

Our Eternal Home

by Robert Lee

"HALF an hour in Heaven, and I am ready for anything," was the testimony of a poor working man. He meant much more than merely having a heavenly time in public worship or private devotion, though naturally that is a good preparation for the walk of life. He meant meditating on Heaven, yea, visiting that blessed abode in heart and mind; but more even than that—for we are *living in Heaven*. That is true of us *positionally*, as Ephesians 1.3 and 2.6 declare; that is also true of us *experimentally*, as Matthew 6.21 shows. Christ, our best beloved, our heart's treasure, is there, and therefore in consequence we are there.

Fifty years ago, our fathers dwelt much on this subject—so much so that many began to think that the sole, or primary object of our Redeemer was to take us to Heaven. Have we not gone to the other extreme? The Gospel prepares us to live; and because prepared to live we are prepared to die. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like His" (Num. 23.10), was the prophet Balaam's desire, yet not granted, because he was not prepared to live the life of the righteous.

To meditate on Heaven should be no difficult task for the believer, because with saintly Samuel Rutherford he can say, "Christ hath come and run away with my heart and love, so that neither heart nor love is mine."

D. L. Moody told of a man he knew who lost his only child, and the sorrow almost broke his heart. He had never given much serious thought to a future life, but after his child was taken, his friends were surprised to find him continually studying that sacred Book, the Bible. Someone asked him the reason, and he said he was trying to find out about the place where his boy had gone. We all have lost many loved ones who, because believers, have most assuredly gone to Heaven—strange, if we do not take up the Bible to find out what it has to say about that Blessed Abode!

There is a third reason why many of us should be interested in Heaven, and that is because in our case old age is creeping on, and if the Lord tarries, in the ordinary course of things, we shall soon be called up there to higher service.

In wonderful wisdom our gracious Master has given us information on important matters in simple language. For example, there is not a finer summary of His personal Premillennial Advent, than in Acts 1.11. It

seems incapable of misunderstanding. The same is true regarding Heaven. For surely language could not be simpler, nor more graphic, than we have in John 14.2: "In My Father's House are many mansions," or as another version, "many resting places." "In My Father's House"—"HOME!" What an attractive description of Heaven! Heaven is our Eternal Home.

1. Heaven is a Homely Place.

Mark you, a *place*—not a mere state, though it is that. Of what value is a state without a place? A right state is a preparation for the right place. As to its exact locality, we know it is in the third Heaven (2 Cor. 12.2). The meaning of "the bands of Orion" (Job 38.31) was unknown until the modern telescope revealed what is known as "the open space in Orion," a great spiral nebula in the belt of Orion in the shape of a band or ring. This band is estimated to be fifty trillion miles in depth, and twenty trillion miles in width. It is by far the most glorious scene in the Heavens, and seems like a gateway into the Heaven of Heavens, with the glory from the Throne of Jehovah shining through.

Heaven is a homely place,

Not a Place of Weariness and Dreariness!

Home—what a mystic name; it conjures up visions of peace, joy, delight, happy fellowship, love. Though some of us now have homes of our own, yet longingly and lovingly we think of the olden days when we gathered together in our earthly homes with mother and father, long since gone home. Heaven, a home! Ah, that tones down the feeling of awfulness in the thought of the glorious beyond. HOME ah, that is just what Heaven is! Amidst the august and unimaginable glories of Heaven, the old feeling will come back again of being little children, nestling safe in the Father's Home. Yes, Heaven is a homely place!

II. Heaven is a Home of Adoring Worship.

Only on one other occasion beside this, so far as the Scriptures are concerned, did our Lord use the expression "House": "Make not My Father's House an house of merchandise" (John 2.16). Thus our great future Home, will be the full realisation of what the earthly Temple was but the dim prophecy and shadow. Most of us lament here our human limitations which make our private and public devotions so poor and uninspiring. Even believers with a rich vocabulary, and a wonderful choice of ready and apt speech, are the first to confess how utterly unable at times they find themselves to be able adequately to express the deepest feelings of their hearts and spirits. Thank God, in the Day to come, those human limitations will be abolished, and all that will be a

thing of the past, for then we shall worship as we ought. Our Heavenly life will be a life of praise.

III. Heaven is a Home Without a Shadow.

This certainly is a big difference to the very best of earthly homes. Is there one earthly home without a shadow? What dark shadows throw their gruesome shapes across most homes. Some have "skeletons in the cupboard"—a weird and awesome saying. Yet our Heavenly Home is a Home without a shadow.

THE SHADOW OF SIN. There is not an earthly home, however good, but sin at times casts its shadow over it. Yet what is the meaning of this? "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Rev. 21.27). Once sin cast its awful shadow over Heaven, when that bright cherubim, Satan, led that awful revolt which culminated in his and his followers' utter ruin. Is that why the Scriptures speak of Heaven as requiring cleansing? (Heb. 9.23). But that shadow has gone for ever. Sin, therefore, now will never cast its horrible and defiling shadow over our Heavenly Home.

THE SHADOW OF SORROW. It is a home without a shadow of sorrow: "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" (Rev. 21.4). Shadow of death—what a saddening shadow this is! Yet that shadow will have gone for ever, for, listen, let us again repeat it: "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying." Heaven will be a life of wonderful joy, and of entire absence of sorrow.

THE SHADOW OF REMOVAL. Some of us know what it is to be so attached to an earthly house that it has pained us to remove from that one into another. Yet that sorrow will for ever have gone when we reach up There, for it is written: "For here have we *no continuing* city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13.14).

