



Devotions of Faith & Encouragement

**"I can do all this through him who gives me strength."
Philippians 4:13**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	iii
A Heavenly Perspective.....	1
Marriage in Heaven	3
Our Heavenly Bodies.....	5
Always Thinking of You	7
Anticipating Heaven	9
A Heavenly Home.....	11
Will We Know One Another in Heaven?	13
Testimonies in Heaven	15
Heaven, Better by Far!	17
Prepared for The Trip	19
Preparing For Heaven	21
We Win!	23
Patty Peace and Abigail Assurance	25
Rejoice in The Lord!	27
Angels in Awe	29
Doing Your Part	31
Reflecting The Light of The Lord	33
Grandma’s Gloves	35
Make The Lion Flee!.....	37
Born into God’s Family	39
God’s Word Helps Us	41

Set Free.....	43
Our Temporary Tents	45
The Gathering in The Sky.....	47
The Light of Life.....	49
Choose The Right Way.....	51
A Proclamation of Thanksgiving	53
The Naming of Jesus	55
Anticipating His Return	57
Do Angels Celebrate The Resurrection?	59

INTRODUCTION

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Philippians 4:4

Chaplain Michael's goal is to make God's Truth understandable to everyone in short imaginative stories meant to encourage weary or lonely souls, uplift those in need, and minister to those seeking a little more blessing in their day.

Written as warm, weekly devotionals, you will discover more about God, heaven, the role of angels, worship, prayer, and living the Christian life more abundantly as you seek to fill your heart with His presence.

Author's Biography

Michael Martin has served for more than a decade with Nursing Home Ministries, Inc. as a chaplain in Salem, Oregon. He ministers to those who live in assisted care, memory care, and rehabilitation facilities through Sunday services, Bible studies, and visitations.

A retired military veteran, Michael is indebted to the Lord Jesus whom he met while serving our country overseas. He now serves Him wherever the Lord leads.

Acknowledgments

Praise be to God who alone is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think! To Him be the glory - now and forever. Amen! I am also deeply appreciative for the ongoing encouragement and weekly editing review of the Devotions by Chaplain Jean Whipple.

Only one who is called to be a shepherd can be contented with his sheep. Only one called to be a shepherd will be discontented when not caring for his sheep.

When Covid arrived, I found myself quickly discontent when I was cut off from my sheep. They were separated from one another, closed off from the world, and their lives placed on hold. How could I tend my sheep? With guitar in hand, I stood by open windows singing hymns to my sheep. Fires burned the forests, smoke then filled the air, windows closed access to my sheep. Went on YouTube, did some Zoom, could not reach all the sheep. Windows opened, then winter came. Continued to pray for access to my sheep. The Lord laid upon my heart to write to my sheep. These weekly Devotions, now over one hundred weeks, have been one way I have continued to feed my sheep.

With the Lord's blessings, may these weekly Devotions be an encouragement to you and to others. Chaplain Michael Martin

A HEAVENLY PERSPECTIVE

It was a cold winter day, the snowflakes were landing atop several inches of snow that had already accumulated on the ground overnight. Though the plane's engines had started, the de-icer had been applied to the wings, and the cabin was warming up, we were not sure if the Air Traffic Controller would give us clearance to take off. My brother Billy and I had never flown in a plane before, so I did not know if I wanted my first flight to be through the snow. Grandma said it would be okay. She even said, "You're in for a treat, honey."

Billy and I were getting fidgety because the seat-belts were uncomfortable. Finally, the Captain announced that we had been given clearance for take-off. The plane moved down the runway, picking up speed as it went. Suddenly, the plane bounced! I thought the oxygen masks might fall down for people to use like the flight attendant had showed us! The force of the moving plane pushed me back in my seat. The plane began to leave the ground and the snow seemed to react by coming down thicker and harder. Then, I could not see out the window at all! I just knew I should have stayed home! As I tightly gripped the handles of my seat, Grandma said, "Here we go!" About that time, the plane lifted through the snow-filled clouds and we were surrounded with the brilliance of sunshine! The plane leveled off, the seat-belt sign dimmed, and Billy and I were looking through the window by my seat. Had we entered heaven!? No, just a different perspective on the same situation. Now we were above it.

Today, many people would like to rise above and escape their situation as we did that day on the plane. While the place and circumstances of your life or someone else's might not change immediately or even soon, the perspective you have can change. Grandma knew the clouds, the snow, and the darkness were temporary. She had experienced them before. Grandma also knew the loss of a husband, an uncaring wayward child, and arthritis in the bones.

The residents and staff where Grandma lived called her Mrs. Sunshine, because

being around her was like feeling the warmth of the sun on a snow-cloudy day. She would share with them the wonderful assurance of seeing her husband again in heaven. How the two of them would once again walk hand in hand, but this time on the streets of gold. She had great comfort knowing that even her wayward child, no matter what had been done, could still freely receive the love of the Lord without reproach. Her smile would beam as she spoke of her eternal body to come. One of flesh and bone, yet would never wear out. One in which she would share a fellowship meal with Jesus, even as He ate with His disciples after He rose from the dead. She spoke of the great Architect of the universe preparing an exquisite home in heaven for her.

Grandma never diminished the setbacks, sicknesses, and situations that her friends or caregivers shared with her. She knew that what we presently encounter in this world is real -- Some physically painful, some emotionally crushing, and some bewildering. Grandma encouraged people to trust in the true Pilot of the plane, the Captain of the ship, the Lord and Savior, Jesus. "Though we do not always understand in the present," she would say, "He will see you through all the storms of this life. He will never allow you to go where He will not go with you. The Bible assures us, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear, for You are with me.' Psalm 23:4 And when life's short journey is over, He will welcome you home with open arms." I remember what Pastor White said at Grandma's memorial: "Mrs. Sunshine had a heavenly perspective on life. One that rose above the circumstances and situations of this world and trusted in the Lord for all things. She told me I could not stand here today if I did not tell you how to be with Jesus. The Bible says Jesus died for our sins and rose again. 1Cor 15:3-4 Whoever trusts in Him will be forgiven and welcomed into heaven. John 3:16 You can pray: 'Jesus, thank You for paying for my sins. Save me forever and give me a heavenly perspective in this world until You call me home. Amen'

MARRIAGE IN HEAVEN

On a lovely warm day, Mel and Melba, now in their sunset years, sat in the park feeding the birds from their bag of popcorn. “Mel”, said Melba, “Do you remember when we would climb those hills over there and look down at the park and watch the old people feeding the birds from bags of popcorn?”

“O, seems like yesterday, sweetie. Where has all the time gone?” “I don’t know Mel, but I’m sure happy we’ve spent the years together.” “Me, too, Melba.”

“Mel.” “Yes, dear.” “Do you remember what Pastor White said last Sunday?” “O, yes dear. He said, ‘Praise the Lord for this food! And remember to pass it to the right.’ “O, Mel. I’m not talking about the potluck after church. I mean his message about heaven.”

“Yes, that was a hum-dingier of a message, Melba. I’m sure glad I put fresh batteries in my hearing aids that morning.” “Mel, ever since Pastor White told us that the Bible reveals that we do not all go to heaven together unless Jesus comes soon, I was wondering if you would miss me?”

“Of course I would, sweetheart. I’m sure there is not a single angel in heaven that can play pinochle like you can.” “Mel! You want me to put my popcorn in your greasy hair and watch the birds come get it?” “Melba, I like it when you’re feisty! But you know I’m just kidding.” “I know, Mel. Did you hear when Pastor White said that in heaven people would not be married as we know marriage today?”

“Yes. I was surprised. Then thought he was joking. After all, sixty-four years of bliss should not be interrupted by eternity. He sure explained that truth from the Bible in a wonderful way, though.” “Imagine, Mel, our marriage being a type or picture of Christ and His bride, the Church. That no matter how wonderful the best marriages have been on earth, in heaven we will know such a fulfilling relationship with Jesus that every moment of emotional, physical, and spiritual connectedness we have ever known in marriage will be eclipsed by our relationship with Him.”

“Yes. And for those who have not known a happy marriage in this temporary world, how incredibly fulfilled their relationship with Christ will be for all eternity.”

“Pastor White made another dandy point about those who have benefited from a close relationship in their marriage. Their friendship will not end in heaven, but continue. They will know and enjoy each others’ company and companionship yet more fully because of the total absence of sin in heaven and in themselves.”

“Yes. He said, here on earth many people long for a perfect marriage. That is exactly what we will have in heaven - a perfect marriage with Christ. Earthly marriages are suppose to point to the ultimate marriage which begins in heaven at the wedding feast of the Lamb. What a celebration that will be. I wonder if those who are in heaven now are already decorating for the festivities?”

“Mel, there should be a way for us to tell others that in the Bible, when John who is called the friend of the Bridegroom, said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,’ he was referring to Jesus the Bridegroom.” “I agree, Melba - to be able to tell others that Jesus paid the dowry price when He paid for the sins of all who would trust in Him.” “Yes, Mel. And still today, whoever trust in Jesus as their Savior becomes part of the bride of Christ, the Church, and will experience the greatest of all relationships for eternity.” “Here, Melba, I will carve a prayer in this tree that someone may see and pray from their heart: ‘Dear Jesus, I long for a special relationship with You. I know You paid for my sins because You love me. I believe You want me in heaven with You for eternity. Today and forever, I trust in You alone to save me. Amen’

“Just think, Melba, with those new bodies Christ has promised we will not be sitting around feeding popcorn to the birds, we’ll be enjoying all of heaven.”

“Oh yeah? You’ll have to catch me if you can!”

OUR HEAVENLY BODIES

Grandma agreed to watch the kids while Rob and Judy went on a trip. After dinner one night, Grandma thought it would be nice to show the kids some old pictures of the family.

“Chrissy, Billy, would you like to see some pictures of the family from a long time ago?” “Are they on your phone, Grandma?” “No. They are in a photo album.” “Yes. I want to see them,” said Chrissy. “Ha-ha! Grandma, is that Daddy with the red cowboy hat sitting on the pony?” “Yes, that is your daddy.” “Oh look! Is that Mother with those pom-poms?” “Yes, that is her.” “She would never fit into that outfit today, Grandma.” “Grandma, how did you get a picture of Mother back then?” “Your mother and father met in high-school.”

“Grandma, is that you on the front porch of this house with that man?”

“Why do you think it’s me?” “It’s your eyes, Grandma.” “Yes, that is me, Billy. “Who do you think that man is?” “His uniform looks like a mailman. Was he the mailman, Grandma?” “Yes, he was a postman.” “Grandma, is he our grandpa?” “Yes, he is. You would have liked him very much.” “Grandma, do you miss Grandpa?” “Yes, I do. But we are going to see each other again.”

“How are you going to do that? Is he coming back as a ghost?” “No, he’s not coming back as a ghost, dear. We’ll see each other when I go to heaven where he is now.”

“Grandma, I heard someone say we will be like Jesus when we go to heaven. If we look like Jesus, how will you know who Grandpa is?”

“Oh, I know what you heard, dear. When the Apostle John was writing to Christians he said: ‘Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.’” 1 John 3:2 “Yes, that is what I heard, Grandma.” “Well dear, though we do not know everything about what our bodies will be like in heaven, the Bible does tell us a number of things.

For instance, we will recognize one another. After Jesus was resurrected from the grave, people recognized Him.” “But didn’t people think He was a spirit?” “Yes, some of His disciples thought that at first because they really were not expecting Him to come back to life. But He told His disciples, ‘Touch me, feel me, a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.’ “ Luke 24:39

“Grandma, is that when they ate with Jesus?” “Yes, it is. Jesus asked them, ‘Have you any food here?’ They gave Him food and He ate it. “ Luke 24:41

“Grandma, how else will our bodies be like Jesus’ body?” “Well, our bodies will never wear out, grow tired, or get sick in heaven.” “Not even you, Grandma?” “Not even me. We cannot live in heaven with bodies like we have now. So God is going to change our bodies so we can live forever in heaven with Him.”

“How is He going to do that, Grandma?” “The first step is to make sure you are going to heaven.” “We are, Grandma. Daddy told us what sin is and how Jesus paid for our sins when he died in our place and rose again. We told Jesus that we are sorry for our sins and asked Him to save us for heaven.” “That’s great, kids. The Bible promises that God will change our bodies to live in heaven: ‘We shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye; we shall meet the Lord in the air; He will take us to heaven and we will always be with Him. 1Corinthians15, 1Thessalonians 4

“Grandma, can anyone go to heaven?” “Yes, whoever is truly sorry for the bad things they have said and done, and ask Jesus to forgive them since He paid for their sins when He died on the cross and rose again as He said He would do.”

