

COMFORT FOR THE GRAVE

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By Pastor Jeff Wright

To II Corinthians, and chapter 5. Sing, I think I could do that the rest of the day. Well God's good isn't He?

Let's read together in II Corinthians, chapter 5, starting with verse 1, and we're going to read down through verse 9. Are you ready? As soon as I hear all the pages stopped turning, I'll go ahead and start. So flip those fingers, amen? Let's go ahead and read now.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle

were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. If so be that being found clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Wherefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him."

Let's pray. "Father, I thank you for your Word, and for the anointing of the Holy Spirit, for His teaching ministry in our lives. I thank you for setting an angel on each side of me, by your Holy Ghost, to speak unto my heart the things that you want said today, in just the way that you want them said. And I thank you for doing the same for the people Lord, and you will cause these words to be a springboard of revelation in their lives, so all of us will receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation, and the knowledge of yourself, and will know what is the hope of your calling, will know what are the riches of the glory of your inheritance in the saints, and will know what is the exceeding greatness of your power toward us who believe. I thank you Lord that we're filled with the knowledge of your will

in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

Say that out loud together with me. "Thank you Lord, we are filled with the knowledge of your will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, according to your Word in the name of Jesus. Amen."

I want to say just a couple of things about this passage and then we're going to move on to another one. It compares our bodies here to tents, doesn't it? In verse 1 it says, "If we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." So there it compares our bodies to houses. So we see it compared to clothes, and then to, or to tents, and now to houses, and then to clothing.

Now verse 3 also mentions clothing again. "If so be that being clothed." So it compares our bodies to tents, houses and clothing.

Now verse 4 says, "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." Another translation reads, "That mortality might be swallowed up in a sea of life." Praise God. Jesus blood is a sea of life that has flowed into this world. In fact, Jesus took death on Himself on the cross, and swallowed it up in the sea of His immortality in the sea of His victory, praise God. In His resurrection victory. He took it in Himself, and swallowed up, and

destroyed it by doing that.

Now verse 5 says, "Now he that hath wrought for us the selfsame thing is God, who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." Now that same word "earnest" is used elsewhere in the New Testament. I believe it's in Philippians or Colossians, and it refers to the same meaning that we have in a real estate transaction, where they talk about earnest money. And we all know that earnest money is a promissory deposit that is put down to initiate a real estate transaction, isn't it? Everybody familiar with earnest money? That means that you're sincere and have a significant interest in going on with this transaction, that you're really interested. And so they make you put some money down, and if you back out of it later, then you lose the money. So the money says that you definitely intend to go through with this thing, do you see that?

Well God definitely intends to resurrect our bodies, and clothe us with immortality. And as an earnest deposit on that He has put His own Spirit inside of us. So every time we speak in tongues, that thing comes out and is activated, and reminds us that just as surely as we can speak in other tongues, so surely shall we be clothed upon with immortal bodies that never grow old or never die. Speak in tongues for me right now. Stop. That's just how sure you can be that your immortal incorruptible body that never grows old and never dies, never gets gray is coming. It's just that certain. Do it again. Stop. Just that certain, amen? Alright?

Let's move on now to I Thessalonians, and chapter 4. Yea,

I better do that right now, this is a good place for that though. I Thessalonians, chapter 4, and I'd like you to read verses 13 through 18 out loud together with me. Are you ready? I Thessalonians 4, verses 13 through 18. I'll wait till all the pages stop, because it's important that we read these things out loud together right now. Let's go ahead and start reading now.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

There are a lot of things you can say when a person passes away. We recently had the lady that was in charge of our communion department pass away last Friday, and there are a lot of things that could be said. But the Word of God says that "comfort is in these words." Amen? Well we know the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, so we could say the Holy Spirit is in these words. He will not be in the words that will cause you to sorrow, like verse 13 says, "Even as others which have no hope."

Those words will not comfort, they don't have the Holy Spirit in them. These words though carry comfort in them, just like we said last week, God's healing scriptures carry healing power in them. Just like freight cars can carry coal inside of them. And when they get to the depository stop, and the crane scoops out the coal and dumps it and uses it then, that's similar to when we speak God's Word, it releases the healing power from the healing scriptures. And when we speak these scriptures, it releases the comforting power from these comforting scriptures, amen? So it's important for us today to be speaking these scriptures.

Now if you'll notice verse 13 uses the word "asleep" for those that are dead, do you see that? Verse 14 also uses the word "sleep" for those that are dead, do you see that? And verse 15 also uses the word "asleep" for those that are dead, do you see that? So three times in three verses he refers to people who have died as being asleep. From God's perspective they are not dead, they are asleep. Well what's the difference between death and sleep? Well death is permanent and never changes in our eyes. Right? But sleep is temporary. And just as surely as you go to sleep, so you wake up. If you don't wake up, then it wasn't sleep. But if you go to sleep you always wake up, praise God.

Now, since the Bible calls death sleep, we can claim the same scriptures that bless our sleep for death. Does that make sense? Well let's think about some of those, turn to Psalm, chapter 4 with me please. We're saying that since the Bible calls death sleep, we can claim the sleep blessing scriptures for

death. Psalm, chapter 4 and verse 8. Read that out loud together with me, as soon as we get everybody there, praise God. Psalm, chapter 4 and verse 8. Put another finger on Proverbs, chapter 3, and verse 24. Psalm 4, Proverbs 3. Let's read Psalm 4 and verse 8 right now out loud together please.

"I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou Lord only makest me dwell in safety." So if you apply that to death, you have a promise there for a peaceful death, don't you? In peace and sleep, in peace to die, a peaceful death. Praise God.

Proverbs, chapter 3 now, let's look at that one. And verse 24, Proverbs 3:24. Incidentally, if you have children, or yourself having problems with nightmares, to where your sleep is being disturbed, these scriptures have the power in them, when spoken to stop that, so that your sleep will be peaceful, if you will speak these things. In fact, on our nightly Bible vaccine you'll recognize this verse here as one that we had the children say every night, to make sure that they don't wake you up in the middle of the night with some dumb dream, right? Alright.

Verse 24 of Proverbs 3, let's read that out loud together now. "When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet."