THE SHADOW OF SEPARATION. A fisher woman who had lost her husband and two sons at sea off the Northumberland coast, was asked what she most liked to think about in Heaven, and without hesitation she replied: "And there shall be no more sea." To her, the sea had been cruel, and she loved to think of the Better Land as sealess, that is no separation, for here it is the seas and the oceans that separate those of one land from another. No shadow of separation there!

THE SHADOW OF NEED. In these days of world-wide financial depression, the old saying, "Keeping the wolf from the door," has a new significance; but up Yonder there will not be any shadow of need, for it

is written: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more...for the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne, shall feed them and lead them into living Fountains of Water" (Rev. 7.16,17).

THE SHADOW OF NIGHT. For some, night has fears, and sometimes terrors. It is written: "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither the light of the sun" [Rev. 22.5]; therefore it will be a home of wonderful light. This means, of course, that our immortal bodies will be constructed very differently from our present ones.

THE SHADOW OF WEARINESS. To the enthusiastic worker for God, sickness or weariness of body which limits or arrests service is a trying shadow. Heaven will know of no such weariness. Our new bodies and ourselves will not be capable of weariness, will need no repose.

IV. Heaven is a Home of Blessed Reunion.

"Will we know one another in Heaven?" inquired a worker's wife of her learned husband. "Why, of course we shall," he replied. "We know one another here, and surely you do not imagine that we shall be bigger fools up there than we are here." The reply, though rather rugged and uncouth, was sound common sense. Certainly it would not be Heaven—that truly human and blessed abode of which Christ is the centre, if our individual personalities were annihilated, and we were unable to recognise one another. Moses and Elijah were recognised on the Mount of Transfiguration, though dead or translated hundreds of years. In that blessed spiritual world there will still be distinctions of persons and personalities, with glorious possibilities of love and fellowship. Heaven will be a life of unbroken love. Reunion rests upon the permanence of personality. Personality is an eternal possession.

V. Heaven is a Home of Happy Service.

It would not be Heaven if it were not. We speak of some homes as "Hives of industry." Heaven is all that, for it is written: "And His servants shall *serve* Him" (Rev. 22.3) ; "Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and *serve* Him day and night" [Rev. 7.15]. Of course, we are not informed of the kind of service that we shall be permitted to render. Heaven, therefore, is a life of doing; all being acts of worship. Most certainly it will be service without toil. There will be nothing laborious in the tasks that will be given to us, for the days of weariness and weakness will be for ever at an end. No doubt by eternal youth and vigour our bodies then will be able to accomplish all that we and the Lord will require. What a glorious thing that is—that death is not an end to the energies and activities which have here been consecrated to God.

VI. Heaven is a Spacious Home.

"In My Father's House are *many* Mansions," or "resting places." It is spacious, as well as beautiful. There will be ample room in the Father's house for all, with room enough to spare.

VII. Heaven Is a Home of Rest,

though, as already noticed, a Home of happy and blessed service. "Many *resting* places" is the Weymouth rendering of John 14.2. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may *rest* from their labours" (Rev. 14.13). We have heard sick people say, "Oh, I would give anything for rest!" There, the weary are at rest. The life there will be a restful one—none of the old weariness of the heart or of the mind, or even of the body. Our new body given at the Resurrection by and by when Jesus Christ comes, will be incapable of weariness.

VIII. Heaven is a Home of Learning,

that is, of ever increasing knowledge. If this were not so, then what is the meaning of John 17.3, where our Lord distinctly declares that Eternal life is given to us in order that we might discover God, suggesting that the whole of Eternity will be spent in getting to know God; and then 1 Cor. 13.12: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." Language could not be more definite the Home we are going to will be a home of learning, of ever-increasing knowledge, for there our life will be one of growth, without limit and without ceasing. There, our life will never reach a point beyond which no advance is possible. Our knowledge will be perfect, and yet ever growing bigger and grander.

IX. Heaven is a Home of Holy Laughter.

JAMES CHALMERS, the great New Guinea missionary, heard a native Christian pray for help to live the holy, active life here for Christ, and hereafter "the place of laughter," for that was the meaning of the phrase he used. After a good day's work, and a good supper, the natives often sit in the street or platform, and shouts of laughter, screaming laughter may be heard, as story after story is told of the day's doings and sayings. All are happy and thoroughly enjoying themselves; and the native word for that custom was the word this native used to describe Heaven. Was he mistaken? No! Heaven will certainly be a home of Holy laughter. Our life's struggles will be over. We shall, with our perfect vision, and unbefogged minds, trace the Lord's guiding hand in our past. We shall tell our experiences, unravel His mysterious providences; and then, do not forget that Heaven is a place where thousands of little children are,

and where children are, there is laughter.

There are two notable occurrences of the word "received" in John's Gospel (chaps. 14.3; 1.12). The Lord cannot receive us to that blessed Home on high if we, down here, do not receive Him into our hearts and lives.

"Christ possessed by faith here," said RUTHERFORD, "is young Heaven and glory in the bud." But we cannot have the full flower without the bud, neither can we have Heaven by and by, if we have not Heaven here and now. "The Lord will give grace and glory," was the Psalmist's assurance. Notice, grace before glory. But saith an old Divine, "Who chides the servant for taking away the first course at a feast, when the second consists of far greater delicacies?" The Christian's first course is GRACE, the second, GLORY. No glory without grace.

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