Are you prepared to go to heaven? Praying is simply talking to God from your heart. He knows what you mean. Right now, you can say to Him: ‘Dear God, I have done and said things that are wrong. I believe Jesus died for all of my sins and rose again. Forgive me and help me to live for You until I go home to heaven. In Jesus’ name, amen.’

ALWAYS THINKING OF YOU

“Mama, did you go to the Dollar Store and get calendars for all your friends again this year?” “Yes, I did!” “I thought so. You told me that you have been doing that every year for a long time.” “Yes, before you were ever born.”

“Do you write in the calendars before you give them to your friends?” “Yes, I do. Since it is easy to forget some things like birthdays and special events, I write those in the calendars for each of us to remember one another.” “But didn’t I hear some of your friends say they would like to forget their birthdays?” “Yes, honey. But we still like to be remembered.”

“Mama, since heaven is eternal and time will be no more, do you think your friends will be sad or disappointed that there is not a day when they are remembered by their friends and family in heaven?” “No, sweetie. While heaven will have some similarities to what we know here, it is quite different. We’ll have no need for sleep and certainly no doctor appointments to keep, and the focus will never be upon ourselves. It will always be upon God, Who deserves all the glory, honor, and praise. While we know that we are always on God’s mind and in His thoughts now (Psalm 40:5), all will agree that being with Him in person is going to be a joy far beyond all the remembrances of our friends here.”

“Mama, does God start thinking about us after we’re born?” “Before that, dear. He tells us, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.’” Jeremiah 1:5

“That reminds me of something you told me when I was a little girl.” “A little girl? I guess now that you are a whole eleven years old you are no longer a little girl?” “Noooo! Ha-ha-ha! When I asked you where I came from, you read to me that part in the Bible where David said to God: ‘You formed my inward parts, You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made’. Psalm 139:13-14 And you told me that God created me in your womb.” “That’s right, and I began thinking about you before you were born. But God knew you long before then.” “Really! What does He know about me?”

“Only what He knows about every one else.” “What’s that?” “Everything! That same part of the Bible, Psalm 139, says about God: ‘You know my sitting down and my rising up, You understand my thoughts, You know when I lie down and are familiar with all my ways. You know every word I’m going to say before I ever say it.’” Psalm 139:2-4 “Wow! I guess He does know everything about me. Is there somewhere I can go where He does not know what I am doing or thinking?” “David asked God that same question. ‘Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in the lowest part of the earth, behold, You are there. And if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. Even the night will be as light to You. How precious are Your thoughts to me, O God!’” Psalm 139:7-12, 17

“It sounds like David was thankful that God was always thinking about him and with him everywhere he went.” “Yes, he was. He learned, from just about your age, that he could always trust God to be there.” “Is that why he fought the giant Goliath when no one else would?” “Yes, that’s why. He trusted God.” “Mama, why did David do wrong later when he knew God was there?” “For the same reason we do. We forget about God’s love for us, how He is always thinking about us, and how He will always help us in every situation if we let Him.”

“So when I do something that’s not right, He already knows, doesn’t He?” “Yes, He does.” “Will He ever leave someone?” “For those who trust Jesus as their Savior, He has promised: ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ Hebrews 13:5

But if we make choices to do what is wrong, we can not expect Him to keep us from the consequences.” “Can anyone ask Jesus to be their Savior?” “Yes. He knows all about us and still loves us. Any person can tell Jesus: ‘Jesus, thank You for loving me. Thank You for paying for all my sin and wrongdoing when You died in my place and rose again. I believe You are the Son of God and ask You to be my Savior.’” If that is your prayer today, God will be with you forever.

ANTICIPATING HEAVEN

You remembered there was something you needed from the store. The hour of closing was near, you could wait until tomorrow, but you really want to get that item now. So you grab the car keys and off to the store you go!

There you are, looking at something you did not even go to the store to buy, when you hear, “The store will be closing in 10 minutes. Please, bring your items to the front for checkout.”

You know that feeling, don’t you? There is more you wanted to shop for, more you wanted to look at, more you wanted to do. But the time for checking out is upon us. None of us knows when that moment will be or how it will come. Could the Lord return today and take us home? Yes! Perhaps His will for you today or tomorrow is to dispatch a couple heavenly angels while you sleep and bring you through the gates of heaven. It happens every day. Are you prepared?

“Where am I?” “You’re in heaven.” “Heaven? No, that can’t be. I’m playing bridge this afternoon with the ladies. They’ll be short one player and besides, I’m bringing my potato salad.” “Should we take her back, Samuel?” “No. We cannot do that, James. When it’s time, it is time.” “Samuel, why do you think many Christians are not thinking about their wonderful eternal home in heaven, especially right now when the time is so close? This lady was so caught up in living her earthly life for herself that she was inconvenienced by heaven.”

“James, as we observe the Church from heaven as Jesus does, we can see a variety of believers living their lives in a manner of ways.” “So true, Samuel. There are those who so excitedly ask Jesus to be their Savior, then soon forget what Jesus has done for them. They lose that first love and continue to live much the same way as they had been living, and never give heaven a second thought. Samuel, there seems to be a lack of interest among some Christians about heaven. Since you and I have always been here, we know how much greater heaven is than any movie, tv show, or book could ever depict, and always will be.”

“I certainly agree, James. And God has given people His Word, the Bible, which includes the reality that heaven is so marvelous that they should look forward to being here forever.” “Samuel, do you remember when God caught Paul up into heaven?” 2 Cor 12:2-4

“Oh yes! Do you remember the expression on Paul’s face when he looked around heaven and saw everything God allowed him to see? It changed the entire way he lived the rest of his life. No wonder he told people that he had a strong desire to depart and be with the Lord. He knew what heaven is like. Philippians. 1:23 Can you imagine how the life of an ordinary, run of the mill Christian would be changed if more thought were given to heaven? Why, it would change more than the life of that one person, it would be contagious to others as well -- if they were to remind one another that heaven has been prepared for them by God Himself, Who loves and cares for them. And since it is prepared, God could send us with Jesus at any moment to bring them home.” “Yes! I am looking forward to this myself. The apostle Paul told Christians that because this could happen at any moment, they should encourage one another with this truth.” 1 Thess. 4:16-18

“Samuel, as ministering spirits among God’s people, we interact with the weak, the strong, the sick and the healthy. One thing in common for each, is that the trials of earth come to all. Balm for the tough parts of the journey home is the sure promise that heaven is never more than a heartbeat or trumpet call away.”

As Christians, what should we do with the time we have remaining? Guard against forgetting that Jesus is coming! One way to do this is to share the Good News with others. Telling people what Jesus said, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16 Anyone can pray: ‘Jesus, I believe You died for all of my sins and rose again. I know You have prepared a home in heaven for me. Help me to live for You every day as I anticipate my home in heaven with You. In Your name, amen.’

A HEAVENLY HOME

Some new friends of mine told me of an exciting event in their life recently. As their current home is showing signs of age and wear that are beyond repair, they began looking for a new place to dwell.

They met with a real estate agent who understood what they were looking for in their next home. So he began to describe a wonderful place that he knew about.

He told my friends, "Your possible future home is located in a fabulous place beyond compare. The city itself is a gated community consisting of twelve beautiful gates constructed of genuine pearl. Through these gates, the residents pass freely as they come and go. The gates themselves never need to be locked because the crime rate is zero percent in this terrific place. The only people that enter and exit are those who live there."

"What about the water supply?" my friends eagerly asked. "Is there ever a shortage?" "Never at all!" the man exclaimed. "The source is unending, purely untainted, and crystal at view." "Such a city sounds wonderful," replied my friends. "Is it guarded by a wall of great size that will diminish the appearance of this tremendous place?" they asked.

"There is a wall around the city, but it was constructed not for safety, but for beauty. The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with all kinds of precious stones, such as jasper, sapphire, emerald, topaz, and more." Revelation 21:19-20 He told my friends, "To see the beauty of these stones as the light shines upon them is quite literally out of this world. Not to mention the source of the light itself. You see, the city has no need for electric cables, generators, batteries, nor windmills. Not even the sun, moon, or stars are relied upon for the city's light. But such is the source which continually shines, that there is simply no night there." Revelation 22:5 "Amazing!" said my friends. "Tell us more!"

"Well, as you enter any of the twelve gates you are greeted by transparent golden streets, which amazingly reflect the smiles of those who live there.

The people who abide in the city say it is better to rejoice that your name is written in this marvelous city's registry, than to have your name on a Hollywood Boulevard star. Luke 10:20 There are those at the gates, affectionately called angels, who greet people as they come and go, and maintain the names recorded of all who live in the city."

"It could be that the screening process to live in such a precious place would be too hard-and-fast to allow our presence," my friends admitted.

"Indeed, the screening process in order to live in such a blessed place is strict, but the outcome has allowed for people of all ages, backgrounds, and languages to live in harmony," said the agent. "Oh please, it could be that we could not ever afford such a wonderful home," my friends lamented. "It is true, this home is priceless," said the agent. "There is no fee for the application process. And there are but few questions to answer. Would you like to apply today to live in this marvelous place?" asked the agent. "Yes!" my friends exclaimed in unison.

"The first application question is: Are you perfect in every way?"

"No. I am not." "Me either." Romans 3:23 "Great!" replied the agent. "That is the correct answer! If each wrong thought, word, or deed done by you deserved the death penalty, could you pay for each one?" "No way!" "Incalculable!" Romans 6:23

Now feeling terribly discouraged, the husband said, "Come along, Dear. We'd better go look for another home to live in." "Not so fast!" said the agent. "Concerning this wonderful eternal city, I have a special book here that contains the way to gain entrance. The Bible says, there is One who is righteous. He also has paid sins' debt. 1 John 2:1-2 If you trust in Him and what He has done for you, He will be your Savior and this heavenly city will be your forever home." "Tell us, Who is this Great One who has done such things for us who do not deserve it?" "His name is Jesus. Anyone can tell Him truly from their heart: 'Jesus, I am a sinner. I believe You died for all of my sins and rose again. My desire is to live for You here, until You call me home to be with You in Your heavenly city. Amen' "

WILL WE KNOW ONE ANOTHER IN HEAVEN?

Have you been to a high school or college class reunion? If so, you probably know people who decide not to wear those sticky name tags. They wonder if anyone will remember who they are from twenty or more years ago.

“Edward! It’s great to see you!” “I’m sorry. I am not Edward.” “You’re not? Oh, I’m sorry.” “I am not sorry. I heard Edward went to prison.” “Edward? The Class President? Oh my... So if you are not Edward, who are you?” “I’m Marty.” “Marty...? Oh! We had computer class together!” “No. I preferred to work on cars, so I took auto class instead of computers.” “Well, you must be the owner of your own shop by now.” “Well, in a way. I own a funeral parlor. In our town, I’m known as Marty the Mortician.” “So you went from auto-body to human-body, ha-ha!” “And who are you?” “I am Alfred.” “Alfred?” “Yes. A’I fred you’ll never guess who I am! ha-ah-ha..!” “You’re probably right. Good-bye.”

When we arrive in heaven, I do not believe we will be asked to wear sticky name tags, nor shall we have any conversations like that one. Instead, what we will have is perfect friendships with those who have gone to heaven before us and with all those who will join us there. We will recognize one another even if we have never met. Even as Abraham recognized the beggar Lazarus after the angels carried him to paradise. Luke 16:22 There they enjoyed the company of other Old Testament people like Noah, Sarah, Daniel, David, and Job, until Jesus took them all home to heaven after His resurrection.

One day, Jesus said to Peter, James, and John, ‘Hey guys, follow me!’ The disciples stopped what they were doing and began to follow Jesus. He led them up a high mountain by themselves. When they reached a certain place, Jesus paused. His face began to shine with a heavenly light; even His clothes took on an appearance brighter than fresh snow. Then it happened, that Moses and Elijah appeared and began talking with Jesus. While their conversation is not recorded for us, it must have been an incredible moment for Peter, James, and John!

Peter said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." Matthew 17:4

Interestingly, Moses and Elijah had been dead for hundreds of years. Yet, the disciples saw them and recognized them. When we arrive in heaven, we will know and be known by others - even if we have not previously met one another.

