



Promises, Not Promises
Part 5 – Heaven for Everyone vs Heaven is for Those that Receive Christ
Shay Robbins

We're talking about an awesome topic. We saved it for the last because it's important. It may be the most important topic that we cover in this entire series, which is *Heaven is for Everyone vs Heaven is for Those that Receive Christ*. Big topic of conversation that became real to us last spring on Easter Sunday... At the time, we were living in a cabin and five of our kids were living downstairs in one big room. So, we've got mattresses across the room. It makes for a really fun tuck-in time as you can imagine.

One of the cool things about having multiple kids in a room is that the spiritual conversations stir up. In fact, when one kid has spiritual momentum in their life, the other kids get the benefit from it. We had a big conversation that started, and kids started asking really big questions, really big, considering they were between three and nine years old at the time. They were asking about heaven and hell. They were asking about why good things happen to bad people. If God is loving, how can someone get to hell and be punished forever. I mean huge questions.

Another question that came up is, "How do you know who is going to heaven?" I told them about Revelation. There is a book that's called the Lamb's Book of Life and it sits in the Throne Room of God. If your name is in the Lamb's Book of Life, it means that you'll be a part of heaven and there with God for eternity, and if it's not, you'll be separated from him for eternity. My six-year-old son looks up at me and says, "Daddy, is my name in the Lamb's Book of Life?" Of course, my heart as a parent just palpitates when he asks that.

I'm going to ask you guys a really important question that we're going to answer here today. In fact, that question is right up here and it's this: If someone asks you how to get to heave, what would you say? I love asking this question as I'm getting to know people because you learn so much about them when they answer this question.

I want everyone to grab the note card and the pencil that you were handed on the way in here. If you didn't get one, throw your hand up in the air. We want everybody to participate in this little exercise we're going to do together. We're going to take some time this morning and I want you to write down your answer to that question. If somebody asks you, "How do I get to heaven?", what would you say? How does that work? I want you to write down your answer, and we're going to talk about it throughout the service.

Knowing how serious this question is, I asked some theologians that I know quite well to see what their response was. We have a video for you. [video plays children with their answers]

We have varying degrees of theological understanding in our home, clearly. For those of you who are visiting or new, the Robbins' family has six kids, but it feels like eight because we were given one extraordinary child who counts as three. We call her Six, Seven, Eight. You could probably guess which one she is. By the way, if somebody pulls up to you in an RV and says, "Get in, we're going to heaven," I would not do it.

We're going to jump in and talk about the things that God did not promise first. Our goal today is gospel clarity. We want to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, with 100% accuracy, how we get to heaven. This is really important because if your theological understanding is just slightly off, it's way off. A great example is Jehovah's Witnesses. They have the same Bible as you for the most part. They have changed just a few of the words and sentences from the original language. I don't know the percentage, but I would guess it's a couple percentage points of what's been changed in that Bible. But as a result, they worship a false God because their theological understanding has been slightly perverted. That's why it's so important that we are having the conversation we're having today so that together, as a church family, we know, with precision, the gospel messages.

God did NOT promise: There are many paths to heaven. There are a lot of religions out there that preach that there are many gods, many ways to heaven. One of the churches that you'll see in the United States is the Universal Church. Their belief is that there are many paths to find your way to God. According to the scripture, we know that isn't true. Exodus 20 states this, **3 "You shall have no other gods before me."** That's the first of the 10 Commandments, and God establishes it right off the bat. There are all kinds of God's that people can worship and elevate above the one true God. But God makes the statement, "You shall have no other gods before me, the one true God."

In the New Testament, Jesus states it plainly in John 14, **6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me."** So, while many people will tell you there are many paths to get to heaven, Jesus states clearly there is only one way, one path to find your way into right relationship with God and it is through Jesus. If Jesus was a door, he would be the only door that you could walk through to spend eternity in heaven with God.

God did NOT promise: God's goodness prevents him from punishing eternally. This is a hard one. I think it's a legitimate struggle, something that you need to wrestle through. You know, those big questions like, "Why does God let bad things happen to good people?" "How can a good God punish for an eternity for a mistake that they made in this lifetime?" The reality is that many times, when we consider our goodness, we look at all the people around us and we find people that are worse than us. When we do that, it elevates us, and it gives us a self-righteousness to where we can ask these kinds of questions.

If we want to understand who God is, we have to understand him in his wholeness, all of his qualities. In Psalm 33, it says this, **5 He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.** You see those three qualities of righteousness, justice, and love all being tied up in who God is. You can't remove the nature of his justice or else you change the God that you're worshipping.

Romans 6 says, ***23 For the wages of sin is death...*** In other words, we have a personal responsibility. It's not an earthly one; it's a heavenly responsibility that we have to answer for the sin and rebellion in our life. Scripture says clearly that there is a cost for that sin. ***...but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

God did NOT promise: You can earn your way to haven by being a good person. Here's another one that is hard. I have to be honest with you. If you struggle with this, I understand. But according to the scripture, there's no way that you can be good enough.

