

Heaven—An Unspeakable Reward

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June 13, 2010

If you have your Bibles, turn to Luke 18, where [I am] going to be speaking on heaven this morning—an unspeakable reward. If you're thinking, "Well, if it's unspeakable, then why are you going to be speaking about it?" you're going to find out in a little bit. Let's pray and ask the Lord to bless our time.

Father, we come before You glorying in Your goodness to us, the sacrifice of Your Son on our behalf though we are unworthy sinners. We are thankful that He lived a perfect life, that He willingly offered Himself up on the cross into the hands of sinful man, and [that He] died the death that we should have died. Father, we are also thankful that three days later He rose again from the dead, showing and proving that He had conquered death so that all who [have] faith in Him might not fear death, but know that they would be resurrected to eternal life. Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Christ. We thank You for Your blessings. Father, we think of the Christian life, and though following Christ often comes with a great price, and we have to go through trials, turn from things, and sacrifice things, yet our sacrifice to Christ is nothing compared to His sacrifice to us. So, Father, this morning, as we look at Your Word, as we read it, as we consider it and its application to our lives, may each of us take these truths to our own heart[s], and may we leave here changed for Your glory. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

Jesus said to a crowd of people in Mark 8:34–38:

If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.

Those are some pretty strong demands [for what we are] to sacrifice for the cause of Christ. Have you denied yourself to follow Christ? Have you died to your own self-will [and] your own self-interests in submission to the lordship of Christ, which Jesus describes figuratively as taking up your cross daily and following Him? Have you lost your life, given up your life, that you might gain it? Have you considered that your eternal soul is worth more than all of the world? It's pretty amazing, isn't it, to think about how many people have killed each other through the ages over money, property, and power? When Jesus says, "What would you give in exchange for the world?" would you exchange your soul? The point there [is that] your soul is more valuable than all of the world. Are you ashamed of Christ or are you bold to speak of Him? Are you willing to talk of Jesus even though some people think, "Well, you're probably a Jesus freak. You're probably one of those born-again Christians. You're one of those hypocrites who pretends to be one thing and is another"?

There is this interesting paradox that a lot of Christians don't ever get straight in their mind[s]. Salvation is the free gift of God, isn't it? You can't earn your salvation. You can't work for your salvation. You can't make God like you or pay the price of your own sin. That is all done by Christ, and that's why salvation is the free gift of God. But the cost of discipleship is

everything. Once you are saved by grace, it costs you everything to follow Christ. This is what we are going to be looking at in our text this morning.

If you were here last week, you [will] remember the rich ruler who was young. We know he was young because he *ran* up to Jesus. Jesus was about ready to go on a journey to the next village or city or whatever, and here comes this young man, breathing hard, “Good Teacher! What must I do to inherit eternal life?” [see Luke 18:18]. He is wound up. He’s got money, youth, ambition, [and] desire, “What can *I do* to gain eternal life? Tell me. Tell me! Do you want me to start an orphanage, give to the synagogue, do a bunch of good works? What do you want me to do, man? I’m young. I’ve got my whole life ahead of me. What can *I do* to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus sees through [to] the young man’s problem, because really there was nothing that young man could do to save himself. Jesus tries several approaches to try and get [the rich young ruler] to see what is necessary for him to gain eternal life. He says, “Why do you call me good? For no one is good except God alone” [see Luke 18:19]. The rich young ruler missed it. See, Jesus is either saying, “I’m not good,” or “I’m God.” But [the young man] missed it. In saying that, Jesus also wanted [the young ruler] to realize that if only God is good, that means [the young man is] not. [He is] a sinner in need of salvation. So [next, Jesus] rattles off these commands and, amazingly, [the young man] says, “Well, I have kept all those from my youth [see Luke 18:21]. No problem. Now what?”

[The rich young ruler] doesn’t realize [that] Jesus is God, he doesn’t realize he [himself] is a sinner, [and] he thinks he keeps the commandments perfectly. Jesus knows [this young man] has an idol in his life, and so He decides to try and show the man his need of salvation [and] that he is really an idol worshipper by getting him to make a choice between [Jesus] and his idol. [Jesus] says, “This is what I want you to do. Take all your wealth, all your possessions, sell it all, distribute it all to the poor, and come and follow Me” [see Luke 18:22]. When the rich young ruler hears that, he turns his back on Jesus and walks away. Jesus, then, looking at him walk away,

says, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven” [see Luke 18:24].

The disciples are blown away at this point. Their eyebrows are popping up, and they’re [thinking], “What?” Then Jesus throws in, “Yeah, it would be easier to stuff a camel through the eye of a needle than to get a rich person into the kingdom of heaven” [see Luke 18:25]. Now their jaws are dropping open. The text says, “They were very astonished” [see Matthew 19:25] that Jesus would say that. Then [the disciples] say, “Well, then, who *can* be saved?” [see Luke 18:26]. Why [do they ask this]? [They ask this] because in their minds, God is the one who gives riches. The Scriptures make that clear. He is the one who gives us the ability to gain wealth. So, if God has given you a lot of wealth, God really likes you. Therefore, if you’re rich, you’re a shoe-in to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus says, “It’s like trying to stuff a double-[humped] camel into the eye of a needle.” It is exceedingly difficult—they won’t lay back their ears, the humps get stuck, the hooves don’t go through well. It’s impossible.