Those of us who have tried to make friends at school, at work, and other places only to find disappointment and shallow acquaintances at best, will at last find the deep satisfying friendships and fellowship that we have craved for so long. In heaven, the uniqueness that God has given to each person that makes you 'you' will shine forth as God intended. Imagine, sharing real friendships without disappointments or hurt feelings. No unintended misunderstandings. No having to explain yourself when you meant to do good. In heaven, there will be no heartaches. There will be no tears, pain, or sorrow. Revelation 21:4

In heaven, we will have glorious recognizable bodies, we will talk, we will share close friendships, we will love one another as God intended. And most importantly of all - we will enjoy the very presence of Jesus our Savior, forever.

Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." John 14:2-3

Jesus, God in the flesh, will show us His nail-scarred hands as a reminder of His deep-deep love for you and me. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16 He died in our place for our sins, then rose again. And if you are truly sorry for those things you have said and done that you know are wrong, you can ask Jesus to save you for heaven. Tell Him from your heart: 'Jesus, I'm sorry for my sins. I know You paid for each one when You died in my place and rose again. Thank You for saving me. In Your name, amen.'

TESTIMONIES IN HEAVEN

When Jean was growing up in her middle-size church, they would have what some call - Testimony Night. That is a time set aside to tell one another how the Lord has been working in and through our lives. God does indeed answer our prayers and bless us in various ways. I imagine we could have quite a Testimony Night when we arrive in heaven. Of course, the Bible tells us that in heaven there will be no night (Revelation 21:25), so perhaps this time of sharing could be called Testimonies Recalled. “Thank you, Daniel, for recounting that memorable night in the lions’ den where the roars of hungry lions were turned into kitty purrs. Who else will share what God has done for you before you came to heaven?”

“Yes. I was a widow with two sons. My family was in debt and I knew my sons would have to be sold as slaves to pay off our creditor. But God in His mercy brought the prophet Elisha into our life. He asked me what I had in the house that I could sell to help pay the debt. I told him that all I had left was a meager amount of oil in a small pot. He told me to borrow all the pots and pans that I could from my neighbors. Then, to begin filling them from my small pot. As I did, the oil continued to multiply until all of the pots and pans were full and there was still more left over! I was able to sell the oil and pay off all of our debt. Not only that, but God had provided enough for us to live on as well!” ‘Amen! Amen!’

“One night as a police officer, I was called about a person in distress. When I arrived, there were people lying on the ground unharmed and others hiding behind cars. The person had a gun. I exited my patrol car and began climbing the stairs to where the man was firing. When I reached his apartment, I announced who I was and he shot through the door. Then he said that he was out of bullets and he was giving himself up. When I opened the door, he fired his gun. When I did not fall, he threw his gun down and raised his hands in surprise. At that range, the bullet could not have missed me, nor was the bullet ever found. God had sent an angel that night for my protection!” ‘Yea!’

“Who else has something to share about God’s goodness?”

“I was a business man doing quite well for myself and my family. But something happened to me. Soon I lost my business and I was living in the cemetery, not taking care of myself, nor wearing any clothes. It happened that Jesus came along and I’m told that He cast out demons from me! I did not know at the time what had happened, but I knew Who did it and I wanted to go with Him. But He told me, ‘Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you.’ Mark 5:8 You can be sure, I was telling everybody about Jesus.”

“I would like to share something.” “Yes, please do.” “Well, when our children were young and we were going to church, two of my kids accepted Jesus as their Savior. But one of my children did not. I continued to pray for him for many, many years. When I died, he still had not accepted Jesus. But to my wonderful delight, he is here in heaven with us because at my funeral the Gospel was presented as I requested, and my baby accepted Jesus as his Savior. God answered my prayers!” ‘Yea!’ ‘Amen!’

For eternity, heaven could be filled with stories of God’s faithfulness, provision, and care for each of us because of His extraordinary love for each one. Though there will be a great variety of testimonies, there is one truth that everyone in heaven will share in common-- that is, that we took God at His word when He said, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

Have you taken God at His word? Today, you can trust in His Son, Jesus. When He died on the cross and rose from the grave, He paid for every word and deed that will keep you out of heaven. If you are sorry for those things that have kept you from Him, tell Him from your heart: ‘Jesus, I’m sorry for my sins. I know that you paid for each one when You died and rose again. Begin to work in my life and make me the person You want me to be. In Your name I pray, Amen.’

If you prayed that prayer now or in the past, you have a testimony to share!

HEAVEN, BETTER BY FAR!

“Ya know Mary, there was a time when I used to fear going to heaven.” “Why is that, Clara?” “Well, it seemed like a place so far away and I did not know much about it. Sure, I knew God is there, and too many angels to count also call heaven their home. But I just did not know what to expect. So many people would talk about how wonderful heaven is and how they looked so forward to being there. But, I had to ask myself, ‘Would ‘I like heaven?’ After all, not everyone likes every place that other people are fond of going to here on earth. So I decided to find out what God has told us about our forever home, heaven.

I knew to stay clear of all those books and movies about people who say they have been to heaven and back. Many of those people have had to admit to their family, the public, the book publishers and the movie producers that they actually had not been to heaven and back. Since I wanted nothing but the truth about heaven, I went to the source of truth, God’s Word - the Bible. There I found so many wonderful promises from God about heaven that my fear turned to joy.

When I think about special friends and particular loved ones that I have known, I begin to feel sad that they are gone. But then, I think of how excited we are going to be when we see one another again - never more to be separated. 1 Thessalonians 4:14 That certainly makes me long for my heavenly home.

When I ponder the exquisite beauty of heaven with transparent streets of gold, the gates of pearl, and the pure crystal river, I can only imagine what else we will see that God has created for us to enjoy. Revelation 21-22

When I receive those letters that inform me that my rent is going to increase again because of monthly maintenance fees, I remember that Jesus said, “In My Father’s house are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you.” John 14:2

I know that my eternal home in heaven will never need repair nor become an historic monument. The place that Jesus has prepared is perfect in every way.

On days when the arthritis in my hand prevents activities that I would like to do, and when I can not bend to reach the brake on my wheelchair to unlock it so I can

move, I think of how unhindered I will be when my wonderful Savior will transform my body to do things I never dreamed of doing. 1 Corinthians 15:52

When I think of the terrible effects that spiritual warfare has had on people and on the earth, then consider the fact that I may have been rescued by one of God's marvelous angels from such an attack, I am reminded that I will be living and talking with those glorious angels of God who have protected and ministered to me when I did not even know it. Hebrews 1:14

When I consider all the books, in all the mortuaries, that contain all the names of those who have stopped by there, I remember the Book of Life in heaven where my name is written. And not only mine, but of all the people that we will meet in heaven: David, Daniel, Esther, Paul, and so many others. Rev 21:27

Mary, I no longer fear going to heaven, where God says there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. A place where there shall be no more pain of any kind. Revelation 21:4 Every day, I know that God could send amazing angels to escort me to my anticipated home. God has prepared heaven not only for me, though, but for all those who love and trust Him. And we certainly have reason to love Him. When we are born into this world, we are not headed to heaven. We must make a personal choice to trust in Jesus as our Savior to be allowed entrance into God the Father's home, heaven. God desires that each person be there. That's why Jesus said, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.' To 'perish' means to be separated from God forever. To have 'everlasting life' means to be in heaven forever. If any person agrees and admits to God: 'God, I'm a sinner. I have done and said things that are wrong. I'm sorry. I know Jesus died for my sins and rose again. Save me, Jesus.' - God will forgive that person, their name will be in the Book of Life, and heaven will be their forever home."

PREPARED FOR THE TRIP

As a child, I can remember a television commercial for a brand of pancake syrup. The slow music would play as the bottle of syrup was poured. In the background, a person would sing the word 'Anticipation' in a drawn-out manner. Sometimes I wondered if the pancake would be cold by the time the anticipated syrup arrived. My sister would say in a logical way, "Those people should eat their eggs while they wait for the syrup so the eggs don't get cold, too."

Someone once said, 'To anticipate without activity is to be bored, even forgetful.' My wife and I had signed up for a cruise one time. We looked forward to this new experience of traveling on a ship. The destination was spoken of as the 'Paradise of Dreamers.' Weeks before the trip, my wife started packing and repacking, going to the stores for this and that, ensuring we were up to date on our shots, planning a sitter for our pets, singing and humming as she went along anticipating the trip. Periodically, she would look at the travel brochure and smile in anticipation of the trip and the destination.

I, on the other hand, was not as busy preparing for the journey. Sure, I was looking forward to going - there was just not a sense of urgency to get things done. I told myself there was plenty of time. It could be done later. When I would forget what I needed to do, my wife would gently remind me that I needed to prepare - not just for me, but this particular cruise was our thirty-year class reunion, featuring a famous celebrity. Truly, I did look forward to seeing friends that I had not seen in years. And it was this influential person's doing that made this trip possible. I certainly wanted to thank him in person. But what was the hurry? There was time...

In a similar way, many Christians are anticipating going to heaven, even the journey there. After all, which of us has been escorted by an angel anywhere, yet? The joyful reunion with old friends is a happy event we are looking forward to. Not to mention the Old and New Testament saints and angels galore!

And most certainly, we want to praise and thank Jesus in person for making heaven possible. But some say, "What's the rush to go?" Paul said he had a desire

to depart and go to heaven to be with Jesus, which is far better than being here.

Philippians 1:23

To be with Jesus should be the primary reason every Christian desires to depart this world and go to heaven. Jesus is the One who made heaven a reality for every person that trusts in Him. To thank Him in person is at the top of my heavenly list. Jesus left heaven and returned to heaven. And Paul is the only person recorded in the Bible that went to heaven and returned. 2 Corinthians 12:2 In person, he saw things that kept him excitedly anticipating his future trip to heaven. But it was Jesus that Paul wanted to be with. In anticipation of his journey, Paul stayed active for the Lord. He never became bored of storing up treasure in heaven, nor forgetful that each moment could be his last one here.

We, too, can live with an urgent expectancy of departing this world at any moment and being with Jesus in heaven. Like Paul, we can stay active for the Lord by storing up treasure in heaven. Matthew 6:20 Before He returned to heaven, Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." John 14:2-3 But you must be prepared for the trip. Jesus said, "Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." Luke 12:40

When my wife and I arrived at the pier to board the ship, the person in front of us was asked for their passport. The individual started to search their pockets, then their bags. Then, bowed their head and had to admit - they had not prepared for the trip. Is heaven your desired destination? Have you prepared? Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6 Today, you can prepare for your trip to heaven. Tell Jesus from your heart: 'Jesus, I know You died for my sins and rose again. You have prepared a place for me with You in heaven. Help me live for you, anticipating heaven. Amen'

PREPARING FOR HEAVEN

“That’s our show for this week, TV audience. Just remember, if a UFO does not take you away, something else will probably happen to you.”

“Daddy, do you believe in UFOs?” “Well sure, honey. They were on TV.” “But Daddy, when Santa Claus was on TV you said you did not believe in him.”

“Well, that’s different, dear.” “Why?” “Well...reindeer don’t fly.”

“Mrs. Joy, our Sunday school teacher, said angels fly.” “Yes, they probably do.” “Daddy, if a UFO took you away, where would you go?” “I don’t know, dear.”

“Mrs. Joy said angels came and took a man named Lazarus to heaven, where he was comforted.” “Yes, heaven is probably a nice place, dear. Let’s watch some news.”

“This is Ingrid Marshall with a recap of today’s events. Tornadoes have touched down destroying many towns, wildfires are burning numerous forests, earthquakes have toppled buildings in major cities, new wars have begun around the world, crime is on the rise, and another politician was caught with his hand in the cookie jar. This is Ingrid Marshall with the best news today.”

“Daddy, I want to live somewhere else.” “Yes, dear. I feel the same way. It would be really nice to live in a place that did not have any death, sorrow, crying or pain of any kind.” “Oh Daddy! That is what Mrs. Joy said heaven is going to be like. She said for the next few weeks she is going to tell us what the Bible says about heaven. Daddy, you should come to church with me and Mommy.”

“Oh sweetie, I can’t do that right now. You know, I’m tired on Sundays and sometimes I have to go with my friends so I don’t hurt their feelings. But will you tell me what Mrs. Joy tells you?” “Of course, Daddy. Mrs. Joy said it’s important that we learn more about heaven because many people are confused when they watch TV shows, read books, or have their own ideas about what heaven is like.

Daddy, remember when Uncle Irving moved to Texas last year and we drove to see him in the summer?” “Yes, dear. It sure was hot, wasn’t it?” “Yes. But you were smart because you looked at the map and took the best way so we could see many things. And you and Mommy packed the coolers with ice and drinks. We were prepared.” “Yes. That was our motto in the Boy Scouts, ‘Be Prepared.’”

