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## SPEAKERS

Carl Robbins

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Carl Robbins 00:01

Hope you have your Bible open to Luke 16. For we will be looking at it in some great depth this morning. Our Lord, being a masterful teacher communicates several vital truths that you need to know via a parable. If you look at Luke 16, there's a parable inside our context. And the Lord Jesus through an economy of speech only has two main characters in this parable. The first is the wealthy man. And this, by the way is the connection to the preceding context. If you will notice in verse 13 and 14, Jesus is talking to the Pharisees, who we are told have great wealth. And just like them, this man in the parable was a lover of money, and was a Jewish man by evidences that will point to in just a moment, and was self indulgent to the extreme. Jesus gives a gripping description of this man, the wealthy man in his lifestyle. Purple was the color of royalty and this man dressed according to verse 19, like a king, but not only did he dress exquisitely, we're told that he ate sumptuously. Every meal was a banquet. He was a hedonist. And next comes our second main character. Look at verse 20. By the starkest contrast, were introduced a beggar named Lazarus. This is not to be confused with the man Jesus raised from the dead in John 11. His daily existence is pitiful. He's so sick and emaciated that according to verse 20, he has to be laid at the gate of this wealthy man since he's too weak to walk. His sickness and malnutrition have left him according to verse 20, with open and running sores, showing that his body's wracked with infection and pain. And Luke, the author, a physician gives a careful account of the man's physical and medical condition. That Lazarus is so gripped with hunger that he would have given anything not that he had anything to give, but he would have given anything for just a few crumbs, the scraps from the table of the rich man and to complete the picture of degradation and poverty, the local dogs, the stray dogs are strolling up and licking his open sores. And Lazarus is so powerless, so weak, he can't even lift his hand to shoo them away, according to verse 21. He too is a Jewish man. His name Lazarus means God has been my helper. The Rabbis of Jesus day had a popular assessment. They said if a man lived in one of three situations, he had no life at all. First of all, if your food if your life depended on food from another man's table, you didn't have a life. Second, if you were ruled by your wife, you didn't have a life. And third, if your body was covered with sores. Well, Lazarus said two of these conditions. Each day the wealthy man according to our Lord's parable passed by Lazarus, and the wealthy man's perfumed aroma collided with the beggar's stench. Occasionally their eyes would meet. But with no greeting from the wealthy man, no offers of help, and obviously no feelings of compassion on the part of the wealthy man. He would even

walk past Lazarus on his way to the synagogue. Or some days he would hear the readings, perhaps from the Book of Amos, where God denounces the exploitation of the poor and the downtrodden and the ignoring of their needs. And if the wealthy man wants to be generous, and minister to the poor, all he has to do step outside his front door, one is right outside his gate laying on the sidewalk but he passes by every day. So Jesus establishes at the beginning of our parable in the minds of his hearers, the starkest contrast. So now as we prepare to hear this parable, let's seek the Lord's help. As we prepare to hear Christ's powerful teaching. Oh sovereign Lord, we counted a great privilege to hold in our hands the complete, perfect, inspired, powerful living word. We ask now as we hear that you would guide us in the right understandings and write them upon our hearts. Let us hear the warnings and the promises of your word. Keep us from drowsiness and the distractions the evil one will surely raise. Give us attentiveness and humility under your word we pray in Jesus name, amen.. A few basic assertions and points you should know from this brilliant text. The first is, death comes to everyone, rich and poor. Look at verse 22, where we're simply told the beggar died. The rich man also died. If there's an incontrovertible truth in this life it is this. Everyone in this room will die. I can say with absolute certainty, you will die one day. For many of you, I will stand at your grave side and I will say your name and then say Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Hebrews 9:27 says it's appointed or decreed or ordained for men to die once and after this the judgment. Death is going to happen to everyone in this room, God has willed it to be so. Your parents, your children, your husband, your wife, your brothers and sisters, your elders and deacons, it's going to happen. And so it's important that as we look at what it is that spurs this parable by Jesus, we think deeply for just a moment about death, that's spoken of in verse 22. And define it. At the close of Ecclesiastes Solomon gives us a good estimation of what death is in Ecclesiastes 12, he says, then the dust will return to the earth as it was and the spirit will return to God who gave it. In other words, physical death is the termination of physical life by the separation of the soul from the body. Let me say that again. So you can get that clearly in mind. Physical death is the separation of the soul from the body. The key idea here and we see it in our text is, is separation. In the case of both the rich man and Lazarus their bodies are laid in the ground but their souls ascend. The time, of course of physical death, is always determined by a sovereign God. We're told in Job 14, that man's days are determined his number of months are with the Lord. God's sovereign plan extends to the minute timing of the instance he calls us to glory or damnation. We speak often of accidental deaths or unexpected deaths. But there is no such thing God is firmly in control of the timing of life and death. Physical death, of course, I have to remind you only happens once, remember the words of Scripture it is appointed for men once to die. This understanding is foundational when you hear stories of those who say I died, went to heaven and came back and this is refuted resolutely and firmly throughout the scriptures. Paul, for example, says in 2 Corinthians 5 to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. In our text, look at verse 22. We're told of the death of poor Lazarus, no surprise, he didn't have any of the means that are needed to prolong his life. But then we're also told that the death of the wealthy man, but wait, can't all of his wealth and his connections - can't he have some means to stave off death? No, because death is the great leveler and equalizer. Black and white, educated and illiterate, poor and wealthy, male and female, morbidly obese or marathon runner. All must die. Wealth, good diets, exercise can never prolong your life or prevent your demise. We're told that the wealthy man was buried in verse 22. You know, I'm sure the funeral was opulent. The family could afford the best arrangements and professional mourners in the best music and the most expensive burial spices and the man was laid out in his finest, most elegant suit of clothing. Everyone was there. We're not told that Lazarus was buried. Simply that the angels came and took his soul to Abraham's bosom. His body may have been tossed in the common graves that were reserved for paupers. No service, no words, no mourners. No one even noticed or missed him. But their similarity ends in their common experience of death. We are told if you'll look at verse 22, that

