

Harvesting Eternal Rewards - Part 6

by Josef Tson

The cross of Christ is a means of reconciliation with God and separation from Satan, sin, our flesh, and the world, and it should be the central theme in our thinking and living.

Duration: 1:01:07

Scripture: Isaiah 53:3

Topics: "Eternal Rewards", "Christian Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses four motivations for living a life dedicated to God. The first motivation is the vision of heaven, where believers are encouraged to focus on the eternal rather than the temporal. The preacher uses the analogy of a rocket that deviates from its intended path to illustrate how sin causes us to miss the mark. The second motivation is the judgment seat of Christ, where believers strive to hear the verdict of 'well done, good servant.' The third motivation is the love of Christ, which transforms believers to live for others rather than themselves. The fourth motivation is the understanding that believers are ambassadors sent by God, backed by the power of the Holy Spirit, to share the gospel with others. The preacher also emphasizes the freedom believers have in Christ, having died to sin and no longer being slaves to it.

Transcript

My talk tonight has two parts. One is about the cross of Christ and the second one is about our cross and how we have to go. So you just put the two together exactly as I put them together in my talk.

It is the leading of the Holy Spirit, isn't it? So we go straight to Isaiah 53. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Like one from whom men hide their face, he was despised and we did not esteem him.

Surely our griefs he himself bore and our sorrows he carried. Yet we ourselves esteemed him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was pierced through for our transgressions and was crushed for our iniquities.

The chastising for our well-being fell upon him and by his scourging we are healed. The cross of Christ. All these hours together we spoke about harvest and I told you about different harvests.

Now I want to tell you about the most beautiful harvest of all and that is described in verse 11 here in Isaiah. You have it in many versions but here is how it I think should read. He will see the result of the anguish of his soul and be satisfied.

He will see the result of the anguish of his soul and be satisfied. The harvest of the cross of Jesus Christ. You know how he explained it in John 12? I am like a grain of wheat.

If I stay alive, I stay alone. If I die, I multiply. That's the harvest of the Son of God.

When I am lifted up on that cross, I will attract the whole world to myself. He will see the result of the anguish of his soul. The harvest of the cross of Christ.

And as I look as I look over you all, I see a part of that harvest. We are here as the harvest of the cross of the Savior. So we had to speak about it and we'll take some time tonight and I hope that tonight you will not look too much to your clock into your watch.

The cross of Christ. What's its purpose? What did it achieve? Why it had to be? Our great contemporary theologian John Stott has just published a great book on the cross of Christ. You should all buy a copy of it and read it and make it a key part of your library.

It is a magnificent work. It is the most complete work on the cross of Christ that was ever written. And so I would refer to that for a complete theology of the cross of Jesus Christ.

I would just want to pick up a few aspects of the cross of Christ tonight. I would start with what the beloved apostle Peter says about it. In 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 18, here is how Peter explains it.

For Christ also died for sins, once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that he might bring us to God. Why did Christ die? In order to bring us back to God. That's the purpose of the death of Christ in a nutshell.

If you look at the reason of our alienation from God, of course, that is sin. And maybe you all know that sin in Greek is hamartia, and that means the missing of the mark. I told you why God created us.

I showed you what great goals God had right from the beginning with us. But we missed the mark. We went astray.

We lost the track. I think the most beautiful illustration of the modern illustration would be a rocket that was launched to reach the heart of the universe. But you know, it takes only a very, very little deviation.

And in days and weeks and months of that rocket traveling through the cosmos, it will turn out to go in the opposite direction, because there was a very slight deviation. Not big, but it ends in a totally wrong direction. And instead of going to the center of the universe, it goes to somewhere in the darkness of the universe.

How can you save that rocket? The engines of the rocket broke down too. It's not only that it lost the direction, it's broken inside too. You cannot turn it.

It cannot turn around. There is only one way. Another rocket to go and go and go and just join the dead rocket and stick with it.

Make one with it and repair it and turn it towards its proper direction and say, that's the way. But from now on, I won't let you alone anymore. I'll go with you.

You recognize? So clear? That's what happened with us. We were launched to be there with God of the universe in positions of grandeur and glory. But with our disobedience, we lost the track and we were going towards hell.

Broken inside with no power of turning back. And it was the Son of God that came and united with us, made himself one with us and repaired us and turned us around and said, this is the direction, but I will come now with you. I will take you there.

