

*A Matter of  
Life, Death  
and Life*



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## A Matter of Life, Death and Life

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***“So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.”***

This is a story of two men living and two men dying; a picture of life before death and death after life.

### THE FIRST PICTURE:

A picture of a rich man... a rich man of the world. He was prosperous and contented. He had all that money could buy. He lived in a mansion, had servants that waited on him day and night... he fared sumptuously!

He was no doubt highly respected in his community, had many, many friends, fine clothes, and a high office... most rich men do.

He must have been a hard worker; thrifty and very industri-

ous... the lazy seldom make much money. He had saved his money and was not a spendthrift. He did not idle away his time, taking it for granted that the world owed him a living. He had worked hard and used his head for something other than a hat rack. He probably worked every angle he could to make another buck or save another dollar. As far as the record is concerned, God did not condemn him for being rich. There is not one word of censure in regards to his wealth.

### BUT.... THERE IS A PROBLEM....

The problem is that he had left God out of his life completely. He did not feel a need for God in his life. He lived for himself and himself only. He had a heart of stone and was completely unmoved by the sight of poverty at his own doorstep. Everything he

into empty prescription-pill bottles. “I’ve got ’em all,” he said, astounded. “I’ve got all 50.” Then he invited me in. A folded-up Nordic Track leaned against the desk, and a bucket of fire axes sat behind him. (After serving as a helicopter mechanic in Vietnam, Wallace worked as a back-country firefighter in Yosemite.) But otherwise, the unit looked warehouse-like. Stacked, labeled boxes stretched down either side of the deep, rectangular space with a snug but passable aisle between.

This was everything Wallace owned, except the truck parked outside. A year ago, he was living in an apartment in Carson City, Nev., funneling the entire \$1,200 he collected in retirement benefits and disability directly into his rent and alimony payments every month. “So I started doing a lot of credit-card stuff,” he said. Soon he was \$30,000 in debt. Wallace hated living in a city anyway, “so because of my debt crisis and my marriage crisis and everything, I moved everything into storage and I just live out of my truck,” he told me, resting his hands on his gut. That was June 15, 2008. At first, he rented a second unit across the way and spent a few months sorting, giving away items he didn’t need to an organization for homeless veterans. “You can call me homeless,” he told me. “But I’m not goofing around. I’ve got money, but I just want to get this debt down.”

It was like a cleansing: the storage unit cost about \$200 a month. But aside from gas, truck payments and

food (he had several boxes of meals-ready-to-eat stocked here), it was his only major expense. He had cut out rent, cable, phone and electricity, and purged all the unnecessary fees from his bank statements. For the last year, he had been camping a lot and driving around the West visiting ex-firefighter friends. He saw a woman in Antioch occasionally. “It’s feeling good,” he said, “and it’s *working*. That’s the thing: it’s working. Debts are down to almost zippo right now.” He figured he’d be done by Thanksgiving.

For a decade at least, storage has been a mechanism allowing Americans to live beyond our means. Wallace was using his unit as a center of gravity, to pull his financial life back within reach. He had even started saving, he told me, and was looking into a small condo in a suburb near Lake Tahoe. “It’s not my style or anything,” he said; he’d prefer something more secluded — bigger, and with land. “But I could do that.” He missed sleeping in his own bed.

He also missed his music collection — and the books and rare coins he had collected. Also, his pins. “Little pins, like flag pins,” he explained. “I’ve got veterans pins, and I’ve got Rose Parade pins, and pins that I got at fairs.” He missed his stuff. “Hey,” he said as I left. “I’ll call you when I’m getting ready to load the truck.”

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one new piece of clothing every five and a half days.

Schor has been hacking intrepidly through the jumble of available data quantifying the last decade's consumption spree. Between 1998 and 2005, she found, the number of vacuum cleaners coming into the country every year more than doubled. The number of toasters, ovens and coffeemakers tripled. A 2006 U.C.L.A. study found middle-class families in Los Angeles "battling a nearly universal overaccumulation of goods." Garages were clogged. Toys and outdoor furniture collected in the corners of backyards. "The home-goods storage crisis has reached almost epic proportions," the authors of the study wrote. A new kind of customer was being propelled, hands full, into self-storage.

