

16:19 "Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day.

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is the second major teaching on wealth in this section, following the Parable of the Unjust Steward in 16:1-13. The story demonstrates the disastrous results of being wealthy in this world yet not being rich toward God.

The rich man's lifestyle is described in very vivid terms. He had more than enough money and used it on himself to enjoy life to the fullest. He dressed in purple and fine linen. Purple clothing came from a dye made from snails (some say, a shellfish) making it extremely expensive. He didn't just own some nice clothing; he *only* wore the finest. Each day was filled with lavish, carefree living.

He was a man of extreme wealth, a lover of money just like the Pharisees (16:14).

**16:20 "And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,
16:21 and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table;
besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.**

Verses 20-21 introduce Lazarus. The name, Lazarus, originates from the Hebrew name, Eleazer, meaning "God helps" (Bock, 1365). This choice of name is probably deliberate for he is the only figure in any of Jesus' stories that gets a name.

Lazarus and the rich man were at extreme ends of the social classes. The wealthy man wasn't just wealthy, he was extremely wealthy; Lazarus was extremely destitute. The rich man enjoyed his wealth and luxurious living daily. Lazarus' life was miserable; he suffered with sores covering his body and had a crippling infirmity; verse 20 says, "*he was laid*" at the gate of the rich man. The passive verb suggests that he was too ill to move (Bock, 1366). The rich man never experienced hunger; Lazarus begged for even the crumbs that fell off the table. The rich man had power and prestige; Lazarus had no influence or esteem. The rich man had a home to provide comfort and protection; Lazarus lay in the dirt outside.

In addition, Lazarus was exposed to the extreme indignity and humiliation of dogs coming and licking his sores. Dogs in those days were not well-cared-for pets; they were scavengers that roamed the outskirts of town in search of garbage. They hovered around Lazarus, taking advantage of his weak condition, picking at the wounds.

Inside the gate life was a feast; outside of it a man was dying a slow death, pleading for the unwanted food that would be thrown away.

"Lazarus never speaks in the parable; he suffers alone and in silence" (Bock, 1367).

16:22 "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

16:23 "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

16:24 "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'

Time passes and both the rich man and Lazarus die. There is mention of the rich man's *burial*, but nothing is said of Lazarus. Some speculate that he may have been carried out of the city and dumped with the garbage, corpses of lepers and criminals.

But death is not the end of story; the parable continues in a description of life after death. Just as in life there were stark contrasts between the rich man and Lazarus, now in death there are also stark contrasts: Angels carry Lazarus to Abraham's side – the place of blessing; the rich man awakens in a place of torment. A complete reversal of conditions has taken place.

The rich man is in Hades. "Hades" in Greek is "Sheol" in Hebrew. It is the underworld, the realm of the dead, the grave (Gen. 42:38). Etymologically it means the "unseen" (land), the "invisible" (world) and is conceived of as being far under the ground (Job 11:8; Psa. 139:8; Amos 9:2). It can be described as a place of torment (Matt. 5:22; Lk. 16:23), or simply refer to a state of death without any negative connotations (Rev. 1:18). Since both believers and unbelievers die, both go to Hades (i.e. the grave; I Sam. 2:6; Psa. 89:48). For example, Acts 2:25-31 speaks of King David's descent to Hades and contrasts it to Christ's descent there (cf. Eph 4:9-10). However, in Luke 16:23 "Hades" comes closer in meaning to "gehenna," or "hell." Gehenna is the word derived from the Hebrew *ge hinnom*, the Valley of Hinnom, where child sacrifices were once made to Molech (2 Chron. 28:3). "This valley afterwards became the common receptacle for all the refuse of the city. Here the dead bodies of animals and of criminals, and all kinds of filth, were cast and consumed by fire . . ." (Easton's Bible Dictionary). The term, gehenna, "developed into a prophetic symbol of judgment. The transferred use of this place name for the final state of the lost employs it as a symbol of judgment. It is the wasteland of humanity, inhabited by all those who reject Christ and His revelation. Those who do not belong to the kingdom of God are there: outside are dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood (Rev. 22:15; 1 Cor. 6:9)" (Ferguson, *Hell Under Fire*, 227).

The point is that the rich man is suffering from judgment, while Lazarus is enjoying blessing.

In verse 24 the rich man appeals to Abraham to intervene for him. Two observations are worth mentioning: (1) In life, the rich man had not innocently failed to notice that Lazarus was just outside his gate; he knew he was there; he recognized him and even knew his name. (2) It appears that even in hell, the rich man's arrogance continues. He totally ignored Lazarus while he was on earth. He allowed Lazarus to suffer and starve until he died; but now he is expecting to be helped by him. He asks Abraham to send him to bring relief, treating Lazarus like he was nothing more than his servant.

16:25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.'

Abraham explains why the reversal is as it is.

“The rich man is not condemned because he is rich, but because he slipped into the coma of callousness that wealth often produces. He became consumed with his own joy, leisure, and celebration and failed to respond to the suffering and need of others around him. His callousness made his earthly riches all that he would receive from life” (Bock, 1372).

In this verse the word “agony” is different from the word in 16:23, and is very commonly used of mental pain. As MacArthur says, the man has “a fully informed conscience now without restraint, without mitigation, accusing him of every evil ever committed, every act of the rejection of the truth ever committed” (MacArthur, sermon). This is also why Jesus describes hell as a place where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Hell is a place of both physical and mental suffering.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matt. 5:7). The rich man had shown no mercy, now he is denied it.

16:26 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'

Abraham closes his remark with a solemn reality – Abraham is helpless to do anything, for God has established an unbridgeable gulf between the blessed and the condemned. The line is “fixed”; it is nonnegotiable. The unrighteous and the righteous cannot mix.

In life, a gate separated Lazarus and the rich man; in death, there is a great chasm that keeps them apart. The image creates the feeling of distance and separation from the place of blessing. Both Lazarus and the rich man know where each other are (see also 13:28).

In essence Abraham is saying, “What Lazarus was in the old life, you have become. What Lazarus lacked, you now lack. What you did not provide for him then, he cannot provide for you now. You are reaping what you sowed . . . The rich man's extravagant wealth and lack of compassion on earth has resulted in spiritual poverty and absence of mercy eternally. There is no mercy in the afterlife for those who fail to show compassion in this life. The teaching pictures what Jesus declared in 6:20, 24” (Bock, 1372).

***16:27 "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house--
16:28 for I have five brothers-- in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'***

The rich man comes to the realization that nothing is going to change for him, so he appeals to Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house to warn his brothers and other family members of their impending torment. The rich man evidently knew that his family shared his values which would lead to the same destiny.

The rich man does have compassion, but his compassion only extends to his family members.

16:29 "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

16:30 "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'

16:31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Abraham responded by pointing out that more information was not necessary; God had already told them what they needed to know through His prophets. If the brothers heard the prophets and responded, they would be fine.

"The rich man's false premise – that there is something greater than God's message through his servants – is significant. He is convinced that some type of sign from the afterlife will be more effective. The premise could not be more incorrect . . . the only sign that people need is the preached call to repent" (Bock, 1376).

The problem is not that men need more evidence; the problem is that men need a new heart. If they don't believe Moses they will not believe even if someone rises from the dead – a clear reference to Jesus' own resurrection. The same people who did not receive His words before the crucifixion, did not believe in Him even after He rose again.

NOTES:

Interpreting Parables

Difficulties in understanding parables often revolve around how much should be taken as a description of reality, and what should be taken as representational or symbolic.

Does this parable teach that there is an actual chasm that separates the righteous from the unrighteous, or is that a symbol that expresses the irreversibility of one's destiny? Are there actual flames and fire in hell, or are they metaphors for torment? People answer such questions differently.

When reading parables we must remember that a parable is an extended metaphor. Furthermore, "metaphors are used precisely in order to describe realities greater than themselves. Hell itself is not metaphorical but real; these vivid metaphors point to a reality more awful than themselves, indeed, terrible beyond words" (Ferguson, *Hell Under Fire*, 227).

Although the details are important, their role in the parable is to support a central point. The central point of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is that the rich should examine how they use their wealth. Those who use their wealth for self-gratifying ends should repent and help people in need. However, the motivation to use one's wealth wisely is dependent upon the realization that (1) once we die nothing can change our fate, (2) hell exists as a place where justice is meted out (a man reaps what he sows), (3) judgment involves conscious physical suffering and mental agony, and (4) nothing will generate faith (not even a resurrection) in the one who has already rejected the word of God.

Cautions about the Interpretation of Concepts that are Difficult to Accept

Hell is a concept that many, especially in our modern age, find to be extremely offensive. Clark Pinnock, a modern theologian, said, “I consider the concept of hell as endless torment in body and mind an outrageous doctrine, a theological and moral enormity, a bad doctrine of the tradition which needs to be changed. How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may have been? Surely a God who would do such a thing is more nearly like Satan than like God, at least by any moral standards, and by the gospel itself (quoted by Mohler, *Hell Under Fire*, 34).

Although I do not agree at all with Pinnock’s comment, there is a sense in which our reaction to hell should be emotionally intolerable for us. Sinclair Ferguson explains, “Humans as such were made for fellowship with God and for eternal glory. That such creatures should be banished forever into the outer darkness, with no escape exit, should fill us with a sense of horror. This is not the destiny for which we were created; emotionally, therefore, it should be an intolerable contradiction. Hell is not the fruit of God’s good creation for humanity but the consequence of humankind’s rebellion and perversion. The thought of hell, then, can carry no inherent attraction to the balanced and coherent human mind. . . Yet hell exists; this is the testimony of the Scriptures, of the apostles, and of the Lord Jesus Himself. The emotionally intolerable is also the truth – and therein lies its awfulness” (Ferguson, *Hell Under Fire*, 220, 230).

Something that is essential when we study the Bible is that we try to *determine what we feel about a subject before we start to study it*. What would we *want* the Scripture to say on a given subject? What would we *hope* that it affirmed or condemned? What is our mindset before we even look at the Bible? Once we identify our feelings, hopes, and desires, we need to consciously refuse to let them be the lens through which we read the text. As human beings, we love to be in our own echo chambers; we like to read and listen to opinions that echo our own. When given a selection of interpretations, we will always lean toward an interpretation that supports what we already think or want to believe. In such cases, we need to exercise extra caution to prevent personal bias from guiding our conclusions about what the Bible says. The goal of a Christian is to allow God’s revealed truth to guide and correct our thinking, not press God’s thoughts into our thoughts.

A second word of caution: When two passages are in apparent contradiction or if a passage is offensive, Christians often unconsciously choose a preferred passage or concept as a grid to override anything else that seems to contradict their belief. For example, in the Parable of the Rich Man, the rich man’s destiny is final; there was a chasm fixed that could not be crossed. For us to then argue that “the love of God is big enough to overcome even that obstacle” is to interject something into the text that isn’t there. By referring to God’s love we can reinterpret what the parable actually says. The Bible is a complex book; learn to be content with complexities and be humble enough to realize that you will not understand it all.

Lastly, probably the greatest difficulty people have with hell is in trying to reconcile the love of God with eternal punishment. If we, whose love cannot compare to the love of God, could not send someone to

hell, how could God do such a thing? Furthermore, the punishment doesn't seem to fit the crime. No matter how bad someone is, no one deserves an eternity of torment.