The just for the unjust to turn us to God. This is how I understand basically the way, the reason of Christ coming and dying for us. Now, I want to show to you five workings or five works of the cross of Christ.

Look at the cross of Christ as coming between us and God, between us and Satan, between us and sin, between us and the flesh, and between us and the world. And all of a sudden, you will see the riches of the cross and the centrality of the cross in our life. The cross of Christ.

Let's look for a minute to the cross between us and God. That sin alienated us from God, separated us from God. Reading Ephesians so beautifully described, we were strangers, alienated.

But Christ, our peace, came. And through his cross, he brought us together, God and ourselves. He destroyed that wall of separation.

He destroyed the enmity in his cross. The cross of Christ brings me back to God and brings back God to me. And we are one again.

We are in one family of God. I cannot go to God any other way. But through the new way, open through that curtain, which is Christ's body broken on the cross.

That is how I come to God, through the cross of Christ. And it is there that my heart is conquered and turned over to God. I read recently about that great man of God, Count Zinzendorf of Germany, the one who started the Moravians, who had such an extraordinary impact on the whole world since 1720 or so.

That great man of God was a man of the world until that day when he looked to a painting of Christ with that crown of thorns on his head. And under that painting, there was this inscription, This is what I did for you. What do you do for me? And tonight, I wanted to depict to you the anguish of the Son of God.

God made man in order to rescue you. The one who died on that cross where you should have died. He replaced you on that cross to bear the consequences of your sins.

It was there that the punishment that God had to give you for your sins fell on him. He replaced you in punishment. And he says to you, This is what I did for you.

What do you do for me? Would you, if you never responded to that question? Right now, as you sit there, whisper, Son of God, if you loved me that much, if that is your purpose with me to take me back on the right track, if you did that much, Lord, here is me. I have nothing else but myself. I respond with myself.

Take me. Repair me. And take me where you want me to be.

I accept you, the rocket of God, to dock my rocket. And may yourself mine with me. That's all that it takes to respond to what Christ did for you on that cross.

Now, the second way in which we have to look at the cross is to see the cross between us and Satan. In 1 John 3.8, John tells us that Christ came into this world to destroy the works of Satan. And in Hebrews 2.14, we are told that by his dying, he destroyed the power of Satan, who was keeping us in slavery all our lives.

And in Colossians 2.14-15, we are told that that document that was our sins, that was Satan's title deed over us, Jesus nailed that in the cross, washed it in his blood, cancelled it, and set us free. I was owned by Satan. Because of my sins, he had right of ownership over me.

It was Christ's cross that came between me and Satan. And he cannot touch me anymore, because I am under the protection of the cross of Christ. I don't owe him anything anymore, and he has no more rights over me.

It's all cancelled in that cross. And as long as I stand there under the shadow of the cross, I am safe from the enemy's touch. He cannot touch you as long as the cross of Christ is over your being.

There is a third way in which we can look at the cross, and that is the cross between me and sin. In Romans 6, Paul describes our relationship with sin. Shall we continue to live in sin? Don't you understand what happened in the cross of Christ? I was included in Christ when Christ died.

And Christ died for my sins. He died for sin, towards sin. And when Christ died, I died to sin.

And now, sin has no more authority over me. I should not give my members, the members of my body, into the service of that former master. You see, the problem is that I wasn't free to drink.

I wasn't free to do all the other things there. I was a slave of sin. I couldn't but sin, because I was a slave of sin.

But I died to that cruel master. He has no more right over me. Let me put it in a simple way, so that you will never forget it.

I use this a lot in my own country, and people enjoyed it very much, and it's so illustrative. The story goes that just at the end of the war in 1864-65, the black people were set free. There were no more slaves.

And what a joy for every one of them to be free. The story is that a young man called Jimmy was standing on a platform, waiting for a train to come, and with some other friends there, waiting for somebody to come with that train. And as the train stopped, his former master just came down from the train with two heavy suitcases.

And his former master used to command, just said, Jimmy, pick up my suitcases and take them to my carriage. And of course, Jimmy used to serve that master, went and picked the suitcases and started to carry them. One of his friends looked to him and said, Jimmy, you don't have to carry this man's suitcases anymore.

You are free. He's no more a slave. He's your master.

It was like him waking up and saying, that's right. And he just dropped them there and said, you carry them. I won't carry your suitcases anymore.

Now, your former master wants to trick you to carry his suitcases again. That is to speak some ugly words again. That is, you carry his suitcases.

