

Heavenly Reward

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Date: 08 November 2015

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[0:00] Well, in these afternoon services, we have been talking about heaven, and that's what we want to talk about right now.

! And the question that I want to ask is, will heaven be the same for each one of us? Will heaven be the same for each one of us?

Or really, to narrow down the question, to get what I'm really after is, will the comfort-loving, half-hearted Christian experience of heaven be the same as, let's say, Henry Martin?

In 1805, sailing from England, he's going to Calcutta, India. Henry left family and friends and Lydia, the woman he loved, and he wrote this, My feelings, as he's sailing away, were those of a man who should suddenly be told that every friend he had in the world was dead.

Because where he's going, he has no friends. All of his friends, his love is in England. Back then, it took months and months and months to get anywhere by ship.

[1:23] So about six months later, he arrived in Calcutta, and he wrote these words in his journal, Now let me burn out for God. And six and a half years later, he was dead.

Burned out for God. During that time, listen to what he did. He translated the New Testament and the Anglican Book of Common Prayer into Hindustani.

At his own expense, he established numerous schools for the native population. He became an able preacher to the natives, though often under threats of personal violence. He translated the New Testament and Psalms into Persian.

But come year four or so, his health began to break. And it was apparent that he had tuberculosis at this point.

So he was coughing up blood. Well, he decided that he needed to move to what is called Persia. It was called Persia back then. It's modern-day Iran.

[2:27] And for a year, he worked on his translation work. And he was the only Christian, for the most part, in this land. And his health got worse and worse. And he was coughing up more and more blood.

And realizing he had to go home for his health, He started to make an overland trip from Iran through Turkey. And he was going to go through what was the city of Constantinople or Istanbul. And he was going to go through Europe that way. As he joined himself to a caravan. And the caravan driver pushed him relentlessly.

And he wouldn't stop to let him rest, no matter how much he begged. Finally, in the middle of some nowhere place, he died. And they buried him in an unmarked grave.

Now, some years later, Charles Simeon, who was himself a godly Anglican pastor. He was a faithful minister. He was Henry Martin's old teacher and friend.

[3:27] He received in the mail, or he received a portrait of Henry Martin. And you can imagine, it was like seeing him again, after years.

And when he opened the package, he burst into tears. And he couldn't hold back. And he put that picture up on the mantle, above his table. And he would often look at it, and he would say this, No one looks at me as he does.

He never takes his eyes off me. And he seems to always be saying, Be serious. Be earnest. Don't trifle. Don't trifle.

And with a little smile, he would say, And I'm not going to trifle. I'm not going to trifle. Now, will a Christian who consistently chooses his own comfort, his own ease, who has the tendency to take the easy way out, who's only half-heartedly fought against sin, will his experience of heaven be the same as Henry Martin's?

Is it sort of like, Once we get there, all distinctions are erased, and the reward is the same? So the question is, Does it make any difference what you do here for the reward that you get there?

[4:54] Or will Christians who believed with Jim Elliot, A man is no fool to give up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose, Are they the wiser of all of us?

Are they living for a better resurrection, a great and eternal reward, something more? And I think the Bible's answer is yes. Bible's answer is yes.

Just as there are lesser and greater punishments in hell, I don't want to take time to prove that, but we can look at verses, and it says there are greater and lesser punishments in hell, there are greater and lesser rewards in heaven.

And so what you do here, Christian, matters. Really matters. It will make a difference. I think the common misconception is that hell will be the exact same for everyone.

It's sort of like you just get there and you're there, and that's all there is to it. But that's not how the Bible talks about it. So I have a quiz question for you. Why did Moses give up the pleasures of Egypt?

[6:04] Why did he consider the disgrace of Christ to be more valuable than the treasures of Egypt? Do you know what it says? The Bible doesn't leave us wondering. If you remember Hebrews chapter 11, it says that Moses was looking forward to his reward.

He said treasures now or reward later. I'll choose the reward. So Moses had a hard life. He had to leave the luxuries of Egypt.

He lived 80 years of his life in the desert, 40 by himself mostly, and 40 ruling over God's people. And he wore himself out ruling God's people.

He had to live with Israel grumbling at him. You know how it was. And he bore so much of it. And he did so much for God. And he did much of it with such meekness.

And the question is, do you think God will make that, do you think God will make it worth his while? Do you think God will make it worth Moses' while?

[7:12] Do you think Moses will regret all that work when the resurrection comes? When he stands before Christ? Moses was looking forward to a reward. A reward for what I'm doing now.

What I'm going through now. There's a reward. What I have to give up now. There's a reward to make up for it. Will God disappoint him? And we'll end up being sort of, we're all the same and equal.

Or will God have a special honor in heaven for Moses? And I think the answer is yes. So just listen to a few verses.

Matthew chapter 16, verse 27. For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person, he will reward each person according to what he has done.

Jesus said, right before Jesus said that, he said, if anyone comes after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. And then he gives this as a motivation.

