A Testimony of One Surprised to Be in Hell, Part 4
Scripture: Luke 16:19-31
Code: 42-215

We have been dwelling for the last number of weeks in the 16th chapter of Luke, and I want you to turn to that text, Luke chapter 16, and the parable that our Lord told there about the rich man who went to hell and the poor man who went to heaven. Luke 16; and we're looking at this particular portion of Scripture starting in verse 19 and running to the end of the chapter, verse 31.

Before we look at it, though, let me just make a few introductory comments. I have conducted hundreds of funerals through the years. I have faced thousands of people staring into the void of their loss and trying to imagine the rest of their lives on earth without the person that has been taken from them, and I am afraid that far fewer people at those funerals thought carefully about what that dead person was experiencing than the number that thought about what they were going to have to experience without them. People do not think long and hard about eternity. The tears are very often tears of human separation and not tears of sorrow over eternal judgment. People are caught up in the sadness of the their earthly loss, and think very little about their own eternal destiny or what that person might be experiencing at that very moment; and I always remind audiences at funerals that the Bible says not to fear the things that kill the body, but to fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. The words of Jesus in Matthew 10:28.

There are no two lives alike. There are no two journeys the same. There are no two histories that are equally played out. There are, therefore, no two eulogies that are alike. Even with people in the same family, each individual's journey is absolutely unique like fingerprints or eyes. Everybody's history with its experiences is only written once. Every life path is absolutely distinct. All of them, however, converge at death; and then everyone's destiny is divided into only two histories, two paths. There are only two eternal destinies. All the individual paths merge at death, and out of death one of two paths, eternal paths come.

C.S. Lewis wrote, "Every human being is in the process of becoming a noble being, noble beyond imagination; or else, alas, a vile being beyond redemption. The dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet if at all only in a nightmare. There are no ordinary people. It is immortals that we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit; immortal

horrors or everlasting splendors." So said C.S. Lewis in his essay, "The Weight of Glory."

In either case, whether one is an immortal horror or in everlasting splendor, those are the only two realities. The arrival at the point of death is instant, and the person is fully aware of whether he or she is a horror or a splendor in heaven or in hell. "And so while relatives and friends plan your funeral," writes Erwin Lutzer, "deciding on a casket, a burial plot, and who the pallbearers shall be, you will be more alive than you have ever been. You will either see God on His throne surrounded by angels and redeemed humanity, or you will feel an indescribable weight of guilt and abandonment. There is no destination midway between these two extremes, just gladness or gloom." Further he writes, "Nor will it be possible to transfer from one region to another, no matter how endless the ages, no matter how heartfelt the cries, no matter how intense the suffering, your travel plans are limited to your present abode. Those who find themselves in the lower, gloomy regions shall never enter the gates that lead to endless light and ecstasy. They will discover that the beautiful words spoken in their eulogy bear no resemblance to the reality that now confronts them."

This is the reality. It is the theme of the unforgettable story designed by Jesus to warn sinners of the horrors of going to hell. Look at verse 19, "Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, 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. Now it came about that the poor man died, and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's side; and the rich man also died, and he was buried. And in Hades (or hell) he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'

"But Abraham said, 'Child (or son), remember that during your life you received your good things, likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'"

This is our fourth look at this very important parable. Let me give you just a very brief review of what that section is about. Jesus describes these two men in life, verses 19 to 21. They are absolutely at the opposite extremes. One is filthy rich. One is filthy poor. So the opening scene is life. The next scene in verse 22 is death. They both die. Therein lies the great reversal leading to the third point, verses 22 to 26, life after death; from life to death to life after death.

The shock of the story, the jolt, the stunning reality to the Pharisees who were being told this story is that they would've expected the poor man to end up in hell, because they believed that men who lived with that kind of deprivation were cursed by God; and men who lived with splendor and wealth were blessed by God; and so this is an inconceivable and stunning reversal in their view, to see a man who is nothing but human road kill being licked by dogs end up next to Abraham, the greatest of all heroes of Judaism, while the rich man, who seemed to be so blessed by God, ends up in agonizing torment in hell. This is unimaginable in the framework of their self-styled theology.