The truth is, there is no typical storage customer. As facilities crowded into the landscape, storage units became incubators for small businesses and artisans; warehouses for pharmaceutical reps, eBay merchants or landscapers. One unit at Statewide, the Doparts told me, functions as a kind of regional distribution center for Little Debbie cakes. I met a few homeless renters, who sometimes choose to pay to put a roof over their possessions instead of their own heads (living in units is not allowed); I met working-class renters using units as closets and safe-deposit boxes while serially couch-surfing or living in multi-family homes. I heard of a martial-arts instructor in Hawaii who trained clients in his unit, and a

group of husbands in New England who watch sports in one on weekends. More than one operator told me they have a unit where, every morning, the renter goes in dressed as a man and comes out as a woman.

Maybe the recession really is making American consumers serious about scaling back, about decluttering and de-leveraging. But there are upward of 51,000 storage facilities across this country — more than seven times the number of Starbucks. Storage is part of our national infrastructure now. And all it is, is empty space: something Americans have always colonized and capitalized on in good times, and retreated into to regroup when things soured. It's tough to imagine a product more malleable to whatever turns our individual life stories take, wherever we're collectively heading.

But where are we now? Of all the storage units I toured, one sticks out as being most emblematic of this particular moment. It belonged to Terry Wallace, a 59-year-old veteran with white streaks in his hair and a broad, shaggy moustache who, when I stumbled across his 10-by-30 at a Storage PRO in Stockton, was sitting in a leather office chair, working at his desk under the open door, like a notary in a storefront. Some open mail and a Herman Wouk novel were pushed aside, and the desk was covered with stacks of quarters, the ones celebrating the 50 states. Wallace was sorting them, state by state,

had he kept for himself, he had nothing for God's work. Self satisfied.....he never considered God.

Now there is also a second part of this FIRST PICTURE....

There is this beggar...Lazarus.

Day after day this beggar is carried up to the back door of the rich man's mansion. Unable to stand, he lies there hoping for some crumbs from the rich mans table. We can almost see him lying there with a bunch of hungry dogs.....waiting for the servants to throw out the garbage so he can get something to eat.

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...but he is not completely alone; the dogs are his companions, they seem to try to sympathize with him as they lick his sores...

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If Lazarus had any clothes they would have been rags and certainly not purple. He is covered with big ugly sores that are infected and runny. This is common in the East. The rich man doesn't send food out for Lazarus's belly, he doesn't send a doctor out to check on the sores and tend to his diseases, he doesn't offer him a nice warm bed to rest in, he doesn't send

out clothes for him to wear. He basically doesn't even know he exists.

Lazarus seems to be without any friends at all...but he is not completely alone; the dogs are his companions, they seem to try to sympathize with him as they lick his sores.....Poor Lazarus...what a tragedy!!

So on they live...the rich and the poor...until at last they go they way of all flesh.....the poor first.

One day the servants open the back door to throw out the garbage and they notice that the dogs are acting strange. They look and find the lifeless body of that old beggar...he has died at their back door. They pick up the body and go throw it in a ditch and it is forgotten. Never again will the rich man be plagued by that dirty old beggar at his back door. The rich man probably thinks, "Good riddance"....POOR LAZARUS!!

But wait!! Did we say poor Lazarus? Never again will he feel hungry, pain from his diseases, cold...never again will the dogs lick his infected sores and never again will those sores itch and burn and rack his whole body with pain. He is at last free from this world and all the pain and agony that he has had to endure all his life.

## THE RICH MAN:

When he first gets sick the finest doctors in all the land are summoned, medicines are prescribed, and every remedy known to man is tried. Servants tip toe back and forth from his big, luxurious bed as he lies breathing heavily and complaining constantly. There is a large fire in the fireplace to keep him warm and he is wrapped in fine bedding. Friends and relatives surround him and see to his every whim. NO USE...his money and possessions and stature cannot save him

## THE RICH MAN DIES

Lavish are the preparations for his funeral. Everything must be the very best in keeping with his station in life. The most expensive mourners are hired, the very best undertaker. The body is embalmed, wrapped in the finest burial clothes and placed in the finest tomb. The attendants are his closest friends and richest associates. It is a grand spectacle and for days the funeral of the rich man is the talk of the town...then he is buried and that is the end.

WAIT!! DID I SAY THE END?  
DEATH IS NEVER THE  
END..... DEATH IS THE BE-  
GINNING OF FOREVER!!

Jesus draws back the veil and

continues the story and with His vision that sees forever...we continue the story.....thru JESUS'S EYES we see:

## THE SECOND PICTURE

First our attention is directed to the beggar Lazarus. Jesus sees him die and so do we. The moment the spirit leaves his body we see the angels of God standing nearby, invisible to the human eye, they wait for Lazarus to draw his last breath and vacate his tabernacle of clay. Over at last! We see him...see him surrounded by the angels, smiling with a song in their wings as they bear him aloft to Abraham's bosom....to PARADISE!!!

