

A Warning to the Indifferent

Luke 10:12-16

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As we come to our time in the Word of God, we want to return to the 10th chapter of the gospel of Luke. We have just heard about God's abundant kindness in that song. One of the expressions of that kindness is the privilege that the Lord gives to us to proclaim His gospel, to be His ambassadors, to be His messengers, His emissaries, His missionaries, His witnesses in the world. What a great privilege it is that He would use lowly ones such as we are for the proclamation of life-transforming, glorious salvation truth. This is our great privilege. We as believers have the eternal truth of salvation to tell the whole world. This is, frankly, while we're still here. This is why the Lord doesn't take us all to heaven because there's a work to be done on earth and that is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the world so that others can hear, repent, and believe. We have the most impactful, the most transforming, enduring, enriching message, the good news of the forgiveness of sin and rescue from eternal punishment. We are here to tell the world that God will forgive sinners; that God desires to be reconciled to sinners through that forgiveness. He will forgive those who repent of their sin and believe in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, believe that He died in their place and rose from the dead. For those who believe, God promises the forgiveness of all their sins and a place in the joy and bliss of His eternal heaven.

That's the gospel. And gospel is just an old English word that means good news, good news. So here we are in the world with good news. However, there is an element of the good news that is very, very bad news. In fact, the good news is predicated on an understanding of the bad news. The news about salvation is only good if one understands the bad news about what happens to those who don't possess that salvation. In fact, part of our proclamation of the gospel is to tell people the worst news they've ever heard, the worst news there is, that God has created a hell, a place of eternal punishment for those who reject Him. And those who do not repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will spend forever punished in that place called hell. That is the bad news that is foundational to the good news being good news. True evangelism then, an accurate presentation of the gospel, must include the strongest negative reality as part of the motivation of the sinner, not just the attractiveness of heaven, not just the attractiveness of the love of God, but the fear of hell and the dread of the wrath of God. All faithful endeavors in giving the good news must clearly convey the bad news. It is not just the promise of heaven; it is the threat of hell.

This emphasis, which is very clear in the Bible, is being eliminated from most of contemporary, evangelical witness as we know it in our experience today. People don't want to talk about hell. They don't want to talk about judgment. They don't want to give warnings to those who reject the gospel. In fact, they even begin to think that God is so loving He just wouldn't really send anyone to hell. But that is not what the Scripture teaches. In fact, the Bible begins and ends with warning. You're not very far into the account of creation in the book of Genesis until you hear God say, "But for the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat for in the day that you eat from it, you shall die." And in that God promised both spiritual death, physical death, and the potential of eternal death.

The Bible began then with a threat, a warning, and it ends that way. The very last chapter of the Bible, the 22nd chapter of Revelation, says, "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if anyone adds to them God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book. If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city which are written in the book." The Bible begins with a warning about death and it ends with a warning about being excluded from heaven. And in between there are countless warnings about the judgment of God. Back in Genesis chapter 6 God gave a warning in verse 7. The Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the earth, I am sorry that I have made them." And He did it in the great Flood that swept across the earth, millions of people, all except eight, were catapulted not only into physical death but into eternal judgment in hell. According to Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 2, one of the principles of Old Testament Law was eternal judgment. It is God who said, "I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal, nor is there any who can deliver from My hand," Deuteronomy 32:39. God is not just loving; God is also righteous. He not only blesses. He curses.

Is it not destruction for the wicked, says Job 31:3? Is it not disaster for the workers of iniquity? Proverbs 1 says, "Because I have called and you refuse, I have stretched out My hand and no one regarded. Because you disdained all My counsel and would have none of My rebuke, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your terror comes. When your terror comes like a storm and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you, then they will call on Me but I will not answer." Because they hated knowledge and they didn't choose the fear of the Lord.

In Luke 13:3 Jesus reiterated this threat of judgment. "I tell you," He said, "unless you repent you will all perish." Psalm 9:7, "The Lord shall endure forever. He has prepared His throne for judgment." Psalm 96:13, "For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with His truth." Acts 17:31, "He's appointed a day in which He shall judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." Romans 2:16 speaks of the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. Job says in Job 21:30 the wicked are reserved for the day of doom. Romans 2:5 Paul says, "The sinners are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath and the righteous judgment of God." And Revelation 6:17 says, "The great day of His wrath has come and who is able to stand?" Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed unto men once to die and after this, the judgment."

