

Your Assurance of Making Heaven (God's Presence) for Eternity

Evangelist Dr. David Hupp

After attending church for a year as a child, I realized that, although going to church can give a child a set of good moral values for the future, attending a church doesn't save anyone. Galatians 3:26 in the Bible says we are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. In Revelation 3:20 Jesus implies that He is outside a person's life until the individual invites Him in. Romans 10:8-13 tells us that just knowing the historical facts about Jesus Christ, that he died on the cross for our sins and that God raised Him from the dead isn't enough. We must also make an out loud confession of Jesus Christ, before men (Luke 12:8-9) as our personal Lord and Savior. I did this at age eleven in a vacation Bible school.

After that, a new issue came up for me. In my family, as an emotionally sensitive child with a strong father, it wasn't safe to communicate. I had made the bad decision to shut down my emotions to protect myself. Thus, when I asked Jesus to forgive my sins and come into my heart as my personal Lord and Savior, I didn't *feel* saved. If I based my having become a child of God on how I felt from day to day, I wouldn't be sure whether I would eventually make it to heaven or not. For three years I was in a state of not knowing, no real assurance. As I began to read the Bible for myself and realized that it is God speaking to us, I was relieved to know that my eternal destination of heaven, rested, not on how I felt, but on God's ability to keep His Word. For example, in Revelation 3:20 Jesus is standing at the door of my heart wanting in. When I responded and opened the door, He said "I will come in". In First John 2:25 it states "And this is the promise He has promised us: eternal life."

In a Reader's Digest article (1982?) Dr. Ian Stevenson, a professor of psychiatry, had studied near death and out of body experiences for twenty years. His conclusion is, in the light of the evidence, "I think it prudent to prepare for the eventuality." Thus, the issue is no longer one of whether I will spend eternity, but, rather, "Where will I spend eternity?" The Bible and people's near death experiences describe two destinations - Heaven and Hell. According to the Bible, our final destination revolves around the question "What have I done with Jesus Christ?" In other words, am I connected to Jesus Christ or not. The New Living Translation reads: 1 John 5:11-13 - And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.

Similarly, In the Gospel of John, chapter 20 we are told the story of doubting Thomas, a disciple of Jesus who had missed a post resurrection appearance of Jesus. Jesus appears and tells Thomas to examine his body, feeling the spear wound made by a Roman soldier in His side. Thomas checks the physical evidence and exclaims "My Lord and my God" (20:28). Jesus then states that those believing in Him because of what God's word the Bible says about His resurrection are blessed. John then writes:

John 20:30-31 The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in Him you will have life by the power of His name.

The main point is that there is no eternal life apart from Jesus Christ. Those who have never heard about Jesus Christ are judged by how they followed their conscience (Romans 2:14-16). Those who have heard about Jesus Christ, but do not connect with Him personally by asking Him into their hearts, continue on the downward path to eternal death or separation from the presence of God. Spiritually, all people serve one of two spiritual lords or masters - Jesus Christ, or Satan. The Apostle Paul points this out in his letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:1-10 NLT - Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. But God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when He raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For He raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of His grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all He has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.

Verse ten tells us God has planned for us to do good things. Yet verse eight says that salvation cannot be earned by human effort. This brings up the question, "Can I ask Jesus into my heart and be made right with God as a free gift (Romans 5:17 Amplified translation), and get to heaven if I continue living as I please?" The Bible answer is "No, you can't." What we learn in the following verses is that we do good works because we are saved, and not, to be saved. The Book of Ezekiel says that God gives us a change of heart and we no longer want to sin or displease God.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 NLT - And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put My Spirit in you so that you will follow My decrees and be careful to obey My regulations.

The Apostle Paul's letter to Titus shows the proper correlation between grace (God's unmerited favor) and good works.

Titus 1:1-2 NLT - This letter is from Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. I have been sent to proclaim faith to those God has chosen and to teach them to know the truth that shows them how to live godly lives. This truth gives them confidence that they have eternal life, which God—who does not lie—promised them before the world began.

Titus 2:11-14 NLT - For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed. He gave His life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us His very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.

Titus 3:3-7 NLT - Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. But—"When God our Savior revealed His kindness and love, He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of His grace He declared us righteous and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life." The whole chapter of Romans 6 from the Apostle Paul further emphasizes our duty as believers in Jesus to, by His power within us, live right and please God.

Romans 6:1-23 NLT - Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of His wonderful grace? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined Him in His death?