Well since the Bible calls death sleep, we could say your death shall be sweet. And of course, that lines up with another passage in Scripture where it says that "precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of His saints." And that's Psalm, chapter 116 and verse 15. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the

death of His saints."

God gave me that passage when my own father passed away about two years ago. And verse 9 was the one I saw, it said, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living."

"Well," I said, "That's great, does that mean he's going to live?"

Well then I went on up here and found another scripture that says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

You see, from God's perspective, people that go to heaven are more alive than those of us that get to stay on the earth. He calls this place, "The valley of the shadow of death." The land of the living refers to heaven. That's where there is nothing but eternal resurrection Zoe life. So much of it it just radiates, there's never any night there, there is so much light inside of that city. Praise God.

So the land of the living then is heaven. Now, we have a portion of that, we have like it said, "an earnest deposit" of that in our lives right now, and it's coming to the earth, to where this place will be just as full of life as heaven is now. And "as He is so are we in this world." But this world is not as He is. I wish it was, it's getting there, and we won't stop until we see that perfection come. "This mortal shall be clothed with immortality. This corruptible shall put on incorruption, death shall be totally swallowed up in victory." Just as Jesus own death on the cross was swallowed up by His resurrection, praise God? Well this whole world, the death in it is planning



to be crucified, and at that point the death will be killed.

I like what Fred Price says, he put it in the little book that he gave out to all the people that came up for healing at his convention last June. He said, "When Jesus took the stripes, 'By His stripes you were healed,' sickness and disease was laid on His body. And then when His body was put on the cross, nailed to the cross, and then pierced through with the sword, and killed, the sickness and the disease that had been laid on His body died at that point also. Sickness was crucified in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Poverty was crucified in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Depression was crucified in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rejection was crucified in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Boy if you want to, go home and fix those crucifixes that some of you have had hanging around in your homes in years past. Take the Man off, and instead put unpaid bills up there, and just hammer a nail right through them. Poverty crucified, lack crucified in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen? Take a pill bottle. If you were so bad off physically that you were constantly taking medicine, put a pill bottle up there and just put a nail right through it, and leave it on that cross, as a reminder of the victory that we have in Christ Jesus. That's something that will make you happy, amen? Seeing that Guy up there suffering, does not ordinarily illicit happiness in me. But when I realize that in Him, I was delivered from all the bad things this world has to offer. And all the bad things this world has to offer were crucified in His body for me. Praise

God? Does that give you some good ideas? Some of you are going to go home and put your check books up there, and just put a nail right through them. No, you better not do that, you might need it. Amen?

...a blessing in your life, praise God, let me get this up here. Alright, let's move on then now.

We've seen then that we can claim scriptures from God's Word for our death to be peaceful, like God wants it to be. Amen. Let me read this to you. "From God's perspective sleep is an accurate description of a temporary period of inactivity, not a permanent period of inactivity. Our resurrection is just as sure as the fact that we woke up today." Did you wake up today? Check the person next to you, and make sure that they woke up today, will you? Make sure they haven't reverted during this service, praise God. Are they awake? Are you awake?

Well, you can be just as sure of Jesus waking you up from the sleep of death, amen? How many remember the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty? Prince Charming comes in, kisses her, she's awake. Well, Jesus is our Prince Charming, amen? And our death is just like the sleep that she went through, it's coming to an end, and Jesus with a kiss brings it, changes it for the better. Praise God, brings us out of that death, out of that sleep, into eternal everlasting life, and we've got that on the inside of us now.

We're all on a conveyor belt in this world. We have mortal bodies, which means death doomed. Romans, chapter 8, verse 11 says, "Now if the same spirit that raised Christ from

the dead dwells in you, it will also quicken your mortal body by His Spirit that dwells in you." It will quicken your mortal bodies. Your bodies are death doomed. It doesn't mean on the day of resurrection, you see. Because your bodies won't be dead on the day of resurrection, they'll be alive after they've they've been resurrected. It will quicken mortal bodies, it will quicken bodies that are death doomed. Your body won't be death doomed on the day of resurrection, your body will be resurrected. Death eliminated on the day of resurrection. It will quicken your mortal body, it will quicken your body right now while it still needs quickening, praise God?

Alright, but let's think about it this way. We're on a conveyor belt leading to the grave. You know, back in I John where it talks about the three problems that people have. It talks about the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. The pride of life normally manifests primarily in young people who think they will never grow old, and that life goes on forever. And then about age 30, when their hair starts to change color, they go through a period of depression when they realize that they do not make very good gods, because they are changing. In the natural we're all changing. We're all on that conveyor belt leading to the grave.

For the world, the grave is a trap door to hell, but for the Christian, the grave is nothing more than a royal entrance with trumpets blowing into heaven, praise God? Through golden arches decorated with all manner of precious stones. Hallelujah. Death has lost it's sting for the Christian. Praise God.

Let's look at some other passages along those same lines. Now, I want you to write these down, because all of you have family members that are getting older. And when family members pass away, especially if you've been very close to them, it can be very emotionally upsetting to you, very hurt. It can hurt very much inside.

Now we talked about this earlier, that if you will speak the comfort scriptures, it will release God's comfort power into your heart, to erase that hurt, or to make it much, much less than it was. Otherwise, that grief can come on you and just overwhelm you, and leave you in a puddle of tears. Some people have even had spirits of grief come on them, or it's become a stronghold in their lives, to where they're tormented by it for months and months, and years and years.

One woman came up to, I believe it was Kenneth Hagin, and said, "Pray for me I still miss my husband, I just think about him all the time."

He said, "Well how long has he been dead?"

"Twenty-one years."

Boy, that's a spirit of grief. That's satan taking advantage of a natural situation, and creating a stronghold that's not natural. It is natural to grieve some, sure, sure you hurt, sure you miss the person. Actually you're more sorry for yourself than you are for them, because if they're a Christian they're better off than they were here, especially if they were old and sick, amen?

But when that thing becomes a stronghold, to where it

becomes an obsession, to where you think about it all the time, and it tortures your mind. Well then that's a demon taking advantage or a natural situation and making it unnatural, and you need to get deliverance from that. If you can't get it by yourself, come for prayer, and we'll cast that thing out of you and break it's power. But here's one way you can combat it, and keep it from coming back, because you all know once demons are cast out, they will try to come back. Jesus said they would, and He said they would try to bring seven other spirits even worse with them. But if your house is filled up with the Word, when they try to come back, they smash against the Word, and fall off, and can't come back in. So you can fill up your heart with the Word to keep satan and his troops from trooping back into your heart.