The Bible presents God not only as Savior and Redeemer but as executioner, as judge. It presents Jesus not only as Savior but also as judge. John 5:22 to 27 says that God has committed the actual function of judgment to Jesus, delegating to Him the authority to judge. Second Thessalonians chapter 1 says He comes out of heaven in flaming fire, dealing out retribution on those who obey not the gospel. Every unbelieving sinner throughout all of time, throughout all of human history, will be condemned, including false Christians, including the people of every religion apart from the truth of God as revealed on the pages of Holy Scripture. The reason for this judgment is sin and guilt before God.

Now listen to this. The more of God's truth you know, the more severe will be the eternal punishment. Those people in the Old Testament who lived under the law of Moses will receive a certain level of punishment for rejecting the work of the law in their hearts which was to lead them to repentance and then to cry out to God for grace and mercy and forgiveness. The people in the Old Testament who did not respond to the work of the law of Moses in their heart, repent of their sin, and

cry out to God to be forgiven, they will receive punishment. Those who did not know the law of God, did not respond to the law of God will be punished. But those who heard the gospel, those who have heard the message of Jesus Christ, the good news of salvation in Him will receive a greater punishment. The more revelation you have, the greater punishment you receive if you reject it. The severest eternal punishment belongs to those who heard the most and rejected it.

Let me show you this. Turn, for a moment, to the 10th chapter of Hebrews and this is a very important portion of Scripture in this discussion, Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 26. Scripture says, "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth..." if you've heard the truth and you understand the truth, that is the truth of Christ, the truth of the gospel, but you go on sinning willfully, that is to say you go on in rejection, you willfully spurn that truth, reject that truth of salvation in Christ and Christ alone, if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the truth, "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." There will be no salvation. If you reject Christ, there's no way to be saved. That's what the writer is saying. There is no other sacrifice, there is no other provision. All you have then, verse 27, if you reject Christ, is a "certain terrifying expectation of judgment." To reject Christ leads you with nothing but to expect judgment, a terrifying expectation of judgment. This is described as the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries, the fiery furious judgment of hell where the worm dies not, the fire is not quenched, blackness and darkness forever, weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in eternal torment.

So if you having heard the knowledge of the truth reject that truth, there is no other way for you to be saved and all you have to look forward to is the terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of the fire of hell. Verse 28 then says, "Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses." In other words, if you violated the law of Moses there were severe and deadly consequences. It was a serious thing to violate the Law of Moses.

But notice verse 29, and here's the key. "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant?" We'll stop at that point.

If you think it's going to be bad in eternity for the people who rejected the law of Moses, it's going to be worse for the people who've rejected Jesus Christ. There are degrees of punishment in eternity. There are degrees of suffering in hell. And the more you know about the gospel and reject it, the severer will be your punishment.

To make it very practical, if you're a non-believer, being in this church and hearing the gospel is high-risk behavior. You'd be better off to climb Everest in a snowstorm or jump out of an airplane with a parachute with a huge hole in the middle of it. Or better yet, jump out of an airplane with an umbrella than to sit in this church and listen to the gospel because the implications of rejecting it are so severe forever. Don't just come here, sit, know more and more about the gospel and continue in your rejection and not expect to be eternally held accountable for that rejection. The severest eternal punishment belongs to those who rejected the most exposure to the gospel.

You say, "Why are you telling all this to us?" Because this is exactly the point of the text. Let's go back to Luke 10. This is the point of this text. Let me pick up the text in verse 12, Luke 10:12. "I say to you, it would be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city. Woe to you, Chorazin, woe to you, Bethsaida, for if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago sitting in sack cloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for

Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades," or hell. "The one who listens to you listens to Me. The one who rejects you rejects Me. And he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me."

The message here is very clear. There are comparative punishments in hell. The more exposure you have to the glory of Christ, the more potential judgment you will receive if you reject it.

Turn over to the 11th chapter of Luke. This is not an isolated teaching from Jesus, it is oft repeated. In the 11th chapter of Luke verse 29, the crowds were increasing. He began to say this generation is a wicked generation. It seeks... It was a religious one, it was steeped in Judaistic religion, but it was wicked by Jesus' judgment. "It seeks for a sign and yet no sign shall be given it but the sign of Jonah for just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation. The queen of the south shall rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon and behold, something greater than Solomon is here."

