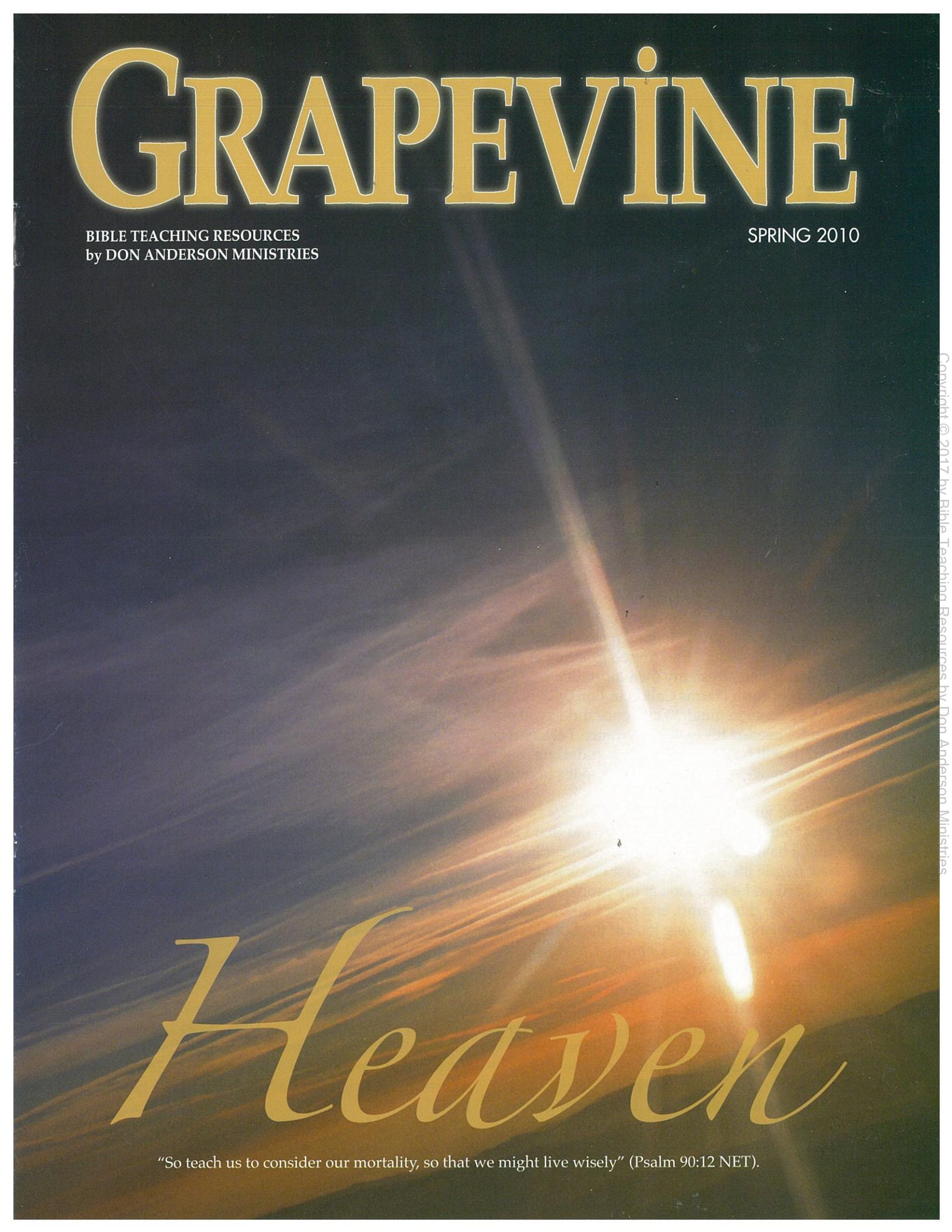


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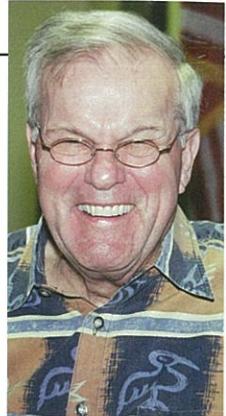
BIBLE TEACHING RESOURCES
by DON ANDERSON MINISTRIES

SPRING 2010



Heaven

"So teach us to consider our mortality, so that we might live wisely" (Psalm 90:12 NET).



Celebrating in Heaven

"The Lord values the lives of his faithful followers" (Psalm 116:15 NET).

"So teach us to consider our mortality, so that we might live wisely" (Psalm 90:12 NET).

"The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing" (Zephaniah 3:17 ESV).

"Death is the supreme festival on the road to freedom" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Martyred Christian*).

Two dear friends and board members of Bible Teaching Resources, Bill Lawrence and Asa Holleman, went to glory within days of each other. I find myself grieving at their departure and facing afresh my own mortality.

The words of Ruth Harms Calkin in Lord, Could You Hurry a Little? come to mind: "Only once did I awaken my husband. I needed his gentle assurance. I remember that he said 'It will happen to us both, my darling. But one thing we know—Jesus will be there, so it's bound to be good.'"

Sheila Walsh writes in *Life Is Tough but God Is Faithful*: "Since I was told that I do have a disease and that I am going to die, I have had a new way of looking at life. I realize how fragile life really is. At first I took a quick look at the Lord and a long look at my problems. I've learned to change this around, and now I take a quick look at my problems and a long look at the Lord" (113).

Before going home to glory, Campus Crusade founder Bill Bright wrote in *The Journey*:

I believe the best thing to do is to offer the Christian's perspective that God is real, His promises are true, life is a brief and exciting journey, and heaven is our home. Jesus said, "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me, Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Encouraging someone to stay vitally connected to Jesus is far superior to mere knowledge about death.