Jesus does give some good encouragement, and says, “Well, the things that are impossible with people are possible with God” [see Luke 18:27]. [It] is such an encouragement to know that God can stuff a camel through the eye of a needle—He can save rich men, and has, and will continue to do so. While men’s commitment [to] and love of various sins are great, they are not greater than God’s grace. While it is impossible for any sinner, rich or poor, young or old, to earn [his] way, do something to get into heaven on [his] own, God’s grace is sufficient. God saves men; men can’t save themselves.

So, the disciples are there, and they’re listening to this, and they’re watching this, and they’re looking at the rich young ruler walk away, who moments before had [asked], “What can I do to gain eternal life?” and now he’s walking away depressed because he doesn’t want to part with his money. They hear Jesus’ words, which are shocking, and then Peter, who I think probably had some Irish or Italian blood [in him], says, “Well, Lord, we did what that guy wouldn’t do.” This is our text. Look at Luke 18:28[–30]:

Peter said, “Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You.” And He said to them, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life.”

There are three facts in this text concerning Christians, their sacrifices to follow Christ, and God’s blessings that should encourage us to lay all we have at Jesus’ disposal in order to follow Him.

The first is: Christians sacrifice for the Lord. Look at [Luke 18:]28: “Peter said, ‘Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You.’” In other words, “We see the rich young ruler was unwilling to do what we did.” The word “homes” here is translated homes because that’s the first thing Jesus mentions, but really it’s “things, everything.” As a matter of fact, that’s how Matthew and Mark read: “We have left everything to follow You” [Matthew 19:27; Mark 10:28].

[Do] you remember what happened when Jesus called the disciples? First the fishermen [were called], and they followed Him for a little bit—a couple days—and then they went back to fishing. Jesus wakes up in the morning, and [wonders], “Where are they?” He goes back and they’re fishing again, so He has to do [a] little miracle and convince them that this isn’t a part-time job—this is a full-time thing [see Luke 5:1–11]. Luke 5:11 says that after Jesus taught in Peter’s boat, “When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.” They left their boats, nets, oars—everything—to follow Jesus. Right after that, we learn about Matthew the tax collector, who [had] purchase[d] a very lucrative franchise from Rome to collect taxes. He [was] rich, wealthy, [and] powerful. Jesus [came] up to him, and [said], “Matthew, come on, you’re going to follow Me.” Luke 5:28 says: “And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him.” He left his franchise, his means of income, his home. He left *everything* and then wandered around with Jesus for three years. [For] the rest of his life, he gave his life for the cause of the gospel.

Though [in our passage] Luke doesn't record all that Peter said, the parallel text in Matthew [19:]27 tells us what else Peter said. It is implied [in Luke 18] when Peter says, "We have left all to follow You." You can kind of get [the impression that Peter is asking], "So what is in there for us?" Well, it's stated right out in Matthew: "What then will there be for us?" [Matthew 19:27]. In other words, "Listen, we've sacrificed a lot, [which] that rich young ruler was unwilling to do, and so what's in it for us? What are we going to get? You said this is how [the rich young ruler] is going to gain eternal life. Do we get that? What do we get out of this?"

If you are a Christian, you have made sacrifices to follow Christ. I know people in this congregation who have passed up great-paying jobs because they knew it wouldn't honor the Lord. They get this offer [of] just killer good money, and they're thinking, "Oh, man, that sounds so good."

Then [the people offering the job] say, "You're going to have to do this and that."

"Oh, that wouldn't honor the Lord. I don't think I can do that."

Maybe you are alienated from your family and friends because of Christ. Maybe you have faithfully given to the Lord for years [and] given to missions for years. You keep setting aside money and sacrificing and sacrificing, and you're wondering, "I hope this is worth it." What will there be for you who have sacrificed to the Lord? Will it be worth it in the end? Will you, when you get to heaven, have regrets that you sacrificed for Christ? Will you be sitting there in your glorified state, thinking, "I should have kept more for myself. I should have invested in things 'destined to perish' [Colossians 2:22]." Or, will you be thinking to yourself, "I should have sacrificed more for the Lord and the cause of Christ and the things of eternity"? I mean, what will matter most: eternal things or things destined to perish?

Look at [Luke 18:]29: "And He said to them, 'Truly I say to you.'" Just stop there. Whenever Jesus says, "Truly," He [is saying], "This is absolutely certain. What I am going to tell you is an absolute certainty." What is that absolute certainty? The middle of [Luke 18:]29 continues: "There is no one who has left. . ." Just stop there. He now gives five examples [of what is left].