This is an interesting statement. Jesus is saying the queen of the south, the pagan, Gentile queen at least was so stunned and struck by the glory of Solomon as to come and give honor to Solomon, and here when a pagan woman gave honor to a great king like Solomon, she demonstrated the appropriate response to the glory of a man. You, who are Jews, who are the people of God's promise, cannot even give honor to one far greater than Solomon who comes to you. And so in the Day of Judgment the queen of the south, that is to say a pagan, is going to stand up to your condemnation. She showed an attitude toward a man that you didn't even show toward the Son of God. You'll be condemned even by what she did.

They hated to be compared to Gentiles in that way. In the 12th chapter of Luke, verses 47 and 48, again this same kind of comparison is made. Verse 47: "That slave who knew his master's will and didn't get ready" or act in accord with his will "shall receive many lashes." It's possible to receive a few lashes or many lashes, that is to say there will be degrees of severity of punishment in hell. It will all be punishment, it will all be lashes. It will be fewer lashes or more lashes and the distinguishing element will be whether you knew your master's will; that is to say whether you knew the truth or not. Verse 48, "The one who didn't know it and committed deeds worthy of a flogging will receive but few and from everyone who has been given much, shall much be required and to whom they entrusted much, of him will they all ask the more." And that's not talking about blessing, that's talking about punishment; more punishment for those who rejected more truth. You'd be better off a pagan, never exposed to the gospel. You'd be better off a Jew living in the Old Testament than to be in this environment sitting under the preaching of the gospel and rejecting Jesus Christ because you will have a severer punishment in hell. To reject Jesus Christ is to bring upon yourself the severest of all judgments. And the more you reject, the more severe that eternal punishment becomes.

Go back then to the 10th chapter of Luke. There are six cities here, three Old Testament cities and three New Testament cities and they are being compared by way of illustration of this comparative principle. The city of Sodom... Sodom is known to everybody. Sodom is a byword for...for the most vile kind of evil, the wretched, wretched perversion of homosexuality that literally characterized the city of Sodom, so utterly perverse, a city of wretchedness, a city of idols, a city destroyed in the most unbelievable destruction of fire and brimstone recorded on the pages of the Old Testament; Sodom, the very prototype for judgment, the very prototype for wickedness. And the cities of Tyre and Sidon are also Old Testament examples. They were Gentile cities. They were pagan cities. They were

cities given over to idolatry and materialism and greed and cruelty and every imaginable kind of wickedness. All the people in Sodom in the days of Sodom who died were catapulted into a godless eternity. All the people in Tyre and Sidon were catapulted into a godless eternity of punishment in hell. Sodom had exposure to the truth from Lot. Tyre and Sidon had exposure to the truth from many who passed their way. They rejected the truth. They rejected the one true and living God and their judgment was severe, their judgment was eternal; that is to say the people who were basically sent to perish forever in hell.

The New Testament cities mentioned here are Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. They will also be punished. But Jesus says here they'll be punished more than Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon. The Sodomites, the Sidonites, and the Tyrites will receive lesser punishment in hell than the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. Those pagan, wretched, wicked Gentiles outside the covenant will receive lesser punishment than the people of the covenant, the Jews, living in the time of Jesus. This is just a powerful, powerful indictment; and we will understand adds to the escalating hostility toward Jesus that eventually causes them to scream for His death.

Let me just review what's going on here in this section. You have to back up to verse 1 to find out that all of this is what the Lord is saying to seventy, or some manuscripts say seventy-two. The Lord appointed seventy and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. They're the first wave of missionaries. He already chose twelve apostles. In addition to the twelve apostles He chooses seventy from among His followers to be these who will go in sort of an advance two-by-two group to proclaim the gospel and announce His coming into towns and villages in the remaining months of His ministry. So they're the first group of missionaries, or witnesses and as such they teach us a lot, they really do. We can learn so much from them.

First of all, we already looked at verses 1 to 4 and said, first, He's concerned about their attitude. If they're going to go out and proclaim the good news of the kingdom, the gospel of salvation, they're going to proclaim that Jesus is the Savior, the Messiah, they have to do it with a right attitude. And we saw what those attitudes were in the first four verses: compassion, prayer, urgency, vigilance, and trust. And then after establishing what the attitudes are, starting in verse 5 and running through verse 11, the focus was primarily upon the message. And the message, as indicated at the end of verse 9 and the end of verse 11, was about the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the sphere of salvation, the sphere of salvation, the place where God rules over the souls of those who have come to Him through faith in His Son. And so the message is that God has a kingdom and you can enter His kingdom. And you can enter His kingdom and find peace, or you can reject His kingdom and find judgment. So we've already learned about attitudes and we've already learned about the message.