[8:13] He's adding this as a motivation. Judgment is coming. I'm going to come as a judge. And those who sacrifice now will be rewarded later. He gives this as a motivation.

So Jesus doesn't say just do it because it's right. He says do it for the reward. It will be worth it. You see the exact same connection again in 2 Corinthians 5, verses 9 and 10.

Paul almost quoting Jesus. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. So Paul, what's the motivation? Why should I live to please God?

Why should instead of choosing to please myself, I'm going to please him instead and say no to myself. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Revelation 14, 13. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit. They will rest from their labors for their deeds will follow them. How many deeds do you have following you to heaven?

[9:21] Your deeds will follow you. And everything you do here, every little thing, every big thing, will follow you into heaven, even when no one notices. Even when no one notices.

Even when there's no reward here. Even when it looks like it doesn't make any difference at all.

Jesus said, Even the cup of water given in my name will have its reward.

Even the littlest thing will not lose its reward. And so what is heaven? Heaven is a place where King Jesus rewards his people for what they've done on earth.

And the Bible doesn't hide that or doesn't minimize it. And everywhere it motivates us with a sense of, it's going to be worth it if you do it now.

It's going to be worth it if you sacrifice now. It's going to be worth it if you suffer now. Matthew chapter 5 in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

[10:22] Rejoice and be glad. Why? Because great is your reward in heaven. So persecution is the seed of reward. So persecution is that seed that gets planted.

And it doesn't grow until it gets to heaven. And then it's this full tree. And Jesus says, It's great. The reward is great. He knows how he's going to do it. He knows how he's going to reward those who suffered for him.

And he says, It's great. And so it's an encouragement to let your light shine. It's an encouragement to not hide. It's an encouragement to be out there. It's an encouragement to even suffer for Jesus' sake because it brings a reward.

And so the more diligent, the more faithful, the more out there, the more you let your light shine, the greater the reward. The more faithfulness, the greater the reward.

But it's not only that. It's not only persecution that brings a reward. So does diligent work and stewardship. So we're not all called to be persecuted the same way, are we?

[11:28] But there are other ways that we can earn a reward, win a reward, so to speak. And it's through diligent work and stewardship, doing the things faithfully and fruitfully, what God gives you to do.

And that's another way the Bible talks about it. So if you have your Bibles, turn to Luke chapter 19. Luke chapter 19. And what we're going to see, Jesus is going to tell this little parable, but what we see in this parable is that the more fruitful, the more faithful, the more productive you are, the greater your reward in heaven is.

So Luke chapter 19, verses 12 through 19. So Jesus said, verse 12, A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return.

And so he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. Put this money to work, he said, until I come back. But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, we don't want this man to be our king.

But he was made king, however, and returned home. And then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money in order to find out what they had gained from it, gained with it.

[12:51] And the first one came and said, sir, your mina has earned ten more. Well done, my good servant, his master replied, because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter.

Take charge of ten cities. The second came and said, sir, your mina has earned five more. And his master answered, you take charge of five cities.

The greater the fruitfulness. Do you see the principle? The greater the fruitfulness, the greater the productivity, the greater faithfulness here. Greater reward there.

Greater authority. Greater influence. Greater honor in heaven. But the worst thing you can do of all is to take your talents, your opportunities, the gifts that God has given you, and then just don't do anything with them.

In Matthew's version of this parable, the king says, throw that worthless servant outside. Throw him outside into the darkness where there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[13:57] Now, what is all of this? Well, brothers and sisters, this is an encouragement to be fruitful and to be productive, to be faithful, because there is a direct connection between what we do now and the reward that we experience later.

Not a cup of water will be forgotten. Not the smallest thing will be left off. So labor on, because you know your labor is not in vain. You might not see the rewards here, but Jesus is keeping track of them, and they will receive the reward then.

And so, when you're getting tired, when you're getting frustrated, when you're tired of working faithfully where God has put you.

So, I'm not talking Henry Martin here traveling to India. I'm saying, moms, you're faithfully working and teaching your children. Dads, you're faithfully loving them.

You're going to work. You're being a witness. You're loving your wife. You're caring for them. You're serving in the church. You're being willing to put yourself out there. And it gets hard.

[15:11] It gets hard. Well, sit and think for a moment. There's a reward in heaven for all of this. It's going to be worth it. There's a reward in heaven if I do it.

So, not a duty faithfully done will lose its reward. One way that pastors are encouraged to be faithful is the promise of a reward. So, Peter, writing to the pastors, he says, Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers, not because you must.

That's a bad motive. I just have to. But because you are willing. Not greedy for money. That's a bad motive. But eager to serve.

Not lording it over those entrusted to you. But being examples of the flock. So, you have those two bad motivations. Doing it for the money. Or doing it just because you have to.

You're forced to. This is just you're stuck. And so, there's no way except to do it. But there's a, what Peter does give a proper and a good motivation to do it.