I think about the nobility and honor of our soldiers who serve our country and die on the battlefield. They don't get a free pass into heaven because of their service. The same goes for the mom who takes in foster kids for a lifetime. It's an incredibly noble pursuit, but that momma has to answer for her sin like everyone else. It's the same for the one who lives for social justice and commits their life to great causes and gives themselves away for a lifetime. That does not earn a way into the good graces of God; it is an impossibility.

The scripture puts it this way in Romans 3, ***23 ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*** This is good for Christians to take ownership of because one of the issues the secular world has with Christianity is they feel that we are pointing our fingers at them and judging them for all the wrong things that they're doing. I think there is probably a very small percentage of Christians that are doing that. The reality is that first of all, a good leader leads with a limp. We first need to recognize and take ownership of the fact... I am messed up. I have made massive mistakes in my life and I continue to do so. In fact, the sin that you wrestle with is no more shameful than the sin that I wrestle with. We're all on a level playing field because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. It is a great equalizer. Joe says it this way, "The ground is level at the cross."

Isaiah 64 says, ***6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*** So, when we look around at other people who are a bigger mess than we are, it makes us feel good about ourselves. Frankly, that gives us an improper view of our own sin. Rather, what we need to do is to look at God in his holiness, in his courtroom. When we stand before him, I promise you we will know, we will understand the depravity of our sin. Only with that understanding can we take ownership of a proper perspective of how much we need God.

God did NOT promise: Most people will go to heaven. That's another thing that's hard. I have so many friends that have no interest in a relationship with God and they are some of the most amazing people. I love them, I enjoy being around them, they are fun, they add to society. Part of me wants that. I want them to be in heaven, but the scripture tells us that most people will not go to heaven.

Here's what Jesus says in Matthew 7, ***13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."*** When Jesus teaches the parable of the sower, he talks about a sower who is casting seed. He casts seed on four different kinds of soil. There is only one kind of soil where the seed was able to land and take root to grow up and produce fruit. It was

the soil that was free of thorns and thistles and being trampled down and birds coming in and gobbling them up. There was one soil or one heart condition that was fertile enough to receive that seed and to produce fruit. We don't hold that 25% of people that hear the gospel are going to heaven. All we know is that according to that parable in this passage and Jesus' teaching, we understand that there are few that find their way into relationship with God. Wide is the path to destruction.

God did NOT promise: My "fire insurance" will get me into heaven. You'll hear this phrase... and I was a sucker for this. I grew up in a Christian home. As a little guy, I accepted Christ and very quickly thereafter, fell off the wagon and lived a destructive lifestyle for a long time. My parents and I look back and just wonder what would have happened to me if I had died when I was 18 years old or 20 years old. Where would I have gone? We really believe that there was fruit visible after the time when I accepted Christ and that if I would have died, then I would have been saved, but I don't know for sure. To be frank with you, I wouldn't want to take the chance.

But I know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, when I was 23, I made a radical commitment that I was ready to follow Jesus with my whole heart. From that day forward, my life has been completely different. This thought process that I can manipulate or trick God... In other words, "Yeah, I believe that Jesus is real, I believe that he's the Son of God, and when I die, I'll go to heaven. But until then, I'm going to live wild and wooly and I'm going to do whatever I want because I'm good to go because I believe in Jesus." That is a very scary way to live life. You're gambling with your eternity.

Here's what the scripture says James 2, ***18 But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.*** James is making a teaching point based off the genuine nature of faith. Jesus said, "You'll know my disciples by their fruit." James is saying that if you say you have faith, it should be backed up with your works, that they would show to us the genuine nature of your faith.

I'm going to say something that will rattle your cage, and I'm going to make sure you have a very clear understanding. You can make the statement all day long that you believe in Jesus and still go to hell. Did y'all hear me on that? Let me give ample clarification. James said, "The demons also believe, and they shudder." In other words, Satan and his demonic army know that Jesus is the Son of God. They know that, but they haven't placed their faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Do y'all see the difference? That's what fire insurance is.

This passage is from Matthew 7. This will speak to it a little bit more and then I'll give an illustration. Jesus does some extensive teaching on the genuine nature of faith. This is an excerpt, but I would recommend that everybody in here gets very familiar with the entire chapter because the context brings it to life. ***21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"***

It's like your saying, "I'm very passionate about my health," and waking up each day and eating six donuts, drinking soda all day, and never exercising. Is that a genuine health nut? No, it's a fake, isn't it?