Now when you go out to evangelize, it's important for you to remember to be compassionate, to be prayerful, to undergird your evangelism with prayer, to have a sense of urgency, to be vigilant and to exhibit trust, trust in the truth, trust in the work of God to bless that truth. It's important that you have the right message; that you talk about the kingdom, talk about the peace that will come to those who will enter the kingdom, the judgment that will come to those who do not. But here's something that usually gets left out of evangelism. After having the right attitude and the right message, we come to a third element in His training of the seventy and that is warning, warning.

How do you end a witnessing opportunity? When you give the gospel to somebody, you proclaim Christ to them, you try to come with a right attitude, you demonstrated compassion, you prayed and

undergirded your witness, you...you have a sense of urgency in compelling them to come. You're expressing a certain amount of vigilance, understanding what's going on around you, being wise in the way you do what you do, trusting in God. You've done all of that. You've given the right message of the gospel and you get shut down. What do you do next? What is....Usually the final parting thing is, "I will pray for you," right? I mean, certainly that's legitimate. But let me tell you what Jesus tells us to do, OK? What He tells us to do I just read you in verses 12 to 16. The parting word that Jesus wants these seventy to give is a warning, is a warning. It is not an affirmation, "I love you anyway," although you can say that. That's not the parting word. It is not an affirmation, "I'll pray for you," although certainly you should say that. The final word in an evangelistic endeavor is a warning. It is a warning. The news is very bad for those who reject, very bad.

And so you have then... Let's just give you three points this morning, number one, the principle of comparative judgment, the principle of comparative judgment. I've already illustrated it in the introduction, but notice it is specifically noted in verse 12 and verse 14. "I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city," verse 14, "it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in that judgment than for you." Here's the warning. "My friend, it will be more tolerable in the judgment for people who have never heard of Jesus Christ than it will be for you having just heard the gospel and rejected it. Better you never should have heard this." That's why I say, hanging around this church is high-risk behavior. It has implications for all eternity. This is the principle of comparative judgment. This is first-hand, folks. Just in case you might think this was hearsay, verse 12 says, "I say to you." I say to you, and you pass it on. First-hand from the judge Himself; I'm telling you from the mouth of Jesus Himself it will be more tolerable for the people who have never heard of Jesus in hell than it will be for you. It's not going to be tolerable, but it will be more tolerable than for you. This is a comparative, from *anektos*, which means bearable, or endurable, talking about lesser punishment. Sodom, Sidon, Tyre will experience lesser punishment than Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, or any other town that saw and heard and rejected Jesus.

Now He says, "In that day" in the middle of verse 12. In what day? It's going to be more tolerable in what day? In that day. What's that day? Down to verse 14, "It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment." So He's talking about judgment day, isn't He? The Day of Judgment. Now the Day of Judgment could...could certainly cover a broad range. It could mean the day that those people died and entered into their eternal punishment. But I think it's more specific than that. In the 10th chapter of Matthew, Jesus in the comparative passage to this is recorded to have said, "In the Day of Judgment," and He puts it together. And also in the 11th chapter of Matthew, verse 24, "In the Day of Judgment." It's in the Day of Judgment. What is the Day of Judgment? It's really talking about, I think, the Great White Throne, the final adjudication, the last tribunal. All the people who die without believing the truth, whether under the law of Moses or after the coming of Christ, all the people all over the face of the earth go out of the presence of God forever into a place of punishment and torment. That's illustrated, you remember, by Jesus' parable of Lazarus and the rich man and the rich man wants water to tip...to cool the tip of his tongue because he's in torment. They're all in torment but they're waiting for their final sentencing on the Day of Judgment in which they will be cast forever into the final hell which is described as a lake of fire. And there at that particular time their punishment will be commensurate with their exposure to the truth of Christ. Revelation 20:11, "I saw a Great White Throne, Him who sat on it from whose presence earth and heaven fled away and no place was found for them." This is at the end when the whole of the universe as we know it is uncreated and disappears and all the dead, the great and the small, that is the important and the unimportant, stand before the throne, they're all brought to the throne. They receive at that time resurrection bodies suited for their eternal punishment in the lake of fire. The books are opened, another book is opened which is the Book of Life. The dead are judged from the things written in the

