

A Taste of Heaven, Part II **Heaven: A Place of Righteousness!**

Text: Romans 8:12-30; 2 Corinthians 4

Introduction:

One of the grievous affects of the fall of our first parents, is that the innate righteousness, which God had infused in man from the beginning, was now lost. The defiling affects of sin, have contaminated our human nature, so that, we are all born, ruined, and contrary to the very design of our glorious Creator. A wonderful masterpiece beyond comprehension, exists, in this creation, and the very rational beings, who have been created in the image of God, and have been ordained to rule over it, walk through this life, with no regard for the true Creator. What insanity! What blindness! What spiritual death! What an obvious evidence of the reality of our shattered righteousness, and our fallen nature.

And so, we have all entered this world with a contaminated heart, full of lusts and idols, which we have unrighteously pursued, leading us further and further down the path of ungodliness. But then, at some point in time; at God's appointed moment, the Holy Spirit triggered the "spiritual life switch" in our souls; He regenerated us, and opened our eyes to the truth. He brought us to grasp the truth of God; of who He is, of His holiness and His righteous perfection, and of how we are naturally condemned because of the gross offense, which we are in His sight. He made us desperate! He shined the light on God's Law, and then He shined the light on us, and we were undone! But He lovingly and graciously brought us to the crucified Savior; to His one and only, unique Son, so that, in Him, we might obtain the free gift of salvation and eternal life! He saved us from our sins and adopted us as His beloved children; brothers and sisters in Christ!

But, having been brought to this glorious place, we have now been given the ability to see the utter wretchedness of our sin; of the sin, which once plagued us, and provided us with such short lived comfort and satisfaction. We have seen the lie, and we have seen the utter filthiness of who we have been, of all that we have desired, and of how we have lived, especially in the presence of the cross, where we view the very cost of our sins! And we have grown to hate

them! But, one of the most challenging realities that have come to face us, in this new and blessed state, is the reality of still having to contend with remaining sin, until we get to glory! We now see, and for the first time, can appreciate, the ugliness of what we naturally are, in Adam! We are in this process of "sanctification," *progressive* sanctification, where, by the grace of God, we are led to deal with remaining sin; we are led to ponder and embrace a growing holiness, until we are restored unto the perfect image of God; even the image of our blessed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And that process is both painful; it is a surgical battle, of putting to death the deeds of the body, by the Spirit, requiring the necessity of many trials throughout the whole process, and it is grievous, as we contend with remaining, wicked, lusts of the flesh, which contradict the very heart and essence of our first love, the Lord Jesus Christ. We long and groan; our souls yearn to be freed from the body of this death! We want to love and please the blessed Savior, who has died for us, and who continues to intercede for us, but there is this remaining contrary principle within us, which yet, contends with and hates this blessed God, who so loves us! It is an evil of all evils; a living contradiction, in the depths of our living souls, and we must violently contend with it, until we find ourselves within heaven's gates. Indeed, we can so relate to the Apostle Paul, in Romans 7, where he states, with a sense of frustration and agony, "For, what I will to do, I do not do, and what I will not to do, this I do!...O wretched man that I am! Who will save me from the body of this death?" And our gasp of relief, unites with Paul's, when he states, "I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

I. Heaven: A Place of Righteousness

One of the glorious realities of the many benefits, which the Lord Jesus Christ has won for us at the cross, is the fact that He not only became righteousness for us, but furthermore, He is re-forming righteousness in us. To be sure, we are never justified before God, by our own personal righteousness. But, because we are justified before God, by the perfect righteousness of Christ, we are also being made righteous ourselves. And one of the wondrous realities of heaven, is that when we arrive there, we will be perfectly righteous, even as our Lord is! As the Apostle John tells us in 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been

revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Heaven, is a place of righteousness!

There is no sin there! There is no corruption there! There are no contrary thoughts, desires or emotions! There are no wicked compelling urges! There is no temptation! There is no devil or accuser or opposer! There will be nothing within or without us, which could ever, even for a moment, compel us in the direction of ungodliness! Every fraction of what plagues us now, will be forever gone, there! The struggles with pride, jealousy, lust, envy, idolatry, covetousness, selfish ambition, anger, bitterness...and every other inner vice, which presently hounds us, will be over....forever! The battle will be over! We will be perfectly righteous! Every thought, motive, desire, word, action...will be initiated and manifested with the utmost purity and sincerity! Our worship of God, will be without so much as a strain of hypocrisy. Nothing will have to be forced. Everything will be naturally good, pure, holy and righteous. We will be the objects of this expressed righteousness from others, and we ourselves, will express it, in the direction of all! What we formerly were, will be transformed into a perfect reflection of the glory of God, to the praise of God's grace and mercy!

Brethren, everything we do now; even our best deeds are tainted. There is some defilement attached to all that we do, which is why everything we do, is never meritorious, but rather, only (and gladly) accepted in Christ! We struggle with sacrifice, inconvenience, loss of time or material possessions. We have to battle with opposing desires, when seeking to sacrifice for the sake of others. But, even when we do sacrifice, we swell with pride, and we want everyone to know that we are sacrificing in some way. Our remaining sin, pulls us from one extreme to the other. There is always tension, and we are constantly having to guard our hearts. We are daily pleading with God to keep us from going astray, because we know that we are very prone to wander. We are so unstable, fighting for the proper balance. One evening, we are praying and praising God, like a puritan on fire. The next day, we are as dull as a soup spoon. This waywardness; this back and forth, up and down; this constant having to "buffet our bodies" with the apostle Paul, so that we can make our bodies our slave; this fight to walk in the Spirit, so that we don't fulfill the lusts of the flesh; this inward war...will finally be over, brethren!

