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## In My Fathers House



Part 16 (011021AM)

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The language [1] of the Bible is bound by culture and time. Therefore, understanding the Scriptures involves more than knowing what the words mean. We need to understand those words from the perspective of the people who used them. The people God chose as His instruments--the people to whom He revealed Himself--were Hebrews living in the Near East. These people described their world and themselves in concrete terms. Their language was one of pictures, metaphors, and examples rather than ideas, definitions, and abstractions.

Where we might describe God as omniscient or omnipresent (knowing everything and present everywhere), a Hebrew preferred: "The Lord is my Shepherd."

Thus, the Bible is filled with concrete images from Hebrew culture:

- [God is our Father](#) and we are His children.
- [God is the Potter](#) and we are the clay.
- [Jesus is the Lamb](#) killed on Passover.
- [Heaven](#) is an oasis in the desert, and [hell](#) is the city sewage dump.
- The [Last Judgment](#) will be in the Eastern Gate of the heavenly Jerusalem and will include sheep and goats.

Heaven is the unbroken Presence of God forever, the unsoiled shores of Paradise, the unending enjoyment of the Living and True Almighty Lord of Heaven and Earth.

Heaven has always been the hope and focus of God's servants. In fact in the time Christ's disciples were most troubled in their hearts, Jesus comforts them with HEAVEN! And that is where we turn this morning in [John 14:1-6](#).

Jesus is all I need to get to Heaven! *Believers are TRUSTING THE WAY OF JESUS, BELIEVING THE TRUTH OF JESUS, AND LIVING THE LIFE OF JESUS.*

This morning most of us if not all would say we are HOPING FOR HEAVEN -- BUT NOT YET! Why? Because "for most [2] Christians heaven is a place they desire to reach eventually, but not until they have lived out their full days on earth. Their hopes, ambitions, and interests, contrary to what Christ taught and the early Church lived, are really bound up in the life they aspire to live in this world. Heaven is a distant and unreal destination they reluctantly expect to reach at the end of life, but it is not desired before then. To be suddenly raptured to heaven would be, for most Christians, an unwelcome interruption of their earthly plans and ambitions." The real need we have this morning is to long for Heaven! Long for our Father's House. And most of all, long for Jesus!

**WHAT IS Heaven?** Heaven is the eternal and transcendent [3] world that is the abode of God, the angels and glorified believers.

**HEAVEN: A DWELLING [4] PLACE.**

In My Father's House are many dwelling places Jesus tells us. The most frequent association with heaven is that it is the place where God dwells. God is the central inhabitant of heaven, but not its only resident. The angels live there as well, as more than a dozen verses tell us. The company of the redeemed also lives in heaven: at the end of Elijah's earthly life, God took him up to heaven by a whirlwind ([2 Kings 2:1](#)), and the book of Revelation repeatedly portrays glorified saints as inhabiting heaven. A preponderance of the Bible's pictures of heaven show it to be a crowded place. Crowd scenes along the lines of Micaiah's sight of God are common.

- [1 Kings 22:19](#) Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left.

But more than anything else, believers going to be where God is, and being invited to live with the Lord FOREVER is the grandest destination and delight of all! Jesus

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was named Emmanuel God with us, so that we could get to be with God!

- **Matthew 1:21**, 23 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."

#### HEAVEN: A REAL PLACE.

In the Bible heaven is emphatically a definite locale. To enter it is to enter a definite space. Look back at our text, note what Jesus say, " I go to prepare **a place**" (Jn 14:2-3). If we ask where this heavenly place is, the answer overwhelmingly is that it is above the earth. Vertical imagery dominates in the placing of it.

1<sup>st</sup> we find in God's Word that Heaven is a place from which God looks down to the earth:

- **Psalm 14:2** **The LORD looks down from heaven** on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.
- **Psalm 80:14** Return to us, **O God Almighty! Look down from heaven** and see! Watch over this vine,
- **Psalm 102:19** **"The LORD looked down from his sanctuary on high**, from heaven he viewed the earth,

2<sup>nd</sup> the Bible describes Heaven as the place from which Christ came down (Jn 6:33, 38, 41, 42).

- **John 6:33** For the bread of God is **he who comes down from heaven** and gives life to the world."
- **John 6:38** For **I have come down from heaven** not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 41 At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, **"I am the bread that came down** from heaven." 42 They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, **'I came down from heaven'**?"