the poor man went to Abraham's bosom. Now this term, let me define it for just a second. This is a term that the New Testament uses to explain to where the souls not the bodies the bodies of the righteous, of course, are in the grave. But the souls of the righteous are. It's also called the intermediate state by theologians or by Paul the naked state simply means that place Abraham's bosom that place until the return of Christ where the souls of believers are. And we're told in verse 23, look carefully there that the wealthy man when he dies, goes to Hades, where the souls of the reprobate are taken while their bodies to are in the ground awaiting the day of resurrection. And then notice, with a great affirmation stated one of the great doctrinal affirmations in verse 26 But there's a great gulf fixed between these two locations. There is no destination midway between the two eternal locations. No purgatory, that's a sad fiction created by the sorely misguided Roman Catholic Church. There is no movement between the two - no transfer no bridges. Hell has no exit. I'm fascinated by bridges. Sandy and I spent an entire vacation listening to David McCullough, our favorite historian who has just recently deceased, his book on the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge. I actually have favorite bridges. The Chain Bridge in Budapest, Hungary, spans the Danube River between Buda and Pest, built in the 1840s on each end are huge stone lions guarding the bridge. I think it's the most attractive bridge in the world. Or the Cooper River bridge that connects Charleston to Mount Pleasant two and a half miles long. Eight lanes of car traffic. It's made to withstand another Hurricane Hugo or an earthquake that's over 7.4 on the Richter scale, the bridge towers shoot up to 600 feet high. Or the Coronado Bridge that connects Coronado Island to San Diego two miles long looks like a roller coaster for cars is 200 feet above the water to allow a US naval aircraft carrier to pass under. These bridges are all marvels of human ingenuity. No man though, nor any firm. Not even the Army Corps of Engineers can build a bridge that connects hell and heaven. That's what's said in verse 26. So Abraham explains to the wealthy man now - now get the spatial picture here is Abraham's bosom with poor Lazarus. Now, in over here in Hades is the wealthy man in torment it is said to us three times. Abraham explains across this gulf that he cannot aid him since they're sovereignly established boundaries. God has so designed the afterlife that the unrighteous and the righteous do not mix. The antithesis is made clear and permanent. So by the time an unbeliever gets there to Hades, it will be too late to be saved, too late to hear the gospel, too late to repent too late to beg for mercy, and too late to avoid the everlasting wrath of God. This fact that it's too late, will daily compound the misery of the damned knowing they have no hope, no way out. And so every missed opportunity, every gospel sermon that they ignored, every foolish decision will be relived and lamented 1000 times and the mantra of Hades will be "if only, if only" because there will be no after death conversions. Hades of course, is a place of separation. Separation from believing family members separation from all holiness and truth separation from grace from happiness. These two men, the rich man and Lazarus had lived right next to one another. But now they're separated forever. It's the same with some of you. You may even share a house or a bed or a row of a pew right now with someone in this life but you'll be separated from them forever. Unless you repent and believe the gospel your last embrace on this earth with a mother or a grandfather or a sister will be your last forever. My unbelieving friend this is why we proclaim with such passion to you here and now. The day will soon come when I nor far better preachers than me will be able to preach the gospel to you. There's only one bridge that you should care about. And that is the one bridge between sinful men and a holy God. That bridge is the mediator Jesus Christ, who by sinless life and substitutionary death for sinners has made a way to Paradise. And by the way this text in parabolic form, is one of the rare New Testament texts. Let me just add in a warning against it. John Calvin has forever inoculated me against speculation and saying more than the Bible says, And in preferring my own odd theories. But the Bible is very clear. This is one of the very few places and so nail this down from this text. This speaks about the condition and the feelings of men after death. And notice what the most used term is in all the New Testament to describe the state of lost men. Look at verse 23. And