There are a couple more [examples provided] in the parallel texts, [but in our text] Jesus gives five examples. Consider these examples because they are the things that people treasure most: homes and relationships, the closest relationships.

First, Jesus says they leave their houses. Have you ever left a house for Christ? Think about it. We lived in Idaho, [and] property there is a lot different than here. It's bigger and cheaper. So, we had a nice house—double story, triple-car garage, big yard, greenhouse, perfect yard. I just finished tweaking it up and there was this guy who call[ed] from Burbank. I won't give you his name, but his initials are Lew Stone. The next thing you know, we're moving to California. I remember telling my wife [asking], "Do you think we'll be able to get a house down there?"

I said, "No way! In Southern California? Are you kidding me? From Idaho to Southern California? No, we'll probably have to just get an apartment close to the church." So that's what I was going to do. I was trying to figure out whether I should sell all my gardening tools and really scale down because I thought we were going to move into an apartment. That's what it was going to be. But, by the grace of God, we got to trade our new, big house for a fifty-year-old repossessed one and that's where we live. Yeah, we liked living near the mountains and lakes, and [enjoyed the] skiing, clean air, hunting, and [being near] family, the three churches we helped plant, and all the friends that we had because of that. We liked that. We were very comfortable there.

Some people came up to us, because they knew that I had been working on this house and got it all fixed up like I wanted it, [and] said, "Man, you just got it fixed up and now you're leaving it?"

I said, "Yeah."

People said, "How can you do that?"

[My response was], "Well, how can we not?" When God calls you, when He wants you to go someplace, you go. His grace is sufficient. His grace, His sovereignty, enables you to go wherever He wants you to go, and you go. That's what you have to do.

We were not like those spoken of in Hebrews 10:34 who “accepted joyfully the seizure of [their] property.” It’s not like because we were Christians they plundered our house. We just exchanged a newer [house] for an older one. But some people have lost their houses, they’ve lost everything, for the cause of Christ. The question is: Is it worth it?

Second, look at the middle of [Luke 18:]29. Jesus also mentions leaving your wife. You can throw husband in there[, too]. I experience a little bit of this when I travel. I would rather be with my wife all the time. I go [and] speak in different parts of the world, and when I’m there, I miss my wife and she has to do without me. What’s really funny is [that] when we lived in Idaho, every time I went on a [trip] there was a huge snowstorm and my wife had to shovel the driveway over and over again. We talked about that. I like shoveling snow, but she had to do that. We had to be apart. That’s the way it is. It was a sacrifice.

Others have sacrificed a significant amount more because, [whey they became Christians], either their husband or wife [didn’t] want anything to do with them. Some have been divorced because their spouse says, “Listen, I don’t like you now that you’ve changed and become a Christian. You’re so much different than you were before. I don’t like you anymore.” Others say, “Well, I’m going to stay married to you, but I’m just going to live my life,” and they basically have a business relationship. There’s no affection, there’s no love. Why? [It is] because [these people] decided to follow Christ and their spouse[s said], “Sorry.”

Third, Jesus mentions those who have left brothers. Maybe the Lord has moved you away from your brothers, who you really enjoy. Or maybe, when you committed yourself to Christ and you started talking to your brothers, your brothers said, “Hey, I don’t want anything to do with you.” I have known people, and there are people in this congregation, whose siblings hate their guts because they’re Christians, because they are more honest, kind, loving, patient, and because the Christians are concerned about their [brothers’] eternal souls. They hate them for it. Is it worth it?

Jesus, fourth, says there are those who have left parents. Maybe you felt called to a ministry, seminary, or missions, and all of a sudden you have to move away from your parents. Though you love your parents and you have a good relationship with your parents, maybe your parents are Christians and they're really supportive, you have to leave and you can't be around them anymore. Maybe you have [kids] and [your parents] don't really like it that you're taking [their] grandkids away from them. You have to do that. There is a sacrifice involved [in] following Christ.

Other people have lost their parents, left their parents, because their parents said, "Listen, it's either your religion or us."

"Sorry, I have to follow Christ."

They say, "OK. Then show up when you've come to your senses again." Is it worth it? Is it worth all that?

Finally, Jesus says some of you have left children. Maybe you're older and all of a sudden you just [felt] the call of God on your life to do some missions work, to move someplace, or to do something for the Lord in your last years rather than burning up all your money on yourself. Your children [say], "You're leaving? But who's going to be our free babysitter?" [But] you leave your children. You love your children and you love babysitting your grandchildren, but you [have] to do what God calls you to do.

The parallel texts in Matthew and Mark also mention sisters and farms [Matthew 19:29; Mark 10:29]. Why would anyone leave [his] most precious relationships, [his] most valuable worldly possessions? Jesus says [he] would do that—look at [Luke 18:]29—"for the sake of the kingdom of God." Why would anybody leave [his] most treasured things for the sake of the kingdom of God? [In] Matthew, [Jesus] says, "for My name's sake" [Matthew 19:29] and Mark [has] "for the gospel's sake" [Mark 10:29]—they're all synonyms. To do what Christ wants you to do, [that's why you would leave everything].