I am often asked the question, "How can I pray for you?" My answer always is: "Pray that I will never leave my first love." My number-one priority is my love relationship with our Lord Jesus, so it requires the most attention every hour of every day. (31)

In scripture, three men in particular teach us how to die: Job, Jesus, and Paul. In the words of martyred missionary Jim Elliot, "When it comes time to die, make sure all you have to do is die." Or as Dr. Samuel Johnson put it, "When a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully."

JOB

Job loses ten kids in a tornado. Marauding terrorists rob him of all material resources. He faces physical affliction beyond comprehension and his wife suggests he curse God and die. On top of that, his three best friends make five pontificating speeches about why he is where he is. In the midst of this very low time in his life, probably convinced that death is near, Job utters the following in Job 19:23-27:

Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! (NIV)

He has earlier said in Job 13:15: "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face" (NIV). In *Heaven...Your Real Home*, Joni Eareckson Tada tells the story of an 80-year-old friend whose eager anticipation of heaven was somewhat colored by the fact that she hoped to "stay around for Jesus' return" because she "never" liked "to miss a good party" (198).

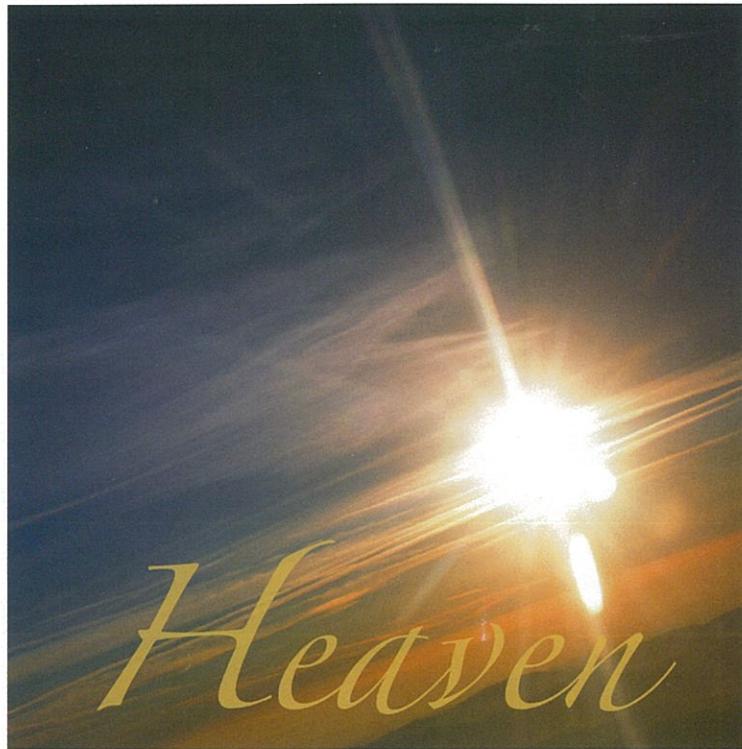
In view of heaven, for those who know Jesus Christ

continued on page 14

GRAPEVINE

SPRING 2010

CONTENTS



Clipboard: 2
Celebrating in Heaven

Don Anderson

Heaven...Can't Wait? 4
Jane Rodgers

FAX 6-9

Pearl's Reflections

In Memorium: Bill Lawrence & Asa Holleman

Donna's Delights: Symphony Brownies

Bookshelf

Annie Johnson Flint: 10
"The Blessings That Remain"

Homework 12
Putting Your House in Order
Do You Remember When?

Mailbox 16

From the Editor

As we are putting the finishing touches on this issue of the *Grapevine*, Dallas sits under six inches of snow. Ironically, it is the first day of spring. Despite our chilly start to the season, we hope this issue finds you and yours happy and well. The recent homegoings of many dear friends, including BTR board chairman emeritus Bill Lawrence and another original BTR board member, Asa Holleman, have turned our thoughts toward eternity more than ever. May we all finish as well as these saints who have preceded us into eternity. Both Don Anderson's "Clipboard" piece and our feature article ponder just what our final destination will be like when we are at last at home with the Lord. We hope you find the reflections uplifting and encouraging. Thank you for your faithful friendship and support. May the Lord bless and keep you.