Or to look where you shouldn't look. Or to get angry when you shouldn't. All these things is serving your old master, carrying his suitcases.

After I told that story in one place, the following week in a factory, one of our people who listened to that sermon was telling some dubious joke to one or two other colleagues there. And another Christian approached gently and he said, Jimmy, you again carried the suitcases of your former master. The other people didn't know what was going on.

But this man just, oh, you are right. Thank you. And there was no more bad joke saying there.

Don't, don't serve your master anymore. You are not obligated to serve him. You are a fool if you serve him.

And he wants to fool you into serving him. So let it stick into your mind that you are free from sin. Reckon yourselves dead to sin.

That is the meaning in Romans 6, 9. So the cross is between me and sin. And then the cross is between me and my flesh. Galatians 5, 24.

They who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. Every day I have to say to my flesh, no. And I have to say yes to the spirit.

My daughter came one day. They had discussion in the school about Galatians 5 with the spirit and the flesh. And as I like to draw immediately diagrams, I said, let me show you.

I said, here is man. And they pointed to the spirit up there and flesh down here. They say, now here is man is in between a man's spirit, a man's spirit or soul and mind.

Everything that makes that man. Now man gets messages from the flesh that says, get angry on that and say, tell him what you think about him or about her. And messages from the Holy Spirit that says, patience, love, gentleness.

And in every occasion, with every situation, there are messages from the flesh and messages from the spirit. The issue is, whom do you obey? Do you have the mind directed towards the spirit or your mind is directed towards the flesh? And it became so simple. And she said, why don't you come to explain to our classroom? It is that simple.

But in order to stand the desires of the flesh, I every day have to decidedly, conscientiously, and with all awareness to say, I put my flesh on the cross. My human nature has to be nailed there. And I obey the Holy Spirit.

That's a thing that I do. That's demanded from me. And then the fifth one is the cross between us and the world.

Galatians 6.14. Far from me to boast in anything else, but the cross of Christ, through which or by which the world is crucified for me. And I am crucified for the world. The world with its values.

The world with its driving for selfishness and self-satisfaction and pride and luxury and then all these things that make the worldliness. It conquered you, didn't it? Why? Because you don't see Galatians 6.14. I put that cross of Christ between me and the world. That's where the cross has to stay now.

To divide me, to separate me. That world is beyond that cross and I am on this side. I am crucified here.

The world is crucified there. We cannot go through the cross of Christ to each other. We are separated.

You see, the cross of Christ comes in five places. In one place, that cross unites. In the other four, it separates.

It unites me with God and I praise the Lord for that. And then it separates me from Satan. It separates me from sin.

It separates me from flesh. It separates me from the world. This is the separation that the cross of Christ has to work in my life.

Now the big question. Do you let the cross of Christ to do all its working in your life? Don't we tend only to look at the cross as it reconciles us with God and ignore the other workings of the cross? You cannot have one without the others. That cross has to come and do all its work in your life.

You cannot bargain and say, I accept that, but I cannot accept that. The cross of Christ has to come and make all those separations. If you really accepted it to reconcile you with God, to wash you clean, to make you whole, to take you back to God, of course, then you say, oh blessed cross, then do all the other things and separate me from all those things, Satan, the world, the flesh, and the sin.

Stay between me and these things. So, consider this now. My message is that you have to make the cross of Christ central in your thinking and central in your living.

And central in your living means that it has to separate you with all these things as it unites you with your God. Now, I want to conclude this series of talks with a question that came again and again to me in many places where I spoke. In the last two years, I spoke quite a lot about this teaching on inheritance, rewards, and the purposes of God with us in the kingdom of heaven.

And again and again, this question came. The motivation. Wouldn't it be nicer just to love Christ and love God for what he has done for me, and don't think of these other things? It would be more generous, I think, if I just love him and don't think of anything else.

Well, it sounds nice, but it's not biblical. So, let's look now in the time we still have at the biblical motivation for Christian living. Biblical motivations for Christian living.

And before that, I want to introduce this with a word about our cross. I spoke to you about Christ's cross. The Lord Jesus Christ tells me, if you want to follow me, you have to deny yourself, and you have to pick up your cross and follow me.

It's not enough that I have the cross of Christ to reconcile me with God and to separate me with all these enemies. I have to carry my own cross. Now, cross means self-sacrifice, and cross means service for

others.