3<sup>rd</sup> Heaven is the place to which people look up from earth

- **Deuteronomy 30:12** It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will **ascend into heaven** to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?"
- **2 Kings 2:1** When the LORD was about to **take Elijah up to heaven** in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal.
- **Luke 18:13** "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even **look up to heaven**, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

4<sup>th</sup> Heaven is the place to which Christ ascended after his earthly life

- **Acts 1:2** until the day **he was taken up to heaven**, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.
- **Acts 1:10-11** They were looking intently **up into the sky** as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here **looking into the sky**? This same Jesus, who has been **taken from you into heaven**, will come back in the same way **you have seen him go into heaven**."

The point of this vertical imagery is obvious: heaven is both remote [5] from earth, a higher and superior mode of existence, and a regal place of supreme authority. This is indicated by nearly a dozen references to God's throne being situated in heaven. This royal quality indicates both the splendor of Heaven and the authority of the God who rules the universe from heaven.

- Sometimes Heaven is the regal palace of the King of the Universe with many rooms, specifically prepared by Christ for his followers, leading us to view it as a place where **people live**. **John 14:1-3** "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.
- Sometimes heaven has the features of a celestial temple, in keeping with the worship that occurs there. **Isaiah 6:1** In the year that King Uzziah died, **I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple**. **Revelation 3:12** Him who overcomes I will make **a pillar in the temple of my God**. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is **coming down out of heaven from my God**; and I will also write on him **my new name**. **Revelation 11:19** Then **God's temple in heaven was opened**, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.
- But more than anything else, though, Heaven is a city (Rev 20-22) replete with walls, gates and streets, this testifies to us as believers being united in one place in the worship of God. But though a city, it is unlike any city we know here on Earth, for this **city also possesses the features of an earthly paradise** **Revelation 2:7** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from **the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God**. **Revelation 22:1-2** Then the angel showed me the **river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing** from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. **On each side of the river stood the tree of life**, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

#### HEAVEN: A PERMANENT PLACE.

Poets have always depended on artistic imagery when portraying heaven. Such images combine hardness of texture and brilliance of light, to suggest a realm of superior permanence, value and splendor when compared with the cyclic, vegetative world in which we live. Jewel imagery is the most prevalent type of artistic imagery.

- Ezekiel's vision in chapter one, of a heavenly level of reality is replete with such imagery—flashing fire and lightning, burnished bronze that sparkles, gleaming chrysolite, and sapphire.

- To this we can add the memorable pictures in Revelation of a sea of glass, like crystal, the appearance of God in splendor like that of jasper and carnelian, golden crowns, gates of pearl, a city of pure gold. In addition to jeweled imagery, physical light and its equivalent, glory, are recurrent in biblical images of heaven. In the heaven portrayed in Revelation, the light of the sun and moon are no longer needed, "for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb," and by the light of heaven "shall the nations walk" [Revelation 21:23-24](#) The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. [Revelation 22:5](#) There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

#### HEAVEN: A HOLY PLACE.

The purity of existence in heaven and the spiritual perfection of those who are "enrolled in heaven" ([Heb 12:23](#)) are expressed by imagery of washed robes ([Rev 7:14](#)), white garments ([Rev 3:5](#), 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13), clothing of "fine linen, bright and pure" ([Rev 19:8](#)) and chaste people who are "spotless" ([Rev 14:4-5](#)).

Daniel pictures them as shining "like the stars for ever and ever" ([Dan 12:3](#)), symbolic of permanence and glory. The book of Revelation also pictures of the redeemed receiving such things as the morning star ([Rev 2:28](#)), a white stone with a secret name written on it ([Rev 2:17](#)) and water from a fountain of life ([Rev 21:6](#)). Similarly, those who enter heaven will become pillars in the temple of God ([Rev 3:12](#)).

#### HEAVEN: AN UNIMAGINEABLE PLACE.

While not a major part of the images of heaven, beings that have never existed in human experience are included in the visions of Ezekiel and Revelation.

- Examples from Ezekiel's vision include living creatures with four faces, four wings and with soles like those of a calf's foot ([Ezek 1:6-7](#)).
- These creatures move about in a riot of motion, and something that looks like torches of fire moves among them ([Ezek 1:13](#)).
- In addition, there is a celestial chariot replete with gleaming wheels which have rims full of eyes ([Ezek 1:15-18](#)).
- To mystify us still further we read that "the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels" ([Ezek 1:21](#)).
- The book of Revelation, with its pictures of creatures with six wings "full of eyes in front and behind" ([Rev 4:6-8](#)), likewise contains the motif of strangeness.

The effect of all this is to reinforce the difference between heaven and earth and to underscore the sense of mystery surrounding heaven. And the far reaches of incomprehensibility enters: "No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" ([1 Cor 2:9](#)).