There are two critical questions that come out of the story, and we've looked at them. No. 1, what will be the sinner's experience in hell? What will be the sinner's experience in hell? And we answered that last time: torment, agony, separation, no relief, no hope, no end. The Bible describes the agony as a place where the worm never dies. Perhaps a reference to the conscience, and it's assaulting the person fully with all of its force unmitigated and unrelieved forever. "A place of shame and everlasting contempt," writes the prophet Daniel. Jesus calls it eternal fire, describes the person as being thrown out into outer darkness, and the agony of hell forever is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

This is an eternal conscious experience. Verse 23: "In hell he lifted up his eyes." That is simply a colloquial way of saying he was made fully aware of where he was and instantly what was going on; and the first thing he realized was his torment and his separation.

Now, somebody might ask at this point, "What about Matthew 10:28?" where it says "Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Doesn't destroy mean annihilate? There are some who would say it does, that it means to annihilate or to put out of existence. This is what is called an annihilationist view, that the ungodly and the unregenerate who die are literally snuffed out. They have no conscious eternal existence. They go out of existence altogether. That, of course, is not what the Bible teaches. It is not compatible with all of the statements of eternal suffering. The conscious agony, the conscious torment, the desperate need for relief and none can come, the separation that never ends, is incompatible with the idea of annihilation.

But just for the sake of clarity, take this word “destroy” from Matthew 10:28. It is the Greek verb *apollumi*. It's a very common Greek word. It has the meaning of to kill, to bring to nothing, to render useless, to lose, to perish, to be lost. It does not mean to go out of existence. That is not what *apollumi* means. “Destroy” is one word to translate it; but it does not, therefore, mean that it goes out of existence. In fact, in Matthew 9 verse 17, "Wineskins” it says “are ruined” and cannot then take more wine. The word “ruined” is the word *apollumi*. It simply means something that is rendered

nothing, useless; not at all annihilated.

In Luke, where we are, back to chapter 15 in verse 4, "If a man has 100 sheep and lost one of them, doesn't he go and leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost," *apollumi*, destroyed, lost. You find a number of other illustrations of how *apollumi* is translated in the New Testament, and no place in the New Testament is this word used to mean “annihilation” in the strict sense of the word.

One of the classic lexicographers of the Greek language, Thayer, says, "The word means, at its heart, to be delivered up to eternal misery. To be delivered up to eternal misery." And that is what Jesus is saying in Matthew 10:28. And you could translate that verb, instead of "Who is able to destroy," "Who is able to deliver up to eternal misery." That is what happens one second after an unconverted sinner dies. They are delivered up to eternal misery. And the rich man is the Lord's illustration, a witness from hell, the only one in the Bible, to warn others not to die in a faithless and unconverted condition.

That brings us to the second critical question. What takes the sinner to hell? Why did he end up there? Why did he go there? And we talked about that last time; but let me have you be just briefly reminded why he went there. Look at verse 27. In this conversation that Jesus fabricates in the parable, He said, "'I beg you, father” speaking of Abraham, father Abraham “that you send him” that is Lazarus “to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'"

With that conversation, we find out why people go to hell; and, as I suggested to you last Sunday, there are some wrong answers and some half answers to why people go to hell. You might think that the rich man went to hell because he was the wrong stock. Maybe he was a Gentile and not a Jew. That's not the case. The Jews thought that heaven was a lock for them because of their Abrahamic ancestry, but this rich man is also a Jew, because he addresses Abraham as “father Abraham.” Some might think that he went to hell because of his substance, because he was rich; and his riches were the reason he was in hell. That can't be, because the poor man went to heaven and went to Abraham's side; and the Book of Genesis says Abraham was very rich. Some people might think that it was his secularism that sent him to hell, that he was irreligious, that he was indifferent to the religion of Judaism. That's not true either. He was very concerned that his brothers repent.

If you understand repentance, you understand sin. If you understand sin, you understand law. If you understand law, you understand the Lawgiver, and so you understand God. He had a very apt theology of God as the Lawgiver, who gives His law which men violate and, consequently, need to repent. He even understood judgment, which he was experiencing and made no plea that something had gone wrong, and he shouldn't have ended up there, because he is now, by a fully activated and eternally obsessive conscience, aware of his own wretchedness.

