth died! — “*Prepare to meet thy God!*”

BLESSED PROSPECT

This parable is also intended to assure us that **for God’s elect the death of this body is a blessed prospect.** In that hour all men dread believers are specially and tenderly cared for by God. The Lord Jesus tells us that when Lazarus died he “*was carried by angels to Abraham’s bosom.*”

I find something very comforting in this expression. We know very little, if anything, about the true, inward experiences of dying people. **But this much is certain** — “*Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord!*” — “*To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord!*” — “*As for me, I will behold*

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thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”

Those who sleep in Jesus are in good keeping. They are not disembodied spirits, floating around in the atmosphere. **While their bodies sleep in the earth, awaiting the resurrection, they are at rest among friends in Abraham’s bosom, at the feet of Christ, the Lamb upon his throne.** They have no want of any kind. Best of all, Paul tells us they are “*with Christ*” (Philippians 1:23). Truly, for the believer, “*to die is gain.*” No wonder Paul wrote as he did about things temporal and things eternal in 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:9.

(2 Corinthians 4:16-18) “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. (17) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; (18) While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are*

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temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.”

(2 Corinthians 5:1-9) “For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2) For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: (3) If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. (4) For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. (5) Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. (6) Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (7) (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) (8) We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. (9) Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may

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be accepted of him.”

THE END

Here we are allowed to see the ultimate end of us all, the righteous and the unrighteous, the believing and the unbelieving. Soon, very soon, you and I will join one of these two men. We will join Lazarus in heavenly glory or the rich man in hell. This is the end of all men. May God give us wisdom and grace to lay to our hearts the things he lays before us in this portion of his Word.¹

Lazarus died, and was carried up to heaven. Chosen, redeemed and born of God, he entered into glory. But *“the rich man also died!”* What became of him?

“In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments!” Here, the Lord God allows us to look beyond the grave. He

¹ (Ecclesiastes 7:2-4) *“It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. (3) Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. (4) The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.”*

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allows us to look into hell itself. He shows us the pains, feelings and desires of an eternally lost, damned soul in hell, one who is forever shut up in hell under the torment of God's infinite, holy, justice and wrath.

TRUST CHRIST

Are you ready to die? Are you prepared to meet your God? Oh, how I pray that God will grant this very hour that you may flee his wrath and find refuge in Christ! How I pray that he will save you from the wrath to come! How I pray you will not find your place at last with the damned in hell!² But, **if you would escape the fires of hell, you must give up and forsake your imaginary, pretended goodness.**

- That which we think is goodness in ourselves is only the self-delusion of self-righteousness.
- That which we perceive as goodness in others is the biased perception of people who think

² Most people think nothing of saying to another, "Go to hell." — If they had any idea what they were saying, I think that even the most profane man on the face of the earth would tremble at the thought of wishing such a horrible thing upon another.

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someone must be good because we have benefited in some way from their kindness, love and generosity to us.

- The Word of God declares, “*There is none righteous...There is none that doeth good, no, not one*” (Romans 3:10-12). In fact, even David, the man after God’s own heart, said to the Lord, his God, “*My goodness extendeth not unto thee*” (Psalm 16:2).

Your goodness will never take you to heaven. Your goodness is nothing but horrible sin under a pretty mask, hatred for God under a cloak of decency and putrifying rottenness under the cover of religious perfume.

If you and I would be saved, if we would stand accepted before God and be accepted by him, in his presence forever, we must have a goodness, a righteousness that is worthy of God’s approval, — a goodness that is worthy of God!

- A religious decision will do you no good.
- Religious morality will profit you nothing.

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- Saying, “I believe in Jesus,” will not save you.
- Saying “the sinners’ prayer” will only add to your condemnation.

If you would be saved you must know the Lord God himself. — *“This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”* You and I cannot be saved unless we know Christ, unless we are made to be the very righteousness of God in Christ. You know that what I am telling you is true. Your conscience verifies these things. You may not like them. You may suppress them until you perish in hell. But you cannot deny them. **This is what God demands from you and me.**

- Perfect Satisfaction – Atonement.
- Perfect Righteousness – Obedience (Matthew 5:20).