—M. Jane Rodgers



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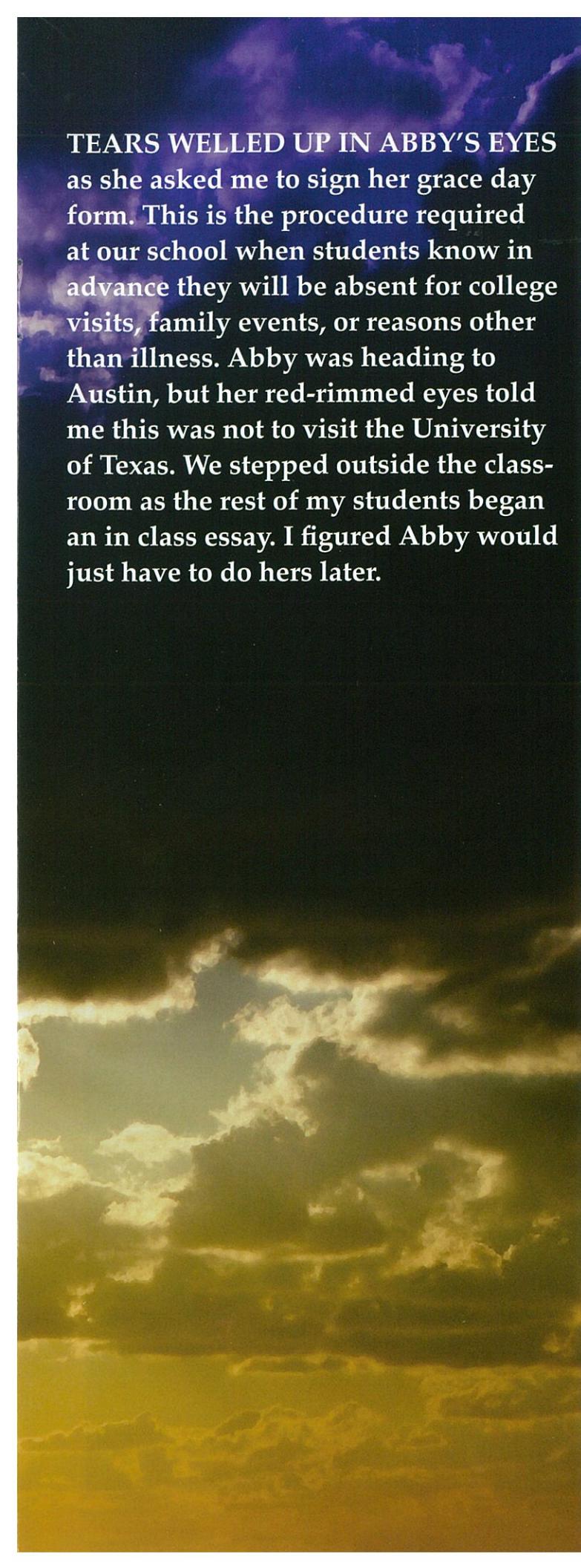
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Heaven... Can't Wait?

by Jane Rodgers



TEARS WELLED UP IN ABBY'S EYES as she asked me to sign her grace day form. This is the procedure required at our school when students know in advance they will be absent for college visits, family events, or reasons other than illness. Abby was heading to Austin, but her red-rimmed eyes told me this was not to visit the University of Texas. We stepped outside the classroom as the rest of my students began an in class essay. I figured Abby would just have to do hers later.

"What's wrong, honey?" I asked in my most sympathetic teacher-becomes-like-a-mom voice.

"I'm going to a funeral," she replied. "Two of them."

"I am so sorry. Whose? One of your grandparents?"

"My great-aunt—she was like a grandmother to me...and an uncle passed away, too."

Then Abby summed up all the outrage of the human race from Adam onward with these words: "I hate death."

I had to agree.

I hate death, too. We are not meant for death but for life. Thank God we have eternal life to look forward to yet death is a blight, an insult, an affront for which we were never intended.

Christians know the theology. Romans 5:13: *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned*" (NIV).

We know the solution.

Romans 5:6-11:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man; though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (NIV)

John 3:16-18:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (NIV)

Secular sources view death variously. The poet Robert Frost, whose religious sentiments, if any, would be hard to pigeonhole, extols a resilient response to death in his "Out, Out..." In the poem, a young boy's accidental and unexpected death is initially greeted by mourners with disbelief. The shock soon shifts to a pragmatic reaction: "And they, since they were not the one dead, turned to their affairs."

In Frost, when the going gets tough, the tough just keep going.

With baby boomers and their parents aging, it seems like whoever you are, "tough" or not, you are going to a lot of funerals these days. At Bible Teaching Resources, We've lost two of the great ones, veterans of our board: Bill Lawrence and Asa Holleman. While we've included a memorial in the FAX section, these homegoings indicate more to follow as the Greatest Generation that survived the Depression, fought World War II, and sired the baby boomers now crosses the threshold of eternity. My family lost my beloved mother last fall. Whether we called her Nana or Mema or Mother, our family said goodbye to everyone's favorite person. The pain is still palpable even though the hope of heaven is real and comforting.

Interestingly though, even Christians understand about salvation, few understand much about heaven. We think of pearly gates guarded by St. Peter...or perhaps a constant ethereal glow...or sparkling streets of gold. Some even envision heaven as a time of deep everlasting sleep. Admittedly, there were moments when my kids were young and that sounded especially appealing.

Randy Alcorn's definitive work on the subject, *Heaven*, answers many questions and is recommended reading to all. Alcorn admits that even pastors suffer misconceptions about heaven. He recalls a minister who confided the following, "Whenever I think about Heaven, it makes me depressed. I'd rather just cease to exist when I die." To Alcorn's query of why, the pastor replied, "I can't stand the thought of that endless tedium. To float around in the clouds with nothing to do but to strum a harp...it's all so terribly boring. Heaven doesn't sound much better than Hell...." (Alcorn

5-6). This is not a scripturally accurate view, according to Alcorn, who has authored several fiction and nonfiction books on the subject of eternity and whose Eternal Perspective Ministries (EPM) is focused on helping others understand the amazing things ahead.

What happens to us when we die? Alcorn believes that those who are dead in Christ enter what he calls an "intermediate heaven." This is not "purgatory," but as Alcorn puts it in a short booklet adapted from his exhaustive work *Heaven*, "it's the place we'll live until our bodily resurrection" (Alcorn, *Heaven...Biblical Answers* 8). "The Heaven we go to when we die is a place without suffering, but it is not the place where we'll live forever. Our eternal home, where God will come down to dwell among his people, is called the New Earth" (8-9). Jesus will be there in bodily form, for, as Alcorn notes, the Bible tells us so in Acts 1:11. As Alcorn puts it, "A fundamental article of the Christian faith is that the resurrected Christ now dwells in Heaven. We are told that his resurrected body on Earth was physical...and that this same, physical Jesus, ascended into Heaven" (Alcorn, *Heaven* 59). If believers currently in Heaven have bodies, they may be "temporary forms" as we await the resurrection (59). However it may be, we will be praising God and awaiting glories to come.