“Daddy, Mrs. Joy said we should be prepared, too.” “Prepared for what?”

“Prepared to go to heaven.” “How can anyone prepare to go to heaven, dear?”

“Like you did, Daddy, when you prepared to go to Uncle Irving’s. Remember, you looked on the computer and found that the best fishing place in Texas was near his town and you found so many other things that you did not know were there. You wanted to leave even sooner to go there.”

“Oh yes, honey. I am sure glad I learned more about his town. Someone at work told me that many people had seen Bigfoot there. I found out that was not true.” “Remember, Daddy when Mama was sick before the trip?” “Yes, she said because of the many good things that we learned about the town, she looked forward to going there and that helped her while she was ill.”

“Daddy, remember before we left how happy we were. You even helped Mama with the chores around the house and washed her car. And I helped you pick up your tools.” “Yes, I think we were looking forward to the trip and did more than we usually do.” “Daddy, as big as that town is, why do you think it just had one road in?” “Well dear, maybe that’s how they kept the town so nice. They could control who came in.” “That reminded me of what Mrs. Joy said about heaven. There is only one way to get in. Jesus said, ‘I’m the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’ She said the first step in preparing for heaven is trusting in Jesus.” “Did she tell you how to do that?”

“Yes. She said all of us have done bad things. And Jesus died to pay for our sins. Anyone can pray: ‘Thank You, Jesus for paying for my sins. I trust in You to be my Savior. Because You died for me, I will live for You. Amen’ “

WE WIN!

As Lou the angel and Gloria the newcomer to heaven were almost done gathering information for Lou's book, *What Other Angels Do*, Gloria surprised Lou when she said that she wanted to interview him for the book.

"Lou, while we have been gathering information and interviewing other angels for your book, it seems to me that we should hear from you, too." "Yes, Gloria. I have that part in the Biography section. Since the book is written for other angels, it will read something like: 'Lou is an angel like you. Created before God created the universe by the Word of His mouth, and joyfully serving Him in all that he is called to do. Lou continues to marvel in Who God is and all that He will continue to do for all eternity. He is especially amazed at God's salvation plan for mankind and continues to grow in his understanding of God's wisdom.' "

"Lou, you know about the plan of salvation that God has offered to every person in the world?" "Yes, Gloria. Recall in the Bible, Peter wrote that we angels are curious and amazed about God's salvation plan. 1 Pet 1:12 While God does not give us angels the privilege of sharing this important salvation message, He has used us to deliver many other messages to people like Daniel, Mary, the shepherds, and others. I remember one time when He sent me with a message to a tribal king in a jungle. The king was planning to attack a missionary compound during the night while the missionaries slept. They arrived with their torches and weapons. I actually did not say anything. I and some angels with me simply stood in front of the king and his warriors with our swords drawn, and the king and his men turned back. I think they got the message." "Lou, while the Bible is God's communication to man, there are several places from Genesis to Revelation where angels play a prominent role. Would you say it is important for angels to know the Bible, too?" "Yes, Gloria. Many angels do know the Word of God very well, including Satan and his fallen angels. In the Garden of Eden, Satan tried to trick Eve by misquoting God.

Satan even quoted Scripture when he was tempting Jesus. Luke 4 Of course, he was not successful.” “Lou, what would you say to other angels who would like to know your favorite part of the Bible?” “That’s easy. We win!! Besides our love for God, what keeps my angel friends and me fiercely fighting against the spiritual hosts of wickedness and serving Him continuously is that we know God has said we will be victorious over Satan and his angels.” “Lou, having interviewed many of the archangels and learned how other angels in heaven serve God - by carrying believers home to heaven when it’s time, being sent to comfort many people in times of sorrow and distress, and how other angels are sent to rescue, serve, and protect many of God’s children, not to mention the way angels conduct the incredible worship here in heaven - I believe the encouraging reminder that ‘WE WIN!’ would be an excellent ending to your wonderful book, What Other Angels Do.” “Gloria, you are correct. And I want to thank you so much for assisting me in bringing the book together.” “You’re welcome, Lou.”

While you and I may not be called upon by an angel to help write a book in heaven, the most important thing to know now is whether you are going to be in heaven. You can read many things in the Bible about angels, but you will never read about one telling someone else how to get to heaven. God leaves that special task for those who know what it’s like to know they are going to heaven. The Bible says we have all sinned and do not deserve to go to heaven, but that God so loved the whole world that He gave His Son Jesus to pay the penalty for our sins. The wages of sin is death. Jesus died in your place and mine, then rose again on the third day as He said He would do. Whoever trusts in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life in heaven. Right now, you can thank Jesus for paying for your sins and trust Him as your Savior. Tell Him from your heart: ‘Thank You Jesus for paying for my sins when You died and rose again. I accept Your gift of forgiveness and ask that You help me live for You. amen’

PATTY PEACE AND ABIGAIL ASSURANCE

As restrictions due to the pandemic were easing in our county and also from the place where Grandma lives, we called to be sure we could go see her. We were told we could visit, but we needed to make a reservation. A reservation? That sounded so formal. Did they promote Grandma to Queen of the facility? We made our reservation for the next day. Daddy tuned up his guitar, Mama rosined up the bow for her violin, and my sister and I practiced singing 'Amazing Grace' and 'In The Garden'. Grandma's room was not large, but it was sufficient for our visit. When we arrived the next day to see Grandma, she met us at the door. The lady behind the desk had plenty of questions about our health and even took our temperature. We were in for a nice surprise, too. Restrictions had been lifted even further, so we could visit with Grandma in a large room down the hall.

As we moved down the hallway carrying our instruments and talking with Grandma, we saw a number of people sitting at the door to their rooms. Others were resting before finishing their journey down the hall. Some smiled and asked where we were going. But what stood out the most to me, were the people with the long faces and sad expressions. I wondered what they were thinking and how I could help them smile. "Grandma, do you know if these people have heard that Jesus loves them?" "Yes dear, they have. Since I have been living here I have made sure of it. Many of them have been Christians for a long time. But during this season of separation from one another, their thoughts have gone to the past, instead of the future. Though they know Jesus as their eternal Savior, the old sin nature sometimes reminds us of our past mistakes. Then, seeds of doubt are planted in our minds concerning His forever love for us." "Grandma, has that ever happened to you?" "Yes, sweetheart, it did. After Grandpa went to be with Jesus, I began to wonder if I could have done some things differently. I even wondered if God took Grandpa away from me because I was bad. But Chaplain Bill reminded me that Satan is the accuser. God is the forgiver.

Jesus paid for all of my sins and God has cast all of them into the depths of the sea. Micah 7:19 God has and always will love us. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever trusts in Him is forgiven of the past and has a glorious future in heaven. God will never take that away.” “Grandma, maybe Mama could tell them of her two friends?” “Which friends?” “Patty Peace and Abigail Assurance. Mama says when she just can not remember a Bible verse, she can remember Patty Peace, who reminds her that Jesus said, ‘My peace I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.’ John 14:27 Even though He knew the cross was coming, Jesus had perfect peace. Patty Peace reminds us that, with the peace of Jesus, we can endure life’s trials and look forward to the joy of heaven. Hebrews 12:2 Mama’s other friend is Abigail Assurance. To see her smile when she talks about seeing Jesus face to face one day, is quite a sight to see. Especially, since she is blind. Abigail says her favorite hymn to sing is ‘Blessed Assurance.’ Mama told us that her name should be Abigail Re-assurance because she has so many of His promises memorized like: ‘I go to prepare a place for you and I’m coming back to take you there.’ John 14 And His last promise in the Bible, ‘Surely I am coming quickly.’ Revelation 22:20 She tells Mama, ‘If every Christian lived like Jesus were coming back today, they will not be so surprised when He does.’ “ “That’s true, dear. Jesus does not want anyone to be surprised at His return, but ready for His soon coming to take us home to heaven.” “Grandma, is it true that anyone can be forgiven by God no matter what they have done?” “Yes. The Bible says: ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ 1 John 1:9 And ‘all’ means all. When Jesus died for our sins, He died for all of them. Anyone can pray: ‘Dear Jesus, thank You for paying for all of my sins when You died and rose again. Thank You for Your peace in this life and Your blessed assurance that heaven is my forever home with You. Now help me to live each day expecting Your return and to tell others about the peace I now have. In Jesus’ name, Amen.’

REJOICE IN THE LORD!

As the angels stood at heaven's gates greeting people, one angel said to another, "Charlie! What's the hold up!" "It's incredible, Leon! So many people have asked Jesus to be their Savior that there is a line to get into heaven!"

Wouldn't that be great! The only place you will ever find a line to get into heaven is in cartoons and joke books. Even with those, the comments are usually far from accurate. On average, 163,898 people are leaving this world and entering eternity each day. While not everyone is going to heaven, the thousands who are entering heaven's gates every day are doing so with rejoicing!

Heaven is so certain for those who trust in Jesus as their Savior that we need not wait until we enter heaven's gates to begin rejoicing. The apostle Paul said, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" Philippians 4:4

Paul said those words while sitting in a Roman prison for living as a Christian.

Perhaps, you are living in a situation today that does not seem like a time to rejoice. The loss of a friend or mate. A time when the government tells you what to do and when to do it. A time when physical abilities are limited, financial choices are few, and personal decisions are dependent on life's circumstances and people you may not even know. I agree with you! The apostle Paul agrees with you! More importantly, God agrees with you! More accurately, we agree with God that things are not as they should be. But not long from now, God will make all things right. His plan from eternity past has not failed. Instead, it is on track and picking up speed as we see the truth of the Bible being lived out before us.

The apostle Paul said, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!"

How could Paul say that? He who had been beaten with rods, whipped to the point of bleeding, shipwrecked more than once, floating in the Mediterranean sea with dangerous sharks around, put in jail a number of times, hunted by people who did not like him preaching the Gospel, stoned with rocks and left for dead, besides all the rest!

2 Corinthians 11 How could Paul rejoice?

One day, perhaps while his body lay beneath that pile of stones, Paul was caught up to Paradise, the third heaven, the home of God. 2 Corinthians 12:4 He heard things and saw things that God did not allow him to share with others. Though he was not permitted to tell others about what he saw and heard in heaven, he did have reason to live by the words, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" God gave Paul a preview of heaven. With that in his heart, Paul traveled everywhere God sent him to share the great news that, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life in heaven.' John 3:16

Paul endured his share of life's hardships as his body became physically weaker, friends abandoned him, even some in the church would try to get others to turn against him. But Paul continued serving the Lord with every ounce of energy that God gave him. While he sat in prison not knowing what tomorrow would bring he said, 'For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' Philippians 1:23

Paul lived with a now-then mentality. 'Now, I will live for Christ - Then, I will live with Christ.'

That day did come when Paul was in prison for the last time. The executioner opened his cell door and said, "C'mon Paul, let's go!" Paul shuffled along, dragging his prisoner chains. "What's that tune you're humming, Paul?" "Oh that's just a little hymn called, It Will Be Worth It All When We See Jesus."

Perhaps, you have been through many trials in your life. Maybe you are in one today. God knows - and He does care. Each person born faces one serious problem. We are separated from God by our wall of sin debt. But in His love for you, God sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the price for your sins and mine to clear the way to heaven. If you're sorry for those words and deeds in your life that have kept you from Him, tell God from your heart: 'God, I'm a sinner. I'm sorry. I know Jesus paid for my sins when He died and rose again. Help me to live every day 'Rejoicing in the Lord' until I am home with You forever. In Jesus' name, Amen'

ANGELS IN AWE

“William, remember when Jesus created us?” “Oh what a moment that was! My first memory is that I was among countless other angels and you were one of them. Yet it was as if Jesus was looking at us individually. Each of us knew our name when He spoke to us and we understood why He created us. Immediately, we began to joyfully serve in His heavenly kingdom.” “Do you recall your reaction at seeing Jesus create a universe filled with galaxies, stars, planets, and all the rest?” Colossians 1:16 “Oh I certainly do! To hear Jesus say, ‘Let there be light’ Genesis 1:3, then poof! To see that whole sphere filled with dazzling light, even before He created the sun or the moon, was simply amazing! Then He continued His creative work.” “How did you react?” “My reaction? I was among all the angels who shouted for joy at what He was doing. Job 38:7 Solely, by the word of His mouth, He created almost all of it.” “ ‘Almost’ all of it? What do you mean, William?” “Well, recall with me. In the first five days God spoke and it was done. He created light to divide the day and night, He created the heavens, the earth with trees, plants, and oceans. Not stopping there, He spoke the sun, moon and stars into existence. Simply by His word, He even created all sea life of various sizes and sorts. Birds flew through the air and sang from the trees. Land animals, tame and beautiful, came into being because He said, ‘Let it be so.’ But then God paused and said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image.’ Genesis 1:26 Then God tenderly created man not by His word, but by forming and shaping him from the dust of the ground, and breathing into him the breath of life. Genesis 2:7” “Oh yes. That was quite a moment, indeed. As our shouts of joy went up at the making of God’s crowning creation, I knew God had a definite plan for man. To be on the right side of God, Who has always existed, is all-powerful, all-knowing, and genuinely creative, has never been disappointing for me.” “I know what you mean. As angels, we were created by Jesus for one reason: to do His will. He has never assigned me to do something that did not prove rewarding.”

