

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GET TO HEAVEN?

Going to heaven can be simplified by two things Jesus said:

1. Believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God

For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

2. Remain faithful until death

And everyone will hate you because you are my followers. But the one who endures until the end will be saved. (Mark 13:13)

All the other teachings of Jesus and the Apostles about this subject can be folded into these two ideas. The commands to repent, be baptized, love our brother, bear fruit, worship, and so on are all various ways to express our faith in Christ.

And those teachings that talk about personal holiness, prayer life, perseverance, developing relationships with God and others speak to the ongoing process of remaining faithful to the Lord for a lifetime.

Of the two, faithfulness is the most difficult command to follow as the line between belief and disbelief is usually only crossed one time. So many things are trying to destroy our faithfulness.

Take note in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:18-23.

- A. Persecution for believing God's Word - vs. 21.
- B. Cares of this world - vs. 22.
- C. Jesus also mentions the allure of wealth - vs. 22.

A few more examples would be:

1. Our personal sins. Aside from persecution and the cares and pleasures of the world there is the matter of our own sinfulness that discourages us from finishing.
2. Unbelievers drawing us away. I'm not saying we shouldn't have relationships with non-Christians, that would be impossible - I'm just reminding you that those who refuse to believe and honor Christ will always be a challenge to our own faithfulness so we have to be aware of this.

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1. **A Firm Decision.** The first step in any successful enterprise is always the decision to go ahead and not quit until the end. We need to make up our minds about Christ once and for all. A good example of this is with Peter in John 6.

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Hebrews 6:11-12)

2. **A Reality Check.** Once you decide that you will be faithful, everything that would lead you away from that decision will come into your life.

"Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. "For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it. (Matthew 10:32-39)

3. **Trust In The Lord.**

Jesus has not asked us to do what is impossible. The Hebrew writer says that Jesus is "...the champion who initiates and perfects our faith." in Hebrews 12:2.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary^b and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

It's not that Jesus is just at the finish line waiting for us to arrive. He's with us every step of the way, through every obstacle, discouragement, and temptation. It is all about trusting Jesus to the end as we develop a life of faithfulness to Him.

'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.' (Revelation 2:10-11)

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21)