In chapter 16 of the book *Heaven*, Alcorn includes a table contrasting what we generally believe to be true about Heaven and what he believes the Bible teaches about our eternal existence in the New Earth, following the resurrection of believers. I'd like to reprint below a modified version of the chart found on page 161 as food for thought.

WHAT WE ASSUME

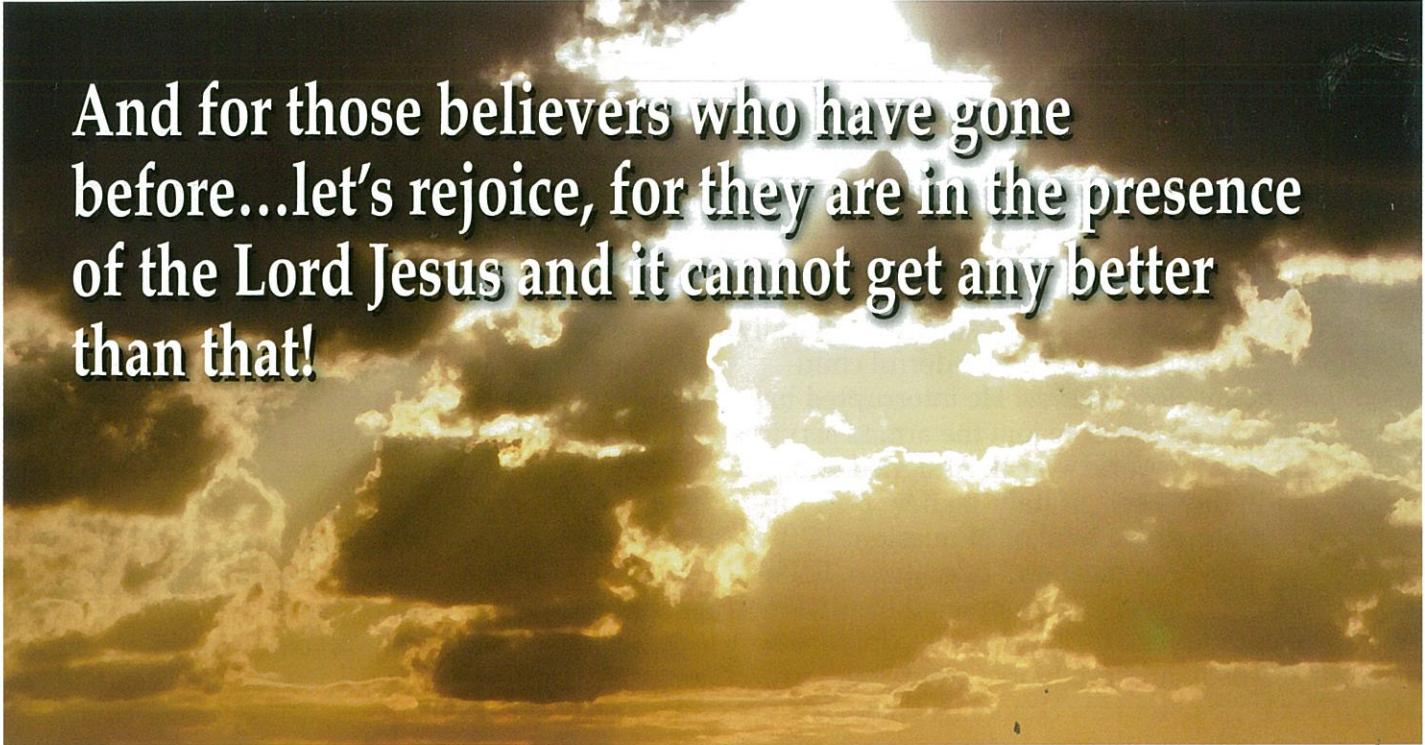
Non-Earth
Unfamiliar; otherworldly
Disembodied
Foreign
Leaving favorite things behind
No time and space
Static
Neither old nor new
Nothing to do

No learning or discovery
Boring
Loss of desire
Absence of the terrible

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

New Earth
Familiar; earthly
Resurrected (embodied)
Home
Retaining the good & finding the best
Time and space
Dynamic
Both old and new
A God to worship and serve; a universe to rule; work to accomplish; friends to enjoy
An eternity of learning and discovery
Fascinating
Continuous fulfillment of desire
Presence of the wonderful

(Alcorn 161)



And for those believers who have gone before...let's rejoice, for they are in the presence of the Lord Jesus and it cannot get any better than that!

In these few pages, I cannot hope to even begin to skim the surface of the insights and arguments Alcorn makes in his 500+ page book. If you have not already done so, I highly recommend you take the time to read this remarkable work.

In *Heaven*, Alcorn notes that the "Bible teaches that sometimes humans are allowed to see into Heaven," supporting his claim with the biblical account of Stephen, who, as he was stoned to death, looked up into heaven and "saw the glory of God" (Acts 7:55-56 NASB). As Alcorn states, scripture does not say Stephen had a vision or dream of heaven, but that Stephen saw heaven (Alcorn 48).

If you'd like to see some things Stephen saw—in other words, heaven, try Revelation 21 and 22. These chapters offer an exciting look at the New Heaven and New Earth, including the New Jerusalem.

And do not neglect the words of comfort which Jesus Himself uttered to His disciples in John 14:104: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going" (NIV). The picture is of a grand mansion or dwelling with many rooms... and whatever those rooms are like, you can bet, as the '70s song goes song goes, we "ain't seen nothin' yet!"

In the 1978 movie *Heaven Can Wait*, a prematurely deceased football player comes back to earth to accomplish work he did not finish, winning the Super Bowl, and occupies the body of a recently murdered millionaire to do so. Heaven appears as a stairway and its residents wear wings and play harps. The main character gets a second chance.