**HEAVEN: A WORSHIP FOCUSED PLACE.** Compared to the relatively plentiful descriptions of heaven as a place, the Bible gives little information about the activity that transpires there. Activity in heaven consists almost entirely of worship (e.g., [Rev 4](#); 5; 7:9-12). [Revelation 14:4](#) adds the picture of the redeemed following the Lamb wherever he goes, we also read that God will "dwell" with his people and "be with them" ([Rev 21:3](#)). There is also the transformation of our earthly experience into a different mode.

- Half of the equation is the negation or canceling out of fallen earthly experience. There will be no more hunger or thirst, no more scorching heat ([Rev 7:16](#)). God will be wipe tears away ([Rev 7:17](#); 21:4), and death, mourning and pain will vanish, "for the former things have passed away" ([Rev 21:4](#)). As part of this exclusion of evil, heaven is a protected place: "Nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood" ([Rev 21:27](#)). The sheer freedom from fallen experience is pictured by city gates that "shall never be shut by day and there shall be no night there" ([Rev 21:25](#)).
- The other half of the equation is the creation of earthly categories into something "new." The main example is the new heaven and new earth that fills the last two chapters of the Bible, as well as the image of New Jerusalem, with its suggestion of earthly reality raised to a higher level of perfection. The writer of Hebrews claims that people of faith "desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one" ([Heb 11:16](#)), and Paul declares that "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" ([Rom 8:18](#)).

#### HEAVEN: A JOYOUSLY SATISFYING PLACE.

The two dominant human responses to new life in heaven are joy and satisfaction.

- The joy of heaven's inhabitants is pictured by the scenes of praise in the book of Revelation, along with the white robed conquerors waving palm branches ([Rev 7:9](#)) and guests at a wedding supper ([Rev 19:1-9](#)).
- This is buttressed by the imagery of some of Jesus' parables, where attaining heaven is compared to attending a banquet ([Lk 14:15-24](#)) or entering into the joy of one's master ([Mt 25:21, 23](#)).
- From the perspective of life in this world, heaven is the object of human longing and the goal of human existence. The book of Hebrews employs the imagery of quest to express this reality: "These all died in faith, not having received what was promised. . . . For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland" ([Heb 11:13-14](#)).
- In addition to being the goal of a quest, heaven is the reward for earthly toil, as in Paul's picture of himself as having "finished the race" and looking forward to "the crown of righteousness" ([2 Tim 4:7-8](#)).
- So too in Peter's vision of "the chief Shepherd" conferring "the unfading crown of glory" on those who have served faithfully ([1 Pet 5:4](#)).
- There is also the glorious picture believers having come to ([Hebrews 12:22](#)) "Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly".
- Images of satisfaction emerge from the pictures in Revelation of saints being guided by a divine Shepherd to springs of living water ([Rev 7:17](#)) and having access to "the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month" ([Rev 22:2](#)).
- Heaven is also portrayed as a rest after labor: those who die in the Lord "rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them" ([Rev 14:13](#)). Similarly, "there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God," which believers "strive to enter" ([Heb 4:9-11](#)).

Author and Pastor John Piper recently said,

"The radical pursuit of joy in God may cost you your life. . . . But it will be worth it. [6]  
" The world has an inconsolable longing, which it tries to satisfy with anything but God. Scenic vacations. Sexual exploits. Ascetic rigors. Managerial excellence. Sports extravaganzas. **We have turned our back to the breathtaking beauty of God and fallen in love with our shadow.** To delight in the Light is a dangerous duty indeed. It may cost you your friends. It may cost you your reputation. It may cost you your life. But it will be worth it. Because the steadfast love of the Lord is better than life ([Psalm 63:3](#))!

#### HEAVEN IS THE PLACE TO BE.

The imagery used to portray heaven is a mingling of the familiar and the unfamiliar, the earthly and the more-than-earthly.

Heaven is a place, but not exactly like earthly places. It contains recognizable features, but the strangeness and transcendence keep alive our awareness that earthly images do not exist in the ordinary manner in heaven.

Oh, the wonders of our promised Haven, the glories of that eternal Home! But nothing will compare with the knowledge that Heaven is just the outflow of Him. In each aspect we looked at concerning that heavenly City, we see a character trait of Him, our Savior. Let us seek Him, and in the words of the song – writer so true:

"Tis heaven below, my Redeemer to know,

For He is so precious to me."