“Yes. And those who recognize our obedience to Him are certainly thankful that we continually obey His word.” “I agree. King David acknowledged our presence more than once, and our obedience to God. He wrote about us when he said, ‘Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.’ Psalm 103:20 One day, David just may learn how much fun we have been having obeying God’s commands.” “Not only David, but think of the millions and millions of lives we have interacted with day in and day out since God created Adam.” “Yes. Many never knew that we were ever there or that God had sent us to them in a time of need. I believe some of the untold joy of heaven soon to come is going to be mingling with God’s people as they tell of the times they knew of our presence. And us telling many of them how God sent us at just the right moment to serve, rescue, protect, or just be there.” Hebrews 1:14

Has an angel been present some time in your life? It is certainly possible. God’s angels working in our lives is but one of the many ways He demonstrates His love and care for each person. But His greatest example of all is when He sent not an angel, but His own dear Son, Jesus. While God posted angels to keep Adam and Eve from going back into the Garden of Eden after they sinned, He sent Jesus to make a way into heaven for each person. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6 Is Jesus present in your life now? While angels are sent to us by Jesus, He will not come into your life unless you invite Him in. He certainly desires to be the center of your life. For all things were created through Him and for Him, including you. He created you to have an everlasting relationship with Him that begins here and continues in heaven. You can invite Him into your life now. Talk to Jesus from your heart: ‘Dear Jesus, I take You at Your word that You love me. That You paid for all my sin when You died in my place and rose again. Thank You for creating me to have a never ending relationship with You. In Your name I pray, Amen’

DOING YOUR PART

Can you remember the first job that you had? Perhaps, you grew up on a farm where, before you even began school, you were already gathering eggs from the clucking feathery birds out in the chicken coop. Or maybe you found your fingers wrapped around Betsy's udders, hoping she would not kick over the bucket of milk. The first task you may have been given responsibility for was making your bed or cleaning up your room. While these tasks may not have been on your most fun-to-do list, you later realized how important they were to instilling a sense of responsibility and accomplishment in one's life.

I remember when Grandpa told me that every job is important to do, because if that job was not done it would affect something else and that would affect something else and so on. He said it is important that each person does what he or she can and should do. Grandpa told me that during the war some of the soldiers felt bad because their friends and others were sent to fight where the action was most dangerous. In part, the reason some of the soldiers were feeling this way, was the idea that they, too, were most needed where it was the most dangerous - and that is where they wanted to be, fighting alongside the others. Some of the soldiers remained at their bases in the United States to make sure that our country was kept safe and the bases well maintained. Others who went to war were put in charge of keeping track of supplies, repairing equipment, and preparing food. Had any of these been neglected, the war could have been lost.

Women went to work in the factories and shipyards. People volunteered with organizations all across the country. There was a silent call of unity, self-sacrifice, and a sense of pride within each person to do what they could for the cause of our nation and freedom's way of life.

While visiting with Grandpa recently, he told me how he can see, within many of the caregivers and nurses where he lives, the same fierce determination that he saw in those who helped fight and win the war years ago.

While not all of them are on the front lines of danger fighting and dealing with the wounded, each one of them is so important where they have been assigned in order to win the 'war.' Many are doing more work under changing circumstances than they had been doing before the 'war' began. We appreciate each 1 of them!

As Christians, we too battle with unseen malevolent forces. While viruses can be seen in the science laboratory, no microscope - however powerful - can visualize the power of invisible spiritual forces. But God has given us this promise:

'He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.' 1 John 4:4

Why does God give us such power? He knows we will face spiritual attacks and resistance and will need His assistance in serving Him wherever He has placed us. God has something for each one of us to do and no task is too minimal.

After the war was over, it was discovered that some soldiers had not done their part to secure the victory. While it did not change the outcome of the war, wouldn't it feel better to have been part of the victory? As Christians, Jesus has already secured the victory for us. Paul said, 'Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' 1 Corinthians 15:57

Since we know from the Bible how it will end, it should encourage us to 'be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.' 1 Corinthians 15:58

It is important that each of us does what he or she can and should do. That has never been more true than in the days in which we live. But no amount of good deeds, hard work or self-sacrifice will secure for you the victory that God wants you to have. The ultimate victory is found in Jesus, the Son of God, who died for your sins and rose again so you could live in heaven with Him forever. If you desire to walk in victory with Jesus, to serve Him by doing your part where He has placed you, and to live with Him forever in heaven, tell Him from your heart: 'Jesus, thank You for paying for all of my sins when You died on the cross and rose again. Come into my life and help me to live for You.' Amen

REFLECTING THE LIGHT OF THE LORD

“Henry, I know God created mankind to have a special relationship with Himself, but I can not help to think sometimes that He created them for our enjoyment, too. After all, when He sends one of us angels from heaven to intervene some way in their life, we experience first-hand His creation close up.”

“You know, Harry, I was thinking something like that the other day, too. Sometimes, when I arrive to accomplish what God has sent me to do, I am amazed at how closely some of His children resemble Jesus.” “Well, it was Jesus that told them they should become like Him.” “Yes. And the Apostle Paul reminded them, too, ‘Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.’” 1 Corinthians 11:1

“Interestingly enough, the more like Jesus they become, the brighter their spiritual light shines. Not only to us, but to those around them. Remember when Jesus told them, ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.’” Matthew 5:16 “Yes. Jesus gave them that command right after He taught them the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount.” “So the more they live like Jesus, the brighter their light will shine.” “Exactly.”

“Can you imagine, Henry, if the over two billion Christians on earth were continuing to become more and more like Jesus - how spiritually bright the earth would be? “No doubt, Harry. That is one-third of the entire world’s population. That kind of brightness, if it were physical, would rival the brightest star in all the universe.” “Yes. But spiritual light is much more powerful than physical light! The sun, stars, and all light-emitting objects will each fade away. But spiritual light is everlasting because it comes from Jesus. While mankind is using physical light to cut metal and even to operate on people, it will never penetrate the spiritual darkness that their world is shrouded in. You and I see it all the time, Henry, because we’re angels.” “Yes. But just imagine, if two billion of God’s children started becoming more and more like Jesus. Darkness would begin to run out of places to hide.”

“The reflective light of the Lord would change so many things, from individual lives to the whole world. Each and every Christian would make such a tremendous difference if they were becoming more like Christ.”

“Maybe if they knew that it was possible to shine that powerfully bright they would do it for the competition?” “Oh sure...like those two ladies who tried to outdo the other with their casseroles on potluck night?” “Oh my, yes. Who would have thought that God’s children would have a church split over deciding whose casserole was best?” “No! God does not want them shining their light in competition. Jesus said, ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.’” “That’s right, it’s for their good and God’s glory.” “Still, when they shine their light with the right motive of bringing glory to God, they are storing up treasure in heaven. Matthew 6:19 Everything they do for the Lord will be very well compensated on that day when Jesus gathers them all together to see how well they let their light shine.” “Oh Harry, that reminds me of that little girl that our transporting angel friends brought home to heaven recently. She had been in the hospital so sick and thin. The pain seemed to be so much for such a little girl. Yet every time a nurse or doctor would come in she would smile and tell them about Jesus - until she finally drew her last earthly breath. Then she entered the gates of heaven joyfully singing: ‘This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine! This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine! Let it shine! Let it shine! Let it shine!’”

Are you shining your light for the Lord? It’s really His light we are reflecting. The more we polish our lives by living for Him, the brighter the light will shine in this world and bring glory to God. To begin reflecting His light, you must receive His light. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” John 8:12 To follow Jesus means to receive Him as your Savior. Tell Him now: ‘Jesus, I’ve been walking in the dark. I believe You paid for my sins when You died and rose again. Help me to reflect Your light.’

GRANDMA'S GLOVES

“Grandma, you sure have a sizable collection of gloves. What are all these gloves for?” “They are reminders of various times when the Lord has helped me or used me to help others over the years. And to tell you the truth, I still use them today. That’s why they are kept together for quick access.”

“This one sure is soft, Grandma. What is it for?” “This one is a silk glove. It reminds me of those moments that I have needed a special touch from God. During those times, He has sent a caring friend to sit, pray, and be with me. And I truly believe there was a time when He sent an angel to be with me because that was the comfort I needed at that time.” “Grandma, do you ever wear the glove?” “Yes, I do, when I am going to visit a friend who is having a particularly hard time. I put on the silk glove and pray that God would wear me like a silk glove and use me to touch that person in a soft and specific way. To bring comfort to them as He has for me. Then, I put the glove back and go visit the person.”

“Grandma, are these boxing gloves?” “Yes, they are, dear.” “Why do you have Bible verses written on them?” “You can not live the Christian life without them. The temptations, trials, and spiritual battles of this world are many. Our best example in handling those is Jesus. Every time the devil tried to get Him to sin, Jesus quoted Scripture. The devil finally left Him. Matthew 4:1-11 We can have victory over the devil and send him packing if we have God’s Word handy. I chose the boxing gloves because I could not find a sword!” Ephesians 6:17

“Wow, Grandma. These are very pretty gloves. What do they remind you of?” “These are velvet gloves. They remind me of a couple important things. One is the strong Christian character we should possess. They look soft and appealing on the outside, yet they are made strong and durable. Likewise, people should find us easy to approach. And fortified from the inside with the strength of the Spirit, determined to do God’s will.” “I can see how that is important. What else do they remind you of, Grandma?”

“They remind me that people in royal families wear velvet gloves. As a child of God, the King of kings, I am royalty. The Spirit Who strengthens me, bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” Romans 8:16

“Grandma, I know what these are. These are leather gloves. Daddy uses a pair when working outside. They sure look like you have used them many times. They are almost worn through.” “Yes, they are. I have gone through so many leather gloves I probably have a cow named after me!” “What do they remind you of, Grandma?” “They remind me that there is plenty of work to be done for the Lord while I am still here. That’s one thing about getting older, dear. You no longer need to choose from a hundred things to do. You should gladly do what you can! Of course, there is always plenty to do.” “What do you like to do, Grandma?” “I like to tell people what the Lord has done and keeps doing for me. I like to slip on the gardening gloves and plant Gospel seeds by sharing with people what Jesus has done for all people. That He paid for our sins when He died for them and rose again to life. That whoever trusts in Him shall be saved.” “Do you remember when you did that, Grandma?” “Yes, I do. A friend planted a Gospel seed in my heart. I was driving home when it hit me how much God loves me. I pulled the car over and prayed: ‘Jesus, thank You for Your love for me. I know You paid for all my sin when You died in my place and rose again. I’m taking off the driving gloves of my life and giving them to You. Amen.’ “

“Grandma, do you think we will wear gloves in heaven?” “Do you see these white gloves here? They are worn in royal parades. And when The Saints Go Marching In to heaven, I plan on wearing mine!”

Eternally more important than having your hand in any glove, is to have Jesus in your heart. You can invite Him in now. Tell Him: ‘Jesus, thank You for loving me. Thank You for paying for all of my sin when You died in my place and rose again. I invite You into my heart as my Savior. Give me the gloves to serve You. Amen’

MAKE THE LION FLEE!