WHAT A SCENE!! WHAT A GLORIOUS EXPERIENCE!!!

## IF WE HAVE FOLLOWED HIS INSTRUCTIONS...

As saints of God we need not fear death. The moment we close our eyes on this life, we will open our eyes in the paradise of God. We will be with our Lord!

## WHAT ABOUT THE RICH MAN? JESUS SHOWS HIM TO US AGAIN.

The rich man is in the house of hell-bound souls. HADES!! He is tormented; he is suffering as

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## The New York Times on Materialism

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Back in 2009 The New York Times ran an article on the boom in self-storage facilities that contains some eye-opening insights on just how much STUFF the average American has accumulated over the past couple of decades. It might be a little startling to us to realize just how much treasure we continue to lay up here on earth. The article can still be accessed at <http://tinyurl.com/ko4k4v>.

Here are some excerpts from the article:

After a monumental building boom, the United States now has 2.3 billion square feet of self-storage space. (The Self Storage Association notes that, with more than seven square feet for every man, woman and child, it's now "physically possible that every American could stand — all at the same time — under the total canopy of self-storage roofing.") According to the Self Storage Association, one out of every 10 households in the country rents a unit, making facilities like Statewide among our last national commons — places where nearly every conceivable kind of American still goes.

"Human laziness has always been a big friend of self-storage operators," Derek Naylor, president of the consultant group Storage Marketing Solutions, told me. "Because

once they're in, nobody likes to spend all day moving their stuff out of storage. As long as they can afford it, and feel psychologically that they can afford it, they'll leave that stuff in there forever." Now, though, "there are people who are watching their credit-card bills closer than before," he said. "They're really paying attention to the stuff they're storing and realizing that it's probably not worth \$100 a month to keep. So they just get rid of it."

Across America, from 2000 to 2005, upward of 3,000 self-storage facilities went up every year. Somehow, Americans managed to fill that brand-new empty space. In June, Public Storage, the industry's largest chain, reported that its 2,100 facilities in 38 states were, on average, still about 91 percent full. It raises a simple question: where was all that stuff before?

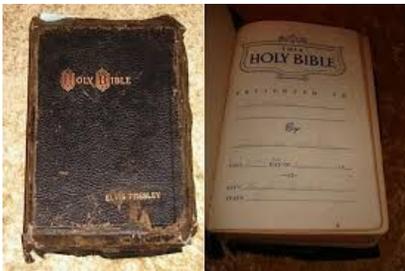
"A lot of it just comes down to the great American propensity toward accumulating stuff," Litton explained. Between 1970 and 2008, real disposable personal income per capita doubled, and by 2008 we were spending nearly all of it — all but 2.7 percent — each year. Meanwhile, the price of much of what we were buying plunged. Even by the early '90s, American families had, on average, twice as many possessions as they did 25 years earlier. By 2005, according to the Boston College sociologist Juliet B. Schor, the average consumer purchased

that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16).

**The Bible is precious because it reveals the way to forgiveness and life. That way is JESUS.** Jesus declared, “*I am the way the truth and the life.*” (John 14:6) **No, it is not the owner of the Bible that makes it valuable. The Bible is valuable because of what God reveals to us in the pages of scripture. Don't just own a Bible; Read it! Don't just read your Bible; Heed it! Then you will be truly blessed.**

...Borrowed from Steve Higginbotham--MercEmail

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## What I Need

I need a strength to keep me true  
And straight in everything I do;

I need power to keep me strong  
When I am tempted to do wrong:

I need grace to keep me pure  
When passion tried its deadly lure;

I need love to keep me sweet  
When hardness and mistrust I meet:

I need an arm to be my stay when  
Dark with trouble grows my day;

And naught on earth can these afford,  
But all is found in Christ my Lord.

--Theodore Horton--

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Lazarus never suffered in this life. As he looks up he sees Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. What a contrast to their earthly lives. He is very conscious of all that is happening, he feels, he hears, he sees, he suffers.

### WHAT'S THAT WE HEAR? THE PRAYER FROM HADES!

Finally, at last...the rich man prays. A little late don't you think? Maybe he never felt a need for prayer, he had all he could want in this life, at least he thought he did. His prayer goes NOWHERE!!! Why?

