

Heaven, here I come!

"Verily, I say unto you, he that hears my words and believes on Him that sent me, has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24

*Heaven, here I come!
You have opened your heart to me all along.
To reach you, was too short
But time on earth has been too long.
And strangely, you have always been my song.
So, heaven, here I come!*

*Heaven, here I come!
There, for me, my Lord, whose voice has bid me home.
'Tis He who calls my name.
And though I go where I belong
I leave the days on earth that I have loved,
To heaven, here I come.*

I Love to Live

*Today, dear Lord, I'm 80, and there's much I haven't done, I hope, dear Lord, you'll let me live until I'm 81. But then, if I haven't finished all I want to do, would you please let me stay awhile until I'm 82?
So many places I want to go, so very much to see, do you think that you could manage to make it 83? The world is changing very fast, there is so much in store. I'd like it very much to live till 84.
And if by then I'm still alive, I'd like to stay till 85. More planes will be up in the air, so I'd really like to stick, to see what happens to the world when I turn 86.
I know, dear Lord, it is much to ask and it must be nice in heaven, but I'd really like to stay until I'm 87.
I know by then I won't be fast and sometimes will be late but it would be so pleasant to be around at 88.
I will have seen so many things and had a wonderful time, so, I'm sure that I'll be willing to leave at 89..... Maybe Just one more thing I'd like to say, dear Lord, I thank you kindly, but if it's okay with you, I'd love to live past 90.*

Extract from the end of The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan

'The thoughts of what I am going to, and of the conduct that waits for me on the other side, does lie as a glowing coal at my Heart.

I see my self now at the end of my Journey, my toiling Days are ended, I am going now to see that Head that was Crowned with Thorns, and that Face that was spit upon, for me.

I have formerly lived by Hear-say, and Faith, but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be with Him, in whose Company I delight my self.

I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of, and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my Foot too.

His Name has been to me as sweeter than all perfumes, His voice to me has been most sweet, and His Countenance, I have more desired than they that have most desired the Light of the sun. His word I did use to gather for my Food, and for antidotes against my Faintings. He has held me, and I have kept me from mine Iniquities: Yea, my Steps has He strengthened in His Way.

Glorious it was, to see how the open region was filled with Horses and Chariots, with Trumpeters and Pipers, with Singers, and Players on stringed Instruments, to welcome the Pilgrim as they went up and followed one another in at the beautiful Gate of the City.

It was said, 'they were yet alive.'

Safe Home

Safe home at last. The morning breaks and night is done.

The glad day dawns and sets the soul astir with joys begun.

The heart leaps forward to the rest that it has won..

Safe home at last.

He calls us home, all other calls His call defies.

And faith shall see the One who has been hidden from our eyes.

From earthly joys and cares our hearts already rise.

He calls us home.

'We would prefer to be at home with the Lord' says Paul in 2 Corinthians 5.8. Heaven is not a myth, it's a magnet that pulls us in the direction of home. A home, which Paul describes as better by far.

A common misconception of heaven is a man with angel wings and a halo sitting on a cloud and doing nothing, and nothing could be further from the truth. So how is it that we talk so little about heaven?

United Christian Broadcasters in their Word for Today writes that heaven seems to have fallen off our radar screens. In Revelation chapter 13 it says that Satan opened his mouth to slander the following things; 1. God's person 2. God's people and 3. God's place, that is heaven. After being evicted from heaven (Isaiah 14) it must be maddening for him to know that we are now entitled to the place that he was kicked out of. What better way for him to attack us than to whisper lies about the place that Paul tells us to set our minds on.

Heaven is pictured in the Bible as a garden, a city and a home. All three require skill, work and maintenance. This is why we are told we will serve God in heaven. Service is active not passive so it seems like heaven will involve lasting accomplishment, unhindered by decay and fatigue and enhanced by unlimited resources. The Bible says we will reign with Christ, exercising leadership and making important decisions. That means we will set goals, devise plans and share ideas. Our best workdays on earth are just a foretaste of the joy our work will bring us in heaven and our service to Christ now, will determine our position then. What is an interest or hobby now may become our main vocation then. The difference is that we continue to work without hindrances of toil, pain, corruption and sin.

(Rev. 21.4-5)

We really haven't given utterance to a thousandth of what lies within us now. When we go to the grave we can say 'our days work is done' but we cannot say 'our life's work is done'. The tomb is a thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight and opens on the dawn.