You see people indulging in sin, making money hand over fist by crooked business practices, driving luxury cars, living in giant houses, gobbling up the world whole like a snake. Then you're struggling by because you have to do your own thing, you have to be honest, report your taxes, submit to this

rule and this law, and even though no one notices, you know God notices. You've said no to drunkenness, immorality, lying, materialism, and sinful pleasures and the world just gets to have all they want of that. Sometimes you may think, "Is it worth it?"

If you look at your life and you don't see constant sacrifices for the Lord, then you need to take that as a little bell going off in your head. You need to examine your life because Christians sacrifice for Christ—every one of them, on a regular basis. If you are a fair-weather Christian and you only pull out into the waters of Christianity when the sun is shining and the wind is gentle, you're no Christian. You're pretending, deceived, deluded. You need to remember what Jesus said in Luke 14:25 and following: All you need to do is hate your father and mother, your wife, your children, your brothers and sisters, even your own life, or you cannot be His disciple [see Luke 14:25–27]. That's pretty clear. You have to take up your cross daily, die to self, count the cost, often pay the cost of following Jesus. You must be willing to give up all your possessions, Jesus says. I mean, He uses every hyperbole in there. And, of course, He's talking about comparisons. He's not saying you need to take a vow of poverty and He tells you in other places to love and honor your father and mother and brothers and sisters [see Matthew 15:4]. His whole point is: "If it comes between Me and them, they go. If it comes between leaving Me or leaving them, you leave them." That's the whole point.

When the Apostle Paul was going to Jerusalem, the Gentile believers feared for his life. [They said], "Paul, hey, listen. Wait, wait, wait. Don't go to Jerusalem. That's where they beat you. They've got people there who hate your guts. They're going to kill you if you go back to Jerusalem." Remember what Paul said in Acts 21:13: "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Is that you? I mean, we sang it earlier. Luther penned it out:

Let goods and kindred go,

This mortal life also;
The body they may kill;
God's truth abideth still;
His kingdom is forever.¹

That's what Luther lived for. He put his life on the line every single day. He was a wanted man. Paul said in Philippians 3:8: "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus." He says, "I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ." Is that you? Moses, the author of Hebrews, says, and this is amazing, [in] Hebrews 11:23–26: "Choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Now, just think about this right now. You're thinking, "OK, OK, what I've got here is I've got the reproaches of Christ and ill treatment with the people of God, or the treasures of Egypt. Hmm. What am I going to choose?" What did Moses choose? [He chose] ill treatment with the people of God and reproaches for the name of Christ. He turned his back on the world.

In Revelation 12:11, the Apostle John describes believers who "did not love their life even when faced with death." Jesus, in John 10:27, [said], "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." If you are one of Jesus' sheep, He knows you, you hear His voice so as to obey, and you follow Him. True sheep hear Jesus' voice and obey it. Jesus knows them personally. He has an intimate relationship with them, and, being sheep, they follow their shepherd wherever He leads. Is that you?

A Christian is not one who merely gathers on Sunday and sings a few songs and throws some money into the plate. Mormons do that. Jehovah's Witnesses do that. Christian Science practitioners do that. The cults do all of those things and oftentimes [they] far outshine Christians in their zeal and sacrifice for the Lord. Why? [It is] because they are doing it for a different

¹Martin Luther, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," *Voices in Worship* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., 2003), #35.

reason. You say, “Well, they’re trying to earn their salvation.” OK. Think about this. Who should be more zealous: the person who is trying to earn [his] salvation, follow[ing] a false religion, or the person who loves the Lord? [In these cults], every young man goes on a mission. Every member goes door-to-door evangelizing. Everybody has to give 10 percent [of their earnings]. They are zealous in doing, doing, doing, and trying to gain favor with God only to be disappointed in the end. They sacrifice so much for nothing.

Thomas Watson, in *The Godly Man’s Picture*, writes:

The Jews did not spare any cost in their idolatrous worship. No, they ‘cause their sons and daughters to pass through the fire to Molech’ (Jer. 32:35). They were so zealous in their idol worship that they would sacrifice their sons and daughters to their false gods. How far the purblind heathen went in their false zeal!