By the way, this is kind of a funny aside. Whenever I get my outline together, I always send it early in the week to Katie and Ted. They'll give feedback and I'll make some adjustments based off their feedback. The last point in Ted's feedback was he wanted to make sure that I wasn't making any absolute statements about people living healthy and not being able to eat donuts. I responded to him, "I would never!" This is already a heavy enough message, is it not? I mean heaven and hell is enough. Enjoy your donuts in moderation. Another way to put it for the Ozarks is it's like a cedar tree claiming to be an apple tree. If a cedar tree tells you that they are an apple tree, are they an apple tree? No. Here's the point: God will test the genuine nature of your faith. We can't trick him with our mouth service. So, it's important to make sure that not only do I have a head connection, but I also have a heart connection, and we know that out of the heart a man speaks and he acts.

God did NOT promise: Being religious will get me into heaven. In Matthew 23, Jesus was speaking directly to some very religious, very impressive people. **27 "Woe to you...** Woe is like, *I feel bad for you. This is not good; this is horrible news. ...scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.* I want to be clear. If you were baptized as a baby, that does not get you into heaven. If you were raised in a Christian home, that does not get you into heaven. When you fill out a census and you check mark Christian, that does not get you into heaven. If you go to church every single day of your life, that does not get you into heaven. Should we talk about what gets you into heaven?

God DID promise: Saved by grace alone. Grace is a gift – receiving something that you don't deserve. It's like when you were a kid waking up on Christmas morning and going down to the tree. All those gifts that sat underneath, was there anything you did to earn them? No. They were a gift because somebody wanted to say, "I love you."

Romans 5:8 puts it beautifully. **8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** A gift. The way I like to picture this in my head to have a proper perspective is I like to picture myself in a holy courtroom, standing before the supreme court justice of the cosmos, before God himself. And standing in that holy courtroom, knowing full well that I am guilty and his judgment upon me because of my sin and my guilt is eternal separation from him. If I choose to rebel from him for a lifetime, I'll be allowed to rebel from him and be away from him for eternity.

Standing there under the weight of that condemnation and that judgement, knowing that I am dead in my tracks wrong, there stands an advocate, Jesus Christ, His Son, offering to step in my place and receive the due punishment, all of it. To take on the punishment of my sin that it might be paid in full and done once and for all that I might walk away a free man. That's what grace is.

God DID promise: By faith alone. Here's how it works. Ephesians 2 says, **8 For by grace...** It's a gift. **...you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.** Saved by grace alone, through faith alone and watch this...

God DID promise: In Christ alone. I've quoted it probably three times already and I'll say it again. John 14: 6 - ***Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."*** There is one door into relationship with God. By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone we enter back into relationship with God and get to spend eternity with him. Here's how we accept that gift. Romans 10: ***9 ...that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved...*** Watch this. It's not just a head commitment; it's a head and a heart commitment. ***10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*** The two have to be packaged together. That is how we enter into the grace of God and receive the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

God DID promise: All who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Romans 10, ***13 ...for "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."*** What that tells me is there's nobody out here that's exempt. There's nothing that you could do, nothing that you have done that can stand in the way of the power of God on your behalf. He died for prostitutes, rapists, child molesters, the worst of the worst. He has offered a way for those who are humble enough to receive that gift. All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Let's go back to that question that we asked and I'm going to ask you a follow up question. I want you to look at the card that you have. If the person who asked you that question took your advice, would they go to heaven or would they go to hell? I like to ask this question because it's a pretty disarming question because it's about somebody else. The reality is that when you answer it, it tells me what you believe.

Today, we're going to do something that we do selectively at Woodland Hills. We're going to have an old fashion altar call. The scripture says in John 3: 16, ***"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."***

I'm going to speak to two groups. We're going to stand and have an extended time of worship, which will allow for those of you who feel led to come to the altar. I'm talking to two groups. The first group is the one that is ready to take hold of Paul's charge in Romans 1: 16, ***For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.***

Perhaps you've been sitting on the sidelines in your faith. Or you've fallen away, become numb, or you've hardened your heart to God. Today, we're giving you an opportunity to stand up in boldness, being unashamed, and come down the altar and make a public profession, "I'm ready to follow Jesus with everything I've got from this day forward." If you have never been baptized, I invite you down to the front to make that public proclamation and to meet with our team.

If you are a daddy who knows in his heart that your wife has been the spiritual leader of your home... You know it, she knows it, and your kids know it. It doesn't matter how old you are. I don't care if you're 73 years old. We invite you to stand up, come down here, and make a public proclamation, "Today is the day where I take leadership in my home."

If you've come to this church for three years and you've just sat in the crowd, we invite you to come forward to make a statement that "I want to join this church. I'm going to take my faith seriously. I'm going to begin giving back." We invite you down to the altar today.

Then the second group is to those of you who were exposed today. Your understanding of how you get to heaven is inaccurate, I want to tell you if you failed the test, this is the greatest test you've ever failed because we've all failed it, but now you have the opportunity to have a correct understanding and to solidify your place in heaven for eternity. You can do that today. We invite you to the front to make a commitment to follow Jesus.

Would you stand to your feet and worship with me? And those who feel led, we ask you to come to the altar.