

## The Message in the Gospel Bracelet

In Hebrews 9:27, The Bible tells us something you all probably know, and something you may not know. It says, "Just as man is destined to die once (something you know) and after that to face judgment (something you may not know)". But there is good news! God's word teaches us that we don't need to fear either death or judgment!

In the Bible, the apostle Paul makes a remarkable statement. In Philippians 1:21 he states, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." How can there possibly be a benefit to dying? What does Paul mean when he says "to die is gain"? Paul understood an amazing truth found in God's word. And that understanding gave him great confidence that if he were to die at that moment, he would be ushered into the presence of the living God, and there he would dwell with Him forever in heaven.

What about you? Do you have the kind of confidence that Paul had? If you were to die at this moment, are you certain that you would go to heaven? The Bible describes heaven as God's dwelling (Matthew 6:9), and a place of unimaginable beauty (Revelation 21:18-21). In verse 18 we are told that the city is made of gold as pure as glass. **The first color we find in the gospel bracelet is *gold*, which represents *heaven* and the confidence each one of us can have in entering heaven when our life on earth is complete.**

Should everyone in the world have this confidence of going to heaven? Or, to put it another way, does everyone get to go to heaven? What about you? Is there anything that might be hindering you personally from entering heaven? Can we get to heaven by being good or by doing good works? Romans 3:10 tells us there is no one righteous, not even one single person! The end of Romans 3:12 states there is no one who does good, not one single person! Isaiah 64:6 reveals that we have all become like one who is unclean, and even the good we try to do is like filthy rags. Romans 3:23 states plainly, that all have sinned and fall short of God's standard. We are hopeless to stand before God based on our good efforts! **Therefore, the second color, *black*, in our bracelet represents the darkness in each one of us called *sin* that blocks our entrance into heaven and keeps us from being at peace with God.** Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death, but....

But what? If the Bible ended there, the only right solution for a just and holy God would be to judge each one of us and sentence us to hell. God would be perfectly just in judging every one of us. Since Revelation 21:27 tells us that no impure thing will ever enter heaven, how does a righteous God declare sinners like you and I worthy to enter heaven? The answer is found in the remainder of Romans 6:23. It continues by saying "but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." His love for us compelled Him to come up with the perfect solution for our sin and our judgment...a free gift! There is nothing we can do to earn or deserve it. We only need to accept it.

Hebrews 9:22 says that without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness of our sins. God himself would have to provide the perfect, sinless sacrifice willing to take the punishment you and I deserve...a sacrifice willing to shed His own righteous blood, so that we could be forgiven. **Thus, *red*, the third color in our bracelet, represents the shed *blood* of Jesus Christ.** The perfect Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice that would take away the sins of the world! (John 1:29) And if you are willing by faith alone to confess your sins to God, repent or turn away from them, and ask Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior as the only solution for your sin, He will cleanse and purify you! You will be spared the judgment of your sins and be allowed entrance into heaven! John 3:16 assures that God loves you so much that He allowed His perfect Son Jesus Christ to take your punishment and shed His own blood so that if you are willing to trust in Him, you will not be eternally judged, but be with Him in heaven forever! But, John 3:36 says, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on Him". You see Jesus Christ is not one of many options for escaping God's wrath; He is the ONLY option!

Isaiah 1:18 gives us a promise directly from the Lord. He says "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they will be like wool". His blood covered our sin. **Naturally then, the fourth color, white, represents the cleansing, purity and newness that comes from trusting in Jesus Christ as your own personal Lord and Savior and as the only solution to your sin.** Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

We might be tempted to think that is the end of the message, that there is no more need for any more colors. But if you will notice, there is one more color! **The fifth color, green, therefore represents growth.** Just as a new born baby grows physically and intellectually, God commands us to grow and mature in our new spiritual life.

How can we grow? 2 Peter 1:3 assures us that we are not left on our own! God promises that His divine power has given us everything we need for all of life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. How do we gain knowledge of Him? We begin the journey by daily reading and studying His word so that we can accurately handle His truth (2 Timothy 2:15). Gathering with and encouraging others in the family of God on a regular basis (Hebrews 10:24-25), is another essential step. Praying to God and confessing our sins, frequently, (1Thessalonians 5:16-18 and 1 John 1:9) keeps us close to Him. Finding an older and more mature Christian who is willing to mentor and teach you (Hebrews 13:7) will accelerate your maturing process. 1 Corinthians 15:33 warns us to not be misled, because bad company corrupts good character. Therefore, seeking out friends that want to grow in their faith and hanging out with them is wise (Proverbs 13:20) and helps you to remain accountable. Don't expect to grow in your faith if you hang out with those that have no desire to grow with you! God even promises us, in Ephesians 6:1-2, that it will go well with us if we honor and obey our parents. Every instruction we need to grow in our knowledge of Him is found in His love letter to us....the Bible!

Perhaps you think you have already placed your faith in Jesus Christ, I pray that is so! But God's Word encourages us in 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith: test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you-unless, of course, you fail the test? If you are not growing in your faith, if you don't desire to know God better, or desire to be with His people, or want to pray, you need to examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith. Matthew 7:21-23 describes an awful scene, Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name; and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you; away from me you evildoers!"

Did you know that it is possible to be very involved in church and doing Christian activities and not have a genuine, life-saving faith! Don't be one who has a shallow, superficial faith and ends up being denied entrance into heaven. If you haven't had a desire to grow in your walk with God, now is the time to give your life over completely to the Lord Jesus Christ! Just as Matthew 7:21-23 describes those who are shut out of the kingdom of heaven, so 1 Peter 1:5-11 describes those who will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom. Listen to what it tells us! "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is near-sighted and blind and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

May this be the reality for each one of us!