For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with Him in His death, we will also be raised to life as He was. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with Him. We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and He will never die again. Death no longer has any power over Him. When He died, He died once to break the power of sin. But now that He lives, He lives for the glory of God. So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus. Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right.

And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

If we earnestly seek to walk in the light, but occasionally fall into sin, Jesus cleansing blood continues to save us for eternity.

1 John 1:5-7 AMP - And this is the message [*the message of promise*] which we have heard from Him and now are reporting to you: God is Light, and there is no darkness in Him at all [*no, not in any way*]. [*So*] if we say we are partakers together and enjoy fellowship with Him when we live and move and are walking about in darkness, we are [*both*] speaking falsely and do not live and practice the Truth [*which the Gospel presents*]. But if we [*really*] are living and walking in the Light, as He [*Himself*] is in the Light, we have [*true, unbroken*] fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses (removes) us from all sin and guilt [*keeps us cleansed from sin in all its forms and manifestations*].

However, if believers in Jesus willingly, knowingly, and repeatedly rebel and sin (disobey God), they may be headed down a dangerous path to a bleak future for their eternity.

Heb 10:26-31 NLT - Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins. There is only the terrible expectation of God's judgment and the raging fire that will consume His enemies. For anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God, and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy, and have insulted and disdained the Holy Spirit who brings God's mercy to us. For we know the One who said, "I will take revenge. I will pay them back." He also said, "The LORD will judge His own people." It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

John 14:16 states that Jesus asked the Heavenly Father to send the comforter, God the Holy Spirit, as a Comforter us, to live in us and "abide with you forever." Consider the fact that king David deliberately committed adultery with Bathsheba, then, to cover up the evidence of a pregnancy, arranged for her husband to be sent to the front of the battle where he would be killed. After such horrible sins, God had not left David

because he repented and was sorry for his sin, being a "man after God's own heart." In Psalm 51:12 NLT, David wrote: "Do not banish me from Your presence, and don't take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and make me willing to obey You."

Contrast this with a statement made by The Late Kenneth E. Hagin, a modern day prophet: "The Holy Spirit does not come and go; and, if he ever leaves, He will never come back." In one of his three his booklet on demonology, Hagin told how Jesus gave him a vision of a minister's wife. A demon came and sat on her shoulder and told her she was too beautiful to be wasting her time as a minister's wife. At first she resisted the temptation, following the Bible command to submit ourselves to God and resist the devil. James 4:7 AMP - "So be subject to God. Resist the devil [*stand firm against him*], and he will flee from you." When further temptations came, she yielded to them and the demon entered into her mind. From there she disobeyed God further and left her husband and began to say bad things about him. She could have repented and turned back to God, but she chose not to. In the vision, Hagin saw the eternal end of this woman - she would be thrown into the lake of fire. Let us never trespass on God's saving grace!

Robert Short wrote a book titled *Life in the Son*. As long as we "abide in the vine", are "in Christ", with "Christ in you the hope of glory", exercise faith Christ (to adhere to trust in, rely on, have faith in - Amplified translation) we have eternal life. This reconnection with God for our eternity is not just something future we hope to someday obtain. The Amplified translation of John 5:24, says we already have it now.

John 5:24 – I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, the person whose ears are open to My words [*who listens to My message*] and believes and trusts in and clings to and relies on Him Who sent Me has (possesses now) eternal life. And he does not come into judgment [*does not incur sentence of judgment, will not come under condemnation*], but he has already passed over out of death into life.

In Jesus' prayer in John chapter 17, He says he is the giver of eternal life, and defines eternal life by saying, John 17:2-3 AMP – [*Just as*] You have granted Him power and authority over all flesh (all humankind), [*now glorify Him*] so that He may give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. And this is eternal life: [*it means*] to know (to perceive, recognize, become acquainted with, and understand) You, the only true and real God, and [*likewise*] to know Him, Jesus [*as the*] Christ (the Anointed One, the Messiah), Whom You have sent.

A good faith affirmation to say out loud is this: "Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior and He is taking me to heaven, to live with Him forever. I do not base my assurance of heaven on how I feel. My assurance of heaven rests on God's ability to keep His Word (His Bible promises to save me for my having placed my trust in Jesus Christ)."

Today a very real contradiction to the Bible has come about. God says through the Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 5:17-21 Living Bible) that personal faith or trust in Jesus Christ and His goodness placed by God on our deficient account is His only approved avenue to heaven.