The last thing will not be the intellect of Athens, nor the luxury of Babylon, nor the power of Rome, nor the fashion of Paris, nor the commerce of New York, nor the splendor of London, but the New Jerusalem, which stands for religion and character, which shall descend out of heaven from God.

*The last thing will not be bombs, but blessings; not war, but peace; not uncertainty but confidence; not sickness but health; not weakness, but strength; not longing, but satisfaction; not sorrow, but joy; not weariness, but vigor. There's a great time coming, so let us lift up our heads and our hearts, for the day of our redemption draweth nigh.*

So what does all that mean today? Well, if the attack with anthrax graduates as the new media warns into a second strike with small pox and deadly plagues swiftly spreading indiscriminately leaving the infected and dying in its wake – Heaven can be very comforting.

Martin Rinkart was a pastor at Eilenberg, Saxony during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Because Eilenberg was a walled city, it became a severely overcrowded refuge for political and military fugitives from far and near. As a result, the entire city suffered from famine and disease. In 1637 a great pestilence swept through the area, resulting in the death of some eight thousand persons, including Rinkart's wife. At that time he was 41, widowed and the only minister in Eilenberg because the others had either died or fled. Rinkart alone conducted the burial services for 4480 people, sometimes as many as 40 or 50 a day!

From that horror comes one of the great hymns we possess as Christ's church – "Now thank we all our God". We may well ask why all this dramatic experience and difficulty is not reflected in Rinkart's hymn. Had the good pastor seen so much stark tragedy that he had become insensitive to human needs and problems? Of course not. He simply had come to believe that God's providence is always good, no matter how much we are tempted to doubt it.

One of the Christian's favorite, often-quoted Bible verses is Romans 8.28 (*Living Letters*):

"And we know that all that happens to us is working for our good if we love God, and if we are fitting into His plans."

Do we really believe this assurance? In our testimonies and prayers, and even in some of the songs we sing, we seem to enjoy talking about our little troubles and difficulties, multiplying and magnifying them. We almost sound at times like "spiritual hypochondriacs!"

In the unclear world of tomorrow, it is entirely possible that we may experience great difficulty, persecution, and even war and death. Christians should prepare themselves and their families for this possibility, so that if and when it comes, we might face it in spiritual victory, giving testimony that ours is a faith that works. It may help us to know Martin Rinkart's experience and his hymn, which confirms these words of the Apostle Paul:

What can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or hardship, Can persecution, hunger, nakedness, peril, or the sword? "We are being done to death for thy sake all day long," as Scripture says; "we have been treated like sheep for slaughter" -and yet, in spite of all, overwhelming victory is ours through him who loved us. For I am convinced that there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in heights or depths - nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8.35-39, *New English Bible*).

Hymn #556 Martin Rinkart (1586-1649)

Now thank we all our God

With heart and hands and voices,

Who wondrous things hath done,

In whom His world rejoices;

Who, from our mother's arms,

Hath blessed us on our way

With countless gifts of love,

And still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God

Through all our life be near us,

With ever joyful hearts

And blessed peace to cheer us;

And keep us in His grace,

And guide us when perplexed,

And free us from all ills

In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God

The Father now be given,

The Son, and Him who reigns

With them in highest heaven,

The one eternal God,

Whom earth and heaven adore;

For thus it was, is now,

And shall be evermore.

Heaven has always been the hope and focus of God's servants. The writer of Hebrews explains that the saints died

- **Hebrews 11:8-16** By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.
- 13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

The dimensions [7] of Heaven or as John describes it – the Heavenly New Jerusalem are given as a cube, fifteen hundred miles square. "And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal" ([Revelation 21:16](#)).

Just to picture this amazing city of New Jerusalem, if we laid this city on top of Tulsa as the center, it would stretch westward to Flagstaff, eastward to Charlotte, northward to Minneapolis, and southward to Brownsville – upwards for 1500 miles.

Just for comparison, there is enough room in the Heavenly New Jerusalem for all 6 billion humans alive to have a space equivalent to 1000 twin tower WTCs! Yes God has made a wonderful place full of rooms, but so few want to go there and stay with Him! Instead most are heading away from the Palace of God and are surging toward the garbage dump of the Universe Jesus called Gehenna.

So if we believe what Jesus promised, heaven will be composed of 396,000 stories (at twenty feet per story) each having an area as big as one half the size of the United States! Divide that into separate condominiums, and you have plenty of room for all who have been redeemed by God since the beginning of time. The Old Testament saints-Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-they will be there. Then we think of the New Testament apostles and all the redeemed throughout two thousand years of church history-heaven will be the home for all of them. Unfortunately, however, the majority of the world's population will likely not be there. Heaven, as Christ explained, is a special place for special people.