So these scriptures are the ones that you can use. And I'd like you to look now at II Samuel, chapter 12. In II Samuel, chapter 12, David describes his infant son who had been born out of his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. How many know that the wages of sin is death? This one knows it, praise God. (laughter) And it comes from the devil, he delivers the wages of sin, God delivers the wages of obedience. Actually it's called in Romans, in that same passage, "the free gift of obedience in Christ Jesus our Lord."

But because of David's sin he had opened the door to the devil, to where the devil was able to kill this infant child. Now, we can't say that that's the case, that that is how - we can't blame every tragedy on that. I'm sure not going to blame it on God though, I am going to blame every tragedy ont he devil.

But we cannot always say that every tragedy that happens to us is because we did a sin, you know, and it's like you plug it into the computer, and it produces X amount of trouble down the road. That's not exactly right. But yet we do recognize that Proverbs says in chapter 26, verse 1, that the curse causeless shall not come. But hey, we live in a world that has a curse on it, and sometimes we run into that curse even when we haven't done things to open the door to the devil. But sometimes we do do things that open the door to the devil, and that's what David had done in this case, have I made that clear? In other words, every time tragedy comes, you don't say, and you sure don't judge people and say, "This bad thing happened to them because they must have done so and so, or they must have been in sin." Well, that's not necessarily true. Sometimes in this world, you just run into the devil even when you were doing everything you knew to do to walk in the light.

If that wasn't true then Paul wouldn't have written in the apostles - in the epistles, in the apostles - in the epistles and said to resist the devil and to give him no place. You see, we have to be vigilant toward him, even when we're doing all that we know to do.

So in this passage he had opened the door, and satan was able to then steal that child. Well of course, God's grace and mercy endures forever, and you do the best you can to get God's healing power, and give God permission to move on the scene through your obedience, so that it can overcome the destructive power of the devil that you've allowed on the scene through your

disobedience. But how many know sometimes you don't always get that trade off made in time? You do the best you can, but sometime it doesn't work out.

Well, what do you do at that point? Well here is what David did, let's look at verse 19. "But when David saw this his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead." Then David arose from the earth, washed and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord and worshipped."

Well, that sounds like a good remedy for combating grief, amen? "Changed his apparel, got washed, anointed himself, went into the house of the Lord and worshipped. Then he came to his own house, and when he had required, they set bread before him and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that you've done, for you did fast and weep for the child while it was alive, but when the child was dead you rose and ate bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive I fasted and wept; for I said, "Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?" In other words, who can tell whether I'll do enough obedience, and can make the proper steps necessary to get God's power in on the scene to overcome what I've allowed satan's power to do.

"But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him." Now that's the key verse I wanted you to get. "I shall go to him." You see that? The reason I had you turn to this, is this is a key passage I heard

Billy Graham on the Donahue Show explain this, use this passage to justify how it is that we know that infant babies don't go to hell. Because unbelievers seem to have - they've let, they come up with all these rationalizations to stand between them and God and this is one of their favorite ones. Satan gives them these mind games to play to keep them from accepting Jesus as their Lord, and one of the things they'll say is "How could I accept A God who sends babies to hell?"

Anybody ever heard things like that? And the next thing they'll say, after they say that, they'll say, "How could I accept a God who sends all the heathen in Africa to hell who have never heard about Jesus?" Isn't that the next thing they'll say? So they're letting the heathens in Africa and the infant babies keep them out of heaven. You know, it doesn't make any sense, but yet there is an answer.

Because in the book of Romans, chapter 1 it says, "That if a man will look into the stars, God will make the plan of salvation obvious to him." If a man's heart is honest, God will even send an angel. Jesus Christ Himself will appear as He has done to many Jewish people who are honestly questioning the scriptures and saying, "Is this stuff right? Is this stuff real?" Jesus Christ Himself would appear. That's always an option. Even if there is no mission there to preach. If a man's heart is in the right place, God will make sure you have an opportunity to accept Jesus as your Lord before you leave this earth.

Now in this country, we've had so many opportunities, and



we think the whole world is like this, and we've kind of gotten to where we taken them granted. But yet, if your heart is right with God, and you're honest, He'll make that opportunity for you. No matter where you are, He doesn't need modern telecommunications to get His message across. Praise God?

So here's the passage then that explains what happens to babies that die. Well what did David do? What did David say? Did David say, "I'll never be able to see him again, I'll never go to him again because he's in hell, and I know I'm going to heaven." No. He said, "I shall go to him." What does that tell us? That tells us that infant babies that die go to heaven. David said, "I shall go to him," didn't he? David had that revelation. That's the scripture that they base the whole doctrine of the age of accountability. How many have heard that term before? In other words, at a certain age, up until children reach the age of accountability, God takes them into heaven, because their spirits are still pure, and they've not made a conscious decision to rebel against Him.

Paul describes it back there in Romans and says, "But the law caused sin to kill my spirit man, and so I was dead in sin at that point in time." The law, knowledge of the law. When I found out that I'd broken God's commandments, I realized it caused my spirit man to die. I realized I was dead in sin. But up until that point, he hadn't reached the age of accountability, his spirit was pure, it was right with God, it would go on into heaven.

But once you have an opportunity to go with God and you

refuse to, well then you're into sin, and your spirit man has died, and you've become the nature of the devil, and God has no choice. But yet if you'll turn back, God's mercy endures forever He'll give you another chance, praise God? Alright.

John, chapter 3 now. In fact, Marilyn Hickey has a real interesting study on the Signs in the Stars. And she doesn't get into horoscopes, but she says, the horoscope is actually a perversion of the twelve tribes of Israel, their signs. Actually if you go look in synagogues in Israel, they have the twelve signs of what we call the Zodiac, but they were actually the trademarks of each of the twelve tribes. And I guess it was a legitimate spiritual thing the way the guides explain it there, and from the research that Marilyn Hickey has done, and I trust her to do comprehensive and scholarly research. And she found out that these signs then, that the tribes of Israel had star formations that didn't represent Zodiacs, but they represented each of their tribes, and it spelled out. They had a legend in stories that spelled out the whole plan of salvation, that talked about the seed of the woman, and crushing the head of the serpent and how God would send a redeemer and win back the human race from the bondage that it had fallen into. So it was that type of thing that is written in the stars. Anybody that's honest, God would bring that type of thing, or that's the kind of thing He used in the past.