“What do you think they are, Leroy?” “There’s no doubt. Those are the tracks of the biggest lion I have ever seen.” “What do you think we should do, trap him and take him to an animal preserve?” “Listen! Do you hear those roars!?” “I think everyone for miles around heard those roars!” “We can not trap him. He is too ferocious and his appetite too great. He is a roaring lion just seeking someone to devour. We can not apprehend or trap him, but we must be prepared for any attack he may purpose for us.” 1 Peter 5:8-9

“Leroy, do you think if we just pretend he is not there he’ll go away?” “No. He knows that we’re aware of his presence.” “Maybe we should just run away.” “Oh no. He would surely make sport of us as a cat with a mouse. We must be steadfast against any attack and resist him continually.” 1 Peter 5:9

“Certainly, he can not be everywhere at once. Let’s take our families and move away from such a malicious beast.” “Impossible. He has trained those who follow him to be like him whenever and wherever they can. We must be unshakable and withstand him and his cohorts every time.” “Can we ever have rest from such a one?” “Indeed! You see, if we resist his various ways and attempts to attack us, he can not have control over us. Then he becomes disheartened and will flee from us. James 4:7 He will prowl elsewhere and endeavor to devour those who pretend he is not there or those who try to take flight from his presence. But we must prepare!” “Leroy, how does he attack? Does he run at full force and pounce upon his unsuspecting prey?” “At times, that is his method. But I have heard many triumphant stories about Christians using the Word of God to strongly fortify their weak areas. And when the lion attempted to leap upon his prey, he wonderfully smashed himself on the one who was inevitably resistant to him. Demoralized, the lion flees in search of one not so prepared for him and his ways.

Still, because he has been stalking and engaging people for so long, he knows that certain ones will not build upon their sure foundation, the Rock of Ages, Jesus. In these he delights to taunt and control in various ways.”

“By what other means is he known to use in order to inflict harm on God’s children?” “God’s Word, the Bible, informs us of many ways the lion uses to inflict all the damage he can in the lives of all he encounters, especially God’s children.

Jesus refers to the lion as a liar. John 8:44 In times of trial, he will whisper that we are alone and no one cares. But our ever present God has told us, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ Hebrews 13:5 As the world is portrayed with violence, evil rulers, and instability, the lion says we should be fearful. But God says, ‘Fear not, for I am with you’. Isaiah 41:10 The Psalmist reminds us: ‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me.’ Psalm 23:4 The lion knows that each of us has weaknesses somewhere, so he will try to exploit those areas for assault. He will say: ‘You need something you don’t have in order to be happy.’ But God promises: The very temporary things of this world can not compare to the eternal riches of heaven that He has waiting for those who love and trust Him. 1 Corinthians 2:9 When our temporary earthly bodies ache, our legs give way, and the doctor says, ‘One more test,’ the lion shouts: ‘Your best days are over!’ God says: In the twinkling of an eye He is going to change our bodies to live in heaven with Him forever. 1 Corinthians 15:52 There we will do things we never thought possible in the greatest days of our youth!” “Leroy, how can people fortify their life against the lion and make him flee?”

“Whoever will trust in Jesus can begin to fortify their life against the lion. Jesus said, ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.’ John 3:16

Anyone can pray: ‘Thank You Jesus for paying for all my sins when You died in my place on the cross and rose again. Begin to fortify my life as I trust in You always. Help me to resist the devil and watch him flee. Amen’”

BORN INTO GOD'S FAMILY

“Ha! ha! ha!” “What is it, William?” “It’s the agonizing scowl of Satan every time someone trusts in Jesus as their Savior!”

“Oh yes. I have seen that look on his face. An expression no one would have imagined if they saw him the way God originally created him - handsome beyond compare. I’m so glad we did not join him when he was recruiting other angels to revolt against our great Creator. Over the centuries, I have noticed that there are only two things that bring about that sour expression on Satan’s face: when someone trusts in Jesus as their Savior and when he thinks about his future.”

“Benjamin, why does he get so upset when someone asks Jesus to forgive their sins and be their Savior?” “Every time any person trusts in Jesus as their Lord, the size of Satan’s family shrinks.” “Satan has a family? You mean all the other angels that followed him in rebelling against God?” “No. Those angels will always be with him throughout eternity, separated from almighty God. Matt 25:41 Satan’s family consists of each human who has not trusted in Jesus as their Savior. When each one of God’s greatest creation, mankind, is born physically he or she is born with a nature that leans toward doing what is wrong. They are born into Satan’s family. No matter how hard any one of them tries, they can not be good enough to be in God’s family. Even the religious leaders of Jesus’ day, who thought that they were quite good above all other people, found that they, too, fell short of God’s standard of being perfect. Jesus told them, ‘You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.’” John 8:44 “Yes. I remember Satan smiling that day because he could even count some religious leaders as being part of his family.” “But do you remember that one particular religious leader who believed Jesus?” “Oh yes. His name was Nicodemus. Jesus told him he needed to be born again. He was one of the first people to hear Jesus say, ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.’” John 3

“Benjamin, even though we have seen it happen millions of times over the centuries, I have not grown tired of seeing what happens when someone trusts in Jesus

and is born into the family of God. Scowling Satan has to relinquish another member of his family into the glorious arms of the Lord. God had the apostle John write: ‘As many as received Him (Jesus), to them He gave the right to become children of God,’” John 1:12 “William, can Satan ever take anyone back into his family?” “Wonderfully impossible, Benjamin! Jesus promised, ‘My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.’ John 10:29-30 Almighty God, Maker of heaven and earth, the One who quells the sea, raises the dead, and promises victory in the lives of His children, is the One who keeps His children eternally safe and secure in His loving, caring hand forever.”

“William, do you remember how Jesus taught His disciples how to stay in touch with their heavenly Father every day? How to give Him thanks and praise, and turn their needs and concerns over to Him?” “Yes. I remember Jesus taught them what He Himself often did, pray. Jesus told them they could begin their prayers by saying: ‘Our Father’. What a reminder of the close relationship God desires with each person.” “William, can anyone just start praying to God?”

“First, they must desire to leave Satan’s family and become a child of God. Then, the person needs to know that Jesus said, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’ John 14:6 If any person believes that Jesus paid for all of their sins when He died on the cross and rose again, they can tell Jesus: ‘Thank You Jesus for dying in my place. Save me and adopt me into the Father’s forever family. And because You died for me, I will live for You.’ But as angels, we are not allowed to tell humans the Good News. That is something God has given His dear children the exclusive right and power to do for Him.” “I hope many more of God’s children decide to show their love for their Father by telling other people, soon. I enjoy seeing that scowl on Satan’s face!”

GOD'S WORD HELPS US

I can remember coming home from Sunday School one day feeling overwhelmed. Being overwhelmed at the age of eight was not a welcome disposition. Our new Sunday School teacher, Mrs. Chafer, said it was important to not only learn what the Bible says, but to memorize some of it, too. It seemed like the Bible was so big, and I was so small. Just the week before, Mrs. Chafer told us that God used forty men to write the Bible, over 1500 years, in three different languages. She said the Bible contains prophecy, poetry, proverbs, history, and more. Just the thought of trying to memorize any of it made my brain feel like I ate ice cream that was too cold. When I turned down a slice of Mama's apple pie after church that day, she could tell I wasn't myself. She asked me, "Honey, what's wrong?" "Nothing," I replied. "Tell Mama what's wrong and you'll start to feel better." I knew that was true. Whenever I talked to Mama, I always felt better - even if I was already feeling good. "Mama, do you think you could memorize our city's phone book?" "No. I don't think so. Why?" "Mrs. Chafer wants us to learn all those lists of names in the Bible." "What did she say?" "She said that the Bible is the Word of God. That we should know what it says and memorize some of it." "Well, I tell you what. I don't have all those names memorized either." "You don't! But you know so much about what's in the Bible." "Yes. And I continue to learn. I'm just saving all those lists of names for last. But I agree with Mrs. Chafer. It is important to know what God says in His Word and to commit some of it to your heart." "Why do I need to do that when I can just look in my Bible?" "For one, you do not always have your Bible with you. Even when you do, it is much easier to have Scripture in your mind when you need it most. Do you know who has much, if not all, of the Bible memorized?" "Mrs. Chafer?" "She probably knows a great amount of God's Word. But I was thinking of someone who always misuses God's Word." "Do you mean Satan?" "Yes, I do. Satan twisted God's Word in the Garden of Eden in order to deceive Adam and Eve." Genesis 3:1

‘Mama, didn’t Jesus call Satan a liar?’ “Yes. Jesus called Satan not only a liar, but the father of lies. John 8:44 In his attempt to keep Jesus from fulfilling God’s will, Satan misused Scripture to tempt Jesus to do what was wrong.” Matthew 4:1-11

‘And Jesus quoted God’s Word correctly and Satan left Him alone that time, right?’ “That’s right!” ‘So if I know God’s Word, when I am tempted to do what’s wrong I’ll be ready to do what’s right.’ “That is certainly true!”

‘Mama, do you think Satan is the only angel who knows the Bible?’ “No, I don’t. Angels are very intelligent beings. In the Bible, God even used them at times to deliver His Word to people. You could say that some angels are quoted in the Bible as they bring God’s Word to people.” ‘Like when the angel Gabriel told Mary she was going to be the mother of Jesus?’ Luke 1:31 “Yes. That’s right.” ‘Mama, do you think it’s possible that Satan misquoted God and deceived the angels who decided to follow him in rebellion against God?’ “We do not know for sure, but it is possible. Tell me dear, what do you think of when there is trouble?”

‘Psalm 46:1, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.’

“What do you think about when you need strength?” ‘Philippians 4:13, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.’ “Where did everything around us come from?” ‘Genesis 1:1, In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’ “See, you have already been memorizing Scripture.” ‘Yes. I guess I have. And it has been helping me, too!’ “What do you think is the most memorized verse in the Bible?” ‘That’s easy, Mama. John 3:16, ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.’ “Is that verse important?” ‘Yes! It tells every person that God loves them so much that He sent Jesus to keep us from perishing.’ “What do people need to do?” ‘Anyone who believes what God said can pray: ‘Jesus, thank You for paying for my sins when You died for me and rose again. Save me and help me to live for You. Amen.’ ‘Mama, memorizing Scripture is a great idea! I’ll have some apple pie now, please.’

SET FREE

“Come on, Eli. We could do all that He can do. Besides, there are more of us than Him.” “But Lucifer, He created us to serve Him and to enjoy His presence. I actually do like this arrangement.” “Eli, God created us to maximize our potential. He does not actually expect us to serve Him for all eternity. Haven’t you noticed how He created us angels to think for ourselves? He has designated certain angels like me to be in charge of various ranks of other angels so we can accomplish great things. We can be like Him! We could be greater than that!” Isaiah 14:13

“You really think so, Lucifer? I will talk to Michael about this plan.” “Don’t talk to Michael. That archangel probably thinks he is hot stuff. Always doing God’s will every time God tells him to do some great task. He’ll ruin everything if you tell him our plan. Let’s go, Eli. We need to talk to the rest of the angels about gaining our freedom and being like God.”

How was Lucifer able to get one-third of the heavenly host of angels to follow him in rebellion against God? As an archangel, did he order them to do it? Like a slick salesman, did he sell them on the idea by appealing to their pride?

While the Bible does not tell us how Lucifer was able to bring this about, we are told that in their failed attempt they lost their positions and places in heaven. Lucifer, whose name meant Day Star, was now called Satan, which means Adversary. He is the adversary of God, humanity, and all that is good according to God. He is not even the friend of those who worship him and follow rituals that honor and uplift him. Even on their behalf, Satan will accuse them before God.

In the name of freedom, Satan entraps many people. As the god of this age, he is a spiritual slave owner. He has blinded the minds of many to the gospel of Christ, which truly sets people free. 2 Corinthians 4:4

As Jesus said, “If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” John 8:36

Having been released from prison, Big Jim was headed back to his home town. He was not only a free man from prison, but he was a free man in the Son, Jesus. At a Prison Fellowship program, the god of this age, Satan, lost his grip on Big Jim. His mind was no longer blinded and he trusted in Jesus to set him free.

As he stepped down from the Greyhound bus, he looked around at all that had changed. One thing was still the same, O'I Dan's Tavern right across from the bus station. As the sun was setting, the lights were on, and the air was warm. Perfect excuse for a drink. Big Jim smiled and said, "Get ye behind me, Satan. I've been set free by the Son!"

He walked to the place where his Mama now lived. The girl at the desk asked, "Can I help you, Sir?" He said, "Yes. I'm here to see my Mother." "You must be Big Jim. We've been expecting you. Follow me." As the young girl and Big Jim entered in, Mama could not sit up but managed to grin. She said with a frail voice, "Hello son. It's been so long." He leaned over and gave a gentle hug. "Hello Mama, I've missed you so much." Ever so slowly she said in reply: "Son, I want you to know that I never gave up. Offering prayers for you from morning til dusk." Pausing a moment, she continued to say: "I asked the Good Lord to help me remain, so I could see that my prayers were never in vain. Now, I'm going to His presence where I will always be free, oh how my heart soars knowing you'll be following me." "Mama, I remembered the prayer that you taught me to pray. 'Dear God, I'm a slave to a sin nature; how I want to be free. I know how Your Son, Jesus, died for me. Help me to walk in Your light and to do what's right. And thank You forever for setting me free.'" At that, Mama went to be with Jesus.