then to verse 24. Then in verse 28, and you notice the reused term - torment. You can speculate all you want, but there's something we know incontrovertibly from Holy Scripture. And that is, the one thing that can be said for certain about the state of the unrepentant is they'll be forever and torment. And then there's the eternal state of the elect. Jesus paints in this parable, a beautiful picture of what happens upon the death of believers in this life. Apparently, Lazarus had no friends to care for him. But now look at verse 22. He's greeted by angels, who gently escort him even carry him to a blessed place. Hebrews 1 tells us that angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who inherit salvation. And here we see them doing just that. They take Lazarus in verse 23, to the company of Abraham. It's interesting that Abraham figures most prominently, in that place of rest for believers souls until the resurrection since we're told in Romans 4, Abraham is the Father of all who believe it makes sense for believers, to be with him when they die. The idea that you see here of Lazarus is now he has peace and satisfaction. We were told in verse 25, look at this glorious word. He's comforted, even honored. Lazarus in our parable suffered dishonor, neglect, abuse, deprivation in this life, but he enjoys the highest honors in the next life. Now, as an aside, notice what the wealthy man's name it's not told us. But Lazarus, his name is known in heaven. He may be a nobody on earth, but his name is well known by God and the Holy Angels. And I would remind you what physical death is. We've defined it already from Ecclesiastes, but physical death is first of all, a homegoing. Doesn't Jesus say the night before the cross in John 14, I have prepared many mansions I'm going to prepare a place for you. This is why Paul can say in 2 Corinthians 5 we are of good courage and prefer to be absent from the body and to be home, at home with the Lord. The dead in Christ are not homeless, or wandering. They're at home. But as well, physical death for a believer is not just a home going, it's a it's a cleansing from all sin. Hebrews 12 says, speaks of the spirits of just men made perfect. It's a state of absolute holiness. John writes in Revelation 21, that nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying shall ever come in. It's a place a state of transcendent purity. Everyone who enters has been totally washed of sin. The one thing we can say about heaven is there's no more sin there. And so instead of speculating and making up silly ideas about heaven, you should set your feet down on this. It is a home, it is a place of no more sin. Isn't it true for every true believer that our greatest burden and sadness is our remaining sin? But in heaven, my friend you will never sin again and word thought or deed by omission or commission never again will we fail Christ or bring harm or sadness to anyone. Never again will we need to ask forgiveness. Our daily petition in the Lord's Prayer deliver us from evil will be at last answered forever. And this holiness is an indefectible holiness. It cannot recede or be lost. That's why Paul writes those glorious words in 1 Thessalonians 4, thus we shall ever be with the Lord. Do you love holiness now? We're repeatedly commanded to be holy as I am holy. Does the prospect of an eternity of purity, delight you? Or are your joys all entirely carnal? There's more that we can say about death. Death is according to Psalm 116:15. It's a precious thing. It's precious in the sight of the Lord. It also death also brings a new understanding. In 1 Corinthians 13. Paul speaks of a time when we will see face to face and not be marked by weak cognitive abilities, but then we shall know we're known. And some of the best of all statements about heaven, it's just better. Paul in Philippians 1 discusses which is better, to live in his current state or to die and go be with Christ. And he quickly concludes that to go and be with Christ is far better. That's why John Calvin said, Oh, what a sad sentence it would be, if we were bound to live in this poor world forever. Of course, I wouldn't be telling you the whole story. If I didn't tell you the key feature of Abraham's bosom or the intermediate state. It's worship. In Revelation 5, we have that, that picture of the eternal Sabbath. You have the huge crowd singing praise to Christ, multi ethnic crowd, people from every nation, tribe and tongue, every language. So let me ask you again. Do you love the gathering of the Lord's people now for worship? If you don't love to worship Christ now what makes you think you will love it then? I remember the first conversation that I had about the eternal state of one of my flock, I was in

