

WELCOME TO THE  
**GREATER RENO**  
CHURCH OF CHRIST

S E R M O N O U T L I N E & B U L L E T I N

Sunday, April 3, 2022



**Today's Study Focus: Heaven Matters Right Here, Right Now Part 5** - Recent polls suggest that nearly 80% of Americans believe there is a place called heaven. I find that statistic encouraging because it tells me that even in this skeptical age there is something deep inside the human heart that cries out, "There's got to be something more. Something more than the pain and suffering of this life. Something more than 70 or 80 years on earth. Something more than being born, living, dying, and then being buried in the ground. The only things we can know for certain about heaven are the things revealed in the Bible. The Bible tells us everything we need to know and I believe it also tells us everything we can know for certain about heaven. After all, if you're wrong about heaven, you're going to be wrong for a long time. **Ray Pritchard**

**In Your Life On This Earth God Has Set Eternity In You** ■ **Ecclesiastes 3:11 - He has also set eternity in the human heart.**

- Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. 20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me. **Philippians 1:19-26 NIV**

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"I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith"

☑ **"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain":** Paul knew that death was not a defeat to the Christian. It is merely a graduation to glory, a net gain for the Christian. Paul's death at the time would be a gain in two senses. First, his death for the cause of Christ would glorify Jesus, and that was gain. Second, to be in the immediate presence of the Lord was 'gain' for Paul. Knowing that his death could be a gain – both for the gospel and for him personally – Paul was torn between being with the Lord or continuing to minister to the Philippians and others. **Enduring Word Bible Commentary**

**Overcome Challenges Here Through Faith In Going There** ■ **2 Timothy 4:8 - Now there is in store for me the crown.**

- 27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved – and that by God. 29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, 30 since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have. **Philippians 1:27-30 NIV**

"whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ"

"stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel"

☑ **"Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel":** The ancient Greek word translated "conduct" means literally, "to live as a citizen." Paul told the Philippians to be good, patriotic citizens of the kingdom of God. He also wanted to know that the Philippian church stayed together as one body, without becoming fragmented. Paul wanted their unity to be put to a productive purpose, so that an increasing trust and belief in the good news of Jesus Christ would be promoted among those who already believed and among those who had yet to believe. **Enduring Word Bible Commentary**

Heaven is a prepared place for prepared people.

**Scripture Passages For Further Personal Study: Matthew 7:13,14** Enter through the narrow gate. **Matthew 19:13-15** The Kingdom of Heaven belongs.



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## When My Quadriplegia Ends: What Makes Me Long for Heaven Joni Eareckson Tada - desiringgod.org

On the morning of my wedding, my helpers laid me on a couch in the church's bridal salon to dress me in my gown. They heaved and shifted my paralyzed body this way and that, trying to fit me into it, but when I sat back in my wheelchair, I groaned. In the mirror, I looked like a float in the Rose Parade. Right before I wheeled up the aisle, my bouquet slid off my lap. That's when I spotted a greasy tire mark on my hem. My chair was spiffed up, but it was still a big, clunky thing with belts and ball bearings. I was not the picture-perfect bride. Then I caught a glimpse of Ken at the front. He was craning his neck, looking for me. My face grew hot, and my heart began to pound. Suddenly, my wheelchair and clumpy dress with its smudges faded away. I had seen my beloved, and how I looked no longer mattered. I couldn't wait to get to the front to be with him. I may have felt unlovely, but the love in Ken's face washed it all away. I was the pure and perfect bride. That's what he saw, and that's what changed me.

### One Glimpse of Him

Our first glimpse of our Savior may well be like this moment. Just one look from Jesus will completely transform us (**1 John 3:2**). And it's why everything in me cries, "Come, Lord Jesus." I long to be free of the stain of sin. And why wouldn't I? Jesus gave himself up for me "that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (**Ephesians 5:27**). He has given me a head start. For although my suffering has often felt overwhelming — as when I saw myself in that mirror — it's been God's choicest tool in making me holy. My affliction keeps purging sin and selfishness out of my heart, honing me into the picture-perfect bride. Heaven is the holy habitation where I'll be presented to Jesus spotless and blameless. And my suffering is helping with that.