When the tribunes of Rome complained that they wanted gold in their treasuries to offer to Apollo, the Roman matrons plucked off their chains of gold and rings and bracelets and gave them to the priests to offer up sacrifice. Were these so zealous in their sinful worship, and will you not be zealous in the worship of the true God?²

That is something to think about. Imagine we get the offering in the morning and it goes around and every single woman here plucks off every piece of gold—ear[rings], bracelet, wedding ring, everything—[and] just pitches it in. You’re thinking, “My wedding ring?” That’s the whole point. The Roman matrons, worshipping a pagan god, were willing to do that. How many who profess to be followers of Christ will give up little if any of their sins and vices, let alone their time, money, talents, gold, and, God forsake, houses to follow Christ? You need to look at your life and ask yourself, “Am I

²Thomas Watson, *The Godly Man’s Picture*, “Characteristics of a Godly Man, Part 3.” Available at: http://www.gracegems.org/Watson/godly_mans_picture4.htm.

sacrificing for Christ? Is it a part of my life?” If you look at your life and you’re always thinking, “Someone else can do it. Someone else can do it,” you don’t know Jesus. He doesn’t just want you as a title on earth, He wants you living for Him, following Him, sacrificing for His cause.

Can you say with Peter, “We have given up all to follow You, Lord.”? Some of you are just inches, millimeters, away from the kingdom, but you can’t quite bring yoursel[ves] to turn from your sins. You just won’t give up that [sin]. You don’t want to go to hell, and you want to call yourself a Christian, but you’re not going to give up your sin. Satan keeps telling you, “Oh, you can be a Christian *and* still live in sin.” That is a lie. You must lay all on the altar to Christ or you cannot be His disciple. Some of you need to choose. Are you going to serve Christ or worship Baal? “Choose this day whom you will serve. If Christ be Lord, serve Him. If Baal be God, then serve him” [see 1 Kings 18:21]. You can only have one Lord.

Some of Jesus’ so-called disciples tried that one on Him. Jesus said in Luke 6:46: “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” That doesn’t work. [He’s saying], “I’m not your Lord unless you do what I say.” The Scriptures make it clear that no one will get their names written in “the Lamb’s book of life” [Revelation 21:27] because they did good works and sacrificed. However, all those whose names are written [did] sacrifice. You come by grace alone through faith alone. You live laying all on the altar as a living sacrifice, which is holy and acceptable to God [see Romans 12:1]. You have to make those sacrifices. The question is: Is it worth it? Or you could say what Peter said, “What will there be for us? For we have left all to follow You” [see Matthew 19:27].

This brings us to our second point—look at [Luke 18:29–]30—Christians will be blessed in this life for their sacrifices. Jesus says to those who have given up all to follow Him: “Truly I say to you, there is no one. . . who will not receive many times as much at this time.” Stop [there]. [Consider the phrase] “at this time.” You say, “What are you saying? Are you saying that if I give up a lot for Christ, Jesus will bless me many times as much in this life?” No, I’m not telling you that, that’s what God is telling you in the text.

I just know that the prosperity preachers swoop down on this text with talons out to grab onto it. [They say], “Listen, if you give to my ministry, God will bless you. You’ll be healthy and wealthy.” That’s not what [the passage] is talking about. The kind of people that Jesus is talking about here have been burnt at the stake, tortured to death, [and] are right now rotting in prisons in different places in the world because of Christ.

You say, “Well, then, what is it? What are all these blessings that are worth many times more than the things that we sacrifice?” I sat in my study [this week] and started thinking about some [of these blessings]. I plunked down twelve here because there [were] twelve apostles. I don’t know. It just seemed [like a] good [number]. Think about these. What kind of blessings do Christians enjoy now because they know Jesus? Here are twelve of them.

One, the thrill of knowing that “When [we] were dead in [our] transgressions and the uncircumcision of [our] flesh, He made [us] alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:13–14). That’s pretty good for starters. [Two], the joy of knowing that “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). That’s pretty good. [Three], the anticipation that “those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified” (Romans 8:[30]). That’s good.

[Four], the comfort of knowing that when we pray, we can receive the peace of Christ, “which surpasses all comprehension,” and it “will guard [our] hearts and [our] minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). [Five], the confidence of knowing that God is sovereign, “Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’” (Isaiah 46:10). [Six], the value of knowing that we have “a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). Seven, the blessing of having the Word of God, “which also performs its work in you who believe”

(1 Thessalonians 2:13). Eight, the surety that “God is able to make all grace abound to [us], so that always having all sufficiency in everything, [we] may have an abundance for every good deed” (2 Corinthians 9:8). It doesn’t matter how much [we] sacrifice, God is going to give “an abundance for every good deed.”

Nine, the amazement of being saved for eternal purposes, even though [we] are sinner[s], even though [we] are unworthy, even though [we] don’t deserve it. [We]’re saved by grace and then [we] become God’s “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Think about that. That is amazing. Ten, the surety of knowing that whenever [we] need wisdom, all [we] need to [do] is “ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to [us]” (James 1:5). Eleven, the security of knowing that God is sovereign and “causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). Twelve, the hope that “we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (1 John 3:2). That’s just twelve of [the blessings]. I could kill you off with verses like that. I could keep reading verses like that until you’re all sleeping on the pew.

