

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

What We Will Do, Part 2

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-19

Tonight, as you know, we're going to look at our number eight message in the series, "Looking Toward Heaven." And I want to say, too, that I have not intended to make these difficult to understand but very simple, very basic so that we can all get a grip on the realities of heaven as revealed in God's Word. And I hope that they have been as helpful to you as they have been to me in my own heart, in giving me that anticipation of heaven that ought to be characteristic of every believer.

In Philippians 3:20, you remember the apostle Paul tells us that our citizenship is in heaven. That is where we have our home. That is our proper place. And Jesus said that He went away to prepare a place for us, a place in the Father's house and that someday He would come and get us and take us to be with Him. So, as far as Christians are concerned, our proper place is heaven. The right place for us is heaven, that's our home. And we've been looking more closely at our home in this particular study together.

Now, wanting to be able to understand all we can about heaven we've approached the subject by asking and answering some questions. Do I need to remind you what they are? We started out asking the question: what is heaven? We decided that heaven is a place. We then asked the question: where is heaven? We decided the Bible indicates that heaven is up beyond the first heaven, the second heaven. It's beyond the created universe as we know it, the sphere where God dwells in infinite presence. Then, we asked the question: what is heaven like? And we went into Old Testament, New Testament passages that describe something about the beauty, the wonder, the vastness, the incomprehensible character of heaven. Then, we dealt with the question of who is in heaven? We talked about God, that it's His abode. We talked about the holy angels. We talked about the fact that we who know the Lord are also citizens of that place.

We then discussed the theme: what will it be like in heaven? Taking the description of heaven a little bit further and then what will be our relationships in heaven, how will we be related to God, how will we be related to Christ, how will we be related to the angels, how will we be related to each other. And now, we are looking at the question: what will we do in heaven? What will we do? What will we spend our eternity involved with? And we're digging a little bit into that particular question again tonight.

Now, let me give you a review because we already began a look at this. The first thing we said is that we will adore God and Christ, i.e., we will worship. Heaven is a place of worship. It will be a place of

loving, adoring worship. We will be worshipping God, glorifying God, exalting God in His fullness. It will be a time of praise from pure motives and from perfect expression. Our hearts will be right when we worship and the expression of our hearts will be as perfect as our hearts are. In a real sense we saw that that is a fulfillment of God's design in salvation, for we remembered in John 4 that our Lord said the Father seeks true worshipers. And God has redeemed us along with everyone else He has redeemed in order to make us into eternal worshipers who would spend forever and ever and ever and ever giving Him glory, giving Him praise. And we remembered the definition of a Christian from Philippians 3:3: we are those who worship God in the Spirit. And that is the characteristic of a believer.

So, first of all, we will spend eternity adoring God, adoring Christ in acts of worship. Secondly, we noted that we will reign with God; we will reign with Christ. That speaks to us of our authority, the sphere of our responsibility. Every believer, I'm confident, will have in heaven some sphere of responsibility, some sphere of authority. We will be delegated that authority to be sure, there will be no autocratic rulers, there will be no independent rulers; we will all operate under the delegated authority of God, just as Christ did. You remember that Christ said He only did what the Father showed Him to do. And, of course, He reigns over an inheritance that the Father gave to Him. So, as Christ as delegated authority from the Father, so will we have delegated authority in heaven. We will reign, the Bible says, on the Father's throne, on the throne with the Son and the Father, and we will express that reign through perfect wisdom. So, we will reign over a sphere of responsibility being given delegated authority, and our reign will be a perfect reign with perfect wisdom. We will never make a mistake. We will never make a misjudgment. We will never err. Everything we do in our sphere of responsibility will be perfect and right.

Now, we were saved then to be worshipers. But it is also true that Christ has not only saved us to make us worshipers, but He has saved us to make us rulers. And we looked into the fact that there are several Scripture portions that relate to the fact that we will be rulers in heaven. We will have a sphere of rule. Ruling to some extent or another in a kingdom. But notice also what this verse explicitly says, "He has made us to be a kingdom," and then it says, "priests to His God and Father."