John, chapter 3, verses 15 and 16, let's read this out loud as we release the comfort of the Holy Spirit through these scriptures on ever lasting life. Read verse 15 and 16 out loud

together with me right now. "That whosoever that believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Chapter 5, and verse 24 now. Chapter 5 of the book of John, verse 24. You should be writing these down, because as the opportunity comes up in your life, you may need to use these for yourself, or pass them on to other people that you see being overwhelmed by grief. Verse 24, let's read that out loud together now. "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself. And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming into which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice. And shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Stop right there.

Go to chapter 6 now, and verse 39 and 40. Let's read that out loud together. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me, I should lose nothing. But should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which seeth the

Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life. And I will raise him up at the last day."

Do you see that? Verse 44, let's read that out loud together. "No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Verses 47 through 51, same chapter. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Verse 53 now through 58. "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me. This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead; he that eateth of this bread shall live forever."

Say this with me, "I live forever."

Chapter 11, verse 25 and 26 now. Read with me, chapter 11 verse 25 and 26. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and

the life; he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die, believest thou this?"

Say this, "I shall never die, Jesus lives in me."

John 17, chapter 2 - chapter 27, verses 2 and 3 now. John 17, verses 2 and 3, read together with me. "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Let's stop right there and think about this. Jesus defines life right there, doesn't He? He says, "This is what life is all about, knowing the true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent." In fact, you won't know the true God except by knowing Him through Jesus Christ whom He sent. He sent Jesus Christ to represent Himself. We know God by looking at Jesus Christ. Hebrews, chapter 1, verse 3 says that Jesus was the express image of His person, which means "accurate, identical and complete." John 14 He said, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." So we know God by looking at Jesus Christ.

Now in Luke, chapter 12 Jesus said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness for a man's life consists not of the abundance of things that he possesses." You remember that passage?

I saw a bumper sticker a few months ago that said this, "Whoever dies with the most toys wins." Well death is no victory is it, in the natural? But for the Christian it's a royal entrance into heaven, so we win whether we have the most toys or

not, amen? And Jesus said, "Life consists of more than having the most toys." In fact, you can get so hung up with toys, Jesus called it the deceitfulness of riches, to where the Word is choked in your life, and the things that make life worthwhile, and it will truly make you happy aren't available to you, like the love of your children, like the love of your family, like good health, amen? Amen.

But God can give you those things that make life worthwhile. The love of your family, the love of your children, and good health, a calm sense of mind so you aren't constantly tortured by thoughts of anxiety, about losing this great pile of wealth that you think you've accumulated. Okay? What good is money if you can't enjoy it? What good is money if you're always afraid of losing it?

Well thank God for Proverbs that says, "The blessing of the Lord will make you just as rich, even more so, but add no sorrow with it." Praise God, praise God forever.

Now, we know that God is His Word, right? John 1, verse 1 says that "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God." Everybody say, "God is His Word." Say, "I can know God through His Word. If I need to know more about God, I can know that by knowing more of His Word."

Well, Proverbs, chapter 4, verse 22 says, "God's Word is life." So here Jesus said, "Life is knowing God through His Son." Proverbs 4 says that "God's Word is life." So we could say it like this, that life is knowing God's Word. Your life does not consist of possessing an abundance of things, your life

does consist of possessing an abundance of revelation knowledge about God's Word. Praise God? Because that abundance of revelation knowledge about God's Word can produce all the things that you have need of, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things that the Gentiles seek after, shall be added unto you." Amen?

I like that word "added" don't you? That indicates it's going to be incremental and progressive, it isn't all going to happen at once. This faith message is not a get rich quick scheme, is it? But it's not a fad, it's not a quicky miracle. It's a walk with God, day by day, proving yourself faithful over little so you can be made ruler over a little more. And then you prove yourself faithful over a little more, so then you're made ruler over a little more. And then you prove yourself faithful over that, to where you're made ruler over a little more, and finally you get to the point where you think back to where you started, and it's a lot compared to where you started. Amen? Then you're ruler over much compared to where you started. It's required in a steward that they be found faithful, otherwise they're fired. Alright.

Proverbs, chapter 3, verse 8 through 10 says, "I count all things as lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. I count all things as dung." Well that's a nice word for excrement which is nice word for something else that's not appropriate to use in church. "But I count all things as dung that I may win Christ." In other words, all the things of my past that I thought were so important, I count them as dung. What do you

want to do with dung? You want to get it as far away from you as soon as you possibly can. And if the past in your life has produced bondage of any kind, you need to count it as dung, get it as far away from you as soon as you possibly can, and don't go dig it up, okay? It won't smell any better the second time around. It will probably be worse. "I count all these things as dung that I may win Christ, and be found in Him," in the righteousness that is of God by faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering. Well how is He suffering today? Is He suffering today? Would you call sitting at the right hand of God, next to the throne of glory, covered over with the abundant Zoe resurrection life and light of God suffering? Totally healed, totally prosperous, never die, never get old, is that suffering? In God's presence where there is fullness of joy, all His paths are pleasantness, all His ways are peace, is that suffering?

That's how Jesus is suffering today. And "As He is, so are we in this world." So the fellowship of His sufferings today means all of our needs are met, but we're willing to pray for other people, like He is today interceding for us forever at the right hand of God. Amen? He's got all His needs met. He's got so much that He's got time now to go worry about other folk. He doesn't worry about them, that's a bad choice of words, what He does is spend His time praying for them. He's laying down His life even today, using His life to pray for other people, to see other people's needs met, and we're doing the same thing aren't we? Laying down our lives. Not dying for anybody, but living to



help Jesus come into people's lives. Jesus died once, for all forever, for all people. None of us have to do that for anybody, but we are called to pour our life into them by praying for them, and letting Jesus live through us to help meet their need, through praying for them in whatever practical way we possibly can that God wants us to. Amen? Amen, praise God.

