

What Is Not in Heaven

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[0 : 00] Last Sunday morning I was standing at the ironing board, ironing my shirt, and for some reason! I really started missing Ed Withrow, missing his smile, missing that look in his eye when he was serious about something.

And part of me wants to say he should be here right now. It's not right for us to be separate. And this world is such a sad place sometimes. This week I read a book, which tells you it was a really good book if I read it in one week.

It was a really good book called Grief Undone, A Journey with God and Cancer. By Libby Groves. Her husband, named Al, was a professor at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. He was 54 or so and diagnosed with terminal cancer. The doctors at first weren't sure how long he would have, and then one of the experts said, I've seen these, they usually go about 11 months.

[1 : 16] Two weeks after the diagnosis, they went to a friend's wedding, or the wedding of some friends, at the father-daughter dance.

His daughter, who was a bridesmaid, came over in her bridesmaid dress and wept on his shoulder. She was never going to be able to dance with her daddy at her wedding.

And she didn't. And again, what can we say except for this world is such a sad place sometimes. And for others, it's children far into sin, and they're so dead to the Lord.

We long for our families to be whole. We long for our children to love the Lord. And if you're not experiencing some present sorrow, it won't be very long, and you will.

This whole life is a valley of tears, and earth under sin is a sad place. But today, I want to lift up our eyes to heaven, because heaven is a happy place.

[2 : 27] And it's a happy place because of what is not there. There's a lot of things that are going to be in heaven that will make us happy, and there are a lot of things that are not going to be in heaven that will make us happy.

And so today, I want you to turn in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 21, verse 4. It's a very familiar passage, but it tells us some things that are not in heaven. Revelation 21, verse 4.

And we ask the question, what is not in heaven? Verse 4 says, He will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Every tear. There will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

This verse basically falls into two parts. Two things. The first thing and the last thing are things that make us sad. Death and pain are things that cause us grief.

[3 : 40] And in the middle are expressions of grief. Mourning and crying. And altogether, this verse is saying, There is not going to be anything at all in heaven that will make us sad.

So why is heaven going to be such a happy place? Because in heaven, there is no more death. Once the resurrection happens, there will be no more death.

So there's going to be lots of things that are the same in heaven as they are on earth presently. I imagine there's going to be trees in heaven. But no one in heaven is ever going to see a tree, cut it down, turn it into boards, and then turn it into a casket.

And there's going to be lots of jobs to do in heaven. But there's not going to be any funeral directors in heaven. There's not going to be any morticians in heaven. There's not going to be any hearse drivers in heaven.

Some people are going to have to find a new line of work when they get to heaven. The cemetery near my house has people who mow the lawn and dig out the graves.

[4 : 50] That is their job. They take care of those things. And just this week, I was walking through the cemetery, and there was a man down in a hole with a shovel.

The backhoe had just left, and now he was putting the finishing touches on a hole in the ground. And I don't know who it was for, but somewhere, a whole family was grieving. They had lost a father. They had lost a mother or a brother, a sister, a child. Friends were never going to see that person's face in this world again because their friend's body was going to go into that hole.

In the ground. On my walk, which I walked there quite a bit, on my walk, I saw no less than four fresh graves with just dirt, still loose, some with the flowers from the funeral still on them. Now, in heaven, I'm sure there's going to be people that mow lawns and people that dig holes. For some reason or other, I'm sure there will be. But in heaven, no one is ever going to mow the cemetery's lawn.

[6 : 01] And no one is ever going to dig a grave. Because there is no more death in heaven. There's not going to be any more me standing at an ironing board missing Ed Withrow.

And there's not going to be any more phone calls that sends your life and your world into a tailspin because you've just received such bad news. No more going to a wedding and crying and sobbing on your dad's shoulder.

And there's no more death in heaven. And there's no more anything that brings about death in heaven. There's no more end and there's no more process of dying.

So there's no more cancer in heaven. There's no more pancreatic cancer, no more liver cancer, no more breast cancer, no more melanoma, no more lung cancer, no more sudden heart attacks, no more heart disease, no more MS, no more Parkinson's, no more Alzheimer's, no more influenza, no more kidney failures, no more diabetes, no more pneumonia, no more AIDS, no more cystic fibrosis, no more muscular dystrophy, no more hemophilia, no more falling asleep at the wheel, no more murder, no more suicide, no more accidents, no more abortion, no more sudden infant death syndrome, no more old age, no more war.

And some of those things have touched people's hearts and lives here. And each one of those have someone here that has affected them, broke your heart, made you weep, made you feel empty inside.

[7 : 33] But in heaven, you're going to live year after year after year, never seeing anything like that, never experiencing that heartbreak, no more bad phone calls, because the last enemy to be destroyed is death.

And finally, Revelation says, finally, last of all, this is such a wild and strange verse, finally, death and Hades will be thrown into the lake of fire.

Death itself will die the second death. That's the glory of Jesus Christ. That's the heaven we're going to. That's the victory that God gives us in Jesus Christ.

And so for the Christian, death is a doorway to glory. But we can't be mistaken about what its true nature is. For the Christian, death is a door to glory.