Now, keep that in mind. That is a very vital understanding. I don't know if you understand that in terms of its eternal implications. We talk a lot about the priesthood of the believer, that we all are given access to God. We are all priests in the sense that we can go immediately into God's presence. But have you ever thought about the fact that we are to be eternal priests as we are to be eternal worshipers and eternal rulers? We are also to be eternal priests. We are given a priesthood that is unending. We are saved to be priests to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what do priests do? Whatever priests do, we'll do it in heaven. And the answer is very simple: they serve God. So, the next point that I want you to jot down as you're thinking this through. Thirdly, in heaven we will serve Christ and serve God. The first thing we saw we will praise. The second thing,

we will reign. Thirdly, we will serve. We will serve. And let's use the word "duty." We will be called to worship. We will be called to authority. And we will be called to duty. What do priests do? Priests serve God. When Hannah desired to dedicate the life of her child, a gift of God named Samuel, she took that little child when it was weaned and gave it to the high priest, put Samuel in the house of God, and left him there for the duration of his life, really, until he was fully matured as a man. He was a gift to the house of God for the purpose of serving God. And that's what priests do. They serve God. They offer sacrifices and offerings and service to God.

The keynote is service. They render service to God. But there's another element to that service that I want to emphasize. What priests do is serve God in intimacy. In the old covenant, you know it well, that the priest had a unique relationship to God. In fact, the Old Testament taught that no common Israelite could get too near to anything that symbolized God. No common Israelite could come near things which were symbols of the presence of God. And even the Levites could only come so close, they attended to the things of worship, but they couldn't come as close as the priests could come. They alone served God in intimacy. The Levites served God. The Kohathites served God in transporting the Ark of the Covenant. All of the people of Israel served God in many, many ways but the priests served God in intimacy. Anyone other than a priest who touched sacred things died; only the priests could come near to God. And only the high priest could come into the holiest place, and only once a year, and only for a brief time, and only after going through great ceremonial cleansing and true heart cleansing could he come into God's presence.

Priests, then, uniquely could serve God in intimacy. But under the old covenant that intimacy was limited. In Numbers where you have a discussion of those who violated the priestly office it says Moses sent a summons to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab and they said we will not come up, "Is it not enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness, but would you also lord it over us?" And you remember the story that follows of Korah and all of the rest of them who stepped into the priestly office and the tragic results when they were terribly, terribly punished. Now, these people who invaded priestly office when they had not right to that drew near to God beyond the barrier that should have limited them. Only the priests could come as near as they came.

Leviticus chapter 16 tells us that the high priest alone could come nearer than the rest of the priests and only once a year could he do that. But nonetheless, in the old covenant, the characteristic that sets the priest apart is intimacy, communion, nearness to God.

Now, in the new covenant, what happened? When Jesus Christ died on the cross, the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom, the holy place in the temple in Jerusalem was exposed, the holy of holies was exposed to everyone and God was by graphic illustration saying all those who believe in My Son now can come into My presence. So, in the new covenant every believer is a priest. And we all have access to God. We are a royal priesthood. We are literally, 1 Peter 2:9, called into God's

marvelous light. Now, just think about that. We are called into God's marvelous light. What did that mean to a Jew? That would be like stepping into the Shekinah which in the old covenant would have consumed them. But in the new covenant because Christ has made our way open, we literally step into His marvelous light because God calls us into His light, because as Peter says, we are a people, mark this, for God's own possession. Same verse, 1 Peter 2:9, a royal priesthood, a people of God's own possession called by God into His marvelous light. So, under the new covenant we all enjoy intimacy, we all have access. That's why the writer of Hebrews says, "Let us come boldly before the throne of grace." We boldly enter the presence of God to commune with Him. And out of that intimate communion we serve Him.

That's why, beloved, there's no priesthood. There's no special priesthood. There is no such thing as a priest in the church who is in some way an intermediary between us and God. There are no such intermediaries. There is one mediator, says Paul in 1 Timothy, between God and man, and that is the man Christ Jesus. There is no such thing as an order of priests who stand between people and God. That was abolished at the cross of Jesus Christ. We are all priests unto God. We are all a royal priesthood. And we all commune with God in intimacy and we need no intermediary priest to go to God on our behalf.

But someday in heaven, we will be perfect priests. And mark this thought, we will not only approach the throne of grace, we will go beyond the throne of grace which Thomas Manton, the great Puritan says, is the porch of heaven, and we will approach the throne of glory. We will be able to go to the throne of glory, not just the throne of grace. We can only now go to the throne of grace because we're sinful, and we can only stop at the porch of heaven where we receive grace. Were we to go to the throne of glory, we would be consumed because of our sin. But someday when we leave this world and go into heaven and are in a perfected state of body and soul, we in our perfected state will be perfect priests who go far beyond the porch of heaven, the throne of grace and all the way to the throne of glory. We will render eternal service to our living God. We will enjoy eternal and perfect intimacy with God. It says in Revelation that God will dwell with us and we will dwell with Him. He will literally pitch His tent with us. It says all of heaven is a temple, and every one there is a priest, and God occupies the fullness of that eternal heaven. It is one great infinite eternal heaven in which God fills it with His presence and we minister as priests to Him. The temple of God and the temple of the Lamb is as vast as the infinite eternal heaven and we are its priests. Think of it. We are its priests.