Now Hosea, chapter 6 says, that on the third day He will revive us. "If we'll return to the Lord then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord, that His return is as certain as tomorrow's sunrise, and as certain as the fact that it will rain again." That's just how sure we are that Jesus is coming back. It said, "We will know if we follow on to know the Lord." Apparently you have to follow on, you have to keep going beyond that point of natural human endurance where you would want to quit and say, "Who cares about all this stuff?" You have to follow on, make yourself go on, follow on to know the Lord, and if you do that, then you'll have that revelation on the inside of you that it's just as certain that Jesus is coming back, as the fact that the sun came up today. Praise God? Otherwise you get like the people that Peter described that say, "Where is the promise of His coming, things continue like they've always been?" Well, no, it's He's coming back. It's just as certain as the sun that came up. It's just as certain as the fact that it will rain again on the earth, amen, Jesus is coming back. Our bodies shall be changed at that point from corruption into incorruption.

I want you to look with me at chapter 8 of Romans.

(Tape turn over)

... eternal life of God. More comfort caring scriptures that you can use to release comfort into your heart when you need it the most.

Romans, chapter 8, verses 37 and 39. Read out loud together with me, as soon as we all find it. Romans 8:37 through 39. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life," did you get that? See, it mentions death first doesn't it? Let's go on. "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come." Stop right there. Nothing in the future can come up that will keep you from what we're about to see here.

Verse 39. "Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature." Stop right there. Not even your own body. Is your body a creature? Don't you qualify as a creature? Well doesn't your body try to do some dumb things sometimes, like grow old on you? Get tired on you? Get weak on you? Get sick on you? Well mine tries to do it on me. But it says right here that no creature, not even this creature, not even this mortal death doomed body is able to separate me from the love of God. Even if it dies on me I'm still embraced by the love of God. Praise God? Amen. Read that out loud together with me, verse 39.

"Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Say this, "I'm embraced by the love of God. In His love I live and move and have my being. And even my own body cannot separate me from that love." Are you getting the message

that there is more to you than your body?

The first passage we looked at compared your body to a tent, to a house, and to clothes. Alright? So you're on the inside. The real you is the spirit man that's born again in Christ Jesus. That's you. You live in a body, just like you live in a house or a tent. And you have a soul, which consists of your mind, your emotions and your will. Everybody say, "I am a spirit, that's who I really am, born again in Christ, a new creation, I live in a body just like I live in a house. And I have a soul to use just like a personal computer, just like a photo album of my precious memories. It's my mind, my intellect, my emotions, my feelings, and my will, my decision making character."

Alright, Romans chapter 15 now. Romans 15, two verses. Verse 4 and verse 13. Powerful scriptures here. Read these out loud together with me. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Do you see that? There is patience and comfort in the scriptures. And that comfort is released when you speak them. These particular scriptures about comfort.

Now remember John 14:26 it says, "But the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost that the Father will send in My name." Calls Him a Comforter. More than anything else, the Holy Spirit wants to comfort you, praise God? He wants to in love, speak the truth. You know, Ephesians 4 says, "Speak the truth in love." Well He's a comforter, in love He wants to speak the truth. He's

even more concerned about doing it in love than He is about speaking the truth. Because the sweetness of the lips increases learning, and if you don't do it in love people won't be able to receive it. So even if it's true, doesn't matter, because they won't listen to you unless you're doing it in love. Sometimes you have to be firm, sometime there is such a thing as tough love. Amen?

The prodigal son for example, came to himself when no man gave to him. He would have eaten what the pigs had, but it said, "No man gave to him," and he got hungry, realized he wasn't going to live forever, realized he was mortal. You see, young people think they're going to live forever, that's the pride of life. Think they don't have to be responsible, or account to anybody, or try to get along. They're just gods unto themselves. Can you remember being a young person? How many young people in here that can identify with that? Well I remember having that kind of stubborn willfulness in my life, anybody else? Got any honest people in here today? Well, praise God.

But it says, the prodigal son, Luke chapter 15, that "he came to himself when no man gave to him." Meaning, that if men had given to him, it would have kept him from coming to himself. Why? Because it would have prolonged the myth that he was immortal and didn't have to be responsible for his actions, could live any old way he wanted to, just consume it all upon his own lust. Would have perpetrated that myth in his life, right? But by cutting him off - You see, the father could have sent agents to check up on him. The father was rich. Could have hired

people to go check up on him, go find him. You can do that, you can hire private investigators. They can go find out where people are, they have ways of doing that, don't they? Could have tracked him down, seen how he was, made arrangements to help him out, poor baby. Couldn't the father have done that? Did he? No. Why? It would have kept him from coming to himself. He wasn't going to be blessed until he ... took a one way trip off of fantasy island and came to himself, amen?

God doesn't want us to grow up as parasites, He wants us to grow up as responsible children of God. Being conformed into the image of Christ, becoming for ourselves like Christ is. Praise God? Not being continually dependent upon our parents for supply all the days of our life. In fact, parents are to put themselves out of a job. Get to preach last night's sermon today Carolyn, praise God, good thing I practiced it last night.

Parents are to put themselves out of a job. What do I mean by that? Well you go back to Deuteronomy chapter 6 and it says, "Diligently teach the Word to your children at every available opportunity." It says, "When you're lying down, when you sit, when you rise, as you walk by the way, every available opportunity teach the Word to your children."

And then in Proverbs, chapter 6 it says, "And children you are to teach the Word to yourself, and think about it when you're lying down, when you're rising up, when you're walking, when you're in the way." In other words, you now do with the Word what your parents were doing for you with the Word. In other words, parents you put yourself out of business, out of a job, by

getting your children to where they're looking to the Word as their father and mother. Because that's God's plan, is that eventually people quit looking to their parents as their source, because how many know that people make a lousy god, they get old and die on you. Heaven and earth pass away, but God's Word endures forever. As soon as you get your eyes off of people that can fail and change, whether they want to or not, they just do, they're just mortal, they're just people. And you've got to get your eyes on the Word that never changes, and can always provide the things that these people seem to be providing for you in the past, but actually it was the Word in their lives that was making it possible for them to provide. The fact that they'd been doers of the Word, that they'd been responsible, that they'd been accountable to other people, that they'd been a team player and gone with the flow. Amen? Amen. Yea, preach it.