Book of Life according to their deeds. They come up from the sea, they come up from death and Hades and they are judged, every one of them, according to their deeds. All the ungodly of all the ages will be at that tribunal for that final sentencing and they will be thrown into the lake of fire. There they will be punished forever. But it will be in that day a lesser punishment for Sodom and Sidon and Tyre, and they're illustrations of those people who lived before Christ, than it will be for anybody who's been exposed to Jesus Christ, whether by personal experience because they were there when He lived, or by the experience of hearing the record of Jesus Christ proclaimed through the Scripture. This is the principle of comparative judgment.

To be exposed to the gospel, to be exposed to Christ either personally, or by the record of Scripture is to raise your level of guilt, culpability, and therefore punishment if you reject. So the principle of comparative judgment, and then the examples of comparative judgment, that's the second point I want you to note, the examples. There are three of them, three of them.

The first one, verse 12, "I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city." What city? Verse 10, "Whatever city you enter and they do not receive you." Any place you go where the people do not receive you, when those people who rejected your message about Christ, they didn't reject Christ, He hadn't gotten there yet, but if they reject the gospel of Christ, it will be more tolerable for Sodom in the Day of Judgment than for the people of that city or town or village.

So here's your message. Go preach the kingdom. Go offer them peace. But close the occasion, if they reject, with a warning of judgment, a judgment greater than that which God will render against Sodom.

Now Sodom, to anybody who knows the Bible and to any Jew, was the absolute and utter epitome of wretchedness. We even have a word, sodomite, which links homosexuality with that city because that city was a city of homosexuality, the grossest, vilest kind of homosexuality. The story of Sodom is frankly almost beyond all belief. The passions of the homosexuality of Sodom are so aberrant as to be beyond what one could imagine. Do you remember what happened, Genesis 17, 18 and 19? We won't take the time to go back but I'll remind you of it.

Just one verse to define the sin of Sodom, it's the 20th verse of Genesis 18. You can just write it down if you're keeping notes. "And the Lord said, 'The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great and their sin is exceedingly grave.'" What was their sin? Well they were Canaanites. Canaanites were wretched to start with. They were cruel, murderous, idolatrous. But there was more than that. There was not just the normal sin. There was an exceedingly great sin there. And what was it? It was the sin of homosexuality to the extreme. In fact, if you follow the story, two angels come to Sodom in the 19th chapter of Genesis and they come there to warn Lot that God's going to judge. And the homosexuals in the town see these angels and they are the most beautiful creatures they've ever seen and excite their perverted passions. And so they come to Lot's house to rape the angels. And Lot, trying to protect the angels of God from this, offers them his daughters, which, of course, they didn't want. And God then strikes all of them blind and having been stricken blind you would think would alter your course a little; change your direction. But it didn't change anything. Having been completely made blind, it says they wearied themselves to find the door to get in to attack the angels; just the most amazing consuming passions of perversion. And God, you know, brought about the greatest destruction of any city in the Old Testament when He drowned that city in fire and brimstone.

Now for the Jews, who know that homosexuality is a sin punishable by death, who certainly disdained that sin, Sodom would be the most wretched of wretched cities. And Jesus says, "I'll tell you this, any town, any village, any city that rejects the gospel is going to have worse punishment in hell than Sodom." This is inconceivable to a Jew. Remember, these people thought they were the covenant people. They thought they worshiped the true and living God. They fancied themselves that they were religious, they were faithful. He says you're going to have a hotter hell than Sodom because judgment is not limited to the degree of one's sin; it's much more associated to the degree of one's rejection. That's why I say, sitting under the gospel is very high-risk behavior. As bad as the people of Sodom were, when the Great White Throne judgment comes, and all the ungodly are brought there, the sentence that falls upon those synagogue attenders in the towns and villages of Israel that rejected the gospel and rejected Jesus is going to be greater, going to be greater. It's really an absolutely shocking thing to say, but Jesus is saying, tell them that, just tell them a more severe hell awaits you for rejecting Christ than the Sodomites will experience.