So, we will serve God as priests, priests who have intimate access. We don't ever need to cleanse ourselves. We don't need to wash at any laver. We don't need to offer a sacrifice to get our life right so we can access God. We don't need to appeal to a throne of grace; we can go right to a throne of glory because there's no need for sacrifice. There's no need for cleansing. All of that is taken care of in the past. Marvelous. We will enter heaven, and we will enter into the fullness of our priestly service, rendering service to God. And somebody will say, "Well, what is it we do?" And the answer is anything He wants us to do, eagerly, and happily, and perfectly.

In Isaiah 58 a couple of verses might help to expand your understanding. It says in verse 13, "If because of the sabbath you turn your foot from doing your own pleasure on My holy day and call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor it, desisting from your own ways, from seeking your own pleasure and speaking your own word, then you will take delight in the Lord and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth, and I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." Now, you say, "What is that saying?" Now, listen carefully, let me go through it again. This is God's desire for us. If because it's the sabbath, you turn your foot from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, this is what God has always wanted. He has always wanted those who represent Him to do His service. And if you call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor it, desisting from your own ways, from seeking your own pleasure and speaking your own word, then you will take delight in the Lord and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth. That's what God is after. And that's what's going to happen in heaven. We will turn completely from anything that is our own pleasure. We will call the sabbath rest of eternity a delight. We will call the holy eternal day of the Lord honorable. We will desist from all our own ways and we will desist from seeking our own pleasure and speaking our own word. And we will take complete and eternal delight in the Lord and His service and He will make us to ride on the heights of the earth. That is the rest, the priestly rest in which we enter into heaven. And when we talk about that as a rest, a sabbath rest, it's not the rest that means we don't do anything, it's the rest that means we are not weary, we are not weak, we are not distracted, we are not interrupted in our eternal service to God. Our eternal service to God. We will serve God. That's what priests do.

Now, to enforce this from specific texts, let's go to the end of the Bible, the book of Revelation for a moment, and see what the Bible says about our service in heaven. Let's look at Revelation chapter 7. Here in this seventh chapter we are introduced to some folks in verse 9, "A great multitude which no one could count from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the throne, before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, palm branches were in their hands. They cry out with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb." And here are all the redeemed in heaven and they're praising God and exalting God and extolling God. And all the angels standing around the throne and all the elders, the four living creatures falling on their faces before the throne worshiped God saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever, amen." And one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in white robes, who are they? And from where have they come? And I said to him, My lord, you know. And He said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great Tribulation and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" This particular crowd is the redeemed of the Tribulation period, that seven-year period of judgment after the Rapture of the church. And these redeemed have come out of the Tribulation having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. That is, they're saved. For this reason, verse 15, note it, "They are before the throne of God." And what do they do? "Like true priests, they serve Him," what? "Day and night in His temple." And even though there is no day and night, you get the

idea of the sort of earthy terminology. They serve Him continually. “And He who sits on the throne shall spread His tent, or His tabernacle over them, and they shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore, neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.” That’s the serving rest, no tears, no exhaustion, no heat, no hunger, no thirst.

There we are near the throne of God, near the throne of Christ, sheltered by the presence of God, in the presence of the Lamb who is our shepherd and our guide, that is serving as priests in intimacy. Do you see it? That’s the intimacy of heaven. We serve Him day and night in His temple and God who is on the throne spreads that tabernacle over us. We’re never out of His presence. And the Lamb is at the center of everything. The word “serve” here is *latreu*. It means priestly service. The service rendered by a priest in intimacy to God.

May I add a footnote that will help you understand what I’m saying? In heaven, we will not serve each other as such, we will serve God. You won’t need me and I won’t need you to make up some lack in your life. You understand that? We’re not going to need to serve each other in the way we do now, which in a sense builds up each other’s weakness in areas of need. We won’t have that necessity. Since we will all be perfect and glorified and like Christ, all our service will be directly service to God. That’s why we will never leave His presence. We will always be like priests, whose primary duty in fact in heaven whose consummate and complete duty is to serve God. Priestly service.