Listen, believer, don’t be deceived. Most who drive nice cars, live in big houses, [and] have lots of money are miserable. Those who indulge themselves in immorality, pornography, drugs, alcohol, materialism, and the things of this world are walking cocoons with nothing inside. You look at them [and] you can see it in their eyes. One moment, they’re trying to [convince] you, “Oh, yeah, it’s all great. I got drunk last night. I drank six packs of beer.” You look at them and you look at their eyes and they’re just hollow in there. They are going from one cheap thrill to another, one temporary pleasure to another. They’re not happy. They don’t have peace. They don’t know God.

When I was growing up, there was a little slogan that said, “Happiness is...” You still see it around on bumper stickers and license plates. You

know, “Happiness is... golf,” or fishing, or whatever. No, it’s not. Yeah, you can get a little bit of pleasure out of those things, but the real happiness comes in knowing Christ and having eternal life.

Fanny Crosby speaks of the blessings that come even though we sacrifice for Christ in her hymn “Take the World, But Give Me Jesus.” The words are as follows:

Take the world, but give me Jesus—
All its joys are but a name;
but His love abideth ever,
thru eternal years the same.

Take the world, but give me Jesus—
Sweetest comfort of my soul;
with my Savior watching o’er me,
I can sing tho billows roll.

Take the world, but give me Jesus—
Let me view His constant smile;
then throughout my pilgrim journey
light will cheer me all the while.

Take the world, but give me Jesus—
In His cross my trust shall be;
till, with clearer, brighter vision,
face to face my Lord I see.

And the chorus is:

Chorus: O the height and depth of mercy!
O the length and breadth of love!
O the fullness of redemption—
Pledge of endless life above!³

³Fanny Crosby, “Take the World, But Give Me Jesus.” Lyrics available at: <http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/t/t/ttwbgmej.htm>.

The whole song is about, “Yeah, I’m going through this life. Yeah, I’m sacrificing. Yeah, I’m giving things up. But, man, I [have] eternal life coming.” [But you might be] sitting out there, thinking, “I’m not sacrificing for Christ. I don’t know why. I think I know Jesus. I don’t know why [I’m not sacrificing].”

[Imagine that] a father is by some river with his son. [He] turns his head and all of a sudden he hears this plunk and sees his son floating down the river. [The father is] not a good swimmer, so he says, “Son, I’m sorry you’re going to drown. I’m not a good swimmer. It’s been good knowing you.” Is that what he does? No, he jumps in.

You say, “Well, why would he do that? He’d be risking his life. He’d be risking everything to rescue his son.” Believe me, when he’s in the water, he’s thrashing, trying to get his son, and keep his son from drowning, he’s not thinking of his plasma TV, car, house, job, or pension fund. He’s thinking of one thing: saving his son. Why? Because he loves his son, that’s why.

[Imagine] a mother is going for a little walk around the block [with] her [baby in a] stroller. Some big, nasty dog comes out, teeth bared. Growl! The woman is not into having a confrontation with a dog. [She’s not thinking], “Here, let me go toe to toe with a Rottweiler.” But, believe me, she gets in between that dog and her son or her daughter—whoever is in that baby carriage. Even if the dog bites her, she’s not going to let that dog get to her child. Why? [It is] because of love.

I have a friend in Idaho [who] used to be my hunting partner when I used to do that. [One time] he heard this screaming and there were two children out in the middle of the street. One was being attacked by a police-trained German shepherd that had gotten out of its fence. [My friend] ran over there, put it in a headlock, grabbed it, and the dog started to bite him. I said, “What did you do?”

He [said], “I [took] my fist and I pretty much shoved it down its throat. I held it there in a headlock until the police came.” He says, “It scratched up my knuckles a little bit.” He [said], “That dog was not going to get the best of me.”

Why did [he] do that?” Obviously it wasn’t fun. Obviously it wasn’t convenient. Obviously [did not think], “I think I’m going to get up and go toe to toe with a police-trained German shepherd.” But he did. Why? Because he had love for those kids, that’s why. Love is what makes you sacrifice for others. That is the definition of love. Love is sacrificing to do what is best for other people according to the Word of God. So, if you’re looking at your life, and saying, “I’m not sacrificing for the Lord,” then you don’t love Him, and that’s the problem. Christians sacrifice for Christ and they discover that in their sacrifices they are blessed far more than they give up and they’re fine with that. Give me Jesus. “You can have all this world, but give me Jesus.”

Third: Christians will be blessed in the life to come for their sacrifices. Look at the latter half of [Luke 18:]30. Jesus not only promises blessing in this life, but also says, “and in the age to come, eternal life.” As we learned in our study of Hebrews 11, as you learn in reading the Scriptures, as you learn in Church history, and Christian biographies, Christians have this blessed hope, don’t they? They have this hope that you can’t pound, burn, [or] torture out of them. What is that? [It is] the hope of eternal life. That’s it.

Paul says in Romans 5:2 that “we exult in hope of the glory of God.” We can’t wait to see God in His glory and be like Jesus. We exult. We can’t wait for that. In Romans 8:24–25, Paul says, “For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.” We talk about being saved, but think about it. We’re still sinners. We still suffer the consequences of our sin. We still live in a sin-cursed world around sinful people. So, what’s this salvation about? We’re getting a taste of eternal life.