D. L. Moody at death caught a glimpse [8] of heaven. Awakening from sleep he said,

"Earth recedes, Heaven opens before me. If this is death, it is sweet! There is no valley here. God is calling me and I must go!"

Just before John Bunyan died, he said, "Weep not for me, but for yourselves. I go to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will through the mediation of His blessed Son receive me though a sinner; there we shall meet to sing the new song and remain everlastingly happy, world without end."

**MAKING SURE** Here is a prayer you can pray, a prayer that expresses your desire to transfer your trust to Christ alone for your eternal salvation. This prayer can be the link that will connect you to God. And if you pray it in faith, God will receive you.

Dear God,

I know that I am a sinner and there is nothing that I can do to save myself. I confess my complete helplessness to forgive my own sin or to work my way to heaven. At this moment I trust Christ alone as the One who bore my sin when He died on the cross. I believe that He did all that ever will be necessary for me to stand in your holy presence. I thank you that Christ was raised from the dead as a guarantee of my own resurrection. As best as I can, I now transfer: my trust to Him. I am grateful that He has promised to receive me despite my many sins and failures. Father, I take you at your word. I thank you that I can face death now that you are my Savior. Thank you for the assurance that you will walk with me though the deep valley.

Thank You for hearing this prayer.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.

**THE MATERIALS OF THE CITY** First, there is a wall with twelve foundation stones that encompasses the city. As for the foundation stones on which the wall is built, each is adorned with a different kind of precious stone-the list is in [1 Kings 21:19-20](#). The jewels roughly parallel the twelve stones in the breastplate of the high priest ([Exodus 28:17-20](#)). The height of the wall is given as seventy-two yards, not very high in comparison to the massive size of the city, but high enough, however, to provide security and to make sure that it is accessible only through proper entrances. Second, we notice the twelve gates, each a single pearl ([Revelation 21:12-21](#)).

OUR NEW OCCUPATION:

1. **The Worship of God** ([1 Kings 8:27](#), [Revelation 4:5](#), [Revelation 19:5-6](#)). If we want to prepare for Our final destination, we should begin to worship God here on earth. Our arrival in heaven will only be a continuation of what we have already begun. Praise is the language of heaven and the language of the faithful on earth.
2. **Service to the Lord** ([Revelation 22:3-4](#), [Matthew 4:10](#), [Luke 2:37](#), [Acts 24:14](#)),

OUR NEW FAMILY ([Mark 3:33-35](#)). John lists in Revelation 7, 21, and 22 many different experiences and realities known on earth that will be *absent* there. No More Sea ([21:1](#)); No More Death ([21:4](#)); No More Sorrow ([21:4](#)); No More Crying ([7:17](#); [21:4](#)); No More Pain ([21:4](#)), No Temple ([21:22](#)); No More Sun or Moon ([7:16](#); [21:23](#); [22:5](#)); No Abominations ([21:27](#)); No More Hunger, Thirst, or Heat ([7:16](#)).

THE FAITH [9] THAT SAVES - ([Hebrews 11:1](#)). That word *assurance* can also mean confidence. Faith, then, is a *conviction*, a sense of assurance that something is true. And if we are convinced of the right things, we will be saved. ([1 John 5:9-13](#)).

1. **A Faith Directed to Christ Alone** ([Romans 10:9-10](#)). Let me say it once more: *If you are persuaded that Christ did all that is necessary and all that ever will be necessary to bring you to God, you not only will be saved but know it!* ([1 Timothy 1:12](#), [Romans 10:17](#)).
2. **A Faith Confirmed by the Holy Spirit** ([Romans 8:16-17](#)),
3. **A Faith That Bears Spiritual Fruit**, ([Ephesians 2:10](#)),
4. **A Faith That Grows;**

The door to rewards by pursuing WHAT CHRIST [10] IS LOOKING FOR

- **Loving Trials:** which is the Joyful Acceptance of Injustice ([Matthew 5:11-12](#), [1 Peter 2:19](#)); [Matthew 5:11-12](#) "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. [1 Peter 2:19](#) For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.
- **Loving Sacrifice:** which is Financial Generosity ([Matthew 6:19-21](#)); [Matthew 6:19-21](#) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal: 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- **Loving Strangers:** which is Biblical Hospitality ([Matthew 10:40-41](#), [Matthew 18:5](#));
- **Loving to restrain our flesh:** which is seeking the Spiritual Disciplines ([Matthew 6:5](#)) *We are rewarded by the person whose praise we seek: prayer, fasting, scripture memory and so on.* [Matthew 6:5](#) "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.
- **Loving our lot in life:** which is Faithfulness in Our Vocation Put yourself in a time machine and go back two thousand years and imagine that you are one of the 60 million slaves in the roman Empire. You have no rights, no chance for a promotion, no court of appeals. To such, Paul wrote that they should serve their masters and they would serve Christ ([Colossians 3:22-24](#), [Philippians 2:8-9](#), [1 Peter 5:6](#)); [Colossians 3:22-24](#) Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. 23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. [Philippians 2:8-9](#) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and

became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 1 Peter 5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