Now, let’s go to Revelation chapter 22, the last chapter of this wonderful prophetic book. And we find words that are not unfamiliar; they sound very much like what we just read. Verse 1, “He showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street on either side of the river was a tree of life, bearing 12 kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nation. And there shall no longer be any curse and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it and His bondservants shall,” what? “Serve Him.” Again the same word, *doulos latreu*, bondservants who do priestly service. We will render priestly service to God. We will never be out of His presence. We will be there at the throne of God, there at the throne of the Lamb. In verse 4, “And we will see His face and His name will be on our foreheads.” Somehow, God will mark us with His own name, as those priests who belong to Him. There no longer will be any night. They’ll have no need of the light of a lamp or the light of the sun because the Lord God shall illumine them and they shall reign forever and ever. There’s the other element. We reign forever, we serve as priests forever. Priestly service.

This is so thrilling, so thrilling. I’m so glad to hear this, because as I said to you this morning in mentioning the service tonight, I couldn’t imagine anything worse than just being somewhere forever doing nothing. It just wouldn’t make sense. Why? Because there’s something in human nature, something in the image of God that is in me that needs to serve, that needs to do something. I need,

first of all, in my perfected state to do something for God who redeemed me. In fact, I personally think it's obvious that when your body and soul are perfected in the presence of God, you will literally be consumed forever with a driving compelling desire to serve God. And that has to have some obvious outlet, some fulfillment. And it will. You'll fulfill the deepest drive of your redeemed self to serve God. You say, "What kind of service will we do?" He doesn't spell out the specifics. Why try, we can't understand heaven. We can't understand it at all. But we will serve God in some way.

But that fits my own sense of humanness, of what a man or a woman really is. We need to serve. We have a sense of creativity built into us; we want to see something accomplished. I get pleasure out of doing something well, don't you? I get pleasure out of the sense of accomplishment, out of doing a task. I get great pleasure out of rendering service and knowing someone is pleased, and how wonderful to render service to God with which He will be perfectly pleased. There's the challenge of the task. There's the challenge of accomplishment. There's the challenge of doing something and doing it perfectly. Imagine that, that throughout eternity everything you do you'll do perfectly. And you'll do it. Yes, you'll do it. It isn't that God will make it automatically perfect, you'll do it and it will always be perfect. That's what God intended you to be and to do.

Now, let me give you another thought while I'm on this point. I really believe that the nature of our service, now think this one through, the nature of our service is likely determined by our service here and now. You get that? Now, you remember that I told you that the nature of your inheritance in glory will be related to how you handle your inheritance here. If you were faithful over little, He'll make you lord over what? Much. And we looked at the parables about those who were faithful with a few talents and were given more and the parable, those who were faithful over a few cities and were given more cities. And I think those take us into glory. There's a sense in which if you're faithful over a little bit of responsibility here, God will give you more responsibility there. That's your inheritance. If you're faithful over some service here, He'll give you proportionately more service there. That's your reward.

And we talked about believers' rewards. I believe that believers' rewards are not something you wear on your head like a crown. They're not stripes on your white robe. They're not that rooms in your mansion, so that the more service you did here the bigger your mansion, that's your reward. It's not that your chariot will be bigger and faster than anybody else's, or your white horses that. I believe that your reward in heaven is going to be a capacity for service and the greater your commitment to service here, the greater the capacity God will give you there so that you can express in a greater capacity your service to God. Capacity for eternal service is, I believe, the essence of what your reward will be. It's not going to be a hat to wear. It's not going to be stripes on your robe. It's not going to be a house that you live in that looks better than everybody else's house. It isn't going to be that, it's going to be the capacity for spiritual service. Each of us will be rewarded.

Look at 1 Corinthians for a moment; let's examine chapter 4 and then chapter 3 just very briefly. First Corinthians 4 verse 5, "Do not go on passing judgment before the time," that is the time when the

Lord comes, “but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts.” Then, listen to this, “Then each man’s praise will come to him from God.” Each man at the time when the Lord faces that man will receive praise from God. But each man’s praise will come to him from God uniquely. God is going to make the valuations of our stewardship. Verse 1, “We are stewards and servants.” Verse 2, “Stewards are to be faithful.” Verse 3, “It doesn’t matter to me how you judge me or how I even judge me,” verse 4. Even when I don’t know anything against myself, I leave judgment to God. The day is coming when He will judge my motive, and He will judge my service, and He will give His praise to me. So, God has the plan of rewarding every believer. Please notice: “each man’s praise will come to him from God.” Every believer will receive praise from God. Every believer will receive a reward.

