

Heaven: Our Eternal Home  
John 14:1-6  
February 16, 2020

Have you ever wondered about Heaven? What heaven looks like, what we will do there, what we will look like.

We have all kinds of questions about it. Questions like: What age will we be? Will we be aging in Heaven? Those who died as babies, will they remain babies or will they be grown up? Will we be the same people with same personalities and emotions? Will we know everything, or will we be learning still? Will we be able to see what is going on on earth? Will we be able to see our family who still live on earth? Will there be entertainment, art, music, or sports? Will there be technology? Will we have our own place to live? Will we ever get tired and be in need of rest? What kind of relationship will we have with others?

I am sure there are many other questions. I am also sure all these questions will be answered when we get there. However, the question that applies to us is, “How do we get there?”

For the Jews, the Law was the key to salvation. “Keep the Law and you will be acceptable to God.” That was the essence of their understanding, but what happens if you break the Law, which everyone does sooner or later? Everyone breaks God’s Law, and some people break it more often and break more serious things than others.

The Jews had a remedy for breaking God’s Law. The remedy was animal sacrifice. They made animal sacrifices to gain forgiveness for their sins. The Law demanded different kinds of sacrifices especially for forgiveness of sins. The Jews had what they called *Chatat* (*Hattath*), which was a sin offering. When a person had committed a sin unintentionally, and he knew that he had committed it, he would bring a *Chatat* to atone for and purge a sin.

Then the Jews also had an *Asham*, a guilt offering. A person who was not sure if he had committed a sin or not, yet he wanted to be clean before the Lord, he would bring an *Asham*, a guilt offering. Later if he had discovered that he had indeed committed a sin, he would bring a *Chatat* (sin offering) at that time.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/sacrifices-and-offerings-karbanot>

Bringing a sacrificial offering was the typical way to deal with sin. The Jews had it until the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD. St. Paul wanted the early Christians to understand that animal sacrifices for their sins were not necessary because of Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross had covered for all their sins. Jesus' sacrifice was the universal sacrifice that atoned for all the sins of humanity. There was nothing else people needed or could do to receive forgiveness for their sins other than accepting Jesus' sacrifice and his grace in faith. Christ had paid it all.

Justification by faith alone was really a radical concept. Many people had difficulty accepting it. Many people have difficulty accepting it now. In the realm of law, receiving forgiveness without paying the price is not an easy concept to accept. Saying "sorry" is not enough. If there is an offense, the offender needs to pay for the remedy. There must be a restitution. We want to see people pay for their crimes and their sins. If someone has committed a crime, we expect that person to pay for his crime, in some form or shape, don't we? Either he pays a fine or goes to a prison. That is our expectation.

We expect the same with the Lord. If we commit a sin against God, we expect that God would demand a restitution. Actually it would be easier to go into the temple and offer up a sacrifice to pay for our sins. Psychologically, it would give us comfort because we are doing something for our sins.

Kenneth Chafin (1926-2001), the late Baptist minister who taught evangelism at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. When he was a young pastor, he thought that it would be very difficult to convince people that they were sinners. He thought it would be hard for people to be told that they were sinners. What he discovered was that it was even more difficult to convince them "that God really loved them just the way they were." Chafin discovered that people found it hard to accept that they could find forgiveness, love, and the acceptance of God simply by asking for forgiveness of their sins. They felt that they had to do something to find forgiveness.

This was especially true if they had actually committed some serious sins in their lives, and they felt really guilty about them. It was difficult for them to accept that someone, in this case, God, would just forgive them by simply asking for forgiveness. It seemed far too easy to be true.

Many of us would like to have some kind of prescribed penance, contrition or self-punishment for our sins. Psychologically it might give us comfort. It is not

necessary, but it might give us a sense that we have done something to receive forgiveness.

So, if it makes you feel better to do some kind of self-punishment for your sins, if you feel you must do some sort of self-flagellation, fine. Do that but understand this. You are doing it only for your own benefit, not God's. God doesn't need that. God does not require it, but if you feel you must do that, then you will do what you will have to do, but that is only for your benefit. It is not required and it is not necessary.

Justification by faith alone tells something about God's character, his character of love and forgiveness.

A few years ago, a man named Fulton Ousler Jr. wrote an article in a *GUIDEPOSTS*, a devotional magazine. It was about his reflection of his father. His father was a writer and Fulton did a lot of research and typing for his father's writing projects. Because he did a lot of research for his Dad, Fulton knew his father's library very well. His father had thousands of books and more than 200 personal notebooks. Fulton knew exactly what book was where and where his notebooks were in his father's library.

Unfortunately, Fulton's father died when Fulton was 19 old. After his father passed away, Fulton found a spiral notebook that he had never seen before. As he flipped through it, he noticed that it had nothing but names, the names of the family, relatives, and his father's friends both living and the dead. Then a few blank pages, followed by a list of names. Those names Fulton did not recognize.

He showed the notebook to his mother. "Oh, that was his prayer book," she said. "Every night before he slept, he opened that book, put his finger on each name and prayed for them in silence."

"But who are these?" Fulton asked, pointing to the names that he did not recognize. "They were the people who had hurt him," she said.<sup>2</sup>

He had been praying for the people who had hurt him. He had not only forgiven them but had also prayed for them every night. That is true forgiveness. Many people say, "I will forgive, but I will not forget." It takes a very special person to not only to forgive but also to pray for those who hurt him.

---

<sup>2</sup> Fulton Ousler, Jr., *GUIDEPOSTS*, May 1994, p. 37.

God's forgiveness is even more complete than that. He forgives our sins and offences not because we are worthy, or because we have done a restitution, but because of who God is and because of what Christ has done.

You and I will be in heaven not because of who we are or what we have done, but because of who God is and what Christ has done. We get to heaven only through faith in Christ and only through God's grace. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through me."<sup>3</sup>

Since heaven is guaranteed for us in Christ, what should our response be in this life? Since God has forgiven us, and will forgive us if we fall again, does this mean we can go out and freely sin and sin again? Of course not!

Let us say that you had hurt your parents or your spouse or children deeply, but out of their love they had forgiven you. Would you go out to hurt them again? You wouldn't do that, would you? Of course not! Only the most corrupt people would keep hurting someone who has forgiven them.

Knowing God's love and treasuring his forgiveness should result in living a righteous life. We should live each and every day righteously and faithfully, not because we fear God or fear his punishment, but because we are thankful for his grace, and we respect his love and cherish his forgiveness.

Heaven is our eternal home because of God's grace and mercy. We ought to live each and every day thankfully. Our righteous and responsible living is the sure sign of thankfulness.

---

<sup>3</sup> John 14:6.