Others might say it was his sin that sent him there. He must have been a really bad sinner, a horrible sinner, a heinous sinner. The only sin that shows up in the story is his indifference to this man at his gate who had absolutely nothing. That is a sin. But it's no heinous sin that sends him to hell, because our Lord says nothing about his morality, says nothing at all about how he lived his life. For all we know, he might have been a Pharisee of the Pharisees who fastidiously obeyed the law to the best of his ability.

So it isn't that he is some over-the-top, horrible, heinous kind of sinner; and that's the kind of person who goes to hell. Somebody else might suggest it was his selfishness. He loved his money, and he wouldn't share it. He didn't give to the poor. Well, if he had given to the poor, would that have taken him to heaven? Do you go to heaven by being philanthropic? Do you go to Heaven by giving your money all the way to the poor? Then the poor have a problem. They can't go to heaven until they give it to somebody else; and when does that end; and the Pharisees gave alms, even though they gave alms hypocritically. And yet, there is some half truth in the last two. Sin will send you to hell, and selfishness is a sin. Sin and self damn to hell, but not necessarily, since all of us are sinful, and all of us are selfish, and all of us are not going to hell.

All who go to hell are sinners; and all who go to hell are selfish sinners; but all who go to heaven are also selfish sinners because Romans 4:5 says, "God justifies the ungodly." That's the amazing reality of the gospel of grace. So what is the difference? Why did he go to hell? It wasn't about stock or substance or secularism or sin or selfishness. The issue was Scripture. The issue was Scripture. "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they're not going to be persuaded though someone rises from the dead."

What sends people to hell? How they respond to Scripture, that simple. How they respond to Scripture. Heaven is for those who believe the Word of God. Heaven is for those who believe the gospel, who believe the good news that God saves penitent sinners who believe in Him. The divine gift of saving grace that spares the guilty from eternal punishment and brings them to eternal joy

always comes through faith in the Word of God, faith in the truth of Scripture, not mystical spirituality, not faith in faith, not some vague spiritual feeling. Heaven is for those who believe what God has clearly revealed in Scripture, who believe what God has said, and who respond, who read it, who understand it, who believe it, and who assent to it or embrace it. It's about what you do with the Scripture. That is why it is so important to preach the Scripture. Faith comes by hearing. We are begotten again by the word of truth.

Now let's go back to the conversation, because this raises an interesting question; and the interesting question is one that I want to deal with. The rich man is concerned about his brothers, which is an interesting thing, really. He has this concern rise in his heart in the story that Jesus invents, for the purpose that Jesus will illustrate, making the point that Scripture is the only hope that his brothers have, because it's the only hope anybody has. The rich man knows his torment is permanent. He knows there will be no relief for him ever. He has been told that. He never asks to escape, to have his time shortened, or to reconsider. He just wants one drip off of a finger to give him a moment's relief from the agony, and he knows he will never have it, and so he has one more plea in verse 27. "I beg you," Jesus has him say to father Abraham, "send Lazarus," which means he knew him, his brothers knew him, and they all ignored him. "But send him back to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may warn them lest they also come to this place of torment."

This is both a complaint and a request. The complaint factor is, "You know, the reason I came here, and the reason my brothers are going to come here, is because we have insufficient data. I wouldn't be here" is the implication "and they won't be here if you will do a sign for them. I mean a real knockout sign. You see, if someone had come back from the dead to warn us, if I had had a sufficient sign, if somebody had come who has been on the other side of death, this would have been sufficient. And I wouldn't be here, and my brothers won't come." In other words, "We...We lack the sign."

This was what they always said, the Pharisees, "Show us a sign. Show us a sign. Prove yourself," and they said it over and over and over and over. "Prove yourself. Show us a sign." "If Lazarus comes back from the dead, that'll be enough; and my five brothers will be sufficiently warned." Verse 30: "They will repent."