The rewards may differ. You notice back in chapter 3 that that work which we do may differ as well. You remember that he says in this chapter coming down to verse 12, “If any man builds on the foundation,” that is Christ, “with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident.” We will all be rewarded but we will be rewarded differently. Some of our works will be gold, some silver, some precious stones, some wood, hay and stubble. Wood, hay and stubble aren’t bad, they aren’t wicked, they aren’t evil, they just aren’t as valuable. In fact, they tend to get burned up. We will all be rewarded and receive praise from God, but we will each be rewarded differently according to the service we have rendered. And the reward, I believe, will be the capacity for serving God in glory. And that, I think, is pointed out to us in those parables where those who were faithful over little were given more. That servant who took care of a few talents was given twice that many by the rewarding lord. That servant given five talents was given twice that many by the rewarding lord. What we do with our privilege to serve here will determine what God does with us in letting us serve Him there. And in those parables of the servants that we find in Matthew and Luke, we remember that in each case when the lord came back to reward his servants, he rewarded them in proportion by giving them greater sphere of service or greater sphere of rulership. And so, we will rule and we will serve in relation to how faithfully we have fulfilled our ruling responsibility here and our service here.

Now, Scripture has much to say about these rewards and I don’t want to get into an entire message on the matter of rewards, but let me just read you a few scriptures. Daniel 12:3, “And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” Now, what he is saying there is very simple. If you lead many to righteousness, you will shine like the stars forever and ever. Your reward then is predicated on the faithfulness with which you proclaimed the message of righteousness. All of those who have wisdom will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven. And what Daniel is saying there is that how you function in this life with the wisdom of God, how you function in this life with the proclamation of God’s message will determine how you shine in the eternity to come.

In the New Testament, 1 Thessalonians chapter, so many scriptures, I don't want to get tied down to too many, 2:19, he says, "For what," or who, literally, "is our hope or joy or crown of exaltation, is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy." Paul says part of the reward we're going to have in heaven is going to be the reward of seeing those who are there because of our faithfulness. That will be part of our reward. Part of our reward, mark this, is not only serving but joy. Just the joy of seeing folks that are there because we were faithful will be part of our reward, an important part of our reward. And again, I emphasize it's not something you wear, it's something that you experience. Greater service, greater responsibility, greater joy. That's essential in understanding this whole matter.

In 1 Corinthians 9:25 Paul says, "We will receive not a perishable wreath or a perishable crown, but an imperishable one." Now, mark that thought. What that means is that when we receive our reward, it will never ever die. Athletes who have won great victories or received great honors know the thrill. In my own athletic career, I know what it is to win a big game, to win a bowl game, to win an award, to receive some recognition, national recognition or whatever it is. You know what it is to watch an athlete ascend the stop stairs to receive the gold medal in the Olympics. That moment, that moment of ecstasy, that moment of exaltation is but a moment. I was watching the Orange Bowl the other night and watching Jimmy Johnson lose it altogether as he was being carried off the field in sheer ecstasy over winning the national championship, and probably woke up the next morning to reality. Well, if you can put that into heavenly terms, heaven will be forever enjoying that maximum moment of thrill, never diminishing, never ever subsiding, never going away. You'll be on the victor's stand receiving the gold medal to the adulation of the living God forever, and ever, and ever, and ever. That will be your ongoing uninterrupted unending experience. You will be receiving that crown which never fades, never perishes. There's never a morning after, just continued joy and exaltation.

Now, the Bible promises a crown of life, a runner's crown, and all of those things. All of those are capacities of service, or simply refer to eternal life. The crown of life, I believe, is eternal life. The imperishable crown is, in a sense, eternal life. The crown of joy, that's eternal life, but it's eternal life filled with joy and glory and privilege for service. Paul writes in 2 Timothy chapter 4, you know this verse, a familiar one, verse 8. He says, "In the future there's laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day, not only me but all of those who love His appearing." What's the crown of righteousness? That's eternal righteousness. The crown of life is eternal life. The crown of joy is eternal joy. So, the crown is not something you wear, I say it again: it is something you experience; eternal life, eternal joy, eternal privilege to serve, eternal blessedness. That's the reward.

Peter writing in 1 Peter 5, I think you probably remember verses 2 and 3, he says, "Shepherd the flock of God among you. Exercising oversight not under compulsion but voluntarily according to the will of God and not for sorted gain but with eagerness, nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge but proving to be examples of the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will

receive the unfading crown of glory.” What is that? Eternal glory. The crown of life is eternal life. The crown of rejoicing is eternal rejoicing. The crown of glory is eternal glory. The imperishable crown is that reward which is forever. And so, we will then serve and our service, I believe, eternally, will be predicated on our faithfulness here and now. I really believe, people, that the way we live now is determining the capacities for service in the days that we spend in eternity. Not days, really, but in the eons that we spend in eternity. In Revelation 2:26 it says, “He who overcomes, who keeps My deeds until the end.” Get that? “To him I will give authority over the nations and he shall rule them.” In other words, what you do now determines what the Lord is going to use you to do then. It’s right. Revelation 2:26.