Some don't quite believe me. They think I want Jesus to come back so I can jump out of my wheelchair and walk again. Although at one time that was true, decades of leaning on Jesus in my suffering have driven my longings for heaven deeper. A glorified body will be nice, but I want a pure heart. I want to be holy. And so, as with any hopeful bride-in-waiting, I'm getting ready, trusting that "everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (**1 John 3:3**). How can I cling to the very sins that crushed my Lover against his cross? Why would I allow the serpent to coil himself around my heart when Jesus gave everything to crush his head? My Savior is the fairest of ten thousand, and his love is sweeter than wine, so I strive to live a "self-controlled, upright, and godly [life] in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself . . . to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works" (**Titus 2:12–14**).

### Chorus Of Sighs

I am not the only one who is aching for Christ's return. John, in **Revelation 22:17**, tells us that "the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.'" I can see why. As "the guarantee of our inheritance" (**Ephesians 1:14**), the Spirit grieves when Christ's betrothed shames the name of her Lord with doctrinal distortions and moral failure. Even the world mocks and scoffs when, with scornful wonder, men see her sore oppressed, by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed.

And while the bride cries to be pure, so does the earth. Think of the horror and holocausts that sin has brought upon the world. I have shared the Spirit's pain when I see children with disabilities in impoverished countries being sold into slavery or further maimed to become pitiful beggars. Or when elderly people are abused. Or when children are aborted because of a chromosomal irregularity. I cry along with the Spirit for Jesus to come and "rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked" (**Psalms 82:4**). Our bruised and broken planet, and all that dwells in it; all of creation, from starving animals to denuded forests; even the entire universe is standing on tiptoe, yearning for Christ to make all right at the unveiling of God's glory in his sons and daughters (**Romans 8:19**). Oh, come soon, Lord Jesus! Yes, I ache for my Savior to speed his return, but I am keenly aware that "the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient . . . not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (**2 Peter 3:9**). If in all my afflictions I have tasted the goodness of God, how can I not share that same goodness with my neighbors? My Bridegroom would want that, and so I hurry his return, as it were, by giving the good news to as many as possible.



### That Grand Moment

If we are blessed to be living at the time of Christ's return, we will literally hear him respond to our cry. Soon — perhaps sooner than we think — "the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God" (**1 Thessalonians 4:16**). The Bridegroom comes! We are now getting to the heart of why we long for Jesus's return: it will be the end of the ages. Christ's kingdom will be complete. His matchless name vindicated. Sin, death, the devil and his hordes — all of them — judged and destroyed. The glory of Jesus Christ filling the universe as he is crowned King of kings. Earth and heaven restored. At this, our faces may grow hot and our hearts may pound, for, in a flash, we shall be glorified (**1 Corinthians 15:51–52**). We will finally grasp that the whole plan of redemption was the Father's way of securing for his Son a wonderful gift: his spotless bride, his inheritance and joy.

### Grace That Brings Us Home

So we cry, "Come, Lord Jesus!" For we belong to him, and we will spend all of eternity praising the glory of his grace. Grace that rescued us from sin, and sustained us in our weakness. Grace that brought us safely home (**Ephesians 1:6**). Now, picture with me great multitudes of the redeemed, pulsing with joy and infused with light. Surrounded by the angelic host, we shall press in line with the great procession of the saved, streaming through gates of pearl; an infinite cavalcade from earth's wide bounds and the oceans' farthest coasts, all in one joyous parade; countless generations, all lifting our diadems before God. "Hallelujah!" we will shout. "For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready" (**Revelation 19:6–7**).

I am making myself ready. So, Maranatha, Lord Jesus! Come soon to carry your bride across your threshold, making all things — even us — new.