The fact that in the Lord's economy it is appointed once for a man to die and then the judgment indicates the falseness of this premise. How much more should we then be about our Father's business telling others about Jesus Christ? And for those believers who have gone before...let's rejoice, for they are in the presence of the Lord Jesus and it cannot get any better than that!

Heaven by Randy Alcorn. Tyndale. 2004.
Heaven: Biblical Answers to Common Questions by Randy Alcorn. Tyndale. 2004.
Eternal Perspective Ministries: www.epm.org
www.randyalcorn.blogspot.com
Heaven Better by Far by J. Oswald Sanders. Discovery House. 1993.
A Better Country: Preparing for Heaven by Dan Schaeffer. Discovery House. 2008.

Bible Teaching Resources FAX

In Memoriam: "Well done, thy good and faithful servants"

William D. "Bill" Lawrence, Jr. 1922-2010

Born in Paris, Texas, Bill moved with his family to Tyler in 1931 and enjoyed a wonderful childhood with many close friends. He interrupted his college career to join the armed services during World War II. Assigned to bases in the "heel" of Italy, he flew B-24 Liberators on a total of 24 missions in the European theater of operations. Following the war, Bill completed his undergraduate education at The University of Texas at Austin and graduated from Southern Methodist University Law School. He met Dorothy McGuire in 1946 and they in 1948.

Bill practiced law with his beloved father and brother in the firm of Lawrence & Lawrence - affectionately referred to as the "One Quart Law Firm: one pint and two half-pints." Bill represented many businesses, large and small, as well as individuals from all walks of life - all with the same passion, expertise and care. He was a Fellow of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel and a member of the American Academy of Hospital Attorneys. His commitment to service went beyond his practice of law - without hesitation he worked in the community that he loved. He was a member of the Board of Adjustments of the city of Tyler, served as president of the Tyler Lions Club, district chairman of the American Red Cross, chairman of the board of the Smith County Chapter of The Salvation Army, president of the Smith County Chapter on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, president of the Texas Rose Festival Association and president of the Smith County Bar Association. During Bill Clements' tenure as governor, he appointed Bill to serve on the Texas Motor Vehicle Commission. Bill served in legal and leadership capacities with the East Texas Medical Center Regional Healthcare System for more than 30 years. In 1977, he served as chairman of the board of East Texas Hospital Foundation (now ETMC) and was currently in the role of director emeritus on the ETMC Foundation Board. In 2005, Bill was presented with the Justinian Award by the Smith County Bar Association in recognition of his professional excellence, exemplifying integrity, leadership, service to the commu-



nity and service to the legal profession.

He loved the Lord and worshiped Jesus Christ. In that commitment he served variously in the Christian church and Fifth Street Presbyterian Church as a deacon and elder. Bill also served on the board of directors for Pine Cove Camp. He was for many years an officer and member of the board of directors of Don Anderson Ministries of Tyler, and upon his retirement served as a regular volunteer of that organization.

Bill is survived by his devoted wife of more than 60 years, Dorothy McGuire Lawrence. They had three children - William David, Charles Frederick (who died in infancy) and Ann Lawrence Tague, four grandchildren, one great-granddaughter.

Asa Holleman (1928-2010)

Asa Holleman was born in San Antonio and grew up in Dallas. He excelled at Texas A & M University, where he earned a degree in chemical engineering at age 19. At A&M, Asa was sophomore class president, Corps captain, varsity swimmer and diver, and head yell leader. He worked in the petroleum industry in the Houston area before returning to Dallas in 1963 to begin a family construction business with his brothers. In 1972 he founded HCCI, spending 20 years as a general contractor in the DFW area serving such customers as Marriott, Kraft, Texas Instruments, Southwestern Bell, Trammell Crow, Dallas Power and Light, and others. Asa retired in 1992 to spend time with his beloved wife of almost 62 years, Billie Francis Carpenter, their four children and their spouses, 16 grandchildren, and 17 great grandchildren. Long-time supporters of Dallas Theological Seminary and Wycliff Bible Translators, the Hollemans were among the founding families of Faith Bible Church in Cedar Hill where Asa was an elder for 25 years before moving to Midlothian Bible Church. Asa and Billie are charter board members of Titus 2:4 Ministries and served many years on the board of Don Anderson Ministries.





Pearl's Reflections

by Pearl Anderson

This article is a reflection upon my life journey, the direction and the special people God placed along the way. My dream, after high school was to pursue nurse's training. I did succeed in getting a job at the local hospital. There two God-appointed ladies, the supervisor of the hospital and a retired army nurse, took special interest in me. They trained and taught me more about nursing than I sometimes cared to learn. After helping the nurse with a particularly nasty procedure I heard her brag to the supervisor: "She hung right in there with me."

After three years I moved to Salem, Oregon, and got a job as a typist in the motor vehicle department of the state of Oregon. That move, and the people I met at the First Baptist Church in Salem, forever changed the course of my life. One of the friends I made at the church had a cousin who was tall, good looking and a lot of fun. Therein lies a whole new story!

I thank my wonderful Heavenly Father for those growing up years. He was always guiding, protecting and providing for me.

My dad's mother, a tiny lady with seven

children, was a staunch Christian who read her Bible and prayed every day. I credit her faithful prayers for me that God specifically answered. We corresponded until she stepped into God's presence shortly before I graduated from Northwestern College.

