

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series for Radio

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Evan A. Fry, Radio Minister
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The Sermon: GOOD OR EVIL, ACCORDING TO YOUR DESIRES

Scripture: Book of Mormon, Alma 19:76-80.

Is the meaning of the word restoration to take a thing of a natural state, and place it in an unnatural state, or to place it in a state opposite to its nature? O my son, this is not the case; but the meaning of the word restoration, is to bring back evil for evil, or carnal for carnal, or devilish for devilish; good for that which is good; righteous for that which is righteous; just for that which is just; merciful for that which is merciful; Therefore my son, see that ye are merciful unto your brethren; deal justly, judge righteously, and do good continually; and if ye do all these things, then shall ye receive your reward; Yea, ye shall have mercy restored unto you again; ye shall have justice restored unto you again; ye shall have a righteous judgment restored unto you again; And ye shall have good rewarded unto you again; for that which ye do send out shall return unto you again, and be restored, therefore the word restoration more fully condemneth the sinner, and justifieth him not at all.

The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul;
...all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.

Would you be happy in heaven if you could move in this very moment? Most people, without thinking, would answer a very loud and unqualified "Yes!" They have been taught that acceptance of Jesus guarantees entrance to heaven. Since heaven is a place of happiness, peace, joy, and bliss, it would at first glance seem reasonable to suppose that if we went to heaven, we should all inevitably and automatically be happy, and in a perpetual state of peace, joy, and bliss.

Most of us, however, do a lot of illogical, incomplete, and fuzzy thinking about heaven. Suppose that you can't get along with your wife or your husband or your next door neighbor or your pastor now. Would transferring both of you to heaven transform both of you so that all would be peace and joy and tranquility, or would your feelings for each other be pretty much on the same old basis? Would the mere fact that you were both in heaven make it impossible for you to disagree or to be irritated with each other?

Or suppose that you have a deep and firm prejudice against the people of some other race, creed, or color. If you can't stand to associate with such people now, would you be happy living next door to them in heaven, or playing a harp or singing next to them in the heavenly orchestra and choir? Or perhaps not all the people

who have "accepted Jesus" are going to be acceptable in heaven. If so, which ones?

Many people have the peculiar and illogical idea that death, or arrival in heaven, or perhaps the resurrection, is going to change basic personality and make us all over into new and completely different persons; that this change will somehow make a bad man good, an imperfect man perfect, a cantankerous man pleasant, a rebellious man obedient, an evil and filthy-minded man pure. To give an extreme example of this attitude, I once knew of a man who had been a renegade all his life. He committed a particularly revolting, unprovoked murder on a defenseless old woman. He was caught, tried, sentenced to hang for his crimes. In the death cell he called for three ministers of three different faiths. Each of the three baptized him and assured him that when the hangman's trap was sprung, his murderer's soul would enter heaven to dwell with saints, prophets, martyrs, and with Christ himself. I wonder whether he did! And if he did, did he feel at home with all the good people there, and they with him?

The resurrection of the body will be a restoration of spirit to body, and body to spirit, each in its perfect form. This restoration will come to all -- old and young, bond and free, male and female,

wicked and righteous. But note carefully and well! Restoration is not regeneration. Regeneration comes in this life, before the resurrection, through repentance, obedience, the new birth, a renouncing of evil and espousal of good, a rejection of Satan as leader, and sincere acceptance of Christ as Shepherd and Guide and Lord. Regeneration can and does change the spirit of man-- his basic personality. Regeneration is indicated and proved by a changed life, by different choices, deeds, attitudes, and activities. Death-bed repentance, if utterly and completely sincere and genuine, may be efficacious to regenerate a sinner, but he who postpones repentance until he is on his death bed indicates by his very procrastination that his will is probably still unchanged, and that he would not repent then if he could postpone it any longer. There is no scriptural promise that the process of death and resurrection will bring regeneration -- only restoration.

When body and spirit are restored to each other and reunited in the resurrection, the body will be changed. This will be a great and wonderful and marvelous change. Mortal will become immortal; corruptible will become incorruptible. There will be no more physical pain, no more sickness or disease or death of the body. The spirit will then have a perfect vehicle or tool for the implementation of its will. But what is often overlooked is the fact that the spirit will be exactly the same spirit which left the body at death! Personality is basically a matter of spirit -- not of body. Losing an arm or a leg, or sight or hearing, while it may leave emotional scars on the personality, still does not change the basic personality. The man who loses a limb, or his sight or his hearing is still the same man, subject to the same marriage vows, committed to the same contracts, owing the same bills.

It is the spirit, not the body, which is stable and continuing in an ever-changing body. The constantly shifting, changing body is simply a tool of the spirit; and a man is not a new man simply because he acquires a new tool such as a hammer or saw or shovel. He is still the same man even after he has worn out a dozen hammers. It has been said that the material of the body is completely changed every seven years; yet a man who has lived seventy years and therefore has lived in ten different bodies, is still the same man.

The resurrected person will therefore be the same person who died -- not a completely different one. As we associate with each other in the resurrected state,

we shall know and remember each other, I am sure, because we shall all be the same people or personalities which we were in this life. Only the body will be changed, from mortal to immortal. With body restored, resurrected men will have a perfect knowledge and memory. The man who died in guilt, shame, rebellion, filthiness, and sin, who all his lifetime followed the leadership of the spirit of Satan, will be the same kind of man after the resurrection, save that he will then have a perfect knowledge of what he is in contrast to what he ought to have been and might have been. He will have a perfect knowledge of the justice and righteousness of God, and of the mercy he stubbornly refused to accept in his earthly life. Because he is the kind of man he is, God can do nothing but restore him to the evil he chose in this life, or restore the evil of his own choices back unto him.

If a man has died repentant, forgiven, humble, pure, righteous, just, kind, noble, he will be restored to the same personality; he will have good restored unto him according to the choices made in this life; he will be restored unto the good which he chose to become.

In the resurrected body, although we will still be the same personalities, we will find that all the impediments, restrictions, and limitations which are placed upon us in this life by an imperfect, mortal body (which by its very nature inclines us towards sin) will be removed. If we have lived by as much of God's spirit as we could comprehend and utilize, we can then receive a fullness of that Spirit, and of eternal joy and happiness.

On the other hand, if in this life we have chosen to follow Satan, and continued rebellious to the end, we shall also be given a perfect and immortal body, but no opportunity to use or enjoy it in the presence of God and Christ. Taking with us a perfect knowledge of all our guilt and uncleanness, and of what we might have been if we had been willing, we shall be required by our own conscience to depart into outer darkness with the devil and his angels, there to remain in a state of perpetual estrangement and banishment from God, while perfect memory and guilty conscience torment us with unending thoughts of what might have been.

Restoration is not taking a personality and placing it in a condition opposite or contrary to its nature. You will be the same person on the resurrection morning that you are when your spirit leaves the body. If that great change should come to you today, what kind of person would you be?