"So the reason I'm in hell," he says, "and the reason we'll all be here is because of insufficient proof or insufficient warning. We need more than we've had. Send Lazarus in order that he may warn them, and if he comes back from the dead, that will be enough." To which Jesus said, "You have, and so do they, Moses and the prophets, and that is all you need." Now that poses a question that I want to answer this morning. This could actually take me a month to answer this. But over the years, I'll

maybe come back to it. If you were living at that time, you were listening to Jesus tell that story, you would go away saying, "OK, if I want to get out of hell, if I want to escape hell and enter into heaven, I must listen to Moses and the prophets. That's thirty-nine books. What do I need to know? What do I need to believe? What is in Moses and the prophets, which, as I told you, is just a term that Jews used to describe the Old Testament? They called it Moses and the prophets, or the law and the prophets. What did someone need to believe to escape hell before the cross and before the resurrection?

For us, to confess Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, and you shall be saved. But what if you're before the resurrection, and you're before the cross, what did they need to believe? This is a... This is a question that has been discussed for centuries, really; but I think the answer is really straightforward in the Scripture. What did the rich man need to believe to enter into heaven? What did Lazarus actually believe, so that he did enter into heaven? What did the brothers need to believe in order to escape hell? What was it that God had revealed in the progress of the Old Testament revelation that needed to be believed in order for a sinner to be saved?

And by the time you get to the Lord's life, the Old Testament has been complete for 400 years, so they all had the full Old Testament, all of it. But what was there in it that they needed to believe to be saved? Well, one could simply say they needed to believe everything that was in it as the Word of the living God; but there were some things that were particularly essential to salvation, so let me just give you a little list. OK? And I wish I had time to expand on all of this; and I...and at the end I'll show you how magnificently this accords with the New Testament.

Number one, they needed to believe in the nature of God. They needed to believe that God is the God revealed in the Old Testament, that He is the all-holy, sovereign Creator, Ruler, Lawgiver, and Judge; that He is the God who always judges sin and judges sin devastatingly; and they had ample indication of that in the Garden in Genesis 3 when the whole of God's glorious creation collapses into wretchedness at the sin of Adam because of God's curses pronounced on them, and they had even a more graphic illustration of God as a holy God who punishes sin when God drowned the entire human race and catapulted them all into hell, saving only eight people out of what very like was millions; the Flood.

They should've known that God was a God who judged sin by reading the genealogy of Genesis 5. When you read the genealogy of Genesis 5, you read all those names, you say, "Why are the names there?" The names are incidental. The important line in chapter 5 that's repeated over and over is, "And he died, and He died, and he died, and he died, and he died, and he died." That's what you

learn from that genealogy, the wages of sin is death.

Then they knew from their own history how God again and again promised to Israel blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience, and their story is a long, dramatic story of disobedience and divine cursing. They knew, Ezekiel 18 said, “The soul that sins, it shall die.” They knew that God was holy, holy, holy, because they knew the scene well in Isaiah 6 where Isaiah himself pronounces a curse on himself when he finds himself in the presence of the infinitely holy God. They knew the Levitical law. "I am holy. I am holy," repeated again and again and again and again, dozens and dozens and dozens of times. They knew Habakkuk chapter 1 that said, "God is of purer eyes than to look on iniquity and...and countenance evil." They knew Deuteronomy 27 particularly well, about the holiness of God, and the punishment of sin.

Second thing that they needed to know, not only is God holy and the Judge of all sin and sinners, but man must repent. The keynote in the Old Testament is repentance. You can go back to, essentially, the beginning. Go back to the Book of Job, one of the first books ever written in the Bible during the patriarchal period. Job goes through this long, traumatic siege from Satan, allowed by God for God's own purposes. Finally, in Job 42 and verse 6, it's done its work in even a godly man's heart, and Job says, "I had heard of You with the hearing of my ear." That is to say, I knew something about You, “but now my eye sees You.” Now my perception is way beyond what I used to know. I know more about You, God. I have seen You in more glorious way through my suffering than I ever did before this." And he said, "I repent in dust and ashes."

You know what he did? He repented for an inadequate view of God. He repented, not for some heinous crime, he didn't have any. When his friends came to him and said, "Look, you must have secret sin in your life. That's why you're having all this trouble." He said, "It's not true." He went before God, and he pronounced his innocence before the very throne of God, as well as before his thriends...friends; but, in the end, he did repent of the horrible sin of having an incomplete and inadequate view of God, which made him question what God did. Even Job needed to repent, and he had no moral flaws. He knew he needed to repent of an inadequate view of God.