The cross of Christ was totally for us. He didn't deserve it. He shouldn't have it.

He accepted it because he loved us, and all that he achieved in that cross, he achieved for us, and on our behalf. When I pick up my cross, that means that I have now to live a life of self-sacrifice and of servanthood for others. As my father sent me, so send I you.

My father sent me as a lamb. I send you as lambs among the wolves. My father sent me to destroy the works of the evil one.

Now I send you to fight the evil one. You have to be engaged in that battle. I was sent to save the world.

Now I send you with the message of salvation. I started the work by my cross. You continue my work with your cross.

And we open now the scriptures at 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and chapter 5. That is where we find the motivations for Christian living on the cross. That is how Paul describes his own life. 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed, perplexed but not despairing, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed, always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our flesh. So death works in us, but life in you.

I, says Paul, accept to be beaten and beaten and beaten so much that I am like a walking death. Now you should understand I carry in my body the death of Christ. And let me tell you what's the purpose.

The purpose is that the life of Christ be manifest through my body to you, so the death works in me and life in you. I accept this life of suffering, because in that way life throbs in you. And he explains it all the way through the Second Corinthians how that happens, how through his suffering the churches get richer, get more life, get more grace, because he accepts this suffering.

It's an amazing understanding how our cross impacts on other people and becomes a blessing for our people. I spoke to you a lot about this last time when we were here together three years ago, so I don't go into that anymore now. I only ask the question now, why? Why should we accept that kind of life on the cross, life under the cross, life of dying, life in which we carry the death of Christ in us so that the life of Christ be manifest in others? Why should that be so? And what should be our motivation? Now the rest of chapter 4 and all chapter 5 gives the motivation.

And actually Paul gives us four motivations for doing that. They are absolutely great, beautiful, and they just conclude all our teaching of these eight hours. Now here is the first motivation.

The first motivation, I would call it the vision of heaven. It starts in verse 16. Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day, for momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are not seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. Why do I accept this? Don't you understand these sufferings work for us an eternal weight of glory? I got a glimpse of heaven. You see, I don't look at the temporal things.

They are temporal. They are transitory. I look beyond them at the eternal things.

And that is my first motivation, the glory that is produced through suffering or by suffering. So that is the first, and I don't go deeper into it because all this time I developed on that motivation, that our beginning should be to look there. What is God's final purpose with us? And when we see that final purpose, when we see that glory, of course, then we say, your majesty, how do you expect me then to live in the light of that? I am here to serve you, to obey you, to be submissive to you.

I am here to do whatever you ask me because I got a glimpse of the glory. So that is the first motivation of Paul. Now let's go to the second.

Now, he goes on to develop. You see, he starts chapter five with the word for. That means he just elaborates.

For we know that if the earthly tent, which is our house, is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven. And he goes to elaborate, to tell us about his house in heaven. And so he says, that is why I toil.

That is why I accept all these hardships, because I look at what I have in heaven. But then, starting in verse nine, he gives us the second motivation. Therefore, also, you see, it's a new motivation.

Also, we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to him for, this is the motivation. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad. The second motivation of Paul is fear of judgment.

The fear of judgment. That is why I have the passion to please God, because I am afraid of the judgment seat of Christ. Now, if you think that I exaggerate when I say the fear of judgment, I want to show you that that is scriptural.

Now, it's just to look at two other scriptures. Look at Hebrews chapter 10, yes. It's some very harsh words here about the Christians who dare willingly disobey God.

And at the end of the verse 30, the Lord will judge his people. Listen, the Lord will judge his people. The judgment will start from the house of God.

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And if you turn two pages to Hebrews 12, verse 28 and 29. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, this is what we were speaking about.

We are going to receive a kingdom that is not to be shaken. And we know that it is ours. They are kept for us in heaven.

Since we know that, let us show gratitude by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire. Therefore, I have a passion to please God because I

am afraid of the judgment seat of Christ. This is the same picture.

I am going there to be scrutinized by the one who died for me. You see, that is what will make that judgment painful. The one who judges Mrs. Paul is the Lord.

That means the one who so loved me that he left his heaven for me. And he was crucified and died in that unspeakable agony for me. And he will come and say, my brother, I left heaven for you.

I died for you. And you didn't want to obey me. You didn't accept my cross to crucify your flesh.

You didn't want my cross to separate you from those sins that were dear to you. You didn't want my cross to separate you with the world. I died on that cross for you.