God faithfully provides answers to prayer, sometimes even before we are aware there is a need. Early this spring, our son-in-law Mark Skorheim traveled to North Dakota to help his parents set up in-home health care. A few days after Mark arrived, our daughter Donna sent the following email to our family:

Today I have thanked our wonderful God for His perfect timing. Shelly, the in-home health care giver [Mark had hired] had taken care of a lady for 2 1/2 years before the lady passed away. Shelly had taken a little break and was just getting ready for another patient when she was called for Mark's parents. She is respected, well known and comes very highly recommended. It blesses me realizing how our awesome God's timing is perfect and how He went before to bring all this together even before we knew of the need and prayed! Talk about amazing. He is already working on prayer requests He knows we are going to pray in the future! When I let that soak in—it is overwhelming!

With this history of God's continued watch-care I have every confidence He will be faithful until I step into His presence in heaven and my

continued on page 15

RECIPE CORNER

Donna's Delights

Thanks to our Donna Anderson Skorheim for sharing the recipe for this easy treat that will have folks thinking you went to lots of trouble.

SYMPHONY BROWNIES

1 box Betty Crocker traditional fudge brownie mix

3 giant Hershey's Symphony candy bars with toffee chips and almonds

2 eggs

1/2 cup oil

1/4 cup water

Prepare the brownie mixture according to box directions, with eggs, oil, and water. Put half of the batter in a greased 9x13 pan. Place the three large Symphony bars over the first layer of batter. You may need to cut about 1/4 inch off of the long side of each bar and use these chocolate pieces to fill in any spaces or gaps. Then put other half of the batter over the candy bars.

Bake in a 350 oven for 26 minutes. Do not over-bake.

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BOOKSHELF

Just Like Jesus Devotional: A Thirty Day Walk with the Savior by Max Lucado (Thomas Nelson)

We asked the men attending our Hideaway men's conference to read this devotional through before the conference. I recommend you carve out a month and use this work as part of your daily reading.

Choosing Gratitude: Your Journey to Joy by Nancy Leigh DeMoss (Moody)

All I could say when I finished reading this work was "Wow!" Nancy really hit a bullseye with this one." It was the best book that I read last year, prompting me to make note of 35 quotations on the subject of gratitude from its 224 pages, such as the following:

Grateful people are loving people who seek to bless others, while ungrateful people are bent on gratifying themselves. They tend to focus on "my needs," my hurts," "my feelings," "my desire," "how I have been treated, neglected, failed, or wounded." An unthankful person is full of himself, seldom pausing to consider the needs and feelings of others. (84)

If God Is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil by Randy Alcorn (Multnomah)

This is quite a large work but you remember Randy Alcorn for several novels that he's written and, of course, for his classic work, *Heaven*. This work makes plain the conflict between suffering and evil and the existence of God.

Letters of John Newton by Josiah Bull (Banner of Truth Trust)

Because John Newton was the one who wrote "Amazing Grace," I have always wanted to get to know him better. This wonderful collection of his letters has certainly been a blessing.

My Search for the Real Heaven by Steve Hempill (Tate)

This is another work on heaven we recommend, in addition to those in the feature. In Steve's words: "What do you see in your mind's eye when you hear the word 'heaven'? Do you see transparent people floating on clouds and playing harps? Or do you imagine a perpetual praise and worship service, singing 'Holy, Holy, Holy' for all eternity? This often-promoted Christian view of eternity doesn't even appeal to the saved—much less to the unsaved. But is this the true, biblical picture? Not even close."

A Year with Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson (HarperCollins)

I used this is part of my devotional reading last year really enjoyed it.

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Putting Your House in Order

Heaven won't wait for any of us, but there are some things we can do to make the transition easier for those who remain and some things families can do to ease the final earthly days of loved ones.

Plan your memorial service. Select favorite hymns and scriptures long before there is a need and list these somewhere so that when the need arises, grieving ones will be able to access them. Many folks do this when facing life threatening surgery or when recovery from an illness seems unlikely, but why not start the list when you feel just fine? This isn't being morbid...just practical. Dear friends of ours in San Antonio asked my husband, Mike, years ago if he'd preach at their funerals. He was honored and agreed, as long as they did not get in any hurry! So far they have not needed his services...which is just fine with us.

We were so grateful that my mother, who passed away last fall, had written down contact information regarding her bank accounts and government and social security pensions. It made wrapping up her final affairs much easier. Her house was completely in order long before she became ill.

Mother had also marked items with the names of the folks who were supposed to get them, and she had listed personal items on a sheet indicating who got what. This prevented any misunderstanding. Mike's grandfather, who is approaching his 100th birthday, long ago did the same thing.

Designate memorials. People like to honor your memory with donations and they like to know where to send the check. Flowers fade...but monetary gifts can make a world of difference to many a charity, church, or organization...and provide an eternal memorial.

All hospice organizations are not created equal. When a loved one falls terminally ill, do your homework and learn about all the services hospice can provide long before your family member goes home to be with the Lord.

Lest We Forget

One family started an email loop on the birthday of departed loved one. Siblings, nieces, and nephews contributed a memory of two of Aunt Jill and the whole correspondence encouraged everyone.

Make a donation to a favorite charity on the birthday of a loved one who has preceded you to heaven.

Call a family member or friend and reminisce. Sharing memories can be healing...and mutual recollections are comforting when missing a precious friend or family member.

Just for Fun...



Do You Remember When?

Remote meant a secluded spot off the beaten path?

Cable was something that supported a bridge?

A cell phone was something you used to make your one phone call from jail?

A calculator was the accountant who did your taxes?

An airbag was some guy who talked too much?

Digital computing meant counting on your fingers?

High speed access was an on-ramp to the freeway?

Surfing was something done on a board in the ocean?

Annie Johnson Flint: "The Blessing That Remain"

The following is adapted from the biographical sketch of Christian poet Annie Johnson Flint (1866-1932) entitled "Annie's Story," published by Rowland V. Bingham of the Bible Memory Association and included in the website www.homemakerscorner.com.