my first church, I was very poorly doing youth ministry and I was trying to figure out where all my kids were, and there's one girl in the youth group that I hadn't seen for the first five or six weeks I'd been at the church and I saw her mom and I said to tell me about your daughter. And she said, Oh, my daughter is great. She's a believer and all that she just doesn't love to come to worship. Because I was about six weeks out of seminary, I was a little too blunt. I said she's not a believer. Because if she were she would love to worship. Richard Baxter, the old Puritan said, the liveliest sign of heaven upon earth that I know is when God's people join together in heart and voice to praise the king. Asked by one of his congregants about those who prefer not to worship Baxter replied, a hog would be more fit to be a professor of philosophy than they are fit for heaven. Then more seriously, Jesus speaks in the same parable about the eternal state of the Damned. He speaks of Hades here, the state before the resurrection when unbelievers are then cast body and soul into hell forever. Whether it be Hades or hell, it's really disappeared from the vocabulary of evangelicalism, unbeliever speak flippantly of hell and talk to folks going there. But Bible believing Christians seem ultra-reticent to broach the subject, which is more than strange, since Jesus spoke about two subjects more than any other - money and hell. How do you describe the state of the reprobate. Too late. Regret. Torment. By the way, that's the favorite descriptive term of our Lord. As I said, look at Verse 23, 24, 25, and 28, Jesus keeps using this term of torment. When he speaks of torment, it's a strong word, the most intense, throbbing, pulsating pain you've ever known, is a day in the park comparatively. The fires of hell communicate a direct sense of the Holy Wrath of God's anger at a person's sin in that hell will that fire will never be quenched. But let me add an adjective to torment. It's an inescapable torment. Let me be even more biblical. It's an inescapable, increasing torment. Just as heaven is the progressive enjoyment of God and His people, so Hades is the progressively increasing agony and pain and torment of the damned. Hell is not remedial. It's not rehabilitative, it's punitive. Notice what the rich man tries to do. Look carefully at his interaction. Here's the wealthy man in Hades across the great gulf fixed and he is speaking obviously, I know it's a parable. It's not a literal text. It's parabolic. The rich man is speaking to father Abraham across that great gulf. And notice what he calls him three times. Look at the language in verse 24, and 27 and 30. He calls him, Father Abraham. You notice what this man is doing. He's trying to appeal to his covenantal heritage. He's a Jew, and he's saying, Father Abraham, doesn't this count for something that I can speak to you as, as part of my covenantal heritage? He's so deluded even thinks he's in good standing with Abraham. Abraham is actually quite tender in his response. He acknowledges their ethnic kinship. Look what he does in verse 25. He responds by calling him son, meaning a descendant of his. But this hypocrite in Hades, the rich man who's never prayed before now begins to pray. But look at what prayers from Hades are. Look carefully. Still no repentance. Still no reflection on why he's in Hades. Look what he wants in verse 24, when he begins to beseech father Abraham, he wants any measure of relief. He would be thrilled to have one who had formerly ignored every day, Lazarus, to come and dip his finger in a bucket of water and just cool his tongue. He doesn't ask for access to a swimming pool, or a pitcher of ice water or even a cup. He wants a drop - just anything. He needs relief. Just a moment's respite from his agony is only once. But there'll be none. And notice how he thinks of Lazarus, he still thinks of him as his waterboy. Lazarus was still nothing more than a prop to him, just scenery. And Abraham tells the rich man why his first request for even the smallest relief would be refused. Because he had lived for the good things in this earthly life. He'd idolized them so he'd already gotten his fill. He had his reward, then, God has no mercy for those who reject his son. And notice what else he wants. Look at verse 27. He wants his brothers to be evangelized. He didn't say notice, "Well, I'm glad my my brothers are coming here, we'll have a great time together", you'll hear ever so often fools, who will say, "Oh, hell won't be so bad. I have great company". My friend, there'll be no enjoyment in Hades. Nothing to mediate the torture. It's not an eternal drunken Mardi Gras party. Where sinners do what they did on Earth. And notice something. People in hell may have a concern for the lost, but