Repentance is preached all through the Old Testament. Jonah preached repentance to Nineveh. The prophets preached repentance to Israel; Joel chapter 2, Ezekiel chapter 18, many other places. So if you wanted to be saved, and you were living before the cross, you had to acknowledge God as the Creator and the sovereign Lawgiver and Judge and recognize that you were a sinner and come to God to repent. They had many models of that.

Third thing that was necessary to believe if you wanted to be saved was that salvation was by sovereign grace; that salvation was by sovereign grace. God has today and always has and always will saved sinners in every age before the cross and since the cross by grace alone. They didn't earn it then. You don't earn it now. Salvation has never been by merit. It has never been by works. It has never been by relative goodness. It has never been by religious ritual or ceremony or sacrifice; and all the way back in the writings of Moses, you have God manifesting astonishing grace, and it starts in Genesis 3 when God says, "In the day that you eat that fruit, you will die." And God had a right to execute Adam and Eve the day they ate, and I'm sure they ate very soon after they were created; and, yet, in God's astonishing grace, Adam lives almost 1,000 after his sin; and God Himself pronounces a blessing on that sinful humanity.

In Genesis 3:15, when He says, "A seed will come out of that woman that will crush the head of Satan, the one who threw the whole human race into iniquity." Grace is displayed there also when God kills the first animal in Genesis 3:21 and takes the hide and wraps the loins of Adam and Eve to cover their shame, and you learn that God is gracious, and God gives life to those who don't deserve it, and God covers sinners, and God pronounces blessing on sinners and curses the one who caused them to sin.

That's why Exodus 22:27 says, "I am gracious"; Exodus 33:19, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious"; 2 Chronicles 30 verse 9, "The Lord your God is gracious." This is not an extraordinary set of verses. This is ordinary declaration from God made repeatedly. He talks about His loving-kindness and His grace. Psalm 86, "Thou, oh Lord, art a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in loving-kindness and truth. Turn to me and be gracious to me." That's the prayer of a penitent. He knew God was the Lawgiver. He knew God was the Judge. He knew he had fallen short of God's holy standard. He knew he needed to repent, and he knew he was repenting to a God who is gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness. They knew they couldn't be saved by the Mosaic law. They knew that all the promises given to Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12 and following, and all the promises given to David in the Davidic covenant, in 2 Samuel 7, couldn't come to pass until they really obeyed God, until they were truly saved. They knew they couldn't be saved by the Mosaic covenant, so the promises of the Davidic covenant and the Abrahamic covenant couldn't be fulfilled by compliance with the Mosaic covenant. They knew their only hope of salvation was the New Covenant, the New Covenant, the New Covenant which was revealed to the prophets in all of its magnificence, to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 31.

This is so critical. Jeremiah 31:31, "Days are coming when I make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, the house of Judah. Not like the covenant I made with your fathers on the day I took them by the hand, bring them out of the land of Egypt. Not like the Mosaic covenant, the law. This covenant, He says. “I will use to put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it. I'll be their God. They'll be my people. I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." And God even says, "I will remember your sin no more. I will remove it as far as the east is from the west. I will bury it in the depths of the deepest sea." All of this is manifest grace.

You then have the promise of God that came to Ezekiel, the same new covenant salvation blessing promise. "I will sprinkle clean water on you,” Ezekiel 36:25. “You'll be clean. I'll cleanse you from your filthiness, all your idols. I'll give you a new heart, put a new Spirit in you, remove the heart of stone from your flesh, give you a heart of flesh, put My Spirit within you, cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to observe all My ordinances.” I will save you, is what He is saying. I will transform you. I will give you new life. I will regenerate you. I'll remake you. This is all a work of grace.

Now, listen, the New Covenant, though only stated in full in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36, was in force all through human history. Adam and Eve were saved by the New Covenant. They were saved by the gracious forgiveness of God upon their repentance. Everybody else who was ever saved in the history of redemption was saved by the grace of God and the mighty work of God in loving-kindness that is described in the New Covenant. The new covenant didn't go into effect when Jeremiah stated it or Ezekiel stated it. It didn't go into effect when Jesus ratified it in His blood on the cross. It had always been in effect. It always will be in effect. People can only be saved by that New Covenant which promises transformation to those who believe, put their faith in God; and it is a covenant of grace.