[16:19] So, pastors here, they have a really hard job. And they're not going to get rich doing it. And they're going to have their hands and their hearts in people's troubles. They're going to have a bigger heart that takes in more concern.

And they're dealing with these things. And they can't just care for themselves and their family. They're caring in a special way for all of God's people. And there's a burden to it. But is it going to be worth it?

And Peter says, when the chief shepherd appears. So, here it is. Here's where your reward is going to be. When the chief shepherd appears. He's going to call in his little shepherd boys.

And he says, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. And I don't think that Peter is just talking about a crown of glory in general. He's talking about a special honor just for pastors.

Because if it didn't matter if you had all these problems or not. If it's just all the same. Then that isn't much of a motivation. But a crown of glory.

[17:19] To have people say, you know what? That he was a faithful shepherd. To have that honor there. Peter says, just as the troubles and the calling singles them out here.

So, the crown will single them out there. Do you see what God is doing? He's encouraging faithfulness. He's not saying, oh, you wicked, selfish people.

He's saying, go for the reward. Now, there's more we could say. There's plenty of other verses to look at. But what is heaven? Heaven is the place where King Jesus rewards his servants.

He's going to make it worth your while. And so, what should we do here? Two things. Two very simple things. The first is, I find myself needing to pray.

Lord, help me to believe. Help me to believe those things. Because this world can seem so present. It can just press in on me.

[18:22] And it's like all I can see. And the frustrations and the difficulties. They're so there, aren't they? They're so real. They're so tangible. And heaven and rewards then can seem so intangible and so distant.

And so, I need those heavenly rewards to be a greater reality to me. More real to me. And so, I need to pray for faith.

And not only that, I need to go to these passages. And really meditate on them. And as I meditate and I pray, I want to ask the Lord, Lord, take these truths and mold me and shape me.

Reorder my priorities so that I'm not living for something that I can't keep. But I'm living for something that I'll never be able to lose. That heavenly reward. And so, without faith, I'll keep living for this world.

But give me a greater faith, Lord. And I will work and I will serve for the treasures in heaven. And so, what do we all need to do? We need to pray that heaven would be closer to us and more real to us than even this earth.

[19:28] And the second thing that we need to do is work while you can. Work while you can. Work while it's day.

For night is coming when no man can work. There's only so much time to store up treasures in heaven. Only the span of your life.

Life is only so long, but the reward of heaven is forever. And so, two people go to work. And one works a lot of overtime and the other one just does the bare minimum.

The other just puts in his time. And at the end of the week, the paychecks come, don't they? And the one who put in all the overtime has a bigger paycheck. And the one who just put in the

minimum, he has a smaller paycheck.

And what you did and what you didn't do, you're stuck with. You can't go back in time and work more hours.

[20 : 33] You can't work the minimum and hope for the maximum paycheck. And so, what the Bible says is, Work while it's day. For night is coming when no man can work.

And so, there isn't. So, we need to work now. How much life do you have left? Fill it. Invest in the future.

That's what Jesus was saying. Invest. Don't invest here. Invest for heaven because that's where you're going. That's where you're going to live. So, invest for the future. Work while you can.

Because there's coming a time when you won't be able to work.

You won't be able to. So, whatever time God has given you, whatever time God has given you, whatever time you have left, fill it. Work for that day.

And you won't regret it. Now, if you are lost, there is a night coming when you can't be saved. Now, you aren't saved by your good works.

[21 : 34] No one earns heaven. No one finds their entry into heaven because of any of their good deeds. Our only entrance is Jesus Christ and his righteousness. And so, we need to put those things aside for now and say, there's coming a night when you can't be saved.

Jesus is available and open now. So, go to him. And if you don't, you'll be standing on the outside. And Jesus gave a lot of parables about that.

Of people knocking on the door. Saying, let me in. Let me in. And didn't I do this? And we would be saying, I always intended to be saved. I always wanted to.

I was going to do it. Lord, I went to church. I did those things. And Jesus will say, the door is shut.

And when the door is shut, the door is not opened again.

The day is over. The night has come. And I tell you the truth. I don't know you. So, if you're saved, or if you're not, we both need to get ready now.

[22 : 45] And so, don't let the sun go down on you. So, do what you need to do to get ready for that great day. Because this is just a dot. And that is forever. Think about it.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do pray for greater faith to live for the things that you say are worth living for.

Help us to have faith to count what you say as more important and more weighty and more authoritative than what the world is saying about what we should live for.

And what even our flesh is saying. It's good to live for this. Will you help us to count you and your word as more trustworthy, as more dependable, as more true than what the world and our flesh and the devil is telling us.

Give us that kind of faith. And I pray that you would make these things to echo in our hearts throughout this week. that we would not live without forever in mind, but heaven would be pressed upon us.

[23 : 50] Oh, Holy Spirit, you are the Spirit of God to bring salvation and to even bring the future into our hearts now. And so I pray that you would press these things upon us and give us grace that we might live for the right world, each and every one of us.

Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.