So, what we do now determines the capacity for future reward. Listen to Revelation 22:12, “Behold, I’m coming quickly. My reward is with Me,” listen, “to render to every man according to what he has done.” Did you get that? Your capacity for eternal joy, eternal glory, eternal reward is related to what you have done: gold, silver, precious stones or wood, hay, stubble. What are we going to do in heaven? We’re going to worship. We’re going to reign. We’re going to serve. The capacity for our reigning will be related to how faithful we were with our responsibility and stewardship here. The capacity of our service will be determined by our faithfulness to serve here. The crown of life will be proportionate to our obedience here. We will enjoy eternal life to the maximum of our capacity, but that capacity will be determined by our life here. The crown of rejoicing will be eternal rejoicing in a capacity determined by the faithfulness we exhibited here. The crown of glory, the same thing.

So, we are at this particular point in time doing things in this life to serve the living God as priests that will affect our capacity to serve Him in eternity. That ought to motivate your heart. Sometimes people will want to be encouraging and say you need to slow down and do less. But if you look at it like this, it’s the opposite, isn’t it? We really ought to spend ourselves to the maximum here so that we can have the fullest capacity throughout eternity to give glory to the great God and our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, this is something else that we will do in heaven. It’s not really what we do, but it’s got to fit in somewhere so I’m going to put it here. We will be continually refreshed by Him. Let’s call it rest, we will rest in heaven. We will rest in heaven. Hebrews 4 talks about entering into rest. There is a rest for the people of God. Jesus said, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me for I am meek and lowly and you shall rest for your souls.” One of the promises the Lord has given to those who believe in His Son is that we will know rest, rest from our labors, the labors to try to find God, as it were, on our own, the rest from works, righteousness. But not the rest from duty. In Luke 13:29 says we’ll recline at a banquet table. We went into that earlier in our series. That doesn’t mean we’re just going to sit around all the time. And in Hebrews 3 and 4 when it talks about the rest that is there for the people of God, it means that we will never be weary. It means that we will never be weak. It means that we will never be unfulfilled. It means that we will never be interrupted. It’s a unique kind of rest.

Look at Revelation 14 while you're there, verse 11. "The smoke of the torment goes up forever and ever," and this is speaking of those who were judged in the time of the Tribulation. And their judgment is without rest, obviously. But on the other hand, verse 12, here's the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus, "I heard a voice from heaven saying, Right, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from now on, yes says the Spirit, that they may," what? "Rest from their labors for their deeds follow with them." Rest, rest. Second Thessalonians 1:7 calls it relief, relief. It says that when Jesus comes He gives relief to the afflicted. Relief, rest.

What does that mean? It means spiritual rest. It means rest from weariness and weakness. There'll never be any hunger. There'll never be any thirst. There'll never be any weariness. There'll never be any heat to tire us out. That's the eternal rest. It doesn't mean we don't serve. We reign, we serve in unceasing duty coupled with perfect rest. Can you handle that? Put it this way: the more you serve, the more rested you become. The more you serve, the more refreshed you are. You see, it's not the law of thermodynamics that we call entropy that causes everything to disintegrate won't be in effect. And so, there will be no debilitating forces. The more you serve, the more you fulfill your purpose, the more you are refreshed. No energy will ever be expended. Did you get that? You'll never expend any energy. You'll never pant. You'll never be out of breath. You'll never slow your step. Incredible thoughts. Perfect rest, perfect rest.

The great Puritan pastor Richard Baxter wrote, and it's worth listening to these words: "Rest, how sweet a word is this to mine ears. Me thinks the sound doth turn to substance and having entered at the ear doth possess my brain and thence descendeth down to my very heart. Me thinks I feel it stir and work and that through all my parts and powers but with a various work on my various parts. To my wearied senses and languid spirits, it seems a quieting powerful opiate. To my dulled powers it is spirit and life. To my dark eyes it is both eye salve and a prospective. To my taste it is sweetness. To mine ears it is melody. To my hands and feet it is strength and nimbleness. Me thinks I feel it digest as it proceeds and increase my native heat and moisture and lying as a reviving cordial at my heart from thence doth send forth lively spirits which beat through all the pulses of my soul. Rest, not as the stone that rests on the earth, nor as these clods of flesh shall rest in the grave so our beasts must rest as well as we. Nor is it the satisfying of our fleshly lusts, nor such rest as the carnal world desireth. No, no, we have another kind of rest than these, rest we shall from all our labors which were but the way and means to rest, but yet that is the smallest part. O blessed rest, where we shall never rest day or night crying holy, holy, holy Lord God of sabbaths, when we shall rest from sin but not from worship, from suffering and sorrow but not from solace. O blessed day when I shall rest with God, when I shall rest in knowing, loving, rejoicing and praising, when my perfect soul and body together shall in these perfect things perfectly enjoy the most perfect God when God also who is love itself shall perfectly love me, and yea, and rest in His love to me as I shall rest in my love to Him and rejoice over me with joy and singing as I shall rejoice in Him." End quote. Rest, rest, rest.