they can do nothing about it. The saddest word that Abraham uses is stuck right there in verse 25. It's the word. Remember. Abraham reminds him of the choices he made during his life, this word will haunt the damned forever. You will remember, over and over all the times you were told that Jesus is the only way. You'll remember all the occasions on which you were called to faith and repentance. You'll remember all the tragic choices you made to pursue the things of this world instead of pursuing salvation and godliness. Hell will be constant confrontation, by your own conscience and memory. And then we are told something profoundly fascinating, theological, and even directive for our worship and our ministry here. Look at verses 27 through 31. I want you to carefully consider what's being stated by Jesus in these verses. It's a repudiation. Listen to me carefully. You may even want to write this down and then remember it every Sunday. It's a repudiation of the spectacular, and an affirmation of God's appointed and ordinary means of grace. You see, the wealthy man is convinced that his five brothers, though unconverted will be swayed and moved to saving faith if something phenomenal happens. Here's what he has in mind. Look at verse 28, verse 30, here's what this silly, wealthy, reprobate has in mind. Would you just send Lazarus back from the dead and preach to my five brothers? And notice something. The rich man he at least has this much, right. He's a believer in preaching. Good for him. But he has a special preacher in mind. Lazarus, wouldn't he be an arresting minister coming out of the grave and all. He thinks his family needs a preacher. But he thinks it needs to be a miraculous preacher, one who, who comes out of the grave and he actually states what his brothers will need to do. Look at verse 30. He knows what they need to do. They need to repent, something he was unwilling to do, that they need to repent of their hard heartedness, their stinginess, their self righteousness. Don't you notice what plagues this Jewish man? He's plagued by the Jewish dilemma. Paul sums it up this way in 1 Corinthians 1 verse 22. Jews ask for signs. And what did Paul do in response to the demand for signs? Paul says in the same verse in 1 Corinthians one, we preach Christ. That's our answer to those who say, you need a carnival and you need you need something very flashy. Our response is always we preach Christ. In response to demand for the spectacular we use the ordinary means of grace, the explanation and application of the written word of God. Jesus is telling us something powerful and profound here. The power in evangelism is not tied to the evangelist, even if he's well known and it's spectacular. The power is in the Word. The written enscripturated Word, faith comes by hearing the Word. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1 that regeneration is through the Word, the Word of God is enough to show men their sin, enough to guide them into the way of salvation, enough to teach them how to give glory to God. And look at what Jesus goes on to say, look carefully at verse 31. And let me forever deliver you of thinking otherwise. Jesus says in verse 31, spectacular signs will not impact anyone. The reason men will go to Hell is because they won't listen to the Word. Here we're given a profound insight into the mind and the heart of an unbeliever. If a man does not believe what is said, in God's inerrant and inspired written word, he will never believe anything else God does. And he will not believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus did great signs. He walked on the water, fed the 5000, healed villages full of people, he raised a man named Lazarus from the dead. Any of those signs seem to have much of an impact on these Pharisees? No. They're still killing. When Jesus came out of the tomb on the third day supplying the greatest sign ever in the history of signs we read in Matthew 28, that the Jews tried to cover the whole sign up. And what Jesus is teaching here in this parable at the end of it, is the sufficiency of the written word for evangelism. Look at, memorize this text. Look at verse 29. What is his remedy for lost men? Let them hear the scriptures. That's it. How do we apply this word to us today? If you're in Christ today, united to him by faith, praise him for delivering you. Colossians 1 says he delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his dear son. Oh how those who have been delivered from an eternity of torment should sing the praise of their Savior. Another application. This doctrine that we see here taught by Jesus, the doctrine of eternal punishment of the enemies of Christ will help you to be patient under temporary afflictions when they come. No matter what they are, no matter what



your afflictions are, and your burdens are. They can never even be the slightest comparison to the torment of the Damned. Your burdens are light compared to the burdens of the damned, and this text as well should engender in you a hatred of sin. If God hates sin so much that He will punish sin and sinners forever. It should cause you to have the same holy hatred that he has of disobedience. Now, if you're here today, and the subject fills you with horror, and doubt, for you're quite certain you have no hope of salvation. Please don't be a passive hearer. Jesus says in Matthew 7, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house upon the rock. The evil ones greatest desire today is to hold you in bondage. But you can have deliverance and eternal life today, if you will but press into the kingdom by repenting and believing the Gospel. Believer, let me remind you of the usefulness of this text for you. In his devotional classic called *The Saints Everlasting Rest*, Richard Baxter said, it's good for believers to meditate often on the day of your own death and your entrance into the presence of Christ. This will be a great help to you in priority setting, in budgeting, and more, the peripheral and foolish things will fade quickly. But this text I will say to this whole congregation, is incredibly powerful in informing us as to a philosophy of ministry. We will not focus on the spectacular, but the ordinary means of grace, always proclaiming the written word. We will fervently pray asking God to use his appointed means, and we rest in the sufficiency of the scriptures. Let's pray together. Father, teach us to number our day so that we indeed will be wise and prepared to enter into eternal life. Deliver us from the folly of the fool in our text who thinks he will live forever. Enable us to live from this day forward with a clear understanding that very soon we will meet with that appointed day. And if we've embraced Christ in faith, we will come home and be comforted. We pray in the name of the one who's prepared for us a place even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.