What did a person have to believe to escape hell before the cross and the resurrection? To believe in the nature of God as holy, as a Judge; to believe in their own sinfulness, and the need for repentance; to believe that their appeal to God was purely on the basis of grace and nothing more.

Fourth thing they needed to believe was that they would receive from God the forgiveness of sin. That God, by nature, was a forgiving God; and that's how His grace operated. If you go back to Exodus chapter 34, and I'll just make a couple of comments, because we can't cover all of this. The Lord passed by in front of Moses. What... What is the Lord doing here? He's identifying Himself, and here is how. The Lord speaks. “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness and truth, who keeps loving-kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin.” But for those who don't come to Him, “He will, by no means, leave

the guilty unpunished."

God offers Himself as a God of forgiveness. I always think of the section of the Psalms. I wish I could read several of them, but maybe a couple of verses out of Psalm 103 verse 9, "He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities," and there's that further section about, removing our sins “as far as the east is from the west." This is because of His great loving-kindness on those who fear Him. "He has removed our transgressions from us like a father who has compassion on his children."

David... You remember when he sinned his heinous sin with Bathsheba and her husband Uriah; adultery with her, murder then of her husband. He prays, Psalm 32, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity.” That the Lord doesn't impute iniquity to the sinner, to whom does the Lord impute that iniquity? To Jesus on the cross. To Jesus on the cross. They understood the blessedness of a forgiving God. God has revealed Himself as a forgiving God.

Then he said in Psalm 51...David...at the same time over the same sin, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity. Cleanse me from my sin, for I know my transgression and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned." To know that God is Lawgiver and sovereign Judge, necessary. To know that God's law has been violated, and you are a sinner who needs to repent, necessary. To know that the only way that you can ever be saved and be made right with God is by the sovereign, uninfluenced grace of God, which can never be earned, is necessary. And to know that God is a forgiver of penitent sinners, to go to Him embracing that forgiveness, is necessary.

Micah, the prophet, in that magnificent tribute to the nature of God as a forgiving God puts it this way: "Who is a God like Thee who pardons iniquity, who passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession. He does not retain His anger forever. He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us. He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."

They knew God as a gracious, forgiving God to the penitent. This is not what the Pharisees thought. They didn't go to God to repent. They went to God to celebrate their self-righteousness. "I thank You that I'm not like other men, like that publican. I tithe, I fast," etc., etc. They were on their way to hell, because they would not recognize the holiness of God. They thought God was less righteous than He was, and they were more righteous than they were. It was their inadequate view of God for which they needed, first of all, to repent, and then all the rest of the sins. They needed to believe in the true holy nature of God, the desperate need for repentance, the promise of salvation only through

sovereign grace and the offer of forgiveness for all their sins. Instead of trying to hide their sins from God and pretend to be holy before God, all they needed to do was confess everything to God, and they would find forgiveness. "Come now," says Isaiah, “let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet, they'll be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool." Forgiveness comes from God.

The fifth thing that a person needed to believe was that the means of appropriating this was by faith. The means of appropriating this was by faith, by faith. This is way back in the very beginning. Listen to what it says in Genesis 15:6, speaking of Abram. "Then he believed in the Lord." He believed in the Lord as Creator, sovereign Judge. He believed in the Lord as Lawgiver; and against that, he understood his own sinfulness; and he believed in the sovereign grace of God; and he believed in the forgiveness of God; and it was enough to believe. "Then he believed in the Lord," Genesis 15:6, “and He” that is the Lord, “reckoned it to him as righteousness." He was saved by faith. That's why Romans 4 presents Abraham as the model of faith, the archetype, the prototype of faith. Habakkuk 2:4, "The just shall live by faith," quoted, as we well know, by the apostle Paul in the New Testament. God has always and only saved sinners in every age, before the cross and since, by grace through faith.