Because of Christ, we can sing for joy even as we say goodbye to our lost, for our loved ones as they slip away. Remember I told you about Al Groves just a moment ago, the 54-year-old professor.

[8 : 38] He left a wife and four children. And they were all gathered around his bed. And they were very glad that they could all be there together.

And a friend was there. And his friend was saying to Al, Soon you will hear the Lord say, Well done, good and faithful servant.

But halfway through that sentence, Al stopped breathing. And his heart stopped. And the amazing thing is, is that they all broke into tears, some of sadness.

But it was all mixed with this great joy. And with tears and smiles and hugs, this is what it says, we started cheering Al on, You're home.

Run to Jesus. Jesus, you're free. Go get them, Dad. Now, is that the kind of death you want to die? The kind of death I want to die. And the Lord himself finished that sentence, Well done, good and faithful servant.

[9 : 49] So for the Christian, death is a door to glory. But we have to get this straight, that none of that changes what death is. Death is an enemy that God hates.

And it's an enemy that God is going to throw into the lake of fire. So why is heaven such a happy place? Because there's no more death. We will live forever and ever and ever and ever.

And there's no more pain. So it's not just death that causes us grief. There are all kinds of pains on this earth.

Maybe you've seen the movie Princess Bride. And the princess, Princess Buttercup, is in anguish. And she yells at the man in black.

And she says, You mock my pain! And Wesley, the man in black, says, Life is pain, your highness. Anyone who tells you differently is selling something.

[10:55] And that is true. If someone wants to paint a picture where you'll never die, they're selling you something. To live is eventually to hurt. And that's what sin does to our world.

Sin breaks families. Sin estranges fathers and sons. Sin leaves children crying in their room. Sin fills children with shame and confusion.

Sin hurts other people. My sin hurts other people. Their sin hurts me. The pain of misunderstanding. The pain of injustice.

The pain of sudden loss. The pain of lost jobs. The pain of watching everything you've worked for taken away from you or stripped away from you. The pain of getting old.

The pain of bending over to pick up a pencil and your back going out, barely able to walk. The pain of sleeplessness. It's hour after hour you wait for sleep to take you.

[11:59] And you wake up. The morning comes and you're exhausted. Worn out joints. Strep throat. Broken wrists.

The inner pain of broken relationships. Of depression. It's the constant pain of living in a fallen, in a cursed world. But in heaven, the old order of things has passed away.

There's no more pain. And so for we will, Paul says, we will be raised imperishable. We won't even be able to get sick. We won't be able to break.

And there won't be any sin in anyone, in myself or in other people, to break my heart. No sin in myself. No sin in them. No regret.

No shame. No sense of failure. No sense of guilt. Why is heaven such a happy place? Because anything and everything that could make us unhappy is gone.

[12:55] It's done away with. And so wherever you go in heaven, go up to the highest mountains, go down to the deepest trenches in the ocean, live there for 10 million ages, and you'll never meet anything that will make you sad in the least.

Heaven, even the memory of this world will send us to rejoicing. And if nothing else, there's nothing else that will or could ever make us unhappy, what does that mean heaven is going to be for us?

So if you never ever meet anything that is ever going to make you sad, make you grieve, break your heart, then what is heaven going to be? It's going to be moment by moment, perfect joy.

Moment by moment, perfect bliss. every day, a sprint into greater joy. And we will open up our mouths and God will fill us with happiness.

And each day will be better, the best day of our life. And when we've been there, bright shining as the sun for 10,000 years, we will be happier than we were at the beginning.

[14:16] Because not only this day are we going to run into so many things that will make us happy, but we will have all the 10,000 years of wonderful memories of being there to reflect on and be happy about those.

Aren't you happy when you can look back at your scrapbooks and say, oh, that was wonderful, that was good. Can you imagine the scrapbooks in heaven of 10,000 years of happiness?

Page after page of happiness. So the best joys of earth are interrupted. They're interrupted. But in heaven, there's nothing that's going to break that endless cycle of growing joy.

That growing, that endless cycle of growing joy. Albert Einstein, you know, he was very smart and he knew a lot about physics. He said that compounding interest is the greatest force in the universe. And what he meant is, wow, compounding interest makes little things big. So with compounding interest, you make money on the money that you put in the bank and then you make money on the money that you put, the money that you made making the money.

[15:27] And it just gets bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger. That's the compounding interest of joy in heaven. It gets bigger and bigger and greater and greater.

It's a snowball that just gets bigger and bigger and there's nothing ever to break that cycle. Nothing to ever break it. There's no death in heaven to break it.

There's no pain in heaven to temporarily put it on hold. There's no crying or mourning. It's just perfect growing happiness. I read of a pastor who said, you know, when I think about heaven, I don't look forward to it.

Because he had this idea of heaven as this boring, dull place. He thought you just were there, sort of. But that's not the heaven of the Bible.

The heaven of the Bible is the world of perfect, growing happiness. And so this is what we should do. Or what should we do? If those things are true, what do we need to do about that?