The second illustration is Tyre and Sidon, verse 3, "Woe to you Chorazin, woe to you Bethsaida, for if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sack cloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you." The "will be" here also emphasizes what I said that we're looking forward to a future judgment and that is the Great White Throne. Chorazin — we don't know much about Chorazin, it's just a little town, a little village, really two and a half miles from Capernaum. Capernaum was the main town at the tip of the northern part of the Sea of Galilee, sort of toward the northwest part of the northern end of the sea. Chorazin doesn't exist today. It's long extinct. But Chorazin was very close to Capernaum and Capernaum was the headquarters of Jesus during His Galilean ministry. Chorazin was exposed to Jesus Christ, to His miracles, to His power over disease and death and demons and nature. Chorazin heard His preaching and heard it from the apostles. And He says, "Curse you." "Woe" means to curse.

"Woe to you, Bethsaida." Well that's another little town on the northwest of Capernaum, up at the tip of the Sea of Galilee. You can't find it today either. It's gone. Once located out on the Gennesaret plain which is a little flat area, sort of at the northwest part of the Sea of Galilee. And, you know, Bethsaida, we do know about. According to John chapter 1, it was the home of Andrew and Philip and Peter. Bethsaida, along with Chorazin, had been exposed to the power of Jesus, the presence of Jesus, His miracles, His message. And they rejected Him. They rejected Him. And Jesus says if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. You had so much revelation and you rejected.

Tyre and Sidon were bad places. Sidon is first mentioned in Genesis 10 as a Canaanite city, idolatrous, cruel, wicked, sinful. Later it's called the great Sidon. It had reached prominence and power because it was where the Phoenicians were and the Phoenicians were the mariners of ancient times and they ran the shipping business out across the Mediterranean. They were powerful. They were rich. They were corrupt. It was basically through Sidon and Tyre that the great shiploads of wheat grown in Egypt were transported to the rest of the Mediterranean even as far west as the city of Tarshish which is in Spain. It became a very powerful and very pagan and corrupt city.

Tyre, also in Judges 19 mentioned, is called a fortified city, close neighbor to Sidon. They would today be in Lebanon, north of Israel right on the coast. They were Phoenician seaport cities. Tyre was about thirty-five miles north of Mount Carmel, about thirty miles west of Mount Hermon. And they had provided some things for Israel. They provided the cedars of Lebanon, you remember, the

timber for Solomon's temple. And they also provided some sailors for Israel's navy. But they were wicked places, full of idols. And God pronounced destruction on Tyre and Sidon. And maybe in some ways the most amazing denunciation in the Old Testament of any city, and I'll show you why. Turn to Ezekiel 28. Prophecies of the destruction of these cities occur in two places, Isaiah 23 and Ezekiel 28. And we won't have time to read all of that but...Isaiah 23 and Ezekiel 28...but I do want to show you something that's really very amazing about God's indictment about Tyre in particular, and then Sidon, which was the sister city. Verse 11 of Ezekiel 28, "Again the Word of the Lord came to me saying, Son of Man, take out a lamentation over the king of Tyre." That kind of thing began back in verse 2, "Son of Man, say to the leader of Tyre." God has a message for the king, a message for the leader and it's a message of coming destruction and judgment. God is going to destroy those cities. But in verse 11 it says, "The Lord...the Word of the Lord came, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, thus says the Lord God," listen to this, he's talking to the king of Tyre, "you had the seal of perfection full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, you were in Eden, the garden of God." Who's he talking to here? He's talking to who? Satan. King of Tyre wasn't in the Garden of Eden. Tyre is so bad that the king is one with Satan himself. This is like the book of Revelation where it says, "You are where Satan's throne is." And He goes on to describe Lucifer. "Every precious stone was your covering, the ruby, the topaz, the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, the jasper, the lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald, and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets was in you on the day you were created." I created you, He says, the most beautiful being in the universe.

Verse 14: "You were the anointed cherub who covers." What does that mean? You guarded my very throne. The most beautiful angel ever made, depicted in all these images of jewelry as heaven is described in the book of Revelation. I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God. You were right there at the pinnacle of the throne.

Verse 15, "You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you."

Verse 16 says that you were internally filled with violence, you sinned. "I cast you as profane from the mountain of God." He was thrown out of heaven. "I have destroyed you, oh covering cherub."

Verse 17: "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor." This is all about the fall of Satan here.

Tyre was associated with the devil himself. Sodom was associated with a wretched kind of perversion. But Tyre is associated with the devil himself so that the king and the devil are almost the same. Starting in verse 20 comes the judgment pronounced against the sister city of Sidon over which the devil was also ruling.

Now with that in mind, you can turn back to Luke chapter 10. So when a Jew thought about the Old Testament, what did he think about? If you wanted to pick... If you said to Jewish people, "Just pick the worst people in history," they would say, "Well, probably the Sodomites because theirs was the greatest obliteration by the hand of God in history, and maybe the Sidonites and Tyrites, because they're literally inseparable from the devil himself. They were the worst of the worst. And the Jews considered themselves, of course, at the very opposite end. Over here was Sodom, and Tyre, and Sidon. And over here were they, the people of God, the favored, the chosen. And God says, "When you all get to the judgment, it's going to be worst for you than it was for them." It's unthinkable. They hated Satan. They hated homosexuality. He says to them, "If the miracles," verse 13, "had been

performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes." If they had seen what you saw, they would repent.

Why wouldn't the Jews repent? Because self-righteousness is a worse condition than any; it's harder to reach a person who doesn't think they have a need. Self-righteousness is so damning. Religious people are the hardest of all. If they had seen what you've seen, they would have repented. And so, verse 14, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you. They would have repented. They would have put on sackcloth. That's black coarse camel hair woven into a garment that was dark. It was a symbol of mourning. And ashes were thrown over the person, a symbol of death. That was a depiction of one's penitence and brokenness and sorrow and mourning, an oriental custom. You see that all over the Bible, the book of Jonah, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Job, Isaiah, Daniel. But when judgment day comes and you come before that final throne, your punishment will be worse. Tyre and Sidon were bad. In fact, you know why the Jews hated Tyre and Sidon? Not only because the prophets deemed that they were literally one with Satan himself; Amos the prophet said it was the people of Tyre and Sidon that sold the Jews into slavery. They came and captured the Jews and sold them as slaves, Amos 1:9. That would increase their hatred, wouldn't it? Joel also says, Joel chapter 3 verse 6, "They sold Israelites to the Gentiles." Jeremiah says they were so bad that the winepress of God's fury was going to crush out the life of Tyre and Sidon, Jeremiah 25:22, 47:4. So they would think it was bad and they would agree with the assessment of Ezekiel, the assessment of Isaiah, the assessment of Jeremiah. As bad as they were the little town of Chorazin and Bethsaida had people, who when they stand at the final tribunal before God are going to hear that their judgment is greater than that of Tyre and Sidon. And again I say, this is not a seeker-friendly message, this is just the truth. Shocking.

The third illustration He gives is Capernaum, verse 15. "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you?" This is strong. He says, "Capernaum, I know what you're thinking but you're not going to heaven. You're not going there." When you finish that evangelistic discussion with somebody, the final words are, "Now that you know the truth of the gospel, if you reject this, your punishment is greater than the worst of the worst who have never heard what you've heard. And furthermore, if you reject this, whatever you might think, you're not going to heaven." That's the message.

Well, you know, God is loving. Don't you think that He's going to widen His mercy and all kinds of folks are...? No, you're not going there. You might think you're going there, you're not going there. In fact, you will be brought down to Hades. Hades is a general word that means the place of the dead and when used as a contrast with heaven, it can only mean hell, and that's the way it's intended to be used here because in the 16th chapter, 23rd and 24th verses of Luke, Hades is described there as a place of torment. Capernaum, I have to tell you, you're not going to heaven. You're going to hell, going to hell.

You know what's interesting about this? Capernaum had heard so much, seen so much, headquarters of the miracle working of Jesus, the headquarters of His teaching. Central to all of Galilee by foot or by boat, Jesus picked that to be His headquarters. And you know there's not anything in the four gospels about Capernaum ever being hostile to Jesus. They never tried to throw Him off a cliff like they did in Nazareth. They never tried to run Him out of town. There's no indication that they persecuted Him, beat Him, chased Him away. There's no indication they mocked Him, ridiculed Him, slandered Him. They tolerated Him. Indifference is as damning as hostility. To reject the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ will render you as guilty as if you pounded the nails into His

hands. The destruction and judgment of Capernaum came, came physically. If you go there today, there's no Capernaum there; thriving city in the time of Jesus, not now. And the disappearance of Capernaum was so complete that for centuries it was impossible to know where it even was. And the people in that city who perished are going to stand before God and receive a severer judgment than those who never knew the message of Christ.

