

Eternal Happiness Awaits Those Who Practice The Word

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Shalom,

Normally, loving parents do their very best to bring up their children for the sake of the children's future. Every family has its own way of raising its children. The family rules may be harsh and firm but they are all corrective measures meant to discipline the children, rather than making them live in misery.

In the Bible, we read a parable of a loving father with two sons. One day, the younger came up to see his father claiming for the share of the estate that fell to him. The father then divided his property between his two sons.

What did the younger son do next? A couple of days later, he sold all his property and travelled long distances. He lived high off the hog satisfying his lustful desires. When famine struck the country where he stayed, he was down and out since he had no possessions left. Having no means of living, he had no choice but to work in the fields feeding swine. He was so starving that he wanted to eat the husks that the swine were eating, but no one gave him any.

In the end, he came to his senses and realized that there was plenty of food to spare at home while he was dying of hunger in that country. He bitterly regretted having sinned against the Heavenly Father and his own father. Feeling unworthy to be called a son, he took on the position of his father's hired worker. He then made up his mind to go back to his father's home (Luke 15: 11-19). Who moved his heart to do so? The Holy Spirit did because he had confessed his sin.

In the meantime, the elder son lived with his father. But, was he better off than his younger brother? It turned out that his heart was overwhelmed with jealousy when he found out the way how his father treated his younger brother (vv. 28-30). It is crystal clear that no one is righteous for all have sinned (Romans 3: 10, 23). How about our positions as children in respect our Heavenly Father according to Ephesians 2?

□ We were once dead in our transgressions and sins, indulging the desires of the flesh and evil mind (Ephesians 2: 1-3).

If the father in the parable could show his mercy to his younger son, how much more can our Father in heaven. He loved man in such a way that he prepared their needs and facilities before he created them. He let them freely eat fruit from every tree except the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2: 16-17). Sadly, Adam and Eve gave in to the desires of their flesh and mind misled by the persuasion of the serpent. As a result, they rebelled against God and were consequently expelled from the Garden of Eden. Nevertheless, God's love for them did not change. In fact, He made garments from animal skin and clothed them (Genesis 3: 21). They were forced to leave the Garden of Eden so as not to eat the fruit of life that would cost them eternal death in sins.

What happened to Adam and Eve, being way far from the Father? The farther from Him, the better their lives? Did they find any solution without God the Father? In reality, they fell deeper and deeper in sin, indulging the desires of their flesh and mind. It is evident that every inclination of human thoughts was merely evil from time to time (Genesis 6:5).

Seeing the wickedness of humankind, God regretted and planned to wipe them from the face of the earth, but Noah found His favor (vv. 6-8). God used Noah to proclaim the truth (2 Peter 2: 5), but people at the time turned a deaf ear to his message. Instead of repenting, they ended up dying in the flood except Noah and his family

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(Genesis 7: 23).

From age to age, men have been living in sin, committing sin time and again (Ephesians 2: 1-2). Like in the days of Noah, they are eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage (Luke 17: 26-30).

The reality is that God knew that men would rebel against Him, but His love for them remains the same and look for a solution to rescue them.

□ God is rich in grace / mercy because He principally loves us (Ephesians 2: 4-7). Please notice the difference between mercy and love. When we see an old, disabled beggar at the stoplights, for example, we give him some money to show our mercy. Then we skip it. But if we do it out of love, we will be concerned about his future. Our Father in heaven not only gives the wicked and the lost a hand but also provides a place for them in heaven where He lives. In a word, He wants to live with us.

How much does He love us? God knows that men will be thrown into the lake of fire to pay off their sins (Revelation 20: 15). He figured out a solution that was incredibly difficult for Him to do. But that was the one and only way to save mankind. He saw His Son, Jesus, who was always with Him and had never left Him since He created the world. Jesus always pleased His Father (Proverb 8: 22-30).

On the one hand, God loved His only Son and wanted His Son to be on His side under His protection. On the other hand, He realized the fact that His Son delighted in humans (v. 31). Then God the Father decided to set mankind free from His wrath. He gave up His Son who was willing to bear God's punishment of His own free will (John 3: 16).