The believer's passage to heaven is a direct route. As soon as we are dead, we will be with the Lord. We take our last breath on earth and our first in heaven. Immediately present with the Lord and we will be known just as Moses and Elijah were recognized when they appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. We will recognize and be recognized

Scripture passages of Heaven

The sun shall no more go down; neither shall the moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.---

He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth.

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sits on the throne shall dwell among them.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.

*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, ...they rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.
There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from His.*

We Are-Survivors (for those born before 1940)

"We were born before television, penicillin, polio shots, frozen foods, Xerox, contact lenses, videos and the pill. We were before radar, credit cards, split atoms, laser beams and ball-point pens; before dishwashers, tumble dryers, electric blankets, air conditioning, drip-dry clothes and before men walked on the moon.

We got married first and then lived together (how quaint can you be?) We thought fast food was what you ate during Lent, a Big Mac was an oversized raincoat and crumpet we had for tea. We existed before house husbands, computer dating and sheltered accommodation was where you waited for a bus.

We were before Day Care Centres and disposable nappies. We never heard of FM radio, tape-decks, artificial hearts, word processors, or young men wearing earrings. For us, time sharing meant togetherness, a chip was a piece of wood or fried potato, hardware meant nuts and bolts and software wasn't a word.

Before 1940 'made in Japan' meant junk, the term making out referred to how you did in your exams, stud was something that fastened a collar to a shirt and going all the way meant staying on a double-decker bus to the terminus. In our day cigarette smoking was fashionable, grass was mown,

coke was kept in the coal house, a joint was a piece of meat you ate on Sundays and pot was something you cooked in; rock music was a fond mother's lullaby, Eldorado was an ice-cream, a gay person was the life and soul of the party, while aids just meant beauty treatment or help for someone in trouble.

We who were born before 1940 must be a hardy bunch when you think of the way in which the world has changed and the adjustments we have had to make. No wonder there is a generation gap! By the grace of God, we have survived!

The Stage of Grief

- 1. It's not real - It can't be happening.*
- 2. Anger - It's not fair. Why is God letting this happen to me?*
- 3. Bargaining - I'll do anything, just make it go away.*
- 4. Depression - Silence and withdrawal*
- 5. Acceptance - We are ready to pray, 'Not my will, but Thine.'*

Only when we become aware of the issues in our lives do we become ready for wholeness and find a road map.

Sometimes we try to find quick release by letting the pain and the loss go before we have gone through these processes. Or we have been taught to hide it all and not show any emotion as a sign of weakness.

When we do that, however, we only stuff it into our emotional garbage can and end up squandering precious time and energy sitting on the lid, trying to keep the contents from spilling out.

In 'A better Kind of Grieving,' Bill Hybels writes, 'Fifty years ago industrialists thought they could just bury toxic waste and it would go away. But we have since learned it doesn't. It leaks into the water, contaminates crops and kills animals.

Burying grief does the same thing. It leaks into our emotional system and wreaks havoc. It distorts our perceptions of life and taints our relationships.

We must feel our feelings and:

- 1. Radically reduce the pace of our lives.*
- 2. Review our loss and talk about it openly.*
- 3. Think and write about it reflectively.*
- 4. Pray it through.*

It is a mistake to go straight back to work and replace the pain with a frenzied activity. Don't trade it for another emotion. That is not God's way.

David wrote in Psalm 30 'Weeping may endure for the night but joy comes in the morning.' You must go through one to get to the other.

When Moses died, a nation's dream was shattered, its heart broken and its confidence shaken. At that moment of unprecedented emotional upheaval, Israeli life - social, political and commercial, ground to a halt while they poured out their collective pain.

Together they wept on the plains of Moab. For thirty days and nights God stood by them, allowing them to mourn in a healthy expression of legitimate grief. No hurrying, no Divine censure, no denial. Just feeling which leads to healing. When He saw the process was complete, only then, did He lead them forward.

(Inscribed on the Chapel Gates at Windsor Castle.)

I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year,

Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.'

And he replied,

'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God.

That shall be to you better than a light, and safer than a known way.'

A Prayer (Anon)

In the name of Christ, who was never in a hurry, we pray of God that Thou wilt slow us down for we know that we live too fast.

If we are to burn ourselves out may it be in causes worth dying for.

With all Eternity before us, make us take time to live - time to get acquainted with Thee, time to enjoy Thy blessings and time to know each other.

Deliver us from wasting time and teach us how to use it wisely and well.

We ask these things in the lovely name of Jesus.