### TWO REASONS:

1. He prayed to the wrong person. He prays to a saint, Abraham. Abraham was one of the greatest saints, if he couldn't help who could?

I TIMOTHY 2:5 "FOR THERE IS ONE GOD, AND ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MEN, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS."

This is the only one we should pray to and in the name of. This was the rich man's first mistake.

2. He prayed too late! To the wrong person. He should have been praying while he was still in this world, alive, in the flesh.... not after he had de-

parted this life. PRAYERS ARE NEVER ANSWERED IN HELL!!! Their wails will never be heard. This was the second mistake.

Let's take a closer look at this rich man's prayer.

### HIS FIRST PETITION:

All he asks for is for Lazarus just to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. He doesn't ask for a bucket of water, not even a small glass of water. He never needed Lazarus before, but he is his one and only chance. He looks on him as a friend and in a wail of agony he offers his petition. This was a prayer for mercy from him that had showed no mercy. Now all of a sudden the roles have changed. The situation has reversed!

As the rich man cries out in agony to Abraham, what does Abraham say? Son, remember....this is part of the rich man's torment because he DOES remember. He remembers how he had such a lush, comfortable life, a life of prosperity, a life of ease, a huge mansion, money, fine foods, elegant clothing, servants to do his every bidding....

Then he remembers the beggar at his back door, the body with all those oozing sores, the dogs

that licked those sores, the garbage he ate....oh, how he wishes he could forget. Those were his days of opportunity and he let them slip by for his own comfort, ease and pleasures. Now he has landed on the wrong side of the fixed gulf and he has landed there....BY CHOICE...HIS OWN CHOICE!! This gulf is fixed and cannot be removed or crossed over.

#### HIS SECOND PETITION:

It is good for us to be concerned about our relatives, but why did he wait so long? AGAIN....he let opportunity run out! Are we concerned about OUR relatives? Do we ever mention Jesus to them or ask about their relation with God? Sometimes we can't talk to our relatives about religion or their soul's salvation, but we can always pray for them,

#### WHAT WAS ABRAHAM'S ANSWER?

"They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

#### HOW DID THE RICH MAN RESPOND?

The rich man said NAY, they won't listen to the prophets and Moses; but if one went to them from the dead they would listen.

Abraham says...NO...if they won't hear Moses and the

prophets, they wouldn't believe even if one rose from the dead! Not another word is spoken, the rich man is silenced. He has offered his last prayer, it is useless....too late! In horror and agony all he can do is await the coming of his (5) brothers unless they hear Moses and the prophets. In his heart he is convinced that they won't.

The curtain falls on the whole scene.

NOW IT IS OUR CHOICE!!!  
NOW IS OUR TIME OF OPPORTUNITY!  
HAVE WE SPOKEN TO OUR FRIENDS AND RELATIVES ABOUT THEIR SOULS SALVATION?

Have we told them about the love of God, the sacrifice of His son Jesus? Have we mentioned the rewards of obedience and the consequences of disobedience to God's Word?

***Mark 8:36-37: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"***

***Matthew 6:24: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."***

***Matthew 6:19-21: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do***

***not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."***

...Ralph Franklin

Springdale, Arkansas

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## Elvis Presley's Bible

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A Bible that once belonged to Elvis Presley and contains his handwritten notes and thoughts recently sold for \$94,000 at an auction house in England. One of the scriptures emphasized by the acclaimed "King of Rock and Roll" was Luke 9:25: "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"

This was an "interesting insight from a man who had so much of this world values," writes Steve Higginbotham. The Bible, given to the singer in 1957 on his first Christmas at his home called Graceland in Memphis, Tennessee, was bought by an American man based in Britain. The Bible was part of a collection of Elvis memorabilia owned by a single British collector. The entire collection sold for more than \$160,000 at the auction in Cheshire, North England. Steve Higginbotham points out that in the case of Elvis's Bible, the value of his Bible was,

"determined by the person who owned it." In reality, however, **it is the Bible that is truly valuable—regardless of who owns it! The value of the Bible is endless because it is the word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17).**

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica saying, "*For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also works in you who believe.*" (1 Thes. 2:13). **The Bible has great value because it reveals our true condition:** that we are "bankrupt" due to our sin, completely unable to save ourselves and consequently doomed to destruction (Rom. 2:23; 6:23). **The Bible is priceless because it reveals the incredible love of God who loves us even though we are sinners.** "*For God so loved the world,*