Annie Johnson Flint was born on Christmas Eve 1866 in New Jersey. Her mother died following the birth of Annie's younger sister in 1869. The two motherless girls eventually went to live permanently with the Flint family. As a school-girl, Annie discovered her love of poetry. Following high school, she attended normal school and became a teacher in the same primary school she had attended.

Early in her career, the arthritis that would plague her for the rest of her life first flared up. Her condition worsened. Her adoptive parents, the Flints, died. Doctors at a sanitarium at Clifton Springs, New York, offered no hope for a cure. After losing both her natural parents and foster parents, Annie, still a young woman, faced the prospect of being an invalid for the rest of her life. Her younger sister was frail as well. Despite her bent fingers, joints swollen by arthritis, Annie first wrote poems to comfort herself and others. She painstakingly created hand lettered cards and gift books, decorating her own verses.

These "Christmas cards" became popular; two publishers printed Annie's poetic greetings, thus supplying her with a modest income. Christian magazines began printing her pieces. People responded. Annie Johnson Flint became known to the world for her works and the savior she exalted. You know her today as the writer of hundreds of much loved Christian poems, including the hymn lyrics to "He Giveth More Grace" and "What God Hath Promised." Once hoping to be a concert pianist, she was forced to create with gnarled hands and a resilient heart the more glorious music of the spheres. We include the following poem to encourage and uplift all.

There are loved ones who are missing
From the fireside and the feast;
There are faces that have vanished,
There are voices that have ceased;
But we know they passed forever
From our mortal grief and pain,
And we thank Thee, O our Father,
For the blessings that remain.

Thanksgiving, oh, Thanksgiving,
That their love once blessed us here,
That so long they walked beside us,
Sharing every smile and tear;
For the joy the past has brought us,
But can never take away,
For the sweet and gracious memories
Growing dearer every day,

For the faith that keeps us patient
Looking at the things unseen,
Knowing Spring shall follow Winter
And the earth again be green,
For the hope of that glad meeting
Far from mortal grief and pain—
We thank Thee, O our Father—
For the blessings that remain.

For the love that still is left us,
For the friends who hold us dear,
For the lives that yet may need us
For their guidance and their cheer,
For the work that waits our doing,
For the help we can bestow,
For the care that watches o'er us
Wheresoe'er our steps may go.

For the simple joys of living,
For the sunshine and the breeze,
For the beauty of the flowers
And the laden orchard trees,
For the night and for the starlight,
For the rainbow and the rain—
Thanksgiving, O our Father,
For the blessings that remain.

Clipboard

continued from page 2

personally, the words "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die" should be restated: "Eat, drink and be merry, for on the day of our death we are really going to start living."

JESUS

Jesus Christ Himself stands as the ultimate example of One facing death and handling it properly. Remember the scene in the upper room: "Just before the Passover feast, Jesus knew that his time had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now loved them to the very end" (John 13:1 NET Bible).

When He is praying to the Father, Jesus says: "I glorified you on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me at your side with the glory I had with you before the world was created" (John 17:4-5 NET).

"But now I am coming to you, and I am saying these things in the world, so they may experience my joy completed in themselves" (John 17:13 NET).

Peterson, in John 19:30 in *The Message*, translates the words of Jesus from the cross: "After he took the wine, Jesus said, 'It's done . . . complete.' Bowing his head, he offered up his spirit."

Luke records a prayer in Luke 23:46: "Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!' And after he said this he breathed his last" (NET).

Who can measure the joy of a race well run, for a task finished successfully? Hebrews 12:2: "keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set out for him he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God" (NET).

1 Peter 1:8: "You have not seen him, but you love him. You do not see him now but you believe in him, and so you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy" (NET).

Ronald Dunn, in the book *When Heaven Is Silent*, tells this story:

Dr. Vance Havner was a traveling preacher for forty years. He didn't marry until he was forty—said he wanted to think about it first. He never learned to drive a car. But his wife, Sara, drove them to his meetings in the Buick when they didn't fly or ride the train. The two of them were inseparable. Until 1973, when Sara died.

Occasionally someone would say to Dr. Havner afterward, "I hear you lost your wife."

"No," Dr. Havner would say, "I didn't lose her. I know right where she is. You haven't lost someone if you know where they are."

And then he would quote this poem:

Death can hide but not divide;

She is but on Christ's other side.

She with Christ and Christ with me,
United still in Christ are we. (119-120)

PAUL

Death means gaining more of Christ. The apostle Paul understood this truth. Near the end of Paul's life he is found in Rome's Mamertine prison. It is the fall of 67. In the spring of 68, he will walk those streets to the place of his beheading; his race will be finished down here on this earth.

From prison, Paul issues very pointed instructions for a many folks. He says farewell to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:24: "But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (ESV).

He tells the Corinthians:

For instance, we know that when these bodies of ours are taken down like tents and folded away, they will be replaced by resurrection bodies in heaven—God-made, not handmade—and we'll never have to relocate our "tents" again. Sometimes we can hardly wait to move—and so we cry out in frustration. Compared to what's coming, living conditions around here seem like a stopover in an unfurnished shack, and we're tired of it! We've been given a glimpse of the real thing, our true home, our resurrection bodies! The Spirit of God whets our appetite by giving us a taste of what's ahead. He puts a little of heaven in our hearts so that we'll never settle for less. That's why we live with such good cheer. You won't see us drooping our heads or dragging our feet! Cramped conditions here don't get us down. They only remind us of the spacious living conditions ahead. It's what we trust in but don't yet see that keeps us going. Do you suppose a few ruts in the road or rocks in the path are going to stop us? When the time comes, we'll be plenty ready to exchange exile for homecoming. (2 Corinthians 5:1-8 *The Message*)

He writes the Philippians:

My confident hope is that I will in no way be ashamed but that with complete boldness, even now as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether I live or die. For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. Now if I am to go on living in the body, this will mean productive work for me, yet I don't know which I prefer: I feel torn between the two, because I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but it is more vital for your sake that I remain in the body (Philippians 1:20-24 NET).

