



Links Players

Heaven's Visa

Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. (Psalms 32:1, NIV).

We recently arrived at the Pensacola airport for a pilgrimage to Scotland. We handed our passports to a friendly Delta agent, who then asked, "Do you have your Visa?" I smiled politely and said, "No, we're just going to the U.K.," thinking she didn't realize we weren't headed to Africa or India.

Her reply was a stunner. "The United Kingdom now requires an Electronic Travel Authority Visa".

What? Lucky for us, we had arrived two hours early. "You've got time," she said, after showing us a website to access. "It's pretty easy."

Well, it was not easy. And as we approached an hour of trying to do it online at the airport, panic began to set in. At one point, it seemed a virtual certainty that we would not board the plane. Finally, in panic, I humbled myself and convinced the nice lady to help us. We made it through the 'pearly gates' of Pensacola's airport. Just barely.

Well, not everyone was so 'lucky'. Harris English made it to Portrush in the U.K. last month for the Open Championship. He finished second.

But his caddie was denied entry due to a drug conviction 30 years ago. Eric Larson spent ten years in prison. There was no 'forgiveness' in the U.K. Visa system for convicted felons. The 'pearly gates' of the United Kingdom had no room for mulligans.

Eric's story is a fascinating tale of a real-life Mulligan. Look up the details on Google, but the short version is that his boss, PGA Tour winner Mark Calcavecchia, never lost touch with Larson and vowed to re-hire him the day he was released from prison. Mark made good on that promise, giving his friend a huge mulligan.

Reading this modern Mulligan story took my mind to the real "Pearly Gates".

Can you imagine all the people who must show up at Heaven's Gate, like we did in Pensacola airport, with what they think is their Passport or Visa to the Kingdom of Heaven?

For most people, it is a long list of their "good deeds", followed by another even longer list of "excuses" for their sins. Modern culture tells us that surely a good God, with His main man Peter at the gate, will be impressed by the good deeds and the adequate excuses.

But the Visa into God's Kingdom is much simpler. The Bible is clear. It is not a list of good works and acceptable excuses.

It all starts with the name of Jesus. Your name is in the Lamb's Book of Life if you have confessed your sin and asked for God's forgiveness based on Jesus' death and resurrection.

The surest way to miss entry into the Kingdom of Heaven is to arrogantly believe that you don't need forgiveness.

I was a Judge for over fourteen years. I loved being merciful, but mercy was only possible for those who "Plead Guilty". Forgiveness starts with Confession.

As John reminds us all, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." (1 John 1:9). Our Visa to enter the Kingdom of Heaven is stamped with the blood-stained love of Jesus.

"Blessed is the one whose transgressions (bogeys) are forgiven, whose sins (double bogeys) are covered." (Psalms 32:1 NIV).

When asked for my Visa at Heaven's gate, I plan to sing "Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe; Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow." (1865 Hymn by Elvina Hall).

Is your Visa ready, stamped, and approved by Jesus? The Kingdom of Heaven awaits.

PRAYER: Thank you, Lord, for the Eternal Mulligan- forgiveness offered through faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Tim Philpot

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