The freedom and forgiveness that Jesus offers is eternal. Have you accepted them for yourself and been set free? You can pray now: 'Jesus, I'm a sinner by nature. Thank You for paying the price for my sins when You died in my place and rose again. Set me free and help me to live for You.'

As Jesus said, "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." John 8:36

OUR TEMPORARY TENTS

“Daddy, I am so glad we went camping before all the fires started in the forests.”
 “Me too, Suzanne. I think we made some wonderful memories we will not soon forget.”
 “You mean like the raccoons who came into our camp the first night and made off with our trash bag full of scraps?” “Yes, that is certainly one memory. Especially when the raccoons brought back the stuff they did not want!”

“Mama was quick to video that moose who came walking through our camp, too. He walked in like we were not even there. He sure was big!” “I felt sorry for that moose though when he stepped on your brother’s canteen full of water and crushed it. Your brother yelled so loud that poor moose did not know which way to go.” “Even though Bobby yelled, the moose did not run. That moose just turned his big body this way - then that, and walked away just as slowly as he came in. Daddy, do you think God knew that moose would step on Bobby’s canteen?” “Yes, Suzanne. God knew that would happen.” Isaiah. 46:10

“Do you think God ever gets bored since He always knows what is going to happen?” “No, He does not get bored, dear. Remember when you gave your friend that special doll as a gift? Did you know she was going to be excited?” “Yes.” “Did that make you bored?” “No. I wanted to see her happy.” “God enjoys watching our responses, too.” “But Daddy, what about when something bad happens? Does God enjoy watching that?” “What pleases God is not the situation, but when we respond by turning to Him and trusting in Him when bad things occur.” Psalm 91:2 “I can remember that day when I was playing hop-scotch with my friends. That boy delivering newspapers ran into me with his bike and knocked me down. It hurt so much. You heard me when I started crying and you came to me right away.” “Of course I did, because I love you.” “Thank you, Daddy. I depended on you to help me. I did not know what you were going to do, but I wanted you there with me.” “And God wants to be with us, Suzanne. He promises, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” Hebrews 13:5

“Another memory from our camping trip I will surely remember is when the tent came down on us!” “Yes. That is funny now, but at the time I did not know what had happened. Did the moose come back? Were the raccoons reacting because we had not left any food out for them? We had that tent in the family for so many years. All the seams just could not hold together any longer with the tension of the ropes. Split! Flop! Crash!”

“When we told Grandpa what happened, he said that we are all living in temporary tents, just some are older than others. Do you know what he meant?”

“Yes. In the Bible, Paul and Peter refer to our bodies as temporary tents that we live in. The older we get, the more worn our bodies become with aches, pains, and problems.” “So when Jesus says whoever trusts in Him has everlasting life, (John 3:16) is He going to give each person a new tent every time the old one wears out?” “No. He is actually going to give each person a brand new body that will last forever. It will never grow weary, ache, or wear out. Paul says that Jesus is going to transform our body, that it may be conformed to His glorious resurrection body. Phil. 3:21 After Jesus rose from the grave, He passed through the stone that guarded His tomb and appeared to His disciples, who were in a locked room. Luke 24:38-39 He walked, talked, and ate with His disciples for 40 days. Over 500 people saw Him. 1 Cor. 15:6 We are going to do all of those things and more with Jesus forever when we go to heaven.” “Daddy, what is Jesus doing now?” “Before He went back to heaven, Jesus said, ‘I go to prepare a place for you. And if I prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you there so you will be with Me always.’ John 14:2-3 God promised to send Jesus and He did. Micah 5:2 God promised He would pay for our sins and He did. Isaiah 53 God promised He would rise from the dead and He did. Psalm 16 If Jesus promised He is coming again for those who trust Him, He will. Anyone can tell God from their heart, ‘Thank You Jesus for paying for my sins when You died and rose again. I do trust You to save me and prepare a place in heaven for me. Amen’ “

THE GATHERING IN THE SKY

When good friends and family move away, what is it we often say? ‘Don’t forget to write’, ‘I’m just a text away’, ‘Call when you can.’ Sometimes, busy lives, time, and forgetfulness seem to prevent those actions from happening. But what if those we think most of never had to move away or even pass away. What if those we love making up with after a few disrespectful words, were always close by.

When we ponder the heavenly relationships we will treasure with those who have meant the most to us in this life, as well as the friendships we will develop with those who have lived over the centuries, heaven continues to be the place we most long to be. Why heaven? Because heaven is the only place that is free from sin, which has ruined everything that it has touched. All of God’s marvelous creation has been infested with sin. The apostle Paul says, ‘the whole creation groans and labors.’ Romans 8:22 Earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, fires, mudslides, lightning strikes, and so much more are evidence of a universe that knows the effects of sin.

In a similar way, our earthly bodies suffer and groan with headaches, asthma, arthritis, bronchitis, chronic pain, back aches, heart attacks, diarrhea, and thousands of other ailments because of sin. Perhaps you understand this all too well. If there is no sin in heaven, and God promises a home there with Him for all who trust in Jesus as their Savior, something must happen to these bodies of ours to allow us to live there forever. And indeed, God has promised to change our bodies in preparation for eternal fellowship with Him in heaven.

Upon the reading of Lady Emily’s Living Will, The Royal Court made an official ruling to remove Lady Emily from life support. Within a day, she drew her last earthly breath. As the angels were escorting her home to heaven, she exclaimed, “I can see! I can see, again! I can see you angels! I can see heaven’s gate! My wheelchair is gone and I can move!” “Yes, Ma’am. God always keeps His word.”

“Leon, she sure is excited about being free from her earthly body and being clothed in the body she is now in.” “Yes, she is Jonathan. I can remember when I

and some other angels were sent to escort a family of Swiss yodelers home to heaven after a mountain avalanche had crushed their house. You should have heard them on the way home to heaven!" "I'm sure that was quite something to hear. But I know what is really going to sound exciting." "Yes. I do, too -- at that moment when the Lord descends from heaven, an archangel gives a shout, one of our angel friends blows the trumpet, and millions of Christians are caught up in the air to meet the Lord and celebrate their face-to-face unbroken fellowship with the Lord forever." 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 "That is going to be a great moment!" "Certainly, that must bring a measure of comfort to the Christians who are suffering today in temporary bodies that are wearing out or afflicted in some way." "Yes, I am sure it does. I can remember what else God told the apostle Paul to write: 'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.'

1 Corinthians 15:52

"While we do not know when God is going to tell us to go with Jesus and gather His children, it will be a privilege for us to be part of it." "Yes. I agree."

Will you be part of the great gathering in the sky? Do you have a longing to see loved ones again that have gone before you or those you have lost track of? Jesus has told each person how to make a reservation for heaven, which includes the grand reunion, but more importantly, our forever relationship with Him Who loves you so much. He demolished the only obstacle that would keep you out of heaven, your sin debt. He paid the price by dying in your place and rising again to life by the power of God. 'The wages of sin is death' Romans 6:23 He died that death in your place. You can pray right now: 'Jesus, I am sorry for all my sins. Thank You for paying for each one when You died in my place and rose again. You are now my Savior. Help me to live for You each day. Amen.'

THE LIGHT OF LIFE

“Quick, Bob! Come this way!” Crash!! “Whoa! That was too close for comfort!” “Yes, I agree with you. That is probably the biggest tree I have seen come down so far. How long have you been fighting these fires, Bob?” “It seems like all year. In the history of our state there have never been so many fires raging at once. I think we are lucky to have found this cave when we did, Chad.” “Yes. Me, too. So tell me, when did you begin fighting fires?” “I was eleven years old when I fought my first fire.” “Eleven? How did you manage that?” “Well, I thought I wanted to start smoking like my dad. So I got one of his cigarettes and some matches and climbed up to my tree house. After lighting the cigarette, I nearly choked on the smoke, so I set the cigarette down to read a comic book. The cigarette must have rolled off the tree house floor onto the dry grass below. I was reading the comic book, when I heard my mother scream, ‘Fire! Fire!’

I was able to jump onto our house from the tree house, climb down a ladder, and turn on the hose and put out the fire.” “That’s quite something, Bob.” “Yes. But the real fire came later when my father learned what I did. My bottom felt like it was on fire!” “And now here you are, twenty years later, fighting forest fires!”

“Where do you think this cave leads?” “I don’t know. But we are certainly not going to get out the way we came in. That big tree made sure of that. Let’s see what we can find. Having these lights on our helmets may prove handy.” “Well, since I never had to use the light on my helmet fighting fires outside, I took the batteries out of mine a long time ago.” “That’s okay. I have fresh batteries in my light. My wife made sure of it. She reminds me, ‘Sharp ax and fresh batteries.’ “

‘Screech! Screech!’ “Yikes! Was that what I think it was?” “That little breeze above your head and those screechy voices was the welcoming committee of the small-winged bats that dwell around here.” “I hope they know we came to protect their home and not invade it.” “You’re okay. They prefer insects to chickens!” “Ha- ha!”

“Let’s go this way.” “Do you hear that sound?” “Yes... It sounds like trickling... Shine your light over here.” “Oh, yes! A small pool of water! I could use a drink.” “Me,

too. I feel dry in this hot, thirsty land.” “I’m sure glad we had the light. While we could hear the water, we could not see it.” “I had an experience similar to that when I was in the Boy Scouts. We took a trip to the Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico. When we reached a certain point, the guide had us stop. He then turned off the electrical lights. We could not see anything. I placed my hand in front of my face and could not see it.” “I know what you are talking about. I have been to that place, too. I have seen or ‘not seen’ how the absence of light can bring life to a halt. It could even bring life to a ruin if someone insists on walking in it. That reminds me of what Jesus said: ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’”
John 8:12

“I have heard that. Do you know what He means?” “Yes. The physical world has the sun, which God created in order to give us light to see, energy for plants to grow and produce food, and the heat to make life on earth possible. Without those we would die. Jesus is the Son which God gave, in order that people would have spiritual light to see, Who would give us His Word to grow and bear fruit, and to make eternal life with Him a reality. Without those we would perish. Jesus said, ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.’ Jesus is the only light for those who desire to be rescued from spiritual darkness and have eternal life in heaven.” “Bob, how can I receive Jesus as my Light and Savior?” “You or anyone can say to God: ‘Thank You, God, for sending Jesus to rescue me from darkness. I believe Jesus died for my sins and rose again. Jesus, help me to walk in Your light every day. In Your name I pray. Amen.’”

“Hey Bob! Look at the light! Someone is digging through. We’re rescued!”

Are you walking in the light of the Lord Jesus?

CHOOSE THE RIGHT WAY

Change. Do you like it? Some people say it depends on what kind of change it is. For instance, having your first driver's license and car was a welcome change from depending upon others to get around where you wanted to go. When the fall season is here, many people enjoy the changing colors of the leaves and the changing cooler weather. Change in a piggy bank that adds up to dollars was fun as a kid, unless you gave piggy a name then broke him open!

Change was needed for the Fornhelm party after their plane went down for unexplainable reasons. Radio contact was lost, dense clouds quickly appeared, and the small jet plane was forced to the ground in a clearing among some jungle trees. Miraculously, no one was injured. But they still needed to get where they were going. The pilot said he had heard of many ways to get to their destination. The assistant pilot remembered the map he had received from the air traffic controller. He said to the pilot and those standing there, that there was only one way to get to their destination safely. All other ways led astray. The people chose whom they would follow, the majority siding with the pilot. The resources were few, but they were pooled and divided. Then the two groups set out on their ways. A few hours into the hike, Lady Fornhelm asked the pilot, "Are you sure we are going the right way?" "Oh yes, Ma'am," ensured the pilot. "These broken bamboo shoots tell us that others have been this way, too." So they continued on.

The two that chose to go with the assistant pilot heard him say, "We have arrived at the river called Grace and Faith. The map says that we must go through it." One of the two asked, "But it seems so swift, how do you think we can do it?" "We can not of ourselves. Only trust in Him who has made the way for us." John 14:6 By nightfall, though miles apart, each group decided to rest. They ate Spam from the can left over from WWII and stayed warm by fires they had built. Morning came soon. They yawned and they stretched.... then on their ways to where they were headed.