You say, “Well, what do you mean by ‘eternal life’? What is eternal life, anyway? Why would we hope in it? What is the whole value of this hope?” Oh, we could go into it. There [are] about forty texts in the New Testament that I looked up about this that it would be really fun [to go through], but we

just can't go through them [all]. [So], I'll just give you one. I love Hebrews 6:18–20, where it talks about [the fact that] we have this hope like “an anchor of the soul.” Our hope is an “anchor of the soul.”

Do you understand what that is? I was a commercial fisherman, and we would [often] drop anchor. It's a big piece of metal. There are a couple different kinds of anchor designs, but they're all made to do the same thing: dig into the ocean floor. If I said, “Draw a picture of an anchor,” you'd probably draw the little thing coming down with the two hooks and the points on the end, right? That's what most people think of when they think of an anchor. What they don't do is draw the crossbar, which is perpendicular to the points in the anchor.

Do you know why the crossbar is there? [It is there] so [that] when [the anchor] hits the ocean bottom, the crossbar causes it be on the point, so when the boat pulls on it, it digs in. Then, once it digs in, it's secured to the ocean bottom, “both sure and steadfast” [Hebrews 5:19]. Though the water is constantly in a state of flux, the wind is moving, and the tides are moving, the boat is anchored “both sure and steadfast.” The hope we have in eternal life, our relationship with Christ, is that anchor, “both sure and steadfast,” so that no matter what the world throws against us, we don't need to be moved. It can't get us broken loose from that hope both “sure and steadfast.” It is unthwartable.

You say, “Well, what is eternal life?” My favorite definition is [the] definition that Jesus gives in John 17:3, where, in His high-priestly prayer, He says: “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” That's the beginning of eternal life: having a relationship with God. A lot of people think of eternal life as living eternally in a conscious state. People in hell are in [an] eternal conscious state. People who perish in a lake of fire suffer torment, Revelation 14:11 says, “day and night” “forever and ever.” So, it's not just merely being conscious forever, though that is included. It is not living forever like you found the mythological cup of the Holy Grail and if you drink [from] it you live forever, or you're hiking through some jungle and all of a sudden

you hack your way [through] and [find] the tree of life. The cherubim was sleeping there because he had been guarding it for so long he fell asleep. You sneak past and eat some of [the fruit] and now you get to live forever. That's not what eternal life is either.

Eternal life is the quality of life that Christians live because they have a personal relationship with the God of creation. They know Jesus—not just know *about* him, not just have mental understanding, not just mental assent, “I know who Jesus is, I know what He did, I know He's the Son of God.” Demons know that. [Eternal life] is [to have] Jesus as your friend, to be reconciled with God through the blood of the cross so that you know Jesus and He knows you, and you are friends.

You [can] say, “Yeah, I know Jesus.” Other people may know *of* Jesus, but you *know* Him. They look at you [and say], “What?”

A lot of people say, “Well, you know, I know so-and-so.”

“I've met this famous movie star.”

“I shook hands with the president.”

“I met this congressman.”

You can say, “I know God.”

It's fun to see peoples' [faces when you say that. They say], “What?”

“Yeah, the God of creation? God almighty? Jehovah Jireh? You know, the judge of the living and dead [see 2 Timothy 4:1]? His Son, Jesus Christ? I know Him.”

Then what are they going to think about you? “Oh, he's one of *those* people—too much LSD in college.”

The Scriptures tell us that because we have this eternal life, we will be resurrected. Paul even says in 1 Timothy 6:12 that we need to “take hold of the eternal life,” that relationship with Christ and God. We need to grab onto it and cling to it. Every Christian knows this. They're always doing best when they're clinging to Jesus. They're always doing their worst when they're not. [With] all that believers have to sacrifice in this life, they're more than willing to do it because of those blessings they receive [and]

because of their love for the Lord. They're not going to trade the world for that.

What about in eternal life? What do you get there? Well, this is the part of the sermon that is an unspeakable reward. This week in my quiet times, I read passages and passages about heaven. Though the Bible doesn't tell us very much, it does tell us to "fix our minds on the things of God and the things above" [see Colossians 3:2]. Jesus is seated at the right hand of the throne of majesty [see Hebrews 8:1]. Get your mind out of this sin-cursed world and get [it] up into heaven.

Do that with me right now. See the angels around the throne. How many? Oh, [only] myriads upon myriads and ten thousands upon ten thousands [see Revelation 5:11]. Think about that. Think about the cherubim who stand as sentinels, guarding the holiness of God with four wings [see Ezekiel 10]. Then you have the six-winged seraphim who cry out, day and night, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of His glory" [see Isaiah 2–3]. You see Jesus, with His hair that's white like wool, and His eyes like a flame of fire, and His face radiant with light, His feet like burnished bronze [see Revelation 1:14–15]. He's looking at you and He's smiling. He's not thinking, "I know what you did. You caused me a lot of grief. I had to go down to that sin-cursed pit and die for you." He's not thinking that. "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" [Romans 8:1]. He sees you as royalty, as His brothers and sisters in Christ, if you know Him.