God knew that His Son would be horribly wounded and that His whole body would be crushed beyond description. Really, His physical agony was unbearably painful, but following this tragedy, His will see His descendants enjoy long life, meaning that there is hope (Isaiah 53: 10).

Jesus was righteous but was given over because of our transgressions and was raised for the sake of our justification (Romans 4: 25). His death powerfully crushed sin once and for all and we turn to the light (Isaiah 53: 11-12). In this way, we are blameless before God since He sees the Ark (the church) no more but the Seat of Mercy (Jesus) instead.

If God the Father is pleased to be close to His Son and Jesus is delighted to draw near to mankind, do we feel happy to have an intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father? Do we enjoy listening to His Word, worshipping and praying (communicating with Him)?

Indeed, Jesus made His Father happy because He obeyed all His Father's commands. He became a servant (Doulos) who had no rights by any means but responsibilities. To top it off, he was willing to die on the cross (Philippians 2: 6-8). He is the matchless key model of humility. In His obedience as a man, He suffered beyond words and lost His life, bearing the condemnation of sins. On the third day, He rose from the dead to defeat the rulers of the air and death alike. The truth is that His death was not a loss but proclaimed His victory instead.

Knowing that we once rebelled against God and lived way far from Him, we should have the same attitude that Jesus did (Philippians 2: 5) and obey to please God the Father after He has made us alive.

Living in exile on the island of Patmos, the Apostle John was overflowed with joy when he wrote a memoir of his private experience with the Lord. He rejoiced at the point when he was practicing the Word of God, rather than hearing it only (Revelation 1: 2-3).

Admittedly, when we are practicing the Word of God, the "flesh" is protesting and screaming out of pain due to the multiple restrictions: Do not lie; Do not corrupt; Do not cheat on your wife, etc. However, do not stand still there. Instead, look ahead. The rewarding happiness is awaiting you. Keep in mind that the Lord's return is just

round the corner. So, when we live out the Word of God and find ourselves “suffering” terribly, our sufferings will not last forever. He is coming soon, bringing His rewards with Him and preparing a place for us where we will share eternal happiness with Him. For this reason, who can separate us from the love of Christ? Oppression? Persecution? Hunger? Sword? No. In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us (Romans 8: 35-37).

Rest assured that Jesus died but rose again. We were all raised together with Him. Otherwise, we would be the most miserable people on earth (1 Corinthians 15: 13-22, 29). Figuratively, death and resurrection resemble water baptism. It is not washing off the dirt from the body, but a prayer for a good conscience (1 Peter 3: 21). Only “death” knows how to silence the flesh. On top of that, obedience to the Word of God justifies, sanctifies and transforms our lives day by day. Following that, we will enjoy the heavenly atmosphere here on earth.

A good conscience brings about true humility because the Word of God has been part of our lives. Aside from that, we should stay alert. Do not fail to gain victory because of those who delight in false humility, the worships of angles, visions, vain self-pride inspired by worldly thoughts and various kinds of regulations they submit themselves to (Colossians 2: 18-23).

True, that church regulations are required for the sake of discipline but are not supposed to get the upper hand over the Word of God. We are not to worship angels or pastors (Revelation

19:10). If we live in obedience to the Father, we will obey the government and its regulations without question.

What do we do to keep fake humility away? Having been made alive with Christ, we must seek and think about the things above where Jesus is (Colossians 3: 1-3).

Let's train ourselves in godliness (1 Timothy 4: 7-8) and take great delight in reading the Word of God. And someday, we will live in happiness together with Him for eternity. If we live close to Him, we are not easily deceived by those hypocrites who do not live out the Word.

□ Because of grace we were saved by faith instead of our efforts or own work (Ephesians 2: 8-10). It is obvious that we had no share whatsoever in our salvation. That we were raised from the dead and are more than conquerors is simply a matter of God's grace grounded on love.

How unspeakably happy we will be, if we practice what the Word of God says. We are not only dead to transgressions and sins, but also alive (raised from the dead), overflowing with humility as our conscience has been sanctified. Our lives have no more room for pride or arrogance even a bit because we realize that all things come from Him, through Him and for Him. To Him be the glory forever and ever (Romans 11: 36). Amen.