Those are all legitimate questions that deserve answers; however, we must also recognize that those questions are often based on a desire to explain hell away, instead of a true desire to understand how God can be both love and judge. When we ask such questions, we need to decipher what we are really asking. For example, when we ask, "Is hell fair?" we are really asking, "Is God fair?" Unbelievers would insist He is not fair, but the Bible insists that deep within the human heart men and women know that they are guilty and deserving of condemnation. Romans 1:32 says, "although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them." Instead of rejecting hell because we don't understand how it relates to the love of God or justice, our approach should be to seek to answer how they could co-exist. If we find no answer, leave it unanswered.

Comments about Hell

In order to discuss this difficult subject, we must understand a little about the attributes of God. An attribute is an inherent quality of God that helps define who He is. For example, we say God is love, holy, merciful, eternal, and unchangeable. All of these describe qualities about Him; therefore, they are called attributes.

God's wrath, unlike His love, is not considered one of His attributes. Wrath is the response of His holiness to sin. Where there is no sin, there is no wrath. By contrast, the love of God will always be there. When a holy God confronts sinful man, wrath is the natural outcome. If we dilute the wrath of God we dilute His holiness.

One problem we face in understanding how a God of love could send someone to hell is that we don't understand perfect holiness and love, nor do we understand the hideous nature of sin. If we were honest with ourselves, a lot of the things the Bible calls sin don't seem all that bad. Consequently, we cannot understand why God would have such a severe reaction to them. If we truly understood the nature of sin, we would free ourselves of it completely for it would be utterly offensive to us. The fact that we can live among sinners rather easily and take pleasure in sin ourselves demonstrates how far short we fall of perfect holiness.

Therefore, we must first come to grips with the fact that we cannot understand God's holiness and His violent response to sin based on our own understanding of it. God has revealed the proper response to sin based on His own perfect character. The response to sin is wrath and judgment. If we do not share the same response it is because we are flawed, not Him.

Secondly, we are confused about how love and wrath could co-exist, since in our experience anger and love usually exist in two separate compartments; love drives out wrath, and wrath drives out love. We come closest in bringing the two together when we must deal with a wayward child, but normally we do not think of a wrathful person as loving.

But this is not the way it is with God. God's wrath is not a blind, emotional outburst. It is a reasonable response to the sinner who affronts His holiness. If sin did not offend Him, He would not be holy. Men deserve the wrath of God. They do not deserve His love. If God loves, it is because He chooses to do so for there is nothing in us that compels Him to love us. The real mystery isn't in God's wrath; it is in His love.

Thirdly, many of us are mistaken in believing that forgiveness entails overlooking another's faults, turning a blind eye, or that it is a necessary requirement of love. That is, if someone sins against us or God, we believe that we are required to forgive them unconditionally or we are not acting in love. The assumption is that to love is to forgive, and to forgive is to love. Of course, love does often lead to forgiveness, and forgiveness is a loving thing to do, but the question is, must God forgive us if He loves us? The answer is, No! In spite of the fact that God loves us, forgiveness is not unconditional. This is obvious or all would be saved and the cross would be unnecessary. Forgiveness of sin is conditioned upon repentance and faith in Christ. God demonstrates His love for us through the cross, but at the same time, forgiveness cannot take place apart from it.

Fourthly, although the following cannot be proven biblically, it is something to consider: there is no evidence that someone in hell seeks forgiveness. In the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, for example, the rich man wanted mercy to be freed from his suffering; however, he sought it from Abraham instead of God! The rich man knew that the fate of his brothers would be the same as his, but there is no mention of any remorse over how he lived. There was no hint that he was sorry for how he treated Lazarus; he still viewed Lazarus as just a servant to do his bidding instead of a person whose forgiveness he needed.

In addition, there are passages that speak of man's rebellion against God in spite of suffering. Revelation 16:8-11 says, "The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory. Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds."

It should be observed that they did not look at their experiences as the results of impersonal forces over which none could control; they consciously knew that God was the source of their suffering; they knew that they were experiencing HIS judgment. Even after being scorched with fire, covered with darkness, and gnawing at their tongues in pain - all "hell-like" experiences - "they blasphemed the God of heaven . . . and they did not repent of their deeds."