Not only that, see all of the rest of the unworthy sinners besides yourself, and think about just how incredible it's going to be in heaven as you are there with all those other unworthy sinners now transformed into saints, holy ones, because of what Jesus did. You talk to them. You say, "I remember when we did this. I remember when we did that." You dialogue, communicate, remember stories, and tell your testimony. You get to know all the angels by name. It only takes you millions and millions of years, but you do it, because you've got time. You remember perfectly. You [won't have to] say, "Oh, here's that one angel coming. What was his name?" That never happens.

Praise God. (If I don't have my wife with me, I'm in trouble [when it comes to remembering people's names].)

You get to know that and then you get to know all of these saints. Some of them you've read about. Wouldn't it be cool to meet the thief on the cross? [You say to him] "Dude! Man, you got in by the skin of your teeth!"

And he looks at you and [says], "So did you!"

You realize that you're all just sinners and you all were hopeless and helpless apart from Christ [see Romans 5:6]. You're around all these other people who were hopeless and helpless and now they're all in heaven because of what Jesus did for them. They all want to just praise and worship God as He is on the throne. Jesus sees this mass of redeemed humanity, from all the nations of the world, every skin color, every kind. He sees them all, and He has saved them by His grace. They all worship Him.

I hope you can see that. I hope you can see that you're going to be royalty—a kingdom of priests, a holy nation [see Exodus 19:5–6]. You're going to rule and reign with Christ in His kingdom [see Revelation 20:6]. You're going to judge angels [see 1 Corinthians 6:3]. Think about that.

"Me?"

"You." If you know Christ, you're going to judge angels. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known." You're going to be able to walk around heaven, see people, [and] ask questions. You'll get answers. You're going to find all those things in heaven, but you're not going to be sinful. You won't have to struggle with the flesh. You won't have to worry about lust, pride, greed, selfishness, and all those things we deal with every single day.

Are you suffering for Christ as a believer? Are you sacrificing [for] Him? Listen to what Paul says to you from Romans 8. He says "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" [Romans 8:18]. Think about that. It's not even worth it. Don't you even go there. You're not going to be up in heaven, [thinking], "Oh, I had to do this and my wife left me. I'd rather have my wife and be in

hell right now.” There’s not going to be any of that. It’s not even worthy. As eternity progresses, and millions and billions of years progress, you’re not going to be regretting the little moments and fragments of suffering you had to give up.

You remember what Paul gave up, right? He was rejected by the Jewish community, persecuted, stoned, [and] beaten times without number. He received the thirty-nine lashes [five] times [see 2 Corinthians 11:24]. He was shipwrecked [see Acts 27:14–43]. He was starved. [He endured] all these things. In 2 Corinthians 4:17, Paul describes these things as: “momentary, light afflictions,” which are “producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.” Think about it. You can’t even go there. It’s unspeakable the rewards, the blessings of heaven.

We’re not going to be, as some think, like the two buzzards in *The Jungle Book*, “What do you want to do?”

“I don’t know. What do you want to do?”

“Don’t start that again.”

[We don’t need to think], “Oh, it’s going to be so boring up there. What are we going to do? Sit around, plucking on our harps?” No. There is going to be a new heaven and a new earth [see Revelation 21:1]. There are going to be things to do and cities to oversee. There’s going to be an unlimited, eternal learning and growing, and knowing God, and serving. [There will be] things beyond your imagination. You’re not going to be sitting around in boredom.

Believer, hear what God says to you in Revelation 21:1–7. John says:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself

will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.”

So, believer, let me ask you: Do you think it’s worth it? Let’s pray.

Father, we are grateful to have Your Word to remind us that the sufferings of this present world and anything we might sacrifice for the cause of Christ are not worthy to be compared with the glory we shall receive. Father, we are so humbled to even know that You would choose us, save us, and send Christ to die for us. Then, after saving us, [You are] giving us all we have, empowering us, and blessing us for eternity because of what You have done through us. Father, it’s just amazing. It is unspeakable. It is that reward that we just cannot even imagine. That’s what Your Word tells us. It is far beyond all comparison to anything in this sin-cursed universe. All things will be made new. Father, if there [are people] here, and I know there [are], who realize they aren’t sacrificing for Christ, they don’t love the Lord, they don’t want to give, they don’t want to serve, and they don’t want Jesus ruling over them, may they, right now, realize their soul[s are] in danger. They’re trading their soul[s] for a small piece of this world. Father, may they right now repent of their sins, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in Him completely for salvation, and, Father, begin a life of giving up all to follow You. Father, we pray all these things in Christ’s name, Amen.

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