Chapter 15 and verse 13 now. Verse 13 of the same chapter. "Now the God of hope." Read with me. "Fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. Let me finish John 14:26 that I started earlier. The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, the Father sends in Jesus name, "will teach you all things, and bring all the Word to your remembrance." He teaches by bringing the Word to your remembrance, and He does all of that to comfort you. The way He comforts you is by teaching you, by bringing the Word to your remembrance. He comforts you by bringing the Word to your remembrance in other words.

Well you can prompt the Holy Spirit, you can push His on button, you can put Him to work for you, by bringing the Word to your remembrance. On purpose, He'll take that opportunity to go ahead and teach you about it, and comfort you with it at the same time. So that's what we're doing right here, bringing the Word to our remembrance, it allows the Holy Ghost to bring comfort to us through His Word. Praise God.

I Corinthians, chapter 15. Of course, the whole chapter is good, I'm just going to pull out a few of the key verses. Let's read verse 54. "So when this corruptible," read with me. "Shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the same that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. Oh death where is thy sting? oh grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin." Stop right there. Did you get that? It says "the wages of sin is death." Here it says, "The sting of death is sin." How many know that some bee stings can produce death in people. It says that sin is like a bee sting that produces death. It's the initial seed, and when it brings forth, when it produces fruit, the fruit is death. That's in James, chapter 1 right over. It says that "sin, when it has conceived brings forth death." Alright?

Let's read verse 57 and verse 58, thank God there's a way out of this trap, hallelujah. "But thank be to God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not

in vain in the Lord."

Philippians, chapter 1 now. Philippians 1, starting with verse 21 through 25, let's read that out loud together. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor; yet what I shall choose I don't know." Quickie translation there. "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith."

You see, the phrase "you all" there proves that Paul was from Texas. (laughter) Okay, back the tape, no that's fine.

I wanted to point out here verse 23 it says, "I'm in a strait betwixt two." Verse 22 says, "Yet what I shall choose I don't know." Or I wot not, means I don't know. Meaning, that we apparently have some choice as to when we shall die. Paul was saying here, he could have put his will on dying, he could have prayed and said, "God take me," and it would have made a difference as to when he went. Are you with me? So sometimes, when people die it's never our business, and we don't want to put our nose in and judge them, but sometime we don't know what was going on between them and God. And we're not suppose to know, we're not God. If we need to know, He'll tell us, but otherwise it's none of our business, amen? Alright, you don't judge me, I won't judge you, we'll all go on to heaven.

I - I'm sorry we read I Thessalonians, we saw that. Look



at Hebrews, chapter 13 now. Praise God, thank you Lord. Verses 5 and 6. Hebrews 13, verses 5 and 6. Let's read that out loud together. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for he has said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Now, that relates back to Romans, chapter 8 where we said that no creature is able to separate us from the love of God that's in Christ Jesus our Lord. Not even our own creature, our own body. Well here it says, "We will not fear what man shall do unto us." We are all men, we all qualify as men, as hu-mens, right? Whether male or female, just like male or female dogs or tigers, we're male or female humans, are men, okay? We shall not fear what man, including this man, including this body. I'm not afraid of what this body is going to do to me, because the Lord never leaves me or forsakes me, even if this body flakes out on me. Praise God. Amen.

Now look at verse 5, that relates to what we just saying also earlier. "Let your conversation be without covetousness." Your life doesn't consist in possessing in abundance of things. What does your life consist of? Possessing abundance of revelation knowledge of God's Word, and that revelation is that the Lord will never leave you or forsake you, hallelujah. That's the kind of thing that will make life worth living, and cause your time on this earth to be a joy instead of a torment. Without that knowledge, your time on this earth will be a torment instead

of a joy. Okay.

Revelation, chapter 21, the last one, then we're going to cover a couple of other things quickly and close her up for today. Revelation 21. Read out loud together with me, starting with verse 1 through verse 7. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new. And He said unto me Write, for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done, I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."

You remember - stop right there, thank you. You remember Ephesians chapter 1, verses 17 through 21 says. Paul is praying that we might have the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of himself. That the eyes of our understanding would be enlightened, that we would know what is the hope of his calling, that we would know what are the inheritance of His

saints, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. What is the exceeding greatness? That we would know the exceeding greatness.

Remember a few months ago we did a study on the meaning of the word "know." Faith, knowing and believing. And we said that faith is basically speaking God's Word. Whereas believing is having a firm, inner or mental picture. And we said, knowing is an actual sensory experience. Right? So there where he's praying that you might know what is the hope of his calling, he's saying that you might actually, sensorally experience the hope of his calling. Well how can you actually, sensorally experience heaven? Well you've been doing it today with your ears hearing God's Word about heaven. God's Word that describes heaven, your senses have been experiencing heaven through this description.

You know another place you can experience heaven? Coming into a good praise and worship service, feeling the anointing of God, feeling the joy of the Lord that ripples over the whole congregation, and takes people up into clouds of glory it seems like. That's what heaven will be like. It's just a small taste of what heaven is like, praise God? The excitement, the energy, the joy that was generated by the music group as they sang praises to God, and we saw Bea ? break dancing with Jesus in heaven on the sea of glass. Amen? Well that's just a little taste of what heaven is like, it's going to be good, you'll be glad you're going. I don't want any of you to miss it, I believe none of you will, praise God. You can be sure you're going.

But another way you can experience heaven is by listening

to the descriptions. Now none of us, it's not scriptural to pray for a vision of heaven, but yet people have had visions of heaven, and we can experience heaven by listening to their descriptions of it, with our natural ears, we can experience heaven by listening to their descriptions, right?

Well listen to this one. "Dr. Maurice Rollins is a Tennessee cardiologist, and clinical professor of medicine at the University of Tennessee College of Medicine in Chattanooga. In recent years he authored a book entitled Beyond Death's Door." This is by a medical doctor. "In which he presented interviews obtained from Emergency Room patients who had actually died physically, and then were brought back to life by emergency medical treatment, and were asked to describe what they had just experienced. Dr. Rollins noted a pattern emerging, as the visions fell into two standard categories. About half of the patients described a tunnel of light leading to lush green pastures, rows of smiling relatives long since gone, and an awesome feeling of peace. But the other half of the patients described lakes of fire and brimstone, and devil like figures, and other symbols of darkness and hell. Just listening to these patients has changed my whole life he added. There is a life after death, and if I don't know where I'm going, it's not safe to die."

