

## Put Your Trust in Jesus

19 Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. 21 For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. 22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, 23 that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

24 “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. 25 Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. 27 And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

28 “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. 30 By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

What will the end of the world be like? For us, it will mean especially the resurrection of the dead. Jesus tells us that some people will still be alive at the end, so that for them, those few, there will not be any death, but everyone will be changed, transformed. Every one of us who have put our faith in Jesus will also be renewed; injuries and defects will vanish as we are made perfect and whole in every way.

Those of us who will have been buried or cremated—no matter what condition our dead bodies might have—we will be released from grave or urn, and the Bible tells us that the sea will give up its dead. We will all rise from the dead.

When we die, our bodies and souls are separated from one another. At that time, our spirits and the spirits of all believers are taken to heaven. The spirits of those who rejected Christ are sent to hell. This judgment is made public in the resurrection on judgment day, but the verdict will not be changed. Once Judgment Day arrives, all of us, the risen and those people who had not yet died, will face the Lord. There is no alternative, and no one will be left behind.

You and I have nothing to fear from Judgment Day. Not about our sins, not about our worthiness, and not about our place in heaven. Jesus says: “**Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.**” And because Jesus knows that we frail and frightened human beings still have little back-of-the-mind doubts, Jesus said something more. He began those words by saying,

**“Very truly I tell you.”** Salvation comes by hearing the Gospel, and you have heard the Gospel. Salvation is certain when we believe what the Bible says about Jesus, and you believe in Jesus.

One of the reasons that we begin each service the way we do is that the words, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” are the same words that you were baptized with. It reminds you of your baptism, that we who sit here to worship together and to be fed with the Word of God together are forgiven children of God.

Jesus says: **“those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.”** Naturally we want to know about the differences between that life and that condemnation.

Hell is an actual place, although we can’t say where it is. It is outside of heaven and earth. Hell is a place of punishment for everyone who sins. It was originally set aside as the prison for the devil and those angels that fell into sin along with him, but now it is also the eternal place of punishment and torture for everyone who does not have faith in Jesus. The agonies of hell are described in the Bible in two ways, both physical and spiritual. Without meaning to sound glib in any way, I believe it is far more important to discover the way to avoid it than to explore what it would be like. It is the separation of the creature from the Creator, from God’s love and mercy. It is a place only of suffering without end. May God spare us all and all whom we love from such a destiny!

Heaven, on the other hand, is even more blessed than hell is cursed. Heaven is constant and everlasting peace in the love of God and friendship and fellowship with Jesus. In heaven, we will be united with God in the image of God, that is, in his perfect holiness and sinlessness restored to us. In heaven, we will also be united, or reunited, with one another, knowing one another just as we see Moses, Elijah and Jesus talking with one another and the apostles recognizing them within the cloud, the Glory of the Lord, on the Mount of Transfiguration. And there are other passages that describe our knowing each other in Paradise.

There is no other option between heaven and hell. Some of our Christian brothers and sisters have been led to believe in a place called Purgatory where sins are supposedly purged away, but, their church admits and acknowledges that there is no basis in the Bible for this teaching. The doctrine of Purgatory is a contradiction of what the Bible teaches about salvation, that Jesus paid the whole, entire price for our sins. Listen to what we’re taught in the Book of Hebrews, chapter 10: **“By the will of God, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest—Jesus—had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.”**

Now, if you have a loved one who believes in Purgatory but also trusts in Jesus for their salvation, should you argue about Purgatory? Who on earth, among all mankind, from our wisest pastors and scholars to our youngest infants and babies, who has a perfect understanding of every doctrine of the Bible? “For even one who is perfect among men will be regarded as nothing without the wisdom that comes from God.”<sup>a</sup> It is better to say what you believe than to attack the incorrect beliefs of anyone. By proclaiming the truth, and especially by using the sacred words of the Holy Scriptures themselves to do so, the way Martin Luther does all throughout the entire Small Catechism, will bring out the one thing that changes hearts: The Gospel of Jesus Christ, as the Lord says in our text: “**Whoever believes my word has eternal life.**” This is why he points our attention to himself, because he is the only way to heaven.

Getting to heaven is not a matter of doing enough good things or pure enough things. Getting to heaven is a matter of only one thing: Believing that Jesus did everything in our place. He lived a perfect, righteous, sinless, and God-pleasing life. He was tempted in every way, but never fell into sin even once. And Jesus also suffered the penalty for all of our sins: for all the sins of all mankind for all time and for all eternity. He suffered hell in your place. So just as you would not have to pay for your lunch if someone else came along and paid your bill, so also you have no debt to pay for your sins, because someone else came along and paid your bill, paid it in full.

The sin this passage uncovers is, in one sense, every sin, but especially the temptation of doubt and the sin of unbelief. There is a terrible temptation to say, “I appreciate the Bible, but there is just this one doctrine, or one commandment, I don’t like. Why can’t we vote on that one issue, and then everything would be good?” Some think that would make a perfect church!

But the problem with that is that if we voted on doctrine, we would vote away every doctrine. If we voted on the commandments, there would be no commandments at all. Because something I trip over isn’t going to be the same thing someone else trips over, so it would all have to go. And if we voted on Jesus having done away with all the commandments and every doctrine, we would have canceled the need for Jesus, and we would already be damned, each and every single one of us.

So we repent even of the temptation to ‘push back’ on anything the Bible says! Repentance is fear and sorrow over my sins, and it is trusting in Jesus, that he paid for all of my sins, the ones I know about, and the ones I didn’t even notice. Put your trust in Jesus who was judged in our place, and with such a friend as Jesus as our judge, we have nothing to fear of the Last Judgment when we will be called home to heaven forever. Amen.

---

<sup>a</sup> Wisdom of Solomon 9:6