- Loving the Unlovable: which is Christlike (Luke 6:27-28); Luke 6:27-28 "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.
- Loving the Truth: which is Doctrinal Integrity (2 John 1-2,4,8); 2 John 1 To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, 2 because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: 4 I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. 8 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.
- Loving Ministry: which is Investment in People (1 Thessalonians 2:19, 1 Corinthians 3:6-8); 1 Thessalonians 2:19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? 1 Corinthians 3:6-8 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.
- Loving Jesus: which is Watching for Christ's Return (Luke 12:35-38, 2 Timothy 4:7); Luke 12:35-38 "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; 36 and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. 38 And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. 2 Timothy 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.
- Loving Refinement: which is Acceptance of Suffering (1 Peter 1:7, Hebrews 6:10. 1 Peter 1:7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, Hebrews 6:10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Upon hearing of the assassination of John and Betty Stamm in China in 1934, Will Houghton, former president of Moody Bible Institute, wrote these words: *So this is life. This world with its pleasures, struggles and tears, a smile, a frown, a sigh, friendship so true and love of kin and neighbor? Sometimes it is hard to live-always to die! The world moves on so rapidly for the living; the forms of those who disappear are replaced, and each one dreams that he will be enduring. How soon that one becomes the missing face! Help me to know the value of these hours. Help me the folly of all waste to see. Help me to trust the Christ who bore my sorrows and thus to yield for life or death to Thee.*

Matthew Henry Might Reflect Her Feelings Best:

Would You Like To Know Where I Am

I Am At Home In My Father's House

In The Mansion Prepared For Me Here.

I Am Where I Want To Be -- No Longer On The Stormy Sea,

But In God's Safe, Quiet Harbor.

My Sowing Time Is Done And I Am Reaping;

My Joy Is The Joy Of The Harvest..

Would You Like To Know How It Is With Me?

I Am Made Perfect In Holiness.

Grace Is Swallowed Up In Glory.

Would You Like To Know What I Am Doing?

I See God, Not As Through A Glass Darkly, But Face To Face

I Am Engaged In The Sweet Enjoyment

Of My Precious Redeemer.

I Am Singing Hallelujahs To Him Who Sits Upon The Throne

And I Am Constantly Praising Him.

Would You Like To Know What Blessed Company I Keep?

It Is Better Than The Best Of Earth.

Here Are The Holy Angels And The Spirits Of Just

Men Made Perfect.

I Am With Many Of My Old Acquaintances

With Whom I Worked And Prayed

And Have Come Here Before Me.

Lastly, Would You Like To Know How Long This

Will Continue?

It Is A Dawn That Never Fades.

After Millions And Millions Of Ages,

It Will Be As Fresh As It Is Now.

Therefore, Weep Not For Me!

JESUS ASSURES US THAT DEATH FOR HIS CHILDREN IS ONLY A TRANSFER TO PERMANENT HOUSING

- [John 14:2-3](#) In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.
- [2 Corinthians 5:6-8](#) Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 We live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.
- [Genesis 5:24](#) Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

JESUS ASSURES US THAT DEATH FOR HIS CHILDREN IS ONLY A Good Grief

[1 Corinthians 15:55](#)

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

I for one would like to have dying grace long before I need it! But the famous English preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon says that death is the last enemy to be destroyed, and we should leave him to the last. He adds:

*Brother, you do not want dying grace till dying moments. What would be the good of dying grace while you are yet alive? A boat will only be needful when you reach a river. Ask for living grace, and glorify Christ thereby, and then you shall have dying grace when the time comes. Your enemy is going to be destroyed but not today. ...Leave the final shock of arms till the last adversary advances, and meanwhile hold your place in the conflict. God will in due time help you to overcome your last enemy, but meanwhile see to it that you overcome the world, the flesh and the devil.*

([Psalm 73:24](#));

When Corrie ten Boom was a girl, her first experience with death came after visiting the home of a neighbor who had just died. When she thought of the fact that her parents would die someday, her father comforted her by asking,

"When I go to Amsterdam, when do I give you your ticket?" "Just before we get on the train." "Exactly. Just so your heavenly Father will give you exactly what you need when we die-He'll give it to you just when you need it."