But you are not faithful to me. The one who judges me is the Lord. The one who loved me and died for me.

And as he will look through me, as Paul puts it to Timothy, see that you are not ashamed at the coming of Christ. What a shame that may be. So this is the second motivation, the fear of the judgment seat of Christ.

The third motivation. Now here we come to the motivation of love. It starts in verse 12 in chapter 5. We are now again, not again, commanding ourselves, but to you, giving you an occasion to be proud of us that you may have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart.

For if we are besides ourselves, it is for God. If we are of sound mind, it is for you. Four.

You see, according to the human judgment, I am mad, says Paul. Isn't that a mad person to accept to go from city to city, to be beaten with stones and with rods, and it's sheer madness to go like that and never stop and go again and again. Now you see, let me make it plain.

If I am mad, I am mad for God. If my mind is right, it is right for you. Four.

Now let me give you the why for it. For the love of Christ constrains us or puts us in a corner, puts us in a situation where we cannot choose anything else. And here is how it is explained in verse 15.

And he died for all that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and rose on their behalf. You want to understand me? Let me tell you how I understood Christ. When Christ died for me, he died for me with this purpose that I cease to live for myself and I start to live for himself.

That's what he says there. You see, the essence of sinfulness is selfishness. The essence of our going astray was that we took our lives in our own hands and we said, I want to live it as it pleases me.

The essence of being worldly is selfishness, living for your own self. And Christ's purpose to die for me was to change that, to make me totally different from all that the world is. The whole world lives for itself.

The one who understood Christ and accepted Christ ceases to live for himself and lives for Christ. And then Paul goes on and in verse 17 he says, if somebody, if a man is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things passed away.

Behold, new things have come. Now I heard so many speculations. What is a new man? What is the new creation? And you know, when people speculate, speculate, speculate, and they don't see the scripture, that's where we go wrong.

Paul has just told us what is the new thing. What are the old things that passed away? What's the new thing that is there? He told us in verse 15. 17 is the conclusion.

Therefore, it's the explanation of what went before. The whole world lives for itself. There at the cross, when I saw the love of Christ, I understood why he died for me.

And I accepted that I don't live for myself anymore, but for the one who died for me. And I am a new creation. And that's the essence of being a new creation.

A new creation, a new, totally new thing in this world is a person that ceases to live for self. The old thing, living for self, that's gone. There is a new reality.

There is something so new that is like creating a new world, a new creation of the world. It's so radical change and so absolute change. So, as you stand there before the cross of Christ and ponder again on why he died for you, listen again.

He died for me, so that I cease to live for myself. His purpose is that I live for himself. And that is the new creation.

Now, says Paul, I am mad. You see, I am mad because I live for you. I am mad because I accept to be beaten for you.

You want to know why? It is because at the cross of Christ, I had no other choice. The cross of Christ put me in that spot, in that corner where I had no other choice but to say, this is it. You died for me, I live for you.

So, that is the motivation of serving others. That is the motivation of wasting yourself so that others be saved. That is why you get mad.

According to the reason of this world, to live a life like that is madness. But you have no choice. At the cross of Christ, you got this motivation, the love of Christ.

So, you see, they were right. They said that you serve out of love. Of course, you serve out of love.

That's the heart of the cross. The love of Christ makes you have the same love now for others. And that's the new creation.

So, this is the third motivation. And there is a fourth motivation, which is tremendous. Yes, that is verse 19.

Namely, let's read verse 18, and so we have continuation. Now, all these things are for God. All these that he said so far.

For God who reconciled us to himself through Christ. But the whole story doesn't end there. He reconciled us with himself through Christ, and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

As my father sent me, so I send you. My father sent me to reconcile you with him. Now, I entrust to you the ministry of reconciliation.

You go now and bring people to God. You are the reconcilers. That is my job for you.

And then he says in verse 20, therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. As though God were entreating through us, we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. And this is the motivation, and I call it our present status.

Do you know who you are? You know what's an ambassador? An ambassador of United States of America is a person who is invested with all authority to represent United States in another country. And when that ambassador signs a paper in that country, a pact, an agreement, America is bound by that treaty because it was signed by the ambassador who represented United States of America. An ambassador of United States of America walks with dignity.

He has that status. He is not who was the ambassador in Romania recently, David Vanderbilt. He's a simple teacher in a Christian college in North Carolina.