Finally, and this one staggers me. Turn to Luke 12, Luke 12, verse 35, he says, "Be dressed in readiness and keep your lamps so lit. Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast so that he may immediately open the door, so that you may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks." Now, follow, "Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes. Truly, I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve and have them recline at the table and will come up and wait on them." Stop at that point. Now, that's incredible. There's one other thing we're going to experience in heaven. Are you ready for this? The Lord Jesus Christ will serve us. The Lord Jesus Christ will serve us. Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes, truly I say to you that he will gird himself to serve and have them recline at the table and will come up and wait on them.

Are you ready for this? There's another thing that's going to happen in heaven, forever and ever and ever and ever, God the Son will render service to the redeemed. Is that an unbelievable thing? Jesus here takes the human imagery of a great lord returning to his palace. His slaves are there waiting. Everything is prepared. They have been faithful to their lord. And upon his arrival he calls for a wonderful gathering together. He doesn't seek to get some rest. He doesn't say to his slaves, "Well, I want to go to sleep for a while, I've had such a long journey." He says no, I want you slaves to sit down, and I'm going to serve you a meal out of gratitude for your service to me and your preparedness when I come. The lord doesn't seek to rest. He doesn't seek to retire for the night. He changes his slaves into kings and he makes a feast for them, and astoundingly he doesn't order other servants to serve them, he does it. Now, I said a few moments ago that we don't serve each other in heaven but we get served by the Lord Himself. Fantastic thought. The heavenly Lord Himself forever and ever serves us.

When He comes and finds that we have been faithful, He will serve us forever. Is that a motivating truth? How could heaven have a greater blessedness than that? How wonderful to think of worshipping Him forever, of reigning with Him forever. How wonderful to think of serving Him forever, of resting in that service forever. But wonder of wonders beyond all that, to imagine that He will serve us forever. Yet, it shouldn't surprise us. He washed the disciples' feet because He loved them, John 13. And He will love us perfectly then, too. And He will serve us. Well, when you think about heaven, it's something, isn't it? Thomas Watson said, "A true saint every day takes a turn in heaven. His thoughts and desires are like cherubim flying up to paradise." End quote. It makes sense to look toward heaven, beloved, it makes sense. It makes sense to set your affections on things above when we realize what heaven is all about.

I want to close with a little list of personal inventory and I want you to get this because this is the conclusion to this series. Just briefly. Don't tune out, stay with me. What is the benefit of looking toward heaven? Why eight weeks on this? Listen carefully; I'm going to give you several. I've jotted down seven.

What is the benefit of looking toward heaven? Benefit number one, it is evidence of genuine salvation. It is evidence of genuine salvation. Are you preoccupied with heaven? That's a good indication you're saved. Is that where your heart is? Do you long to be in the heavenlies? Do you long to commune with God? Do you lay your treasure up in that place? Do you have your affections set on things above, not on things on the earth? Looking toward heaven is evidence of genuine salvation. A heart set on heaven is a heart set on God. And a heart set on God is a heart God has changed. The truest evidence of saving grace may be a heavenly attitude.

Secondly, looking toward heaven is important because it is the motive to the highest excellence of Christian character. It is the motive to the highest excellence of Christian character. Nothing can compel you to be what God wants you to be more strongly than the truths about heaven. If you understand about the inheritance, and the rewards, and the glories, and the joys, and the privileges and the capacities of heaven, and you understand that Christ Himself will serve you forever out of gratitude for what you have done, that is the most compelling reality to drive you toward the highest excellence of Christian character. That is the hope that purifies, John said, that purges the heart, communing with the Lord of heaven, traveling there through prayer and meditation and devotion purges the heart and motivates toward obedience.

Thirdly, the benefit of looking toward heaven is that it's the truest path to a life of joy. It is the truest path to a life of joy. If you want to be miserable, just get your focus here in this world. If you want to be joyful, get your focus on heaven. David said the light of God's face gladdens the heart. We rejoice in hope, and we can endure any suffering in the light of glory, said Paul. The eternal weight of glory far beyond anything we suffer in this life. And so, as we look toward heaven, it becomes the evidence of genuine salvation, the motive to the highest excellence of Christian character and the truest path to a life of joy.