We cannot give him either. These things are to be had only by the obedience and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the sinners’ Substitute. They are ours only if we trust the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Trust him now. Oh, may God be pleased to grant you faith in Christ!

Sooner or later, you will learn that what I am preaching to you is true. I wonder if you will learn it before it is too late. Most do not. **In Luke 16, we read about a man who learned everything too late.** He did not learn the things I am telling you now, until he was in hell.

LESSONS LEARNED IN HELL

The passage before us has a very sobering distinction that separates it from all others. This is the only place in the entire Bible (the only place in the world) in which we learn anything at all about the thoughts and emotions of the damned in hell.

Here are seven things that old Dives learned. But he learned them too late. He learned them in hell! I pray that you will not learn them too late.

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1. As soon as he died, this rich man discovered that **DEATH DOES NOT END ALL.**

“If a man die, shall he live again?” Indeed, we shall. We all have an immortal soul that will live on forever, after our bodies are in the grave. Will you spend eternity in the bliss and glory of heaven or in the torments of the damned in hell?

(Mark 8:36-37) “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (37) Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

What a meeting place hell will be!

- Lost Neighbors
- A Lost Daughter and Her Lost Mother
- A Lost Son and His Lost Father
- A Lost Church Member and His Lost Pastor

2. This poor soul also learned that **THERE IS A REAL PLACE CALLED “HELL.”**

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Hell is as real as Danville, Kentucky. The same Inspired Book that tells us about heaven and the eternal bliss of the redeemed tells us about hell and the eternal misery of the damned.

The Lord Jesus tells us plainly that after death the rich man was “*in hell — tormented with fire.*” What a fearful picture he gives us. This lost soul in hell longed and begged for a drop of “*water to cool his tongue.*” He was tormented in flames. There was “*a great gulf fixed*” between him and Abraham, which could not be crossed.

J. C. Ryle wrote, “There are few more dreadful passages perhaps in the whole Bible than this. And He from whose lips it came, be it remembered, was one who delighted in mercy!”

I do not know where it is, and I cannot imagine what it is, but hell is a real place. The rich man found out too late that **hell is not a myth**. Hell is a place of...

- Unquenchable Fire!
- Undying Worms!

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- Inescapable Torment!
- Everlasting Darkness!
- Eternal, Conscious Separation!
- Unending Hopelessness!

“To say Hell is a horrible place is an understatement. Hell is the very presence of God and His wrath without Christ as a mediator. Hell is the ‘place’ where men face God without a savior, without anybody to pay their debt of sin. If you thought Satan’s minions were scary, imagine being face to face with all God’s wrath with no Jesus in sight.”

—— *Nathan Terrell*

3. Lifting up his eyes in hell, this rich man found out what he tried his best to ignore all his life, that **A HOLY GOD MUST AND WILL PUNISH SIN.**

It is written, “*The soul that sinneth, it shall die!*” God is so inflexibly just and holy that when he found sin upon his own dear Son he poured out his infinite wrath upon him. And he who punished his Son for

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sin will certainly punish you for sin, if your sin is not removed by his Son.

4. The rich man found out that **HELL IS A PLACE OF ENDLESS TORMENT.**

(Luke 16:23-24) “And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (24) 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.”

Dives cried, “*I am tormented in this flame!*” Hell is a place of lust and desire unfulfilled, a place of mental, moral and physical agony. When I try to imagine what the torments of the damned in hell must be, I am shocked by what I know, and quake because I realize that I know is nothing in comparison with what those torments actually are! Unspeakable torments! Endless torments! All I can do is cry,

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“Flee! Flee! Flee away to Christ, lest you fall into hell and the torments of the damned!”

THE NAMES

What dreadful names are used to describe that place called “hell” in the Book of God!