Likewise, Revelation 6:14-17 states, "The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and

hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Once again they attribute the events directly to God. They recognize God's presence and want to hide from it. They even specifically name Christ as the source; they believe they are experiencing the wrath of the Lamb.

Their question, "who is able to stand?" is rhetorical, meaning that no one can survive the wrath of God. The despair of mankind is complete. The suffering of mankind is unbearable. Yet instead of repenting or begging for mercy, they stand firm in their hatred and rebellion and say to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Death is preferred to submission to God and repentance.

Could it be that the eternal nature of hell is due in part because men were created to live forever and as long as the unbeliever does not repent, forgiveness cannot be granted? Men will hate hell, but their desire to leave it is not due to a change of heart toward God. They would prefer the environment of heaven, but they want it without Christ. As long as their hostility toward God continues, God's condemnation of the sinner must continue.

Finally, even if we were to convince ourselves that there was no hell, denial does not change reality. Failure to believe that God is a God of wrath actually lessens our ability to appreciate the cross. The cross is where the love and holiness of God meet. God is so holy that He cannot endure the slightest sin, but so great is His love that He poured out His wrath upon His Son to our benefit.

The following is taken from *Hell Under Fire*, by Morgan and Peterson (general editors), in the chapter entitled "Pastoral Theology: the Preacher and Hell" by Sinclair Ferguson, pages 220-237.

That which follows includes direct quotes and my own summation of the material. However, all of it is Sinclair Ferguson's material. Even though it is a little choppy, I hope you will benefit from reading it.

There are three elements that are essential when we consider the topic of hell:

- The righteousness of God
- The sinfulness of our sin
- The absolute justice of God's condemnation of us

If these three elements are not conscious in our minds, we will not ever really understand hell.

1) God's judgments are absolutely righteous, perfectly just, and unerringly accurate

"Human beings are forever remaking God in their own image, foolishly assuming that God's judgments are approximate to our own. But our judgments are at best partial, at worst horribly wrong. We judge by appearance; God looks on the heart. Paul presses this home in four different ways" (222).

a) The judgment of God is based on truth.

“But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things” (Ro. 2:2 NKJ).

“According to the truth’ here means ‘consistent with the facts of the case, true to reality.’ The God who judges is alone able to sift through the evidence and to weigh the motives of the heart. Nothing is hidden from his sight. When He passes judgment, it mirrors reality” (222).

“At no point will we be able to produce last minute, hidden, or unconsidered evidence to defend ourselves from a guilty verdict . . . The judgment of God turns inside out the reality of our lives, hearts, minds, and motives, sifts them before His all seeing eye, and brings in a verdict of guilty so powerful that before God every mouth is stunned into silence and all the world held guilty before Him” (222).

Romans 3:19: “every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.”

b) The judgment of God does not show favoritism.

Romans 2:11: “God does not show favoritism” (NLT).

“No matter who I am or what I may think myself to be, God never favors me on account of my position, lineage, or possessions. This is devastating to our egocentricity, for by nature we assume that God views us the way we view ourselves: each as a special case” (222).

c) The judgment of God is righteous.

Romans 2:5: “because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed” (ESV).

“Righteousness is not a well-understood concept. In the Hebrew world it indicated conformity to a norm. Here God Himself is the norm. In this sense, God's judgment perfectly expresses His identity and holy character. But it also matches the truth about us. Thus, His judgment perfectly matches the reality of our lives” (222-223).

Because God's judgment is righteous, His punishment fits the crime. In Romans 1:27 it says, people receive “in themselves the due penalty for their perversion” (NIV).

d) The judgment of God leads justly to condemnation.

“God reveals His wrath by handing us over to the present consequences and eternal implications of what we have been and done” (223).

Romans 1:24, 26, 28 repeat the words, "gave them over" which refers to a judicial handing over.

2) God's judgment will be intensely personal and individual.