He reassures the Thessalonians:

We can tell you with complete confidence—we have the Master's word on it—that when the Master comes

again to get us, those of us who are still alive will not get a jump on the dead and leave them behind. In actual fact, they'll be ahead of us. The Master himself will give the command. Archangel thunder! God's trumpet blast! He'll come down from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise—they'll go first. Then the rest of us who are still alive at the time will be caught up with them into the clouds to meet the Master. Oh, we'll be walking on air! And then there will be one huge family reunion with the Master. So reassure one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 *The Message*)

He communicates often with young Timothy his final letters from the Mamertine prison in Rome. We read from 2 Timothy 4:16-18:

At my preliminary hearing no one stood by me. They all ran like scared rabbits. But it doesn't matter—the Master stood by me and helped me spread the Message loud and clear to those who had never heard it. I was snatched from the jaws of the lion! God's looking after me, keeping me safe in the kingdom of heaven. All praise to him, praise forever! Oh, yes! (*The Message*)

Paul has already challenged Timothy regarding the proximity of death: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come" (2 Timothy 4:6 DAV).

Death is a departure, not perishing.

Philippians 1:23: "But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better" (NASB).

It has been 30 years of ministry since the Damascus road and what a fruitful, fulfilling ministry the apostle has had. He says "It's the time of my departure." That refers to the breaking up of camp, the act of setting sail. Paul's ground time is up. His flight is on schedule. Departure is imminent. He is ready to go. He sums up his life's ministry with a three-fold description: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course; I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7 DAV).

Yes, Paul could say he has "fought a good fight" against sin, Satan, and the system. He has been faithful. He has been a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Secondly, he has finished his course as a runner. Repeatedly Paul likens life to a race in scripture; why change now? Hebrews 12:1 says much the same thing: "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (NASB).

Thirdly, Paul has "kept the faith." The apostle has not turned away and he has not forsaken the Lord Jesus but has "kept the faith" unto the end so he can tell Timothy: "Guard the precious deposit which has been entrusted to you through the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in us" (2 Timothy 1:14 DAV).

Paul turns his mind to the future in 2 Timothy 4:8: "the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge will award to me on that day and not only

to me but also to all who have loved His appearing" (DAV).

The righteous judge, the just umpire at the judgment seat of Christ is going to reward the apostle Paul. He is going to receive the gold medal, "the crown of righteousness" for all of the labor and work that has gone on down here during his 30 years of ministry.

Paul has built on the foundation with gold, silver and precious stones. And as his works are examined, there will be reward.

1 Peter 1:4: "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (KJV).

It is possible to face death triumphantly and with joy and excitement because of the great celebration that will take place over on the other side when we are welcomed home.

Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have nothing to fear.

Our friends and family in Christ who have gone before us are now experiencing joy unimaginable. They got home ahead of us. They took an earlier flight. Our reservations are made and confirmed. And great our rejoicing one day will be.

Pearl's Reflections

continued from page 9

eternal home. Please read Psalm 139 in the New Living Translation, or your favorite translation, to renew your mind, trust and restore faith in God's eternal love for you.

Even before birth and through death and into His presence in heaven you are His beloved one.

A note taped on my bathroom mirror reads "Walk steadily toward God without fear" (Psalm 23:4 paraphrase).

P.S.

Thanks to the dear people reading this *Grapevine* who have shared parts of this journey with us at one time or another. You have enriched us—made our lives interesting, fruitful and blessed. Thanks as you continue to share 'the ride' with us. You are wonderful traveling companions.

We love you,
Don and Pearl

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Some of our favorite letters from the **mailbag**

Watch your mailboxes this June for the newest edition of the BTR devotional A Great While Before Day (abbreviated AGWBD). Several of the letters excerpted below concern the last devotional sent in early 2010. We love to hear from our readers.

Thank you for the 2010 devotionals—they are better every year.

Thanks for your help [supplying AGWBD]. If you have more of volume 8, could you send me some? My pastor thinks we will need extras for our visitors.

Thank you for the new devotional book. I am doing well. 84 years young. My dear hubby has been in heaven for 12 years.

The last issue of the *Grapevine* meant so much to me. "Learning to Lean" touched my heart deeply. Sam passed away on October 29. He read aloud to himself AGWBD each day.

I have loved getting the *Grapevine* quarterly and read it from cover to cover. However, AGWBD truly is such a blessing to me each early morning, and I love this year's



format.... My husband has been very ill and disabled for the past two years, so these devotionals have truly lifted my spirits and given me renewed hope and strength for the journey.

Thanks for the latest and greatest edition of AGWBD. I've used it for so long I panicked when 12/31 came and went and a new one didn't appear. I was afraid I was "voted off the island!"

Thank you for giving your lives for others. I met you at Stonecroft several years ago. What a blessing that was. I loved your cheerful attitudes and cowboy poems.

Our oldest daughter, whom Don baptized at family camp some 18 years ago, is having our first grandchild in April. Praise God for that blessing and for all you do.

My wife and I have been receiving the *Grapevine* magazine for a long time. Don Anderson was the youth minister of our former church, The First Presbyterian Church now called Lincoln Avenue Bible Church. We were there from 1943-1974.... We were at the Cannon Beach Conference Center in Cannon Beach, OR, in the 1991 for a seniors conference and he was the speaker.... My dear wife passed away in October unexpectedly due to complications from pneumonia. She was 88. Please continue sending your materials.