Matthew says in the comparative passage in his gospel that if the miracles that were done in Capernaum were done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented. So Capernaum bears the same culpability, having heard and seen what they did in terms of Christ. How in the world can you have this message presented to a Jew without a having hostile reaction? How could the 70 go out and say, "I just want to tell you, you're going to die and you're going to show up at the judgment and you're going to be sent to a greater punishment than Sodom and Tyre and Sidon?" It's just beyond their comprehension and it just escalates the hostility. Or the sinner, feeling the weight of the fear of that reality, falls on his face and repents.

So we've considered the principle of comparative punishment, the examples of comparative punishment, and finally, the personalization of comparative judgment. We've been talking about cities and we've been talking about towns, but I want you to notice verse 16. We'll stop here. "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me." The one...the one...he.... All right, now we're getting down to individuals here. We've been talking about towns but we're really talking about the people in the town and whole towns of people did reject Jesus, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, many, many others. Still even today cities all across the world uniformly reject the gospel of Jesus Christ with very few exceptions. But it all does come down to the one, the one "he." The one who listens to you, He says in verse 16, listens to Me. The one who rejects you, rejects Me. He who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.

There are going to be people who listen. And the idea of listening here is to hear with faith and repentance and to believe. If they listen to you when you give them this message, then they're hearing My voice. Boy, what an amazing reality that is, isn't it? When you speak the faithful message of the gospel, it's the Lord speaking through you. And when they hear, they're hearing Him and when they don't, they're rejecting Him. It's really not you they're rejecting; it's Him they're rejecting. It's not you they're receiving; it's Him they're receiving. That's why you want to make sure you're faithful to the message. Matthew 10:40 has recorded that Jesus said this similarly, "He who receives you receives Me, he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." When they receive you, they're receiving Christ. When they receive Christ, they're receiving God the Father, who sent His Son, right? When they reject You, they're rejecting Christ. When they reject Christ, they're rejecting God who sent Him.

Here were the Jews imagining that they worshiped the true God, believing that they worshiped the true God, the Creator God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the one God, the God and author of Scripture. They believed they were worshiping God. He says if they reject you and your gospel message, they not only reject Me, they reject God. It is an illusion that anybody rejecting the gospel is honoring God. It is an illusion. The one who rejects you and your gospel rejects Me. The gospel is the test. John 5:23, "Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." John 8:42, "If God were your Father, you would love Me." First John 2:23, "No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also." Second John 9, "Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God." I mean, that's the bottom line. You

receive the gospel, you receive Christ. You receive Christ, you receive God. You reject the gospel, you reject Christ and you reject God. This is the personalization of this principle. It comes down to what an individual, the one, the one "he" does with the gospel. Nothing is more serious than to reject the gospel. You have just rejected Christ and God. You may think you're religious and you may think you're going to heaven, you are wrong. For you there is a hotter hell than for one who never heard the message. This is how our...our gospel preaching must, must end. It's fine to say, "I'll pray for you." It's fine to say, "I'm concerned about you." It's necessary to say, "I warned you. Having the truth, you have greater exposure to a severer judgment." At the same time, we plead with men, don't we, to be reconciled to God?

Father, we thank You again for the powerful, powerful words of Scripture. Thank You that You've given to us this ministry of reconciliation. You have given to us, the responsibility and the immense privilege of being Your representatives, preaching Your gospel, being Your witnesses. First of all, we thank You that You saved us, that You brought us to faith and repentance. We thank You that we can speak and when we speak the truth of Scripture and the truth of the gospel, it is Christ who speaks through us. It is the Father as well. And may we know that this high and holy privilege of preaching the gospel is powerful in its influence, it is a savor of life unto life for those who believe, it is a savor of death unto death for those who reject. And as Paul said, "Who is adequate for such a privilege," to have this kind of influence when we speak the gospel it has eternal consequence either for life or judgment? May we be faithful to go about our witnessing not only with a right attitude, with an accurate message, but with a commitment to warn those who have heard of the severity of punishment that awaits those who having known the truth trample it under their feet. If there are any here today who are in such condition, oh God, may they be rescued now from this severer judgment by embracing the gospel which they have to this point rejected. We pray for Your glory. Amen.

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