Well that tells me that about half the people in America aren't born again, but thank God half of them are. And you can be one of those just by making Jesus your Lord. Praise God. And thank God for water baptism. It's a dry run, I guess you can

call it a wet run practice on death itself, amen? That'S what it's suppose to be, Romans 6. You've heard the teaching on the baptism from our New Members Orientation Class. We get to practice dying when we go through the motions of dying. What Jesus is saying in water baptism is, "Death is nothing more to be afraid of then having your body lowered into a pool of water, and then brought back up again." Amen? So that you know, that you know, that you know that Christ was raised from the dead, that's a part of being born again, amen? You get to experience it yourself. This is what is was like for Jesus to be raised from the dead, when I come up out of this water.

And this is just what it's going to be like for me to be raised from the dead. Death is no more painful or fearful for a Christian than going down into a pool of water, it has no sting. Praise God.

Listen to this, "At the age of 11 Betty Baxter received a complete and instantaneous healing of several severe physical deformities, with which she had been born, including a deformed digestive tract which could not accept solid food, an enlarged heart and severely twisted limbs and spine, which left her unable to stand, walk or use her arms. She spent the first of 11 years of her life here in America confined to a pillow. Because of her enlarged heart and deformed digestive tract the doctors had not expected her to reach the age of even 11, and they were not surprised when she began to deteriorate at that age and eventually went into a coma. In that weakened, half conscious state, Betty despaired of life, and prayed that God would let her

die. As she prayed to die, she had the following experience. Thick black darkness settled about my bedside. They had never left me in a dark room alone before, there was always a light burning, and mother or daddy one was with me. I was alone in the darkness, though frightened I whispered 'Daddy, where's my Daddy, I want my Daddy.' But you'll find out as I did, at the hour of death, you may call for your Daddy but he won't answer. You may call for your mother but she won't come to you." So your parents make lousy gods don't they? They can't take you through that tunnel into heaven, but thank God Jesus can.

When your mother and father forsake you, whether they meant to or not, the Lord will take you up, and He's a much better source of love and comfort and supply than your mother and father ever hopped to be.

"You may long for your husband or your wife who has always been there, but in that hour of death there is only one who is able to go beyond the veil of death with you, and that one is the Lord Jesus Christ, and He's the only one. I looked in front of me, and just in front of me in the darkness, it looked like to me there was a long, dark, narrow looking valley. In a floating sensation it seemed I just floated inside the valley. It was worse inside the valley than outside. It was not only very, very dark, but it was so very cold, and my twisted, crooked body trembled and shivered. It was so cold that my teeth chattered, and in a scared whisper I asked myself the question, Where am I? What is this awful place? And from somewhere far, far in the distance I recognized and heard my mother's voice saying softly,

Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil because God is with me. And I said, This must be the shadow of death.

"I prayed to die and go to Jesus, and if this is the way that gets me to Jesus, I'm willing to go through that valley. But I was barely inside when the place lit up with a light, lighter than day, because where Jesus is there can be no darkness. He's the light of the world, and will light death's dark valley for the Christian. Somebody's big strong hand took mine and squeezed it. I didn't need to look, I knew it wasn't the strong hand of the doctor or my father. I knew without looking it was the nail scared hand of Jesus, who said He'd never leave me or forsake me, and He would be with me always.

"At last I came out and saw the most beautiful land I've ever seen. Separating me from this beautiful place was a wide, wide river, and the waves were tossing and rolling angrily against the shore. I looked on the other side and saw the land where those who die in Jesus go to rest and await the resurrection day. The River of Life was winding it's way through that land, because it's a land where we'll never grow old. And just across the river from me I saw a group of those that had been saved by the same Christ who saved me, dressed in garments of glowing white, they stood with arms upraised, and were singing, 'Hosanna to the King.' I looked at one, and not a single one was bent, and bowed and twisted like I was. I looked at another one and not a single one had arms that were dead, and useless, and paralyzed like mine. I looked at still another and not a one was

crying because of pain or burdens too heavy for them to bear, because God meets you and wipes away all tears from your eyes.

"I looked at them and said, In just a moment I'm going to join that heavenly band, and the moment I step across the river I'll straighten up and have a new body, and I'm going to run all over God's heaven. I was anxious to get across that river, when Jesus beside me spoke audibly, and said, 'No Betty, you're not to cross now, go back, you'll have healing, you'll be able to receive your healing in the Fall.'"

It wasn't that God was holding out on her, it's that she didn't come to a point where she could receive what He had already provided until a few months after that.

Here's another quick description I want to give to you. This is Marvin Ford's testimony of going to heaven back in the mid-'70s. This was published in the October '76 issue of Full Gospel Businessmen's Voice magazine.

"On New Years Day, 1972 in Southern California, Marvin Ford experienced dying and a vision of heaven after a massive heart attack a few days earlier. He described his experience as follows. On New Years Day my veins collapsed for the third time. I glanced at the clock on the wall near me, it was about ten minutes past two in the afternoon. Grim darkness entered my room. This had happened before when my veins had collapsed. As it spread from the left side of my bed, the light began to vanish from the right. I was aware that death and life were waging a warfare over my body. At times the light would gain, then the darkness would prevail. Suddenly all was black as night. It was



just like the Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico when tourists are taken far beneath the earth's surface and then the lights are cut off momentarily.

"I felt my spirit leave my body, like pulling the stopper out of a thermos bottle. Faster and faster my spirit traveled at an approximately 45 degree angle, until ahead of me I began to see iridescent lights beckoning me into the most beautiful city I've ever seen. It was immense."

Now why he saw a city, whereas Betty saw a pasture across a river, I don't know. But I believe they were both descriptions of heaven.

"I cannot verbalize the magnitude nor the splendor of that city."

That would be a good question to ask Jesus when you get to heaven, amen?

"All was so overwhelmingly bright. It was like flying into Los Angeles on a clear night at Christmas time, when lights of every kind are arrayed in breath taking magnificence. But this was magnified into a brilliance millions of times greater than anything this planet could produce. I saw gates of pearl, streets of gold. Not paved with gold, but a solid yet crystal clear translucent gold that you could see through. I viewed it's walls of jasper, consisting of heavenly green unlike anything I've ever seen before. I could see the marble, veins running all through it. There were colors that are indescribable, because how can you describe a color with comparison to other colors? But there is no color or comparison for some of these colors.