Number six: What else did they need to believe? They needed to believe that salvation occurred by the granting of an alien righteousness. They needed to believe that salvation occurred by the granting of an alien righteousness. I mean they come...the sinner comes and, like the publican, pounds his breast, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." He's wretched. The sinner knows, like Job knows, "I repent in dust and ashes." I'm crushed. Like Isaiah, who says, "Woe is me." Damn me. Curse me. “I'm a man with a filthy mouth." If then he's ever to be righteous before God, there's going to have to come to him a righteousness that is alien to himself. There has to come a righteousness from some other source, and so they believed in imputation, a great Reformation word. They believed in imputation.

As we read earlier, the sins were imputed to Christ, and the righteousness from Christ imputed to us. That's Genesis 15:6. Abraham...or Abram believed God, and it was imputed to him as righteousness. Because he believed, God credited His own righteousness, completely alien to all of us, to Abraham. Psalm 103:17, "The loving-kindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting" listen to this “and His righteousness to children's children." He just keeps giving His righteousness to every generation of people who believe in Him.

How were you saved in the Old Testament? You were saved in the Old Testament by believing in God as sovereign Creator, all-holy Judge, understanding therefore your own sinfulness and repenting

of it before God; acknowledging the fact that salvation could come only on the basis of sovereign grace, because it couldn't be earned; embracing the fact that God is a forgiving God by nature. You come to Him offering nothing but your faith, no works whatsoever, realizing that if you were ever to enter into the presence of God and be considered righteous it's going to have to be because some alien righteousness is credited to your account. God will accept you on that basis until He can make you fully righteous in His presence.

And there's another thing. If you were to be saved in the Old Testament, you had to know that God's justice could be satisfied by substitution. If you were saved in the Old Testament, you believed that God can save sinners by transferring His judgment to a substitute. Where do you think they picked that up? They slaughtered millions of lambs in the course of Israel's history. They knew Leviticus 17:11 said, "The life of the flesh is in the blood." They understood, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.” There was no salvation apart from a blood sacrifice. They understood that sin brings death, but the message was sinners live and substitutes die. They sin; they live. Adam lives almost 1,000 thousand years. The other patriarchs before the Flood lived 900 plus years. They lived long lives even after that. They lived hundreds of years, and then it began to lessen; but sinners live; and all through that sacrificial system, sinners live and substitutes die.

And John gets it, John the Baptist. Jesus shows up, and he says, "Behold (the what?) the Lamb of God." They understood substitution. They understood that the means by which God satisfies His justice is substitution; and He showed them in Genesis 3:21 when He killed an animal and took the skin of that animal. The animal was the sacrifice; and so Adam and Eve, instead of being killed by God, lived. An animal dies. The skin wraps Adam and Eve in the grace of God and protects them from the judgment of God felt, as it were, by the animal. They didn't really receive salvation through the death of that animal. They received salvation the same way you do, through the death of Christ, because even the sins of Adam and Eve were imputed to Jesus Christ on the cross, along with everybody else who's ever lived; but the animal was a model to demonstrate that God, in His grace, will kill a substitute to let a sinner live.

They knew that from the Passover lamb, Exodus 12. But the greatest of all testimonies to that is Isaiah 53. Even today, if you walked into the Jewish synagogue down the street, stood up and read Isaiah 53, there would be panic. There would be panic. "Surely our griefs He Himself bore; our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening of our well-being fell on Him. By His scourging we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way. The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." That's substitution, vicarious substitution.

"The Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief, to render Him as a guilt offering. Ah, but He will see His offspring. He will prolong His days." Oooooh, there's a resurrection. There's a resurrection. You can't kill Him and then have Him prolong His days. There's a resurrection, like Psalm 16, "He will not allow His Holy One to see corruption." They knew that all who have ever been saved from hell, and all who will be in the heaven of heavens are going to be there because the justice of God has been satisfied by a substitute; and Revelation 13:8 says, "Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." They believed that God would provide a substitute.

Certainly, Genesis chapter 22, Abraham got a great illustration of it, didn't he? He takes Isaac up there, lifts the knife. You say, "Why would he even do that?" Because Hebrews says he believed God would raise him from the dead. Well, had he ever seen a resurrection? No. Had there ever been a resurrection that he knew of? No. Well, why did he think He'd raise him from the dead? Because God made him a promise, and he trusted God's promise, and he just knew that God doesn't make promises He doesn't keep, so he was prepared to kill his son, knowing that He'd raise him from the dead, but in the middle of that, God stops him, and there's an animal, a ram, in the thicket, and God has provided a substitute.

