

PLAIN SPEECH

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“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12)

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A TELEVANGELIST’S TERRIBLE TWISTING OF THE TEXT

Back in the first century, Peter wrote concerning Paul’s epistles: **“As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16).** The highlighted word comes from *streblōō*. That particular Greek word means: **to twist, to turn, to distort, to torture, to do violence to someone or something.**

Unfortunately, the abuse of God’s Word was not just a first century occurrence. Scripture is still sorely distorted by many.

Consider, for a moment, Charles Stanley. Stanley is the “Senior Pastor” at First Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Stanley is frequently seen “preaching” on several television stations. Stanley, like nearly all Baptists, believes and teaches that it is impossible for one who has become a Christian to ever fall away from God and be lost. Stanley, like nearly all Baptists, terribly twists the text in an effort to make God’s Word teach the non-biblical doctrine of “Once Saved – Always Saved.”

What follows is just one example of Charles Stanley’s mishandling of the Word of God. Stanley has stated: **“Where is this place represented by the ‘outer darkness’ in Jesus’ parables? To be in ‘outer darkness’ is to be in the kingdom of God but outside the circle of men and women whose faithfulness on this earth earned them a special rank or position of authority”** (Handbook on Christian Living, page 126). Folks, Stanley’s statement is simply ridiculous. Let’s think about this.

The term “outer darkness” is found only three times in Scripture. Let’s look at them one by one.

Matthew 8:12 reads: **“But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”** The context (8:5-11) of this passage shows that the children addressed here are the hard hearted Jews who would not accept that Jesus was the Christ (cf. **Romans 11:20**). When you think of heaven, do you think of unrepentant non-believers? Do you think about weeping and pain? Note **Revelation 7:9-17**.

Matthew 22:13 reads: **“Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”** This is found in the context of Jesus’ parable of the wedding feast (22:1-14). The text is rich with lessons. In **verses 11-13** Jesus is teaching about the necessity of proper preparation so as not to be thrust away from the “party.” When you think of heaven, do you think about it being loaded with people who had been called (**2 Thess. 2:14**) but who had not prepared themselves properly? Hogwash!

Matthew 25:30 reads: **“And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”** This passage concludes Jesus’ teaching about the men who were given talents. The lesson is one in a series of lessons (**Matt 24:37-25:46**) given to emphasize the importance of urgency and constant readiness in view of **Matt.24:36**. Let me ask you a question: When you ponder heaven, do you envision wicked and slothful folks (**25:26**)? Do you really think that those who have been useless to the Lord while upon the earth will be in heaven? C’mon.

Now how does Charles Stanley sound? Let’s recall his words: **“Where is this place represented by the ‘outer darkness’ in Jesus’ parables? To be in “outer darkness” is to be in the kingdom of God but outside the circle of men and women whose faithfulness on this earth earned them a special rank or position of authority.”** I will tell you how Stanley sounds: he sounds like a very foolish man trying to twist the Scripture to fit his precious doctrine of eternal security.

Let’s probe this business a bit further. If Stanley’s theology is right, then any passage that applies to life after death which mentions weeping and/or gnashing of teeth, must equate to heaven, for he has already admitted such will be in glory. Thus consistency demands, in view of **Matthew 24:45-51**, that heaven will have: evil people (**48**), people who leaned on their own understanding (**48**), those who were abusive (**49**), those who were gluttons and drunks (**49**), hypocrites (**50**), and those who have been cut in pieces (**50**). Oh can’t you see how preposterous Stanley’s teaching is?

It’s sad to note that Stanley & Co. will learn too late that John was right when he wrote: **“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).**

“Outer darkness” equaling some sort of janitorial realm in heaven?! You’ve got to be kidding me. Sadly, Stanley isn’t joking.