"Then I saw one resplendent light emanating from the center to the right of God's throne, I recognized it as being Jesus my Savior. Although I did not view Him as a corporal being, He welcomed me into His presence, and I began to worship Him."

I want to stress the dignity of worship there.

"Then a strange thing happened. My attention was attracted to the hospital, and I could see my body lying upon the bed. A white car was parked near the entrance, and a familiar person entered the building. I saw it all through those streets of gold. It was as though the hospital had no roof on it. Before that time I had not known the layout of the hospital. But later I asked, and found out that my vision had been correct."

Proverbs says that all the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord.

"I felt a tug earthward. I asked Jesus what should I do? His answer was an interrogation, 'What do you want to do?' I replied that I preferred to stay with Him, but that if He would be with me, and give me the fulfillment of a ministry I'd never attained, I would like to go back to the earth. With that my spirit returned to my body. It felt cold. I was later informed this was due to shock. I smiled at one of the nurses, and she plugged in the cord to the monitor. The doctor said I was clinically dead, and they knew that they had lost me. I had been without oxygen for more than, for at least an hour, half of an hour, to where my brain should have been damaged, but it was perfectly restored."

One last story and then we'll quit for today. "Kenneth Hagin was born in Texas in 1917, prematurely, weighing two pounds with a deformed heart. Had two serious organic heart problems. At the age of 15 he became bedfast, and five doctors agreed that as far as medical science was concerned, to their knowledge no one in his condition had ever lived past 16 years of age. His body became completely paralyzed, and doctors said he would become in time, he became partially paralyzed, and doctors said he was approaching complete paralysis.

"Sometimes three weeks would pass, he said, when I didn't know anything. My mother and grandmother fed and cared for me, for I was helpless as a baby. I reached the point where I could hardly hear them talking with me. They later told me that they would put their mouth down to my ear and shout at the top of their voices, but it seemed to me as if they were a block away. I was somewhere between reality and unreality. I gave my heart to the Lord on April 22nd, because earlier that evening my heart had stopped beating, and the spiritual man," get this, "who lives in my body had departed. When death seized my body, my grandmother, my younger brother, and my mother were sitting in the room, I had time only to tell them good by.

"Then the inner man rushed out of my body and left my body lying dead with eyes set and flesh cold. I went down, down, down until the lights of the earth faded away. I don't mean I fainted, I don't mean I was unconscious. I have proof that I was actually dead. My eyes were set, my heart had stopped beating, and my pulse had ceased. In fact my grandmother had worked with

a medical doctor, and later told me 'I had dressed many people for burial and laid them out in days gone by. I've had much experience with death, but I learned more about death in dealing with you and your experiences than I ever knew before. But as far as I knew, you were dead, just as dead as all the people I'd ever seen buried. You had no pulse, no heart beat, your eyes were set.'

"The scriptures tell us that the lost are cast out into outer darkness, and I know what that place is like. The farther down I went, the blacker it became until it was all blackness. I could not have seen my hand if it was one inch in front of my eyes. And the further down I went, the hotter and the more stifling it became. Finally, far below me I could see lights flickering on the walls of the caverns. The lights were caused by the fires of hell. There was one in the center, a giant white crested orb that pulled me, and drew me as a magnet draws metal to itself. I did not want to go, but I had no choice, it was drawing me in. I could not take my eyes off of it, the heat beat me in the face.

"Many years have gone by, yet I can see it just as clearly today as I saw it then. Still is fresh in my memory. I came to the entrance of hell. I can't describe what it looked like, I don't have anything to compare it to, but I knew I was at the entrance. I paused momentarily because I did not want to go in, I tried to pull back with everything I had in me. I sensed that one more foot and I would have been gone forever.

"When I reached the entrance there was an escort waiting

for me, a kind of a spirit being by my side. I had not looked at him, but I could not - because I could not take my gaze off the fires of hell. But when I paused he laid his hand on my arm to escort me in. At that same moment a voice spoke from far above the blackness above the earth, above the heavens. I don't know if it was the voice of God, Jesus or who. I don't see him, it wasn't in English, I didn't understand it. But when He spoke His words reverberated throughout the region of the damned, shaking it like a leaf in the wind and causing that creature to take his hand off my arm.

"I did not turn around, but a power like a suction pulled me up away from the fire, away from the heat, back into the shadows of the absorbing darkness. I continued to ascend, until I saw the lights of earth, I saw my grandparent's home where I'd been living with my mother, and went through the wall, back into my bedroom, just as real to me as it was anytime I had entered through the door to that room."

You see, my spirit needed no door, just like Jesus walked through a door after He was resurrected. Listen to this.

"I slipped back into my body as easily as a man slips into his trousers in the morning. It was a sensation similar to slipping your foot into a shoe. It was the same way in which I had gone out, through my mouth, and I began to talk to my grandmother.

This was repeated three times. Finally on the third time he began to scream out, "God, God, I belong to the church, I've been baptized in water." All he could hear was the echo of his

own voice. So finally he said, "Oh God, I come to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and ask you to forgive me of all of my sin and cleanse me right now." And at that point he was born again, stopped having this experience where his body was collapsing and dying and going into hell like that. And a few months later he started reading. He could only read ten minutes a day, but he started reading grandma's Methodist Bible as a Baptist boy on the bed of affliction. Can only read ten minutes a day. And in a few weeks then he got up to the book of Mark, found verse 23 in chapter 11 that says, "Whatsoever things you believe, you can have what you say" in other words. "Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be removed and be cast in the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but believe that those things which he says shall come to pass, he shall have what he says. Therefore whatsoever things you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them." He said, "I desire healing, I believe I receive my healing."

The Holy Spirit said, "Well if you're healed stand up."

He did. Received strength into his body. A few days later he was able to go and rejoin his family at the breakfast table.

Praise God, amen. So there is a heaven, there is a hell. There is a heaven to be gained, and a hell to shun. And with that in mind, we need to take our offering. Do I have any cheerful givers here today? Anybody glad they're not going to hell? Hallelujah.