Dying grace does not mean that we will be free from sorrow, whether at our own impending death or the death of someone we love. Some Christians have mistakenly thought that grief demonstrates a lack of faith. Thus they have felt it necessary to maintain strength rather than deal honestly with a painful loss. ([Hebrews 5:7](#));

As Christians, we live with the tension between what is "already ours" and the "not yet" of our experience. Paul said believers should look forward to Christ's return "that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope" ([1 Thessalonians 4:13](#)). Grief was expected, but it is different from the grief of the world. There is a difference between tears of hope and tears of hopelessness.

([Romans 12:15](#)), Donald Grey Barnhouse, on the way home from the funeral of his first wife, was trying to think of some way of comforting his children. Just then a huge moving van passed by their car and its shadow swept over them. Instantly, Barnhouse asked, "Children, would you rather be run over by a truck or by its shadow?" The children replied, "Of course we'd prefer the shadow!" To which Barnhouse replied, "Two thousand years ago the truck of death ran over the Lord Jesus. ..now only the shadow of death can run over us!", [Psalm 23:4](#), Death is the chariot our heavenly Father sends to bring us to Himself.

Finally, is Jesus yours?

Jesus is all we need. He is our Good Shepherd [11], so we need no longer fear the outcome of our battle with evil. Christ has conquered! We have conquered! And we will conquer!

1. **Have you come to Christ for salvation? If you are empty, call out to Christ.** Do not let yourself go through another day without coming to him. Be born again, receive life, be filled, be delivered, and join the victory parade! If you are spiritually dead—without resurrection life—under sin—under guilt—empty, Christ invites you to come to him: Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. ([Isaiah 55:1, 2](#)) **The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"** And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. ([Revelation 22:17](#))



2. **DO YOU look only to Christ for satisfaction?** Cultivate human relationships, but do not look for ultimate fulfillment in them because they will disappoint you. Energetically pursue your career, but do not imagine that you will find transcending fulfillment in it. In Christ we have everything. May our prayer be: I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. ([Philippians 3:10](#))

3. **ARE YOU KEEPING filled with Christ's spirit?** Our lives can be victorious. Jesus has been there before us; He has met the worst Satan can give and has been victorious. The most important factor in victorious Christian living is to be filled with the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit ([Romans 8:9](#)). Christ is the victor over temptation and sin. His very words to us are, "[T]ake heart! I have overcome the world" ([John 16:33](#)). When Martin Luther was asked how he overcame the Devil, he replied, "Well, when he comes knocking upon the door of my heart, and asks 'Who lives here?' the dear Lord Jesus goes to the door and says, 'Martin Luther used to live here, but he has moved out. Now I live here.'" When Christ fills our lives, Satan has no entrance. In response to each of the three temptations, Christ answered with Scripture ([Deuteronomy 8:3](#), [6:16](#), and [6:13](#)). He knew the truth of, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" ([Psalm 119:11](#)). Why is this so? God's Word reveals God's mind, and God's mind cannot be subject to sin. Therefore, if we fill our hearts with his Word, sin and temptation cannot dominate.

Back in January [12] of 1956, five young missionaries were speared to death in the jungles of Ecuador. The offenders have now become Christians and have told Steve Saint, the son of one of the martyrs, that they heard and saw what they now believe to be angels while the killings were taking place. A woman hiding at a distance also saw these beings above the trees and didn't know what kind of music it was until she heard a Christian choir on records.

YOUR PERSONALITY [13] CONTINUES: We are accustomed to talk about the differences there will be when we make our transition from earth to heaven. But there are some similarities too. Given the fact that our personalities continue, we can expect continuity. Heaven is the earthly life of the believer glorified and perfected.

1. **Personal Knowledge Continues** ([1 Corinthians 13:12](#)),

2. **Personal Love Continues**, I like what Chet Bitterman said after his missionary son was killed by guerrillas. "We have eight children. And they all are living: one's in heaven and seven are on earth." ([Romans 8:18](#)),

3. **Personal Feelings Continue** ([Psalm 16:11](#), [Revelation 7:17](#); 21: 4, [Revelation 6:9-10](#));

4. **Personal Activities Continue** We are, says Maclaren, saplings here, but we shall be transported into our heavenly soil to grow in God's light. Here our abilities are in blossom; there they shall burst forth with fruits of greater beauty. Our death is but the passing from one degree of loving service to another; the difference is like that of the unborn child and the one who has entered into the experiences of a new life. Our love for God will continue, but awakened with new purity and purposefulness. The famous Puritan writer Jonathan Edwards believed that the saints in heaven would begin by contemplating God's providential care of the church on earth and then move on to other aspects of the divine plan, and thus "the ideas of the saints shall increase to eternity." The "real you" will be there.

