

## **The Gables – How to Get to Heaven**

### **Introduction:**

Our son was recently graduated from Liberty University in Virginia, and just started a new job. He called us last week to say he needed to get a driver's license, and asked us to please send his social security card right away, which we did. When he went to the department of motor vehicles yesterday with his Connecticut license and his social security card they turned him away. They said he didn't have enough identification. They said he also needed either his original birth certificate or a passport in order to process his application.

In the same way, a lot of people think they have what is needed to get into heaven, but will be shocked when they are turned away.

### **Dialog between Rick & Donna:**

**Rick:** Donna, who do you think will get into heaven?

**Donna:** Just about everyone will get into heaven except really bad people like murderers, adulterers, pedophiles, and thieves; people like that.

**Rick:** Interesting.

**Donna:** Other people like doctors, nurses, school teachers, missionaries, and social workers are pretty much guaranteed of getting into heaven because they spent their whole lives helping people. People like politicians, lawyers, bankers and those who work at insurance companies only have a slight chance at getting into heaven.

**Rick:** Donna, I work at an insurance company.

**Donna:** Oh, that's right.

**Rick:** Donna, you don't get into heaven just by being a good person.

**Donna:** What's wrong with being a good person?

**Rick:** Nothing is wrong with being a good person. Those are extremely honorable professions you mentioned, and I'm sure they helped a lot of people, but that's not how you get into heaven.

**Donna:** If you don't get into heaven by helping other people, then why bother?

**Rick:** What did Jesus say are the two greatest commandments?

**Donna:** To love God and to love your neighbor as yourself.

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**Rick:** Correct. Those are commandments on how we should live; they are not the means by which we get into heaven.

**Donna:** I don't get it. Doesn't the Bible say God will judge us one day?

**Rick:** Yes. Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment."

**Donna:** I thought that when you stand before God, He looks at the good things you did, and then the bad things you did, and if you did more good things than bad things he lets you into heaven.

**Rick:** That sounds nice, but it's not what the Bible says. Your past is locked in concrete and can't be changed. Nothing good you do can undo the bad you've done.

**Donna:** What does the Bible say about getting into heaven?

**Rick:** We have to realize that in God's eyes we aren't good enough to get into heaven on our own, no matter how much good we think we've done in life.

- Isaiah 64:6 says, "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."
- Romans 3:23 says, "...for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God..."

**Donna:** Well, nobody's perfect.

**Rick:** I know, but that's God's standard for getting into heaven. In Matthew 5:48 Jesus said, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

**Donna:** Then no one will ever get into heaven.

**Rick:** That's partially correct. No one can ever get into heaven *on their own*. Nothing you or I ever do on my own will ever be good enough to get us into heaven. God is perfect and holy, we are imperfect and unholy. In describing heaven, Revelation 21:27 says, "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, *but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*" [Italics mine.]

**Donna:** That's not fair. How can God have such a high standard for getting into heaven that no one can attain?

**Rick:** God knows we can't reach it on our own, but in His great love for us, he sent his son Jesus to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

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- Romans 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” So, it’s not a work that we’ve done; it’s a gift.
- Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.”

**Donna:** So, if it’s a gift, does that mean we have to receive it?

**Rick:** Yes.

**Donna:** Is that all we have to do?

**Rick:** To get into heaven, we must repent, believe and receive.

- Luke 13:3 says, “I tell you, no! But unless you **repent**, you too will all perish.” Repentance means to turn away from our sinful life and follow the path God has for us.
- 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 them.” If we believe that Jesus’ death and suffering on the cross paid the penalty for our sins, then the righteousness of Christ is transferred to our account, and our slate is wiped clean. It’s as if we’d never sinned.
- John 1:12 says, “Yet to all who did **receive** him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...” We must ask Jesus to be our Lord and Savior and receive the gift of eternal life. God doesn’t force himself on us.
- Romans 10:9 says, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”
- So, what have you learned, Donna?

**Donna:** That getting into heaven doesn’t depend on what we do, but on what Jesus did.

**Rick:** Exactly.

**Donna:** But we have to repent, believe and choose to receive God’s gift of forgiveness.

**Rick:** Yes. These verses in the hymn called *Jesus Paid it All* sum it up:

Jesus paid it all  
All to Him I owe  
Sin hath left a crimson stain  
He washed it white as snow

**Donna:** Why does God judge us if there is nothing we can do to save ourselves?

**Rick:**

- As stated in Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

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- 1 Corinthians 3:14-16 says, “If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.”
- So, God has good works for Christians to do, and a marvelous plan for our lives, but it has nothing to do with us getting into heaven. All the glory goes to God for our salvation. None of it goes to us.