President Reagan picked him from there, and he sent him ambassador to Romania. And there, now he is back there teaching again. Who is he? But when he was ambassador, and there was a trial of a Baptist minister in Romania, and the ambassador of United States entered the hall of the tribunal, and they all said, the ambassador of United States is here.

Can we continue the trial? We are watched by America. He was representing United States there. I was trying to lift my own people there in Romania, and I was saying this way, don't you understand that you are a child of the King of Kings? You are a prince of the King of Kings.

When you walk on the street of this city, the King of Kings walks here. Walk with the dignity of a prince. We are ambassadors sent with full authority of God.

You are aware of your status, and you go with that dignity. So here we are with the four great motivations. The first motivation is that you got a glimpse of the glory, and you live for that glory, and you know that all that you sacrifice here, all that you give up here, just makes you more worthy of that glory.

It just qualifies you more for that glory. The second motivation is that you have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and you don't want to be ashamed there. You want that verdict, well done, good servant.

The third motivation is that at the cross, the love of Christ transformed you and made you live for others, not for your own self. And the fourth one, you are sent by God. You go out from here as an ambassador sent by God, and all heaven is backing you.

The mighty power of God is backing you. The Holy Spirit is backing you. Your unity with Christ is backing you.

Everything is backing you when you go and you speak with other people, as you break through into their darkness of their minds with the gospel of Jesus Christ. You are an ambassador. You know your status, and that makes you go with daring and with dignity.

This is the plan of God with us. My purpose was to give you a panorama of all God's plans and purposes with us and all his dealings with us. Now, here is what I told you at the beginning.

There are all these harvests, the harvest of us going to bring in the sheets, to bring the lost souls to God. And then there is the harvest at the end of the age, when the angels will separate people, and then it's the

harvest in heaven. And I told you that if we look at the harvest in heaven, then we can understand our position as harvesters here.

Isn't it clear now? We can understand our life in such a new light. When it comes to this issue of accepting suffering and hardship, we know now. He is testing us.

When we see that he is saying, give me this, give me that, give me that, we know now he is testing us. And that testing will have a bearing on our position there. Do we give him everything that he gave us? When he gives us riches, do we give them back to him, or we just keep them? And in every area we know now, he is testing us, and at the same time he is making us.

Step by step, he is developing us into new beings. Now, I don't like to speculate, but just in conclusion, I want to tell you what Jonathan Edwards, one of the greatest theologians America ever had, said about degrees of rewards in heaven. He strongly believed that there are degrees of punishment in hell, as there are degrees of rewards in heaven.

And he tried to make sense of it all, and he put it this way. You are like cups. As you obey God, you grow in capacity.

Now, just stop a minute there. Don't you remember whenever you did something wrong and you disobeyed God, and you knew you didn't please God with that? Don't you remember something in you shrunk? You felt that you were little, you were smaller than before. But don't you remember when you gave with generosity, when you obeyed God, you felt that you grew? You see, your capacity, your spiritual dimensions grow as you obey, and as you sacrifice, and as you serve, and you grow.

So in his paper, Jonathan Edwards designed smaller cups and bigger and bigger and bigger cups. And he says, when we all go to heaven, God will just fill us to the brim, each one of us. Now, the smaller cup cannot complain to say, why didn't you give me more? Why didn't you give me as much as you gave to the other cup? Well, because that's the dimension you brought here.

I filled you to your capacity, but that capacity is developed here. But I conclude with this. You remember what I said in the morning? He gives us all the grace that we need for it.

He gives us the fullness of the Holy Spirit for it. And he gives us the unity with Jesus Christ, so that the life of the vine throbs in the branch. And we bear fruit, his fruit, because it is his life.

So that is why when we go up there, we'll say, I take the crown you give me and put it at your feet. Because I am not worthy. You are worthy.

You gave me everything. I only did my job, my duty. And even here, my only passion is to serve you for all eternity.

Let's bow our hands. O God, Holy God, O Father, Holy Father, it's so great. Only a God could conceive this greatness.

You have such a glorious plan with our lives. You aim so high with us. All this universe to be ours.

And your plan to put us in charge over all your possessions. O Lord, you imprinted your image in us. You put your seed in us.

You put your nature in us. You put your Holy Spirit in us. You united your Son with us.

You flooded us with grace and with power in order to submit, to obey, to do everything according to your commandments. Put in us that desire. We want to be like Jesus.

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