"When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same anymore. A new life has begun! All these new things are from God who brought us back to himself through what Jesus Christ did. And God has given us the privilege of urging everyone to come into his favor and be reconciled to him. For God was in Christ, restoring the world to himself, no longer counting men's sins against them but blotting them out. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others. We are Christ's ambassadors. God is using us to speak to you: we beg you, as though Christ himself were here pleading with you, receive the love he offers you—be reconciled to God. For God took the sinless Christ and poured into him our sins. Then, in exchange, he poured God's goodness into us!"

Jesus told His initial core group of followers:

John 14:1-6 NLT - "**Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in Me. There is more than enough room in My Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with Me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going.**" "No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where You are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus told him, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me.**"

Jesus also said,

John 10:1-2,9-10 NLT - "I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through Me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

Other religions, and even some Christian cults are promoting the idea that Jesus is not the only way to heaven and eternal life. My answer is two questions. "When God send his only Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross in our place for our sins, did He pay too much? If there had been another, less costly way for God to reconcile fallen man to Himself, other than sacrificing the most precious thing He had, His only Son to die in our place, don't you think He would have known about it and used it?" To put it bluntly, if there were another way, then God didn't know what he was doing.

Peter, a leader of the group, after Jesus was raised from the dead and went to heaven to prepare this promised place, told the religious leaders of his day,

Acts 4:12 There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."

In addition to God's Bible promises, there is another way you can be assured of heaven. In Romans chapter eight, the Apostle Paul writes that when one asks Jesus into his or heart as Lord and Savior, God the Holy Spirit comes to live in that person, providing a heartfelt inner assurance that one is a child of God. The Bible also states that God places the Holy Spirit within us as a down payment on our receiving resurrected and immortal bodies when Jesus returns to earth.

Romans 8:9-11, 15b NLT & 16-17 AMP - But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to Him at all.) And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, He will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you. ...you received God's Spirit when He adopted you as His own children. Now we call Him, "Abba, Father."

AMP - The Spirit Himself [*thus*] testifies together with our own spirit, [*assuring us*] that we are children of God. And if we are [*His*] children, then we are [*His*] heirs also: heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ [*sharing His inheritance with Him*];

Ephesians 1:13-14 NLT - And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, He identified you as His own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom He promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee that He will give us the inheritance He promised and that He has purchased us to be His own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify Him.

In closing take note that to reject Jesus Christ, does not mean that one will just miss heaven and be eliminated or cease to exist. Jesus told us this:

Matthew 10:28 NLT - "Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

W.E. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, defines the words *destroy* and *hell* used here as follows:

Destroy - **apollumi**, a strengthened form of **ollumi**, signifies "to destroy utterly"; in middle voice, "to perish." The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of wellbeing...of the loss of well-being in the case of the unsaved hereafter.

Hell - **geenna**... That God, "after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell," is assigned as a reason why He should be feared with the fear that keeps from evil doing, **Luk_12:5**; the parallel passage to this in **Mat_10:28** declares, not the casting in, but the doom which follows, namely, the destruction (not the loss of being, but of wellbeing) of "both soul and body."

Proverbs 3:5-8 Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take. Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the LORD and turn away from evil. Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones.

Job 19:25-27 - "But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and He will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! I will see Him for myself. Yes, I will see Him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!"

I conclude with Jesus' Parable of the ten virgins. five were wise and kept their lamps full of oil as they anticipated the return of the Bridegroom (resurrected Jesus) to be taken to the marriage supper of the Lamb, receiving resurrection bodies themselves, and spending their eternity with Jesus as he sets up His kingdom under a new heaven and earth. The five foolish virgins were not prepared, the oil supply in their lamps had run out, and the wise virgins were unable to help. Matthew 25:2-13 NLT

"Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

Mat 25:2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.

Mat 25:3 The five who were foolish didn't take enough olive oil for their lamps,

Mat 25:4 but the other five were wise enough to take along extra oil.

Mat 25:5 When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

Mat 25:6 "At midnight they were roused by the shout, 'Look, the bridegroom is coming! Come out and meet him!'

Mat 25:7 "All the bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps.

Mat 25:8 Then the five foolish ones asked the others, 'Please give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.'

Mat 25:9 "But the others replied, 'We don't have enough for all of us. Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves.'

Mat 25:10 "But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked.

Mat 25:11 Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside, calling, 'Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!'

Mat 25:12 "But he called back, 'Believe me, I don't know you!'

Mat 25:13 "So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of My return.