And, if you're a Jew through that economy, sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice, a bloody mess... Priests were nothing but butcher, and it went on and on and on all the time. You'd say like all those Jews, "When is the final sacrifice going to come? When is the One who will finally be pierced for our iniquities? When is the One who will finally satisfy the justice of God going to arrive?" Part of their anticipation.

So what did it take to be saved in the Old Testament? Believing in the character of God as gracious, forgiving; appropriating the salvation that God offers to the repentant sinner by faith. It also involved understanding that you would have to be the recipient of an alien righteousness and the beneficiary of a substitute who would take the full wrath of God.

There's number nine. Is that right? Number nine? Number eight. OK, the anticipation of the coming Messiah, the anticipation of the coming Messiah: giving you that transition, the anticipation of the coming Messiah. I can't even begin to develop all of that, but it's crystal clear, isn't it that the Jews expected the Messiah to come? It's all over the place. Genesis 3:15, "The seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head." The seed of the woman? OK, human. Human. But humans don't crush Satan. So in the Genesis 3:15, you have a proto-evangelium, as it's called. You have the first prophecy of incarnation, really, of God incarnate. How...I can understand the seed of the woman.

That's His humanity, and He's of the...the loins of Abraham, and He's of the seed of David through Judah, Jesse, David. He is human. But on the other hand, it's more than human to crush the serpent's head. It's more than human to be the seed, Genesis 3:15, it's more than human to be the seed “through whom all the families of the earth will be blessed." No human could achieve that.

It's more than human, Psalm 2, to have all the nations bow to you, all the nations of the world bow to you. That's what psalm says. "Kings of the earth take their stand. Rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed,” and He laughs at them, and He crushes them with a rod of iron, and takes them as His own inheritance. You have elements of His humanity. You have elements of His deity in the promises of the Messiah. Even Job saw the promise. "I know that my Redeemer lives,” he said. I know that there's a Redeemer. There's a Redeemer, and He lives. They understood that; and when Jesus was to be born, the Jews like Simeon and Anna, knew He was the Promised One; unmistakable, right family, right heritage, right tribe, right ancestry, right birthplace. Bethlehem, as Micah 5:2 said, "He'd be born in Bethlehem," and He was. Everything came together in Jesus Christ. That is why it was so tragic and so unnecessary to reject Him. He is the...the One whose right it is. Shiloh, Genesis 49:10, who would come with a scepter. He is the Messiah.

A final thought...and I haven't scratched the surface of it. I'll carry this on a little bit next week. So anything left? Yeah. One other thing: Personal reception of this salvation was always, and is always, by total self-abandonment, forsaking all, forsaking all other gods, forsaking all other righteousness, forsaking all self-reliance, forsaking all sin, forsaking all other hopes, forsaking everything; total abandonment to the only Savior.

Psalm 3:8, "Salvation belongs to the Lord." Isaiah 43:3, "I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." God says, "I am your Savior. I am your only Savior." "Truly,” says Isaiah 45:15, “Truly Thou art a God who hides Himself. Oh God of Israel, Savior. Israel has been saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” God is the Savior. "Turn to Me. Turn to Me,” verse 22, “all ends of the earth and be saved. I am God, and there is no other. There is no other God besides Me, a righteous God, and a Savior.” There's none except Me. This is total abandonment to God who alone is the Savior; no one else, and you give up everything.

Listen to Isaiah 55:6. "Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He's near. Let the wicked forsake His way, the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to Lord, and He will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." It's about forsaking everything and embracing the God who is the Savior.

Now, in conclusion, does that sound any different than the New Testament? It's not one bit different. All those components are components of New Testament salvation. The only difference is we've seen the reality of the coming King and Sacrifice. If they believed Moses and the prophets, that would've been enough.

Father, we thank You for our time this morning and Your Word. So much to consider. Thank You for the faithfulness of Your people to receive and to believe what You have given us. Now, Father, send us on our way, grateful for the glory of this salvation so clearly revealed in Your Word, and in our lives through Your sovereign grace. In Christ's name. Amen.

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