

**Peace** be with you. We greet you in the name of God, the Lord of peace, who wants everyone to understand and submit to the way of righteousness that He has established, and have true peace with Him forever. We are happy to be able to return today to present your program *The Way of Righteousness*.

The Holy Scripture says:

*"The cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile...and all liars-their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur." "[They] will be thrown outside, into the darkness...into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "[These] will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life!"*

**Hell!** No one likes to talk about it! We don't even want to think about it! Nevertheless, the subject of hell is what we plan to study today, because God has much to say about it. In the Holy Scriptures, God has given hundreds of warnings so that people might not go there. Today and in the next lesson, we plan to learn what the Scriptures teach concerning hell and heaven, or Paradise, and how we can be sure that we will go to heaven and not be sent to hell.

Many people think that no one can know what will happen in the hereafter, or where they will spend eternity. They think that way because they do not know the way of salvation which God has established, nor the wonderful promises of God, which give a confident assurance. Does the Word of God tell us how we can know for sure that we will go to Paradise? Absolutely! God's Word says: *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life!"*

Do you **"know"** that you have the eternal life that the Word of God proclaims? On the day that you die, do you **know** where your soul will go? Are you **sure** that you will enter

Paradise and not be sent to hell? If you do not have that assurance, our lesson today should be of great interest to you.

As we have seen in the Gospel, when Jesus the Savior was on earth, He often taught people about the place called **Heaven** and the place called **Hell**. However, Jesus taught more about hell than He did about heaven, because He knows about the horrible punishment of hell and does not want anyone to go there. Now then, let us return to the Gospel and hear how Jesus taught the crowds about hell. **Listen to this true story** about two people who died. In the Gospel of Luke, chapter sixteen, Jesus spoke to the crowd, saying:

*"There was a **rich man** who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a **beggar named Lazarus**, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.*

*"The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to **Abraham's side**. The rich man also died and was buried. **In hell**, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side."*

Let us pause here. Did you understand what happened to the rich man and the beggar, Lazarus? Where did the beggar go when he died? Instantly, his soul was in **Paradise**, in the presence of God, where the prophet of God Abraham had been for a long time. And the rich man, where did he go? Instantly, his soul was in **hell**, where he was in torment.

Why did the beggar, Lazarus, go to Paradise and the rich man go to hell? First, know that being poor does not mean you will be saved, and having great riches does not mean that you will perish! Lazarus, the poor man, went to Paradise because **he paid**

**attention to the way of salvation** which God announced in the Writings of the Prophets. As for the rich man, **he ignored the Word of God**. That rich man was like many people today who are outwardly religious. They know that there is one God and that the Writings of the Prophets exist, but they are on the path to hell, because they have never believed the way of salvation of which all of God's prophets testify in the Scriptures. Like the rich man in our story, having a good time and getting wealth is more important to them than listening to the Word of Truth, which can save their souls.

Let us continue with the story and hear how God allowed the rich man, who was in hell, to converse briefly with the prophet Abraham, who was in Paradise. God wants us to get insight from the words spoken by this man in hell. The Lord Jesus continued the story saying,

*"In hell, where [the rich man] was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'*

*"But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'*

*"He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'*

***"Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'***

*"No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'*

*"He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"*

This is where the story of the rich man and Lazarus ends. Truly, the place called Hell is a horrible place, where there is no mercy. The rich man in hell was in torment and no one could relieve his suffering by giving him even a drop of water! Even more awful, this same rich man is still there today! He is in hell awaiting the Day of Judgment when both his soul and body will be thrown into the place called **the lake of fire**. There he will be forever with **everyone who refused to obey the message of the prophets**--the Good News of Jesus the Messiah. That is what the Scripture declares when it says: *"If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire...with burning sulphur...and the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night!"* Think about it! Everyone who ignores the righteous way of salvation that God has established and enters hell will **never** get out, and the fire will **never** be quenched! **Never! Never! Forever!**

Some think that after sinners have suffered for a time in hell they will get out and go to Paradise. But that idea is not in accordance with the Word of God, which describes hell as **"eternal punishment."** Consequently, there are no prayers for the dead in the Writings of the Prophets. Praying for the dead comes purely from man's traditions, but not from God's Word, which says, *"Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment!"* Praying for the dead cannot relieve the sufferings of those in hell, nor can it save them in the Day of Judgment. Concerning those who are in heaven, they do not need our prayers, because they are in the presence of God and in perfect bliss!