[16 : 42] And if that truth is going to do us any good, what should we do? Well, two applications. Number one, we need to don't forget to mix all your earthly sorrows with heavenly joys.

Don't forget to mix all your earthly sorrows with heavenly joys. things. So, we cannot grieve like the world who has no hope.

Now, what that says and what I mean by that is not that we never grieve in this world. There's lots of reasons to grieve in this world.

But we shouldn't grieve like the world does who has no heaven, no hope to look forward to. Instead, he's saying we need to grieve with our hope. Our grief and our hope need to be side by side mixed together.

And so, we can't forget to mix heaven's joys with our sorrows. So, how do you do that? One way that you can do it is every time something sad happens, every hurtful thing, we can use it as a trampoline to think about and go up into heaven and think, in heaven, this thing is not going to be there.

[17 : 58] It makes me sad now, but it's not going to be there in heaven. Where I'm going, where I'm soon going to be, this sad thing won't be there. Peter said, we rejoice that we've had to suffer through many griefs and all kinds of trials.

Why? And that has a context. The context is because salvation is coming. It's coming and so we can rejoice even though we suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

And he says, the pain is going to lead to praise and glory and honor when Christ is revealed. He's attaching the pain to the glory to come. And Paul says, our light and momentary troubles are working for us in eternal weight of glory.

Our glory that far outweighs them all. So Peter and Paul are both saying the same thing. Don't forget to mix your earthly sorrow with your heavenly joy.

glory. Now Satan wants to keep us in a closed box. He wants us to live in this world and this world only where the sorrows that we have are the sorrows that we have.

[19 : 08] But he wants us to be cut off from heaven's joys. But listen to me, he's a liar and he's a schemer. And this is just another of one of his magician's tricks to make us grieve like there is no hope.

And if we are grieving like there is no hope, then he is one. But this world isn't all there is. There's a perfect world of joy coming. And when you think about that, it gets you through today's sorrows. It's like buoyancy in a boat. It keeps you from sinking. Yeah, you might be riding low in the water, but you're not going to sink because you have heaven's joys lifting you up.

Or think of it like yeast. What's the difference between baking bread and it just coming out like a flat pancake and baking bread and it pops up and turns out nicely?

Well, the yeast makes the difference. Heaven's joys is the yeast to this life's bread. Now, without the joy of heaven mixed into our loaf, we're going to fall flat.

[20 : 20] But with heaven's joys mixed into our life's loaf, we can rise even when we're put into the oven. As hot as it gets, we'll rise.

And so the first application is don't forget to mix heaven's joys with earth's sorrows. See the devil's scheme for what it is. The second is simply this.

Let's spend more time thinking about heaven's joys. Let's spend more time thinking about that happy world. These things were written so that we could have hope.

These things were written so we could have perseverance. These things are promised to us to keep us going. But you know what? If we don't look forward to it, it doesn't do us any good at all.

So what good does it do to know heaven is a happy place if we don't ever think about it? So Paul says, set your minds on things above.

[21 : 23] That's something that we need to do. Setting is an active verb. It's put your mind there. Do something. Set your mind on things above. Set them there. And that tells us that there's a tendency in our hearts and our minds to not go up there.

There's a tendency for them to stay right here in the mud, in the mire. And so he says, set your minds there. Grab your thoughts.

Instead of letting them sink into the earth, set them up there. Put them into heaven. And so when they fall away from heaven and when they get bogged down into this earth and you get mired and you're in the muck, put them up there again.

Now, that is something that we need help with. And that's one reason that we have each other. Isn't there something that for us to do in this?

That's something that we can help each other with. Isn't this something that we need each other's help with? And I think the answer is yes. We certainly do.

[22 : 28] I need you to tell me about heaven's joys. To remind me of it. Not in a glib way, but in a believing way. To say, this is true, brother.

And you need the same from me. Not to say, oh, it's all going to be good because heaven's going to be there. No, we're facing the grief of this life together but we need each other's help to point forward to look to heaven's joys.

I need that. You need that. And so let's help each other think about heaven. Let's help each other think about heaven. Let's pray.

Our great Father, we thank you that we are going to that happy world. And we thank you that there is no more death or mourning or crying or pain and you will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

We might show up to heaven with tears on our face. And we probably will. But thank you, Jesus, that you are so sweet that you will wipe away every one of our tears and take away all of our sorrows and fill us with everlasting happiness.

[23 : 43] It is almost too good to be true. It is almost too great for us to believe. Holy Spirit, strengthen our hearts so that we can set our minds on things above.

Strengthen our hearts so that we can count them as true and live like they are true and enter into the joy of them even now. It is going to be so easy for us to walk away from here and to just not think about heaven.

To say, yeah, I know that. I knew that. But will you make these things real to us? Make them real to us when we are in grief.

Don't let them escape our minds and our hearts when we are suffering. and don't let them escape our minds and our hearts when our brother or sister is suffering. But to call these things to mind and therefore to stir up our hope and encourage one another in these things.

Thank you for the glad and happy prospect that we have of joining all that sacred throng gathered around your throne singing your praises with sinless hearts.

[24 : 54] Soon we will be there. I pray that we would each be ready in Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen.