

## MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Message Title: Heaven Pt. 2

What do we do now?

Wendell Anderson, Director of Spiritual Maturity

Weekend 03.19-20.11

Thank you, Dan, Sue. Thank you guys. That is one of my favorite songs and they did such a great job in playing it for us. Did you listen to the words? “When it’s all been said and done, there is just one thing that matters. Did I do my best to live for truth? Did I do my best to live for You? When it’s all been said and done, all my treasures will mean nothing; only what I have done for love’s rewards will stand the test of time, when it’s all been said done.”

Well, this is the second week of a two-part little mini-series that we are looking at—Heaven. As we started to see last week, the word of God has an awful lot to say about Heaven. Why don’t we begin by looking at one of my favorite passages—Philippians 1, verses 21-24. As you can see in the message notes that are in your program, I have a lot of places where we are going to go—a lot of scriptures we are going to look at. I am going to direct your attention to some that I would like for you to turn to with me. I know that you probably will not turn to all of them and I may not read all of them. Some of them you might look at in your study as the week proceeds. Some I will just read or quote to you. But there are a few that I would actually encourage you to look at with me as we go. You know, as we hear the word, that is one way through our senses that we are able to take it into our minds and into our spirit but as we also look at the word as well, then we take it to our eyes and we just amplify our learning opportunities. So we encourage you, as well, to not only hear it but to look at it. That is why we encourage you very often to bring your own Bibles as well so that you can look at it in your own Bible—you become familiar with where these passages are in your own Bible, not just the one that is provided for you. Now of course we provide them for you as know.

Well, let us look Philippians 1, verses 21-24. It says, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.”

Now do you notice the tension that is present as Paul expresses here verses 23 and 24. He has got this tension where he says: I am hard pressed between the two. I have this desire to be with Christ which is far better, better by far. Nevertheless it is more needful for me to be here with you now. So he wants to go to Heaven to see the Lord face to face and yet he knows that right now he supposed to be here. And as we started to explore last week, he says here that it is better by far. You know, what a bold statement for somebody to make! And again as we studied last week, Paul could make this statement because he was in Heaven. We looked at II Corinthians 12 and the first few verses there in II Corinthians 12 and it said that Paul was caught up into the third Heaven. He was caught up into paradise and yet he was not able to specifically tell us what it was that he saw. Now we do not know why it was that he could not tell us what it was that he saw but nonetheless he could not give us the details of that. In one other place, he says that it is beyond our imagination. But here in this passage, he says, it is better by far. It is beyond what we can imagination; beyond the best that we can think of in

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this life. So Paul has got this tension that he exhibits here—that I want to go there once again and reside where it is better by far nevertheless I need to stay here.

Well, last week we looked at some of what our experience might be like in Heaven. We looked at the fact that our experience in Heaven will be a feast for our senses, that we will have a perfect relationship with others and that we also will have a perfect relationship with God. As sweet as our relationship might be with God and with others from time to time, there are times when it is not that good. But when we get to Heaven it will be perfect.

Now I shared a few snapshots of some of the beautiful things like this one of Tahquamenon Falls. A few people asked me about this Tahquamenon Falls snapshot which is just beautiful. Madeline and I had the opportunity to camp up there a few times in the upper peninsula of Michigan. Just a beautiful place and even in spite of how beautiful this is, Heaven will be, what? Better by far.

Well, you know, as Paul Harvey would say, here is the rest of the story about Tahquamenon Falls. You know, we have camped up there a number of times. One time we happened to be camping up there over a weekend so we decided to get cleaned up and go to church. When we are at the campsite, we are camping in a tent and couple of times in a semi-rural where you go to the bathhouse and clean up in the sinks and so forth. So we actually decided to scrub up and go to church. The nearest village to Tahquamenon Falls is the village of Paradise. Now I find it, isn't amazing that you go up through Michigan to get paradise! Hey, I didn't name the city. That's the name it has—it's Paradise in the upper peninsula of Michigan. Well, here is the other humorous thing about Paradise, Michigan—there are three churches to choose from with three denominations. And I think all of them didn't think the other ones were going to be in Paradise but they are there. So I think there will be a lot of things in paradise that are going to surprise us but the biggest one will be that it will be better by far than whatever we can imagine.

Well, we looked at quickly the fact that everything that is precious to us as believers, everything that is precious to us as Christ-followers is already in Heaven awaiting us. Our Father is in Heaven, Jesus is in Heaven, our names are written in Heaven, our loved ones who have went on to be with the Lord that are Christ-followers are in Heaven waiting for us as well and our citizenship is already in Heaven. Well, last week I introduced to you and you can see in your message notes, a travel guide for Heaven. If you have ever had a travel guide and went on a trip, you know, this is travel guide for the trip that we went on a couple of years ago to Israel. And we got this travel guide several weeks in advance of our trip and we were able to start reading some passages through here and look at the various sites that we would be able to see on our tour around Israel. And as we looked at them and gained a greater insight and, in this particular case, it had scripture references to what had occurred in some of the sights that we would visit. As we started to look at this, our anticipation and excitement about Israel grew.

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Well, as we actually look at a travel guide to Heaven, our anticipation for Heaven will grow as well.

The first thing in this travel guide is that the best thing is that this trip has been completely paid for. Again, Ephesians 2:8 and 9 says, “For by grace we have been saved through faith. And this is not of ourselves; it is a gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast.” So this trip to Heaven has been completely paid for.

The second thing we can learn from the travel guide, this being our travel guide to Heaven—the Scriptures. The second thing is that this an exclusive members-only trip. Dan mentioned the verse from John 14:6 where Jesus said I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me. So it is those that have been invited and responded—that have accepted Christ into their life and become Christ-followers. It is a members-only trip. It is completely paid for; it is a members only-trip.

**Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.**

And number 3, there will not be any travel delays or fatigue in travel. In just the last couple of weeks, Madeline and I had went on a couple of trips. In fact, while I am talking here, let us turn this passage, II Corinthians 5:8. One I would like for you to look at. We went on a couple of road trips, one of them in particular was a long road trip over an extended weekend. And if you have done this, which I imagine most of us have done, we drove too much in a four-day weekend. And we were tired for at least a week after. But the fact is, is that this trip to Heaven, there will be no delays and there will be no fatigue. So that is a good thing about travel as well. Look at II Corinthians 5, verse 8. It says, “Yes, we are of good courage, and we would be rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” One of the things we learn from this verse is the fact that as we leave this body, we are immediately in the presence of the Lord. Immediately! There is no travel delay, no fatigue that goes on. This is not a tiring trip whatsoever. We are in the presence of the Lord when we leave this body. We do not stop some place in purgatory as some people would teach—that is not a biblical teaching at all. We are immediately in the presence of the Lord. There is no second chance to decide what you are going to do; you decided that previously. That occurs before because when the trip begins, it is instantaneous.

No look back just up a couple of verses there. I think in your message notes, it says II Corinthians 4, verses 18 through 5:1. In fact, let us start in verse 16, the beginning of a paragraph there at the end of chapter 4. It says, “So we do not lose heart. Though our outward nature is wasting away, our inward nature is being renewed day by day. For the slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. As

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we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

So here we are, we are in this place where we are in this natural body in this world and the things that we see, our bodies, this building, our homes, our cars, things that we see—Tahquamenon Falls, even things that are beautiful like that, those things are not eternal. It is Heaven that we look forward to, that in fact, is eternal. And we can glimpses into what that might be but that is the eternity that we are looking forward to. And then Chapter 5:1, it says, “For we know that if this tent which is our earthly home is destroyed, we have building from God, a house not made with hands but a house that is eternal in the Heavens.” So we look forward that there will be no travel delays.

Well, number 4, we know that we will have the absolute best accommodations possible—the best accommodations possible. John 14:2, Jesus says, “In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?” So we have the best accommodations. Jesus has gone in advance to prepare a place for us.

Number 5 is that Heaven is like a brand-new, all-inclusive resort—brand-new, all-inclusive resort. Turn with me to Revelation 21:1. You know, once again, if you have travelled along the road, especially if you have done some of these crazy road trips like I was just talking about—we drove fourteen hours on a Friday to get some place for Saturday and Sunday and then, fourteen hours on a Monday. That did not used to be as hard on me as it is today. But that’s a whole other story. It is tiring when we do that but, you know, as you take some of those crazy-type road trips, you can stop at certain hotels or motels along the way and you might have a real nice clean room that you can really enjoy and it has more to do with how new it is than it has to do with the brand name of the hotel. I have been in some relatively expensive motels or hotels that are tired because they just have not been updated and they have been worn down.

We do not have that to worry about in Heaven because when we look here at Revelation 21:1, it says, “Then I saw a new heaven and new earth, for the first heaven and first earth had passed away.” So we are going to have a brand new heaven that is going to join us up there. That is pretty exciting too, isn’t? I mean, it is better by far than anything we can imagine. Is it not interesting that these last two chapters of Genesis, chapters 21 and 22, the last two chapters of the scriptures talk about what we got looking forward to us in Heaven...in that perfect beginning. And if we go back to the very beginning of the Book, Genesis 1 and 2, we see the very beginning. And you see this chart that is in your message notes. You know, in the very beginning, in Genesis 1 and 2, we had the original earth. And in Revelation 21 and 22, we have the new earth that will be coming, and the new heaven that will becoming. But in between, we have a fallen earth. In the very beginning, we had original mankind and in the end we will have a resurrected mankind. But in the middle, we see a sin-fallen mankind. In the very beginning, sin was unknown. In the end, sin will be removed and we will not see sin anymore. But in the

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middle, in our present time, clouding all of our sight and comprehension, sin overwhelms us. It overwhelms all of creation. In the beginning, there was no death. In the end, in the last chapters, death will be removed but in the middle, we contend with death as well. No shame in the beginning as well, walked and talked with God without shame and we will have no shame to look forward to but in the middle we have shame as well. Sin that covers us causes us shame. Beyond what we can imagine, Heaven will be, in fact, better by far.

Well, if look just down a verse there in Revelation 21, verse 4, we can see the sixth point. This vacation will have absolutely no disappointments. It says in verse 4, "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be any mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." This vacation will have absolutely no disappointments.

Here is one that I look forward to as well and that is, number 7. It is like an extreme body makeover. We will have new bodies. You know, if you look at the passage there, I Corinthians 15, it talks about those new bodies. I Corinthians 15, verses 42-44. Paul is writing here and he says, "So it is with the resurrection of the dead, what is so imperishable" ...that would be our bodies today... "is raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor but it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness but raised in power. It is sown in natural body but raised a spiritual body. Number 7 is that we will have an extreme makeover, new bodies to look forward to. You know and, again, as I mentioned last week, we do not change species, we have new bodies, but we do not become angels. We do not morph into angels. We still are human beings. We do not become God. We are still are finite beings. We do not have all the powers of God, we are not omnipresent, we are not omniscient; we are finite beings. And yet, we will still be recognizable. Do you recall the story that is recorded on the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus led some disciples up onto the Mount and then Moses and Elijah appeared to them. They came from Heaven and were revealed to the disciples in that place and the disciples recognized them. And they recognized them as distinct people—distinct people. And also Jesus appeared to his disciples after He died and was raised and they recognized him. And in Luke 24, it says, "See my hands and my feet, it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." So we will be recognizable and we will retain our identity. We will not become angels. We will not become some different species.

Well, with that excitement of looking towards Heaven, Paul expressed this tension in the middle and what are we to do now? What should we do now? On the other side of your message notes, we will fill in some blanks there as well about what we should do now while we are waiting for our travel to Heaven.

Well, the first thing is that we remind ourselves that Heaven, not earth, is our home. We remind ourselves. Now turn with me to Hebrews 11, verse 13 and hold your place there. I am going to have you turn to a few more scriptures here in a moment and we will come back to

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Hebrews 11. Now again as you have read Hebrews 11 in the past, you know that sometimes, as pastors, this chapter is referred to as the Hall of Faith where we see some of the Old Testament heroes of faith and what God did in and through their lives is recognized in this particular chapter—certainly not all of them but a number of them. And in verse 13, it says, “These all died in faith, not having received the things that are promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.” You know, one of the translations, it says “strangers and aliens on the earth.” They all died looking forward recognizing that this was not their home. Philippians 3: 20 says, “But our citizenship is in Heaven...” In II Corinthians 5, the other reference there, Paul calls us “ambassadors for Christ”—ambassadors for Christ. Well, you know that an ambassador is somebody who represents his or her homeland while they are away on duty site in a different place. So an ambassador from the United States will be on duty in another country. We will have an ambassador in Japan and in lots of other countries that will be there representing their homeland, the United States. Well, Paul tells us that we are ambassadors for Christ, that we are here representing our homeland because our true homeland is Heaven. Our citizenship is today in Heaven. And so what did these heroes of faith do in this passage? They reminded themselves, they acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. It is good for us to remind ourselves this is not my home—this is not my home.

Well, the second thing is that we should live not for the dot, but for the line. This little illustration here and you can turn if you will to Colossians 3, verse 2. This little illustration that you see in your notes shows the larger circles that are in brown that gets smaller to this red circle and that is meant to depict that as we focus on our lives in the world around us here that it seems so big, but as we start to focus on the line which is meant to depict eternity going into Heaven, as we set our eyes on Heaven, then this life becomes much smaller. It shrinks down to that smaller dot that you see there in the middle. And instead of focusing our attention on living for the earth here, we live for the line in our balance, our perspective changes. Colossians 3:2 says, “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” The Message translation says, “See things from His perspective”—see things from His perspective. So although we have our feet on the earth, we have our eyes on Heaven.

Now again I am going through in a topical-type study like this a lot of different scripture references. One of the things that I hope will occur as we read some of these and look at some more in our remaining time is that as we set our eyes on Heaven, as we start to see things from His perspective, some of these passages that we looked at will take on a different light. We may have read these in the past from our earthly perspective and not tried to see how the writers of scripture, how the Holy Spirit was trying to get our eyes set on Heaven. I Peter 1:13 says, “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” We live for the line.