Fourthly, looking toward heaven is the best preservative against temptation and sin. It is the best preservative against temptation and sin. Why? A heavenly mind does not stoop to the depth of evil. A heavenly mind does not stoop to vanity. A heavenly mind is not a victim of sensual impulses. A heavenly mind is a heavenly mind, not an earthly one. And when you set your affections on things above in Colossians 3, you will, says Paul, mortify then, the deeds of the flesh. You'll slay them. Satan's attempt in temptation and sin is to set his traps to catch us with our mind on the earth. But you show me a believer whose mind is on heaven, who longs for full righteousness and the presence of God, and I'll show you one who is not an easy prey to Satan.

Fifthly, looking toward heaven maintains the vigor of spiritual service. Looking toward heaven has the benefit of maintaining the vigor or the energy of spiritual service. Listen to me: if you run slow in the Christian race, and if you worked very little in Christian service, and if you're unfaithful in rendering to the Lord that which is due to Him, it is because you have little regard for the promised prize. Did you

get that? Because, if you had proper regard for the heavenly prize, you would be compelled in spiritual service. Fervency comes from the vision of heaven's reward. And as you understand the reality of heaven's eternal reward, you should be compelled to spiritual service.

Sixth, the benefit of looking toward heaven is also that it honors God before all. It honors God before all. What do I mean by that? Simply, when your heart is set on heaven, you demonstrate your love for God. You demonstrate that exalt God. Your faithful service gives to the people who see you a high view of God, that He is not only all demanding, but He is all worthy. You live in a heavenly sphere, and you are honoring the exalted God. You live in the mundane mud and muck of the world, and you're dishonoring God by saying this is more important to me than He is. If you live your life looking toward heaven, you honor God before all who see your life. And you say, what a God you serve, so worthy of your best.

Finally, the benefit of looking toward heaven is that it repays God. It repays God. You say, "What do you mean, it repays God?" Well, His heart is always set on us, why shouldn't our heart always be set on Him? Hmm? His heart is always toward us. Why shouldn't our hearts be always toward Him? And by the way, there's nothing in this world worth setting your heart on, is there?

Personal inventory: what are the benefits of looking toward heaven? Number one, it's the evidence of genuine salvation. Look at your life. Look at your life. Are you constantly looking toward heaven? Is the hunger of your heart the things of God, communion with God, the realities of eternity? That's evidence that you're a Christian. If it isn't there, the evidence isn't there. Secondly, if you're looking toward heaven, that's the motive to the highest excellence of Christian character. When you commune continually with the living God, when you have a hope of eternal heaven, that purifies your life, that purges your heart. Is that true in your life? Are you so set on heaven that your life is pure? It is also the truest path to a life of joy. Are you experiencing joy in your life? Or when you do inventory are you constantly depressed, down, dour, sort of sour through life? That's because you have lost your joy because your face is stuck on this passing world. Fourthly, we said that looking toward heaven is the best preservative against temptation and sin. If you're finding yourself continually falling into Satan's traps, it's because you're preoccupied with the things here rather than the glories of God. Fifthly, we said that looking toward heaven maintains the vigor of spiritual service. If you have trouble being faithful, being diligent, giving your all in serving Christ, it's because you are having little regard for the promised prize. It doesn't matter to you that God has promised you eternal reward. That's not as important to you as whatever trivia you're doing here. And sixthly, looking toward heaven means you're honoring God before all. If you live that kind of life the people watching you are going to say he must serve some wonderful God, she must serve some wonderful God to so totally give his or her life to him. And finally, how could we not be preoccupied having our heart set on God when God's heart is always set on us? Looking toward heaven repays God.

The Psalmist said, "I'll be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness." When I awake in Thy likeness. Will you be satisfied with anything less than that? If you will, then you don't understand the attitude of living a heavenly perspective. What would satisfy you? What would really satisfy you? Anything less than being like Christ misses the point. Let's bow in prayer.

Blessed, Father, thank You for these wonderful days in which we have studied this incredible theme. Thank You even for tonight, for what You've done in our hearts. Thank You for the hope of heaven. Lord God, help us to get our focus where it ought to be. Help us to be constantly looking toward heaven, giving evidence of our salvation, being motivated to the highest excellence of Christian character, following the truest path to joy, being preserved against sin, maintaining the vigor and energy of our service, honoring You and repaying You for Your constant affection and love toward us. Father, help us all who are here to examine our own hearts that we might so live as to be obedient to the hope of heaven, to be compelled in the anticipation of the things You have for us for Jesus sake. Amen.

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