And when it is, we will be presented before those in the heavenly places, as shiny, glorified, trophies of grace! We will be revealed as purchased, redeemed, righteous, manifestations of the glory of God! God's power and His grace and His mercy; indeed, the incomprehensible ability of our Holy God, to take repulsive, naturally condemned and defiled, ungodly sinners, and to transform them into cleansed, pure, righteous, holy, sons and daughters of God, will be magnified before every living thing, in that day! We will be in the spotless, impeccable showcase, displayed before all creatures, in heaven and on earth, as a most magnificent product of God's incomprehensible grace and power. And all; every living thing, will fall down before God, and offer Him ongoing praise and worship! The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, will be glorified in their respective roles, for accomplishing this glorious redemption! In the meantime, we, and the creation (which has presently been subjected to futility and corruption for our sakes) groan for that day! We long to come to completion! Notice again, how our texts emphasize this reality. [Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Romans 8:18-23]

Now brethren, I want you to notice something critical here, found in both of these contexts, which is very relevant for the present state, within which we find ourselves. These wonderful promises of what we will become; of the glory, which will be revealed in us, are given to us now, for a very specific and critical purpose. These promises are especially given to us, in light of the fact that we suffer in this life. In fact, they help shape the reason and purpose of our sufferings, which are working toward the end of our completed righteousness.

1) In 2 Corinthians 4, what is the context, within which, the hope of our final state, is given to us as a motivation. Notice, it is in the context of suffering! [Read verses 7-18]. Here is the great motivation, given in and by our suffering. While our outward man is perishing; while our bodies and our physical state are diminishing and deteriorating, we are being renewed *inwardly* day by day! The breaking down of our outward form, actually serves to build up and grow our inward spiritual life. Our "light affliction, which is but for a moment" (indeed, it is painful, but it is only for a short time, and we will be raised up anew), "is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." How so, brethren? What does this mean? It means that by means of our temporary, bodily breakdown, the Lord Jesus Christ is more and more being formed in us! It is producing righteousness and holiness in us! Our suffering has a

purpose, beyond just, "having to endure it, because it is God's will." It is a key component to our sanctification. Man is not to live by bread alone [and indeed, bread will be sacrificed at times, for the sake of a greater good], but rather, he must live by every word, which proceeds out of the mouth of God. We are stripped of our self-dependence and we are driven to rely more and more on our invisible God, contrary to our fallen nature, when those things, which we naturally depend upon, are taken from us! See this again in Romans, brethren.

2) How often have we quoted, and heard others quote Romans 8:28, as if it were in a vacuum somewhere, without any surrounding context? How often have people abused this text, and in doing so, have in fact, contradicted the very intended purpose of the text. What is the purpose of Romans 8:28? To tell us that, all will go well with us, in this life, and that we don't have to worry about suffering and hardship, because after all, "all things work together" for our good...etc. No, the very purpose of this text is to motivate and encourage us, during times of suffering, helping us realize the very good and necessary end of our suffering. [Read again Romans 8:18-30].

You see, brethren, we groan and long for the completion of our salvation. We, along with all of creation, long for our completed righteousness, when God will reveal us, unto His glory and praise! It is presently our *hope*. And while it is a "hope," this is only the case because it has not yet, been realized. But, it is absolutely certain. And so, we eagerly wait for it, with perseverance. We are compelled to endure all manner of suffering, in anticipation of this end. And the Spirit helps us, in our praying, throughout this journey of suffering. He makes intercession for us. And our sufferings, as difficult and as painful as they might be; we can endure them, because we know that they cannot even be compared with the glory, which will be revealed in us, on that day! And furthermore, we know that all of our sufferings; that all things, work together for our good, and for the good of all of those who love God, and are the called according to His purpose. They love God, and this is evidenced, by the persevering for His name's sake. And what is the good, toward which all of these sufferings move us? Verse 29 tells us, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Herein, brethren, lays the whole sum of the matter. What is the glory, which will be revealed in us, which far surpasses our sufferings in this

life (and which our sufferings are used to carry us toward)? What is the good, for which all things are working together, in our lives? What is to be revealed in us; what is that glory, which is to be revealed in us, which all of creation groans to behold? It is perfect conformity to the image of Christ! It is the righteousness of Christ formed completely in us!

You see, brethren, heaven is a place of righteousness, and we are being prepared toward that end, at this very moment. And all of our sufferings and trials and pains and tears, are tools, which are used to shape us toward that end. And when we get to glory, the process will be complete! We will be forever pure and perfectly righteous! And this guarantee; this hope, is what drives us in the present, to persevere and to press our way home! No amount of suffering or persecution can turn us away from this sure and certain reality! Nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus! All *anything* can do, is work for our good, serving to help prepare us for this blessed and glorious end! Now, hear again, the remainder of Romans 8, in this light! [Read Romans 8:28-39].

And then, lastly, let me close with 2 Peter 3:10-18. [see also Matthew 13:36-43?]

Amen!!!