“God will accurately weigh each person's individual responsibility. He will give to each person according to what he has done”(223).

God “will judge all people according to what they have done” (Ro. 2:6 NLT).

“This individualizing is frequently reiterated in Scripture (Psa. 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10) and constitutes an element of God's judgment that unnerves us. It is true that at the last judgment the nations are envisaged as gathered, and doubtless individuals will be judged within the national, social, cultural, and temporal context in which they lived . . . Yet we are each to stand before God as individuals with individual responsibility for the decisions, thoughts, and actions that are unique to us” (223).

In Romans, chapters 1–3, Paul makes the argument that “none of us have lived according to the revelation we have received, whether general or special, common or redemptive. And we are not judged on the basis of what we have known but on the basis of how we have responded to what we have known and what we have done or left undone” (223).

Furthermore, what has been hidden and kept secret will be brought before the court.

1 Corinthians 4:5 - “wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts.”

In Revelation 20:11–12 account will be given for every thought, word, and deed. The hard drive of our lives, from which nothing can be erased, on which every motive, attitude, disposition, and act is indelibly recorded, will be accessed and scrutinized in the one great moment by the Judge.

3) God's judgment leaves men and women without excuse

“. . . His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, *so that they are without excuse*” (Ro. 1:20).

Whatever excuses we have will be dismantled before the throne of God. Several common self-vindicatory thoughts are destroyed by Paul's emphasis:

(1) *"I have nothing to hide"* is pathetic self-reassurance and self-delusion that allows us to live with the guilt of sin without repentance. The truth is, no one can hide from God's gaze.

(2) *"I have been better than most"* has no meaning to God. “God's judgment is not an assessment of our ranking in the league table of humanity; it is an evaluation of individuals against His own perfect standard of justice – Himself – in light of His perfect knowledge of persons. We could be better than everyone else and nevertheless fall under just condemnation by God, whose standard of righteousness involves comparing our lives not with the patterns of other's behavior but with God's own holy character” (224-225).

(3) *"God would never condemn me if He really understood my difficulties."* The Bible says that Jesus understood our difficulties (He was tempted as we are, yet without sin), and that He has been

appointed to judge humanity. "He knows the human condition; He has faced the fiercest of temptations; He has gone to the extremity of death. He who is both standard and judge understands perfectly our difficulties – and measures our failure, sin, and guilt with the perfect knowledge and precision" (225).

(4) *"The loving Jesus of the Gospels would never condemn someone like me. I've been a church member all my life!"* The Bible is clear that our "religious activities are not a safeguard against judgment according to the truth" (225).

Matthew 7:22–23 says, "On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

Although hell is real and horrible, we must always remember that there is a way of salvation. There is somewhere to hide from the wrath of the Lamb. This leads us to a second major consideration: the compulsion of the love of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15: "For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that One has died for all, therefore all have died; and He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised."

God's love for us led to Christ's death. His death constitutes a substitutionary act in which God reconciles the world to himself in a manner that imputes our sin and the consequences of our sin to Christ.

"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

"To be made sin" implies liability to the condemnation of God and God's righteous judgment.

"In a nutshell, the gospel is this: Christ took our place, bearing our sin, tasting our judgment, dying our death – so that we might share His place, be made His righteous, taste His vindication, and experience His life" (229).

The doctrine of hell and its relationship to the believer:

As Christians we need courage because "in many contemporary contexts one mention of hell is enough to guarantee the accusation of a hateful spirit and bigoted mind" (232).

A Christian worldview means that we look at the world from God's perspective and framework, not our own. From His perspective we should be burdened by the future shock of those who will find hell waiting for them. If we truly believe that men are condemned and will be judged, how can we remain silent or cowardly? We can only do so if to some degree or another we deny the reality of hell.

We will have no compassion for others until we recognize our own great need of grace to save us from the wrath to come, the terrible nature of judgment, and the provision that God has made for us in Christ.