- It is called a place where the worm dieth not (Mark 9).
- It is called a burning oven (Malachi 4:1).
- It is called a fiery-furnace (Matthew 13).
- It is called the bottomless pit, the unquenchable fire, fire and brimstone, hell fire, the lake of fire, devouring fire, everlasting fire, eternal fire, a stream of fire (Revelation 21), and “*the second death.*”

THE TORMENTS

The torments of the damned are unthinkable. In hell you will have full sight and knowledge of your condition. All your senses will be fully awakened. **You will have a full sight and knowledge of your**

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wasted life, from first to last. — “*Son, remember!*”
(v. 25).

The guilt of all your sin will lay heavily upon your soul. — There will be no pleasure in sin for a season in hell, but only torment. Who can imagine the agony of a tormented conscience, fully awake! It will be a worm that dieth not and a fire that is not quenched forever!

When God lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, when the hail of fire and brimstone sweeps away your refuge of lies, when the waters of God’s horrible wrath overflow your hiding place, and your covenant with death is disannulled, your covenant with death shall not stand. When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then you shall be trodden down by it (Isaiah 28:17-18). — Then shall be brought to your never ceasing remembrance the fact that you are in hell, that you are damned because you despised Christ and the gospel, because you refused to hear his word of grace, because you rejected that one Foundation laid

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in Zion. **What a vexation your awakened memory will be to your lost soul forever in hell!** — (Isaiah 28:14-19; Proverbs 1:23-33)

(Isaiah 28:19) “From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only *to* understand the report.”

(Proverbs 1:23-33) “Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. (24) Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; (25) But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: (26) I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; (27) When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. (28) Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: (29) For that they hated knowledge, and did

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not choose the fear of the LORD: (30) They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. (31) Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. (32) For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. (33) But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”

Though he was forever confined to hell’s dark prison of torment, old Dives saw Lazarus in the bliss of heaven’s glory. Yes, the damned in hell see their friends, families, neighbors, mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, children and those they despised on earth in the kingdom of heaven, and themselves cast out forever (Luke 13:28).

(Luke 13:28) “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out.”

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In hell your only company will be the damned — the damned angels — the damned sons of men — the damned like yourself — A vast company of men and demons who hate you as fully as you hate them, screeching and roaring so insidiously that they drive you mad, mad forever, and your madness is madness without hope of relief!

In hell God Almighty will lay upon you all the fulness of his unmitigated wrath, without mercy. He will punish you with everlasting destruction from his presence and glory (2 Thessalonians 1:9). — In this condition you must be forever!

(Revelation 20:6) “Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Perhaps the greatest torment of all is what is described in the last line of Luke 16:23. — **In hell,**

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old Dives “seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

- He “seeth” Abraham — All the blessedness of covenant grace fulfilled.
- He “seeth” him “afar off.”
- He “seeth” “Lazarus in his bosom.” — Possessing and enjoying all the blessings of Covenant Grace!

5. In hell this poor, lost soul learned, but learned too late that **CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY OF SALVATION.** — The rich man’s riches, religion and works were of no value to him in hell. Missing Christ, he lost all!

Illustration: *Voltaire’s Son*

“There’s nothing to hang on to!”

6. In hell the rich man learned, but learned too late, **EXCEPT A MAN REPENT HE WILL SURELY PERISH.** — In hell this man realized that without repentance there is no salvation (v. 30).

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(Luke 16:30) “And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.”

• **In hell he saw what matters!**

7. One more thing that this rich man learned in hell, but learned too late, is this — **NO ONE CAN EVER BE SAVED WITHOUT HEARING AND BELIEVING THE GOSPEL** (vv. 28-31).

(Romans 10:17) “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

(1 Peter 1:23-25) “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (24) For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: (25) But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto

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you.”

(Luke 16:28-31) “For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. (29) Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. (30) And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. (31) And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

Be wise now, and believe the gospel. Trust Christ, lest you also perish forever under the wrath of God. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and live forever. If you choose not to believe on the Son of God, soon you will find yourself in hell, suffering the unspeakably horrible and just wrath of almighty God. Oh, God help you now, to trust his Son!

Amen.

¹ Danville — Sunday Morning — June 2, 2013
Kansas City, Missouri — SAT — June 8, 2013

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Reading: *Luke 15:1-32*

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