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Well, you know, not only does Paul who was caught up into the third Heaven encourage us to make the most of our lives now but so does the other disciples as well that are recorded in scripture. Listen to this passage from II Peter 3:11 and 12, verse 14. I am going to read it from the NIV. II Peter 3, verse 11, it says, "...what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming." So like Paul, here Peter in this passage, he is expressing this tension, if you will, that we ought to live holy and godly lives while we are here right now as we look forward towards Heaven. He continues in verse 14, he says, "So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him." So number three is what we shall be doing now? We should live holy and godly lives looking forward—live holy and godly lives looking forward.

Turn with me over to I John 2. Here is John writing about this as well in the letter of I John. In I John 2, verses 15 and 16, it says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world." So do not set our eyes upon here but set our eyes to look towards Heaven. Look down to Chapter 3, verses 2 and 3. John continues. He says, "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."

Well as we strive to live holy and godly lives looking forward, number 4, is that it provides a moral anchor for us—it provides a moral anchor for us. Now turn back to Hebrews 11. Hopefully you kept your place there or you can get there once again real quick. Here are these heroes of the faith—heroes of the faith that acknowledge that they are strangers and aliens in this world, in this life, that they are in fact looking forward. And in Hebrews 11:24-26, it says by faith Moses when he was grown up, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. You know, I have always liked that passage that is so frank and honest. That Moses said, you know, sin has pleasure but Moses chose to say, I am not going to allow myself...I am going to strive to live a holy and godly life and not allow myself to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. And then he continues in verse 26, because he considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt. He was looking forward...looking to his reward—looking to his reward.

So that brings me to point number 5, is that there will be final exam. The scripture speaks of this in a number of places. I am not going to have you turn there but Romans 14:12 in your message notes says that we will all give an account of ourselves. II Corinthians 5:10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ..." Now these passages are written to Christ-followers. This is written to the church; these passages are not talking about our

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entrance into Heaven. They are saying as Christ-followers, we will give an account of ourselves as to what we have done while in this body and will be rewarded for that—will be rewarded appropriately for that. It is not a judgment to get into Heaven.

Well, Jonathan Edwards was a great Puritan preacher. He preached on Heaven a lot as well. Early in his life, he wrote a number of life resolutions. In fact, you can Google “Jonathan Edwards life resolutions” and find a whole list of these as well. One of Jonathan Edwards life resolutions was: He, Resolved, to endeavor to obtain for himself as much happiness as he possibly can in the other world. I strive to live my life to have as much happiness as I can in Heaven because that is where my eternal life is at.

Well, with eyes on the fact that there will be a final exam, then what do we do? Number six would be we live our life on purpose. We have all been given time, talents, treasures uniquely designed and gifted by God and we intentionally use those gifts that God has given us to live our life on purpose. We make the most of every opportunity; we realize that we were shaped by God and we lay up our treasures in Heaven. Listen to Philippians 3: 13-14, where Paul continues. After he had written this passage, he is torn between the two—to be with Christ or to be with us and to continue the work with the church there in Philippi. In Philippians 3, he writes, in verse 13, “Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” So we live a life on purpose.

And number seven, we live a hope-filled life—a hope-filled life. One last place to turn to, I Peter, chapter 1, verses 3 and 4, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept for us in Heaven. The reference in your notes on Hebrews says that we should encourage each other, that we should encourage one another looking forward to that hope—looking forward to that hope. Paul concluded in one of his letters saying, “Therefore my dear brothers, stand firm, let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord knowing that our labor in the Lord is not in vein.”

Let me share a story that I read during my study as we conclude. There was a woman who was dying. She had received a diagnosis of a terminal illness and she was making her preparations for her memorial service. Of course, they honored her request and her request was that as she was laid in the casket that she would have a fork prominently displayed in the casket in her right hand where everyone could see. And she was talking with the people as the arrangements were being made, she said, “Well, you know, I always recall the potlucks that I went to and as the main course was being completed, things would be cleared away but they would tell me to keep my fork because dessert was coming—there was going to be a rich chocolate cake or a wonderful apple pie. The best was yet to come. So, of course, she was

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displayed in the casket with the fork prominently displayed and people as they would walk by would ask the pastor or the family what is with the fork? Of course, the best is yet to come. To be with Christ, to be at home in Heaven, is better by far. The best is yet to come. And yet while we are here, we strive to live holy and godly lives looking forward to that promise that he has for us.

Would you join me in prayer? Father, we are thankful for your rich word that encourages us about what you have in store for us in Heaven. That as we can set our minds on Heaven, as we can try to see things from your perspective, that we can be excited, realizing that it will be better by far. Father, I just pray that each of us will be encouraged to do what you have for each of us to do, that we can live our life on purpose living holy and godly lives as we look forward. I pray this in Jesus' Name.