**Do not allow anyone to deceive you with empty words.** Some people say, "Ah, God is good! He would not create his servants and then burn them! He will have mercy on us all and receive us into Paradise!" Those who talk this way do not base their thoughts on God's Word. They only say this to appease their consciences since they are wilfully ignoring the way of salvation, which God has established. If they do not turn from their wrong ideas, turn to God and believe the way of righteousness through Jesus Christ, one day they will know that there really is a hell! But then it will be **too late** to repent!

Did you hear what the rich man asked of Abraham? He asked him to send Lazarus to his father's house to warn his five brothers who had not yet died, *"so that they will not also come to this place of torment!"* How did Abraham respond to him? He told him, *"They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them!"* But the rich man said, *"No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent."* Abraham said to him, ***'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'***

Do you know the Good News of God's prophets which can save you from hell? That Good News is the message you have been hearing on your program *The Way of Righteousness*. In summary, we have seen that the good news of the prophets is the Good News about the holy Redeemer, whom God sent down to die on a cross in order to pay for your sins, and to rise from the dead on the third day. **If you believe in your heart that He died for your sins, you will not go to hell!** That is the Good News which can save you from God's righteous judgment.

As we discovered in our first lessons, God did not create hell for man, but for Satan and his evil angels. However, the sin of our ancestor Adam is the reason we have all been born far from God, in the kingdom of Satan, on the wide path that leads to hell. Surely the sinful nature which is in us would cause us to **perish forever**, if God had not

provided a **remedy** for us, since the payment for sin is death and eternal hell. In our own strength, we have no way of escaping hell! However, we thank God for designing a plan by which He can forgive us our sins! What is that plan? It is **the death of the holy Messiah**. God laid the punishment of our sins on Jesus when He died on the cross. As it is written: *"God made [Jesus Christ] who had no sin to be **sin for us**, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God!"*

We have seen how people tortured Jesus, flogging Him, putting a crown of thorns on His head, insulting Him, striking Him on the face, spitting on Him, and nailing Him to a cross! God allowed people to mistreat the sinless Messiah in order to display the punishment which our sins deserved. Everything that people did to Jesus—we deserve because of our sins. But God, because of His great love for us, laid the punishment for our sin on the holy Messiah, His Beloved, Eternal Son. And remember, the sufferings of Jesus on the cross were not limited to what men did to Him. The Scriptures of the Prophets show us that when Jesus was suffering on the cross, God Himself laid on Him a pain that the human mind cannot comprehend. God laid on Jesus the payment for our sin, that is, **our hell!** The prophet Job foretold the intense sufferings that the Messiah would endure from God when he wrote, *"God has turned me over to evil men and thrown me into the clutches of the wicked!... God assails me and tears me in his anger and gnashes his teeth at me; my opponent fastens on me his piercing eyes!"*

The payment for sin is to die and to face God's wrath and to enter the darkness of hell, where God consigns all who refuse to believe the Gospel! However, Jesus endured God's wrath for us, so that we might receive God's grace. As we have read, when Jesus was dying on the cross the whole land became pitch-dark—just like hell—from noon until three o'clock. During those hours, Jesus called out with a loud voice, **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?!"** Why did God forsake the Messiah, His

beloved, on the cross? **You and I are the reason!** Our sins are the reason! While Jesus was on the cross, God placed on Him the punishment for our sin, **our hell!** This is a profound truth which our minds cannot totally understand. However, what is absolutely certain is that **if you truly believe in the Lord Jesus, you will be saved, and you will never go to hell,** because God will count you as righteous based on the Redeemer's (substitutionary) sacrifice. Like the sacrificial sheep, which redeemed Abraham's son from death, Jesus the Messiah died to redeem you from the death which will never end in the place called **hell!**

God placed your hell on Jesus Christ. **Do you believe this?** Do you believe that Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, paid for you your debt of sin? Or will you go to hell to pay your own debt of sin throughout eternity? **It is really up to you.** What do you choose? **Paradise?** Or **hell?**

Thank you for listening. We invite you to join us next time to look into a subject drastically different from what we studied today, because, God willing, we will study about the wonderful place called Paradise...

God bless you. We bid you farewell with these solemn words from the Lord Jesus:

***"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."***