**THE INTERMEDIATE STATE** ([2 Corinthians 5:1](#), [Revelation 6:9-10](#)), *Believers go directly into the presence of Christ at death. They are conscious and in command of all of their faculties.*

**THE RESURRECTION BODY** ([1 Corinthians 15:42-44](#)),

- First, *we are sown a perishable body, but we will be raised imperishable.* Like a seed sown in the ground, there is continuity between the acorn and the tree, between the kernel and the stalk. Not every particle that ever was a part of you has to be raised, and God just might add additional material to make up the deficiencies. In heaven, no one will comment on your age or notice that the years are beginning to take their toll. You will look as young a billion years from now as you will a thousand years from now. As Dr. Hinson wrote: *I The stars shall give for a million years, A million years and a day. But God and I will live and love when the stars have passed away.*
- Second, we are sown in dishonor; but raised in power. When a body is transported to a funeral home it is always covered by a sheet to shield gaping eyes from the ignominy of looking upon the corpse. Every dead body is a reminder of our dishonor, a reminder that we are but frail. But we shall be raised in power.
- Third, we are sown in weakness, but raised in strength. The resurrection body is not subject to material forces. Remember how Christ came through closed doors after the resurrection. Keep in mind that the reason the angel rolled the stone from the tomb was not to let Christ out, but to let the disciples in!

Finally, we are sown a natural body, but we are raised a spiritual body. To say that we will have a "spiritual body" does not mean that we will just be spirits. Christ's glorified body was so human that He invited the disciples to touch Him and affirmed, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" ([Luke 24:39](#)). There will be continuity with a difference. Our future body will be like Christ's resurrection body. "We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" ([1 John 3:2](#)). Just think of the implications. [Revelation 19:7](#).

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[1] Ray Vander Laan, *That The World May Know: Set 4 Leaders Guide for Faith Lessons 19-27*, Colorado Springs, CO: Focus On The Family, 1997, p. 2.

[2] HUNT, HOW CLOSE ARE WE?, p. 320.

[3] Adapted, drawn, and quoted from Ryken, Leland; Wilhoit, James C.; Longman III, Tremper, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press)

2000, c1998.

[4] The epithet "God of heaven" is recurrent in the OT (e.g., [Gen 24:7](#); [2 Chron 36:23](#); [Neh 2:4](#)). In Isaiah's vision of heaven the train of God fills the space ([Is 6:1](#)). In the parallel passage in Ezekiel the vision of what the prophet sees "above the firmament" is likewise dominated by the figure of God ([Ezek 1:26-28](#)). Throughout the heavenly visions of Revelation the presence of God and Christ is a constant reference point for what happens in heaven. Heaven is nothing less than the "holy and glorious habitation" of God ([Is 63:15](#) RSV; cf. [Deut 26:15](#)). At the top of the ladder joining heaven and earth in Jacob's vision stands God ([Gen 28:13](#)). When the dying Stephen gazes into heaven, he sees God and Christ ([Acts 7:55-56](#)).

[5] The sheer separateness of heaven from earth is suggested by some passages. When the writer of Ecclesiastes lays down the principle that "God is in heaven, and you upon earth" ([Eccles 5:2](#) RSV), the point is that heaven is a different level of reality than earth is. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus speaks of "a great chasm" fixed between heaven and hell, that "none may cross from there to us" ([Lk 16:26](#) RSV), reinforcing the sense of heaven as having its own space.

[6] Drawn from John Piper, *The Dangerous Duty of Delight: The Glorified God and the Satisfied Soul*.

[7] Paraphrased from portions of Erwin W. Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1997, 81-95.

[8] Erwin W. Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1997, 141-143.

[9] Erwin W. Lutzer, *How You Can Be Sure That You Will Spend Eternity With God*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1996, p. 112-121.

[10] Erwin W. Lutzer, *Your Eternal Reward*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1998, 87-100.

[11] Adapted, paraphrased and quoted from Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Colossians and Philemon—The Supremacy of Christ*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.

[12] Steve Saint, "Did They Have to Die" *Christianity Today*, 16 September 1996, 26.

[13] Erwin W. Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1997, 62-67.

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