

The Parchment

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You Can't Earn It

Have you seen Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*? This is a movie about World War II, specifically chronicling events on D-Day. On this day in 1944, the Armed Forces find out that one family has lost all their sons except one, a Private James Ryan. The Army dispatches Captain Miller (played by Tom Hanks) and a platoon of soldiers to find Private Ryan. Their hope is to return him to his grieving family.

At the end of the movie, Captain Miller has received a fatal wound. Miller's last words are directed to Private James Ryan. Having given his own life, and the lives of his platoon for Private Ryan, Miller gasps, "Earn this, earn it." What did he have to earn? Ryan had to live a good life in return for the soldiers' sacrifice.

The next scene turns to the graveside of Captain Miller about fifty years later. Private James Ryan is now a grandfather remembering what happened in 1944. He begins to cry and pleads to his wife, "Tell me I am a good man, that I lived a good life." He was not sure if he had earned it or not for the sacrifice to save him was so great.

As we look forward to Easter, we recognize that Christ's sacrifice on our behalf is even greater. It is the very demonstration and expression of God's own love for each one of us (Romans 5:6-8). God's own Son, blameless and

spotless, put Himself in harm's way as a sacrifice. In the process, He lost His own life. However, Christ was resurrected from the dead. He is alive today and His loving sacrifice continues to change lives.

Just like Private Ryan, our nature is to try to earn everything we receive. When we receive a gift, we want to do something to be worthy of what has been given us. In fact, we are skeptical when we are offered anything, for fear there are strings attached. In the case of receiving salvation, we may wonder if it is indeed a free gift. But God's love is truly different. We simply need to receive it.

Instead of God demanding for us to "earn this" great salvation, He offers for us to "receive it". The only requirement for God to save us is to receive, by faith, deliverance from our sin through the death and resurrection of Christ. Don't earn it, don't do anything for it—receive it and thank God. Then live for God, not with obligation to earn God's acceptance, but with the deep understanding that He already accepted us.

Suggested Scripture Reading for the Passion Week (3/28-4/3):

March 28—Luke 19:28-40

March 29—John 12:1-11

March 30—John 12:20-36

March 31—John 13:1-17

April 1—John 13:21-35

April 2—John 18:1-19:16

April 3—John 19:17-42