Soon, the question was raised, "Pilot, are you sure we're going the right way?" Came the answer quite quick, "Yes, Ma'am. As you can see we're headed with ease

down this road that's ever widening. Many people are traveling this route. So I say without doubt, soon we'll arrive safe and alive at the place we are going!" As they happily traveled along, they made up a cute little song about all the fun they were having. Picking fruit from the trees, shooting the breeze, and doing all that was right in their sight. Proverbs 14:12

As the other three traveled along the right way, the assistant pilot mentioned that they should not stray by yielding to signs mentioning changes of route. "Those are temptations and snares from those who don't care if you make it home safely or not." "We will listen to you!" said his company of two, "because you've not led us astray. Though narrow the gate and difficult the way, it leads to life everlasting!"

The pilot and friends became mingled within the many who traveled their way. They soon would discover the ground they had covered was the wrong path chosen to take. For it leads to a place darker than space where people are never recovered. It is a place called hell where God does not want you to dwell, so He sent His Son as the Savior. By trusting in Him, God places you in His great love and mercy forever. When your time is done here, you will cross over there because of the path you have chosen. In heaven you'll be for all eternity living in joy, happiness and peace. But God leaves the decision to you as to which path you will choose. So make your decision today. Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it." Matthew 7:13

Right now, you can pray: 'Jesus, I know You are the way I want to go. Thank You for paying for my sins when You died and rose again. Now help me to walk every day with You. Amen'

A PROCLAMATION OF THANKSGIVING

In the last one-hundred fifty-eight years, there have been many notable changes. The greatest blessing though is that God has not changed. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Hebrews 13:8 Not only that, but His blessings are new every morning. There have always been reasons to give thanks to God even in times of sickness, war, and seeming uncertainty.

In 1863, there was great division in our country among many people. Political unrest, fighting among families, and battles between citizens. Even during the midst of this very challenging time in our nation's history, God could be praised and given thanks. In this week's devotion, I would like to share with you the words of one who was there in the midst of it all and saw how God's mighty preserving hand blessed our nation still. For which - He should be given Thanks.

October 3, 1863 By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation. The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theater of military conflict; Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense, have not arrested the plow, the shuttle or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore.

Population has steadily increased, and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom. No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union.

By the President: Abraham Lincoln William H. Seward, Secretary of State

Yes, even in our world today, there is plenty to offer thanks for to God. Most importantly and unequal, is the gift of salvation and eternal life in heaven through Jesus the Son. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

In heaven there is no strife, only the blessings of God are experienced. Tell God from your heart: ‘Thank You for loving me. Thank You Jesus for paying for my sins when You died and rose again. Save me and help me to thank You every day.’

THE NAMING OF JESUS

Another Advent season of celebrating the dear Savior's birth has taken place. The world has never been the same since the time Jesus was born. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph would certainly agree to that, including the days following the birth of Jesus.

"Joseph, will you pick up Jesus from the manger and bring Him to me, please. It's time for breakfast. Good morning, Jesus! Come to Mama. Oh Joseph, look at that smile!" "Can you imagine, Mary, if everyone we know would smile like that? The world would be a different place. How are you this morning?" "I'm still a little tired. It was a long night with Jesus being born, the shepherds coming to visit, and all the joy and excitement that filled the air. Who could sleep!" "I agree. It was quite the night. Mary, I spoke with the man who generously allowed us to stay here with the animals. Here are some food and other things that his wife wanted you to have." "How thoughtful of her. I hope you told them, 'Thank you.'" "Yes, I did. He also said for us not to get too comfortable here. He is going to buy a couple more animals and needs the room for them." "Of course, Joseph. Perhaps tomorrow we can begin our journey to the temple in Jerusalem and stop by for a visit with Zacharias and Elizabeth on the way." "I was thinking the same thing, Mary. Ever since you visited your cousin Elizabeth while you were both still pregnant, there has been a special connection between Jesus and their son, John. I recall you saying that when you greeted Elizabeth, that her baby leaped for joy in her womb. Luke 1:44 I know Zacharias and Elizabeth have been excitedly waiting to see Jesus. We should be able to stay with them until it is time to perform the ceremonies at the temple that God has ordained for us to do."

"Joseph, I don't know how it is going to happen, but God has said that Jesus is going to make a tremendous difference in the hearts of many people. I wonder which of His promises He will keep next? Certainly without our help, He kept His promise through me that 'the virgin shall be with child and bear a Son.'" Isaiah 7:14 "Yes. And while you were very pregnant, I would not have made you walk and ride on a donkey to come eighty miles to Bethlehem. Yet, God promised Jesus would be born here, so

He arranged that we would be here for Jesus to be born. Micah 5:2 Let's prepare to go see Zacharias and Elizabeth!."

"Joseph, Mary, welcome!" "Hello Zacharias! Hello Elizabeth!" "We are so honored to have you in our home." "Zacharias, we are so thankful to be here with you both." "Joseph, it is almost the eighth day since the birth of Mary's Son. Will you be performing the circumcision and the official naming of Him while you are here?" "Yes, Zacharias. We would like to share this joyous time with you both." "Such a happy occasion is a celebration to keep with many friends, Joseph. We will invite others, too." "Mary, come in and rest. We have much to talk about." "Yes, we do, Elizabeth!"

"Family, friends, and neighbors, thank you for being here today. It has been eight days since the birth of Mary's Son. In keeping with the covenant of God, Joseph has performed the circumcision and will now give the baby His name."

"God is our great God! He has ordained events that are yet to be. One is now to be done, the naming of the Son. Mary and I were both visited by angels sent by God with a message: 'Mary will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.' Matthew 1:20-21 In keeping with God's revelation, the Son is named: JESUS." Yea! "Joseph, how will Jesus save people from their sins?" "As you know, the name 'Jesus' means, 'The Lord Shall Save'. As Jesus grows, I'm sure we will hear more from God."

Yes, it's true. We have heard from God when Jesus said, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.' John 3.16 The Father sent the Son as Savior, that whoever believes that Jesus died for their sins and rose again will be saved. Tell God: 'Thank You for sending Jesus as Savior. I believe Jesus paid for all of my sins when He died in my place and rose again. Help me to live every day for You.'

ANTICIPATING HIS RETURN

While I do enjoy 80% off chocolate treats at the store, this past Sunday was incredibly more important than all the variety of rabbits combined. We celebrated the resurrection of the Creator of all the animals and most significantly the Creator and Savior of our souls.

From the start, followers of the crucified Jesus faced persecution from family and religious leaders. One such family was a widow and her two children, a boy and a girl. “Mama, I’m scared. One of the religious leaders, a very outspoken man against Jesus, saw us following Jesus when He rode into town on the colt, the foal of a donkey, at Passover.” “All will be well, Hilda.” “But Mama, Uncle Levi said he will make sure we are barred from the synagogue. My bar mitzvah will be canceled! I will not be able to work or marry.” “All will be well, Benny.” “Mama, how can you be so calm? You know the other women will no longer be allowed to be your friends. It will be forbidden under punishment. Neither will you receive some of the food that we eat.” “All will be well, Hilda. You both forget, I sat among the many people as Jesus multiplied the fish and loaves of bread. And I was present at some of His teachings. You know how much I love the birds. And Jesus told us that the Father takes care of them, so we should not worry because we are of much more value than they. He will take care of us.”

‘Knock-knock-knock’ “Rutha! Rutha! Open up!” “Mama, it’s cousin Mary!”

“Mary, what’s wrong?” “It’s Jesus!” “Yes, we know, Mary. He was crucified and we are very sad.” “Yes! No! I mean, Jesus is alive!” “Oh Mary, I know how much He meant to you. It’s okay, all will be well.” “You do not understand, Rutha. I and others went to His tomb this morning and the stone was rolled away. Then an angel appeared and told us that Jesus had risen!”

‘Knock-knock’ “Rutha!” “Mama, who is it?” “It’s Cleopas.” “Cleopas, why are you so excited?” “Jesus has risen! We were journeying home to Emmaus, when He began walking with us, but our eyes were constrained from recognizing Him.

He began to teach us from Moses and the Prophets about all that has taken place this past week, including His crucifixion and His resurrection on the third day. Then, as we sat to break bread together, our eyes were opened and it was Jesus! Then He vanished!”

Jesus rebuked a number of people for being surprised by His resurrection since He did tell them that He would rise again on the third day. After all the feeding, healing, and raising of the dead that Jesus did, should the disciples have taken Jesus at His word when He told them more than once that He would rise on the third day? If they had taken Jesus at His word, do you think they might have had a different expectation? Instead of hiding in fear of the religious authorities, might they have prepared with excitement to see Jesus again?

Are we like the disciples who forgot Jesus said that on the third day He would rise again? Are the events in your life and of this world causing you to hide instead of hope? If the disciples had lived as if Jesus would rise on the third day as He said, the passing days until His resurrection could have been filled with anticipation.

While Jesus did not tell us when He is returning, He did say that He is coming again. Jesus has told us, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself that where I am you may be also.” John 14:2-3

Since we know He loves us, gave Himself for us, and always keeps His word, we should be living each day filled with anticipation in light of His appearing. The Apostle John learned his lesson and tells us: ‘Little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.’ 1 John 2:28 Can you say: ‘He is risen indeed and He’s coming back for me!’? The first step in being ready to meet Jesus, is to belong to Him.

You can pray: ‘Jesus, because You gave Yourself for me when You died for my sins and rose again, I give myself to You and live in anticipation of Your return.’

DO ANGELS CELEBRATE THE RESURRECTION?

Have you ever wondered if angels celebrate the resurrection of Jesus? Some angels did play an important role in this most extraordinary event of God's love. Perhaps if we could hear what angels talk about during the Resurrection season, we might know if it means anything to them.

"Harry, do you ever feel sorry for the other angels who followed Lucifer in his revolt against our Creator, God?" "You know, Barry, at first I was shocked because some of those angels were the best there were. But, of course, that is what caused Lucifer's downfall. God created him so beautiful, with wisdom and leadership ability. It all went to his angelic head. But to tell you the truth, Barry, my initial dismay disappeared when not one of them were sorry or sought God's forgiveness." "That's true, Harry. And in their shared pride, they grew ever bitter toward God and His prize creation, mankind. So much so, that Lucifer tried to destroy God's relationship with man." "Yes, that is when I lost all respect for them, too. That is one of the reasons I was so excited once again to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus this year." "You know, Harry, not everyone can say they have celebrated His resurrection for almost 2,000 years in a row!"

"That's right, Barry. And even fewer can say that they were actually there when it happened." "Harry, do you remember being inside the tomb guarding the body of Jesus, just in case Satan and his fallen angel friends tried something to keep Jesus from fulfilling His promise to rise again on the third day?"

"Oh yes, Barry. I can remember hearing those Roman guards on the outside of the tomb talking about who was the toughest among them and how many exploits they had accomplished. And how if anyone even dared think about touching that stone covering the tomb while they were on duty, what they would do to them. Then it happened! The guards were caught off guard when God sent Irvin, the most timid of angels, to roll away the stone so that the guards could see that they were guarding an empty tomb because Jesus had already risen and left! I'm so glad God let us stay there long enough to see the expression on their faces when they saw Irvin, before

they passed out. Ha-ha!”

“Yes. And though you and I were summoned back to heaven for another mission, God allowed Irvin to tell the women who came to the empty tomb that Jesus had risen, and that they should go tell the other disciples that Jesus had kept His word to rise again. Also, that they should go to Galilee where they would see Jesus.”

“Barry, I am so grateful I did not ever consider joining Lucifer and those other angels in their rebellion against God. He allows us to serve Him in such exciting and rewarding ways.” “Yes, He does, Harry. And how it moves His heart, when one of those humans who seems to live like a fallen angel, finally realizes how much God loves them and how Jesus paid for all of the wrong things they have said and done, and turns to Jesus for forgiveness.”

“You know, Barry, as fulfilling as closing the mouths of lions, breaking apostles out of prison, transporting saints home to heaven, and ministering to God’s children in so many other ways can be, I have heard from a great number of Christians that none of that can compare to telling others about Jesus and His love, and seeing another person accept Jesus as their Savior.” “I have heard that, too. I guess we will never truly know the joy that salvation brings. But I am always ready to serve the One Who made that possible for each of them.”

“Barry, I have seen so many people whose hearts God has prepared to receive Jesus as their Savior. While God does not allow any of us angels to share the Good News, He says every Christian should share with others how much God loves them. How Jesus paid for all the wrong things they have said and done in their life, when Jesus died and rose again. And then, help the person to pray: ‘Jesus, thank You for paying for all of my sins when You died and rose again. I trust in You alone to be my Savior. Help me to serve You like the good angels do. In Your name I pray, amen.’ “