



*Presbyterian  
Evangelistic  
Fellowship*

# OUR HOMELAND

Viewed From Age 85

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Ever since I was a teen-ager I have loved hymns about Heaven. And now at age eighty-five I enjoy them more than ever. Jerusalem the Golden, Jerusalem, My Happy Home, The Sands Of Time Are Sinking, In the Sweet By and By, and others have been a comfort to my soul through all the years of my life.

And Paul's letter to the Philippians has been precious to me for all these years. I have a number of translations of the New Testament, and they all have their value as they help to clarify the meaning of various portions of God's Word. But recently the Living Bible rendering of Philippians has delighted me as no other version, especially verses 3: 21-22.

But our homeland is in Heaven, with our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ; and we are looking forward to His return from there. When He comes back He will take these dying bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like His own, using the same mighty power that He will use to conquer all else everywhere.

Philippi was a colony of Rome, and many of its people were happy to be citizens of Rome, who had ties to that world capital which made it their homeland. Paul, the missionary who wrote these words, had been Saul of Tarsus, born a Roman citizen. After Jesus transformed him on his way to Damascus he used his Roman citizenship as a means of advancing his work as a messenger of Jesus Christ. No doubt he taught all believers who were Roman citizens that as their earthly citizenship made Rome their homeland, so their faith in Christ made Heaven the homeland of their souls. So Paul in this letter to the Philippian Christians who were his fellow citizens of Rome, wrote our homeland is in Heaven.

During our lifetime tens of thousands of Americans have been in foreign lands for long months and even years. Have you ever been far from America and longed for our beloved homeland? I have spent thirty of my eighty-five years in the heart of Africa as a missionary of Jesus Christ. I know what it means to be homesick for the homeland. Those of you who have spent long years overseas also understand what it means to be homesick for the homeland. So you will understand why I love Philippians 3: 21-22 in the Living Bible. That is my reason for writing about those verses now.

Heaven is a beautiful place. What we know about Heaven we have learned from the Bible. In that precious book we read so much about its attractions that all true Christians want to go there. Some unbelievers ridicule the thought of Heaven. But we know that some time, they will be horrified to learn that their names are not written in the Book of Life.

The same Bible that tells us about the joys of Heaven tells about the horrors of Hell. Many ungodly people who have no fear of Hell use that word profanely. Hell is nothing to laugh about. Those who use the word profanely now will not laugh about Hell when they get there. Forever they must share the fearful fate of the devil and hiss angels and all the foolish people who have turned their backs upon God's gracious offer of His love and mercy .

Years ago revival meetings were being held in a village church down south. It so happened that the only rich man in the neighborhood attended the meeting one night. Everybody knew that he was not a Christian, that he openly made fun of Christians and the Church. The preacher at one point asked that everyone who wanted to go to Heaven raise his hand. Everybody raised a hand except

the rich man. A halfwitted boy noticed it and after the meeting went to the rich man and solemnly asked him. "Don't you want to go to Heaven?" The rich man answered, "No." The half-wit glared at him and said very seriously, "Go to Hell then!"

That was not the end. Next morning the rich man went to see the preacher and said he wanted to be a Christian and join the church. The preacher was like the angels in Heaven who rejoice over every sinner who repents and accepts Jesus as his Savior. So he asked the rich man what he had said that led to his conversion. He was astonished when the rich man replied, "What you said had nothing to do with it. After the meeting that halfwitted boy came and asked me whether I want to go to Heaven. I gave him a blunt No! The halfwit then glared at me and said in all seriousness, 'Go to Hell then.' I have not slept all night thinking about it. I want to be a Christian. I saw that I really was on the way to Hell, that I have been a fool. I really do want to go Heaven. But it was the halfwit's question following your question about going to Heaven which converted me. " Heaven and Hell are real places, no matter what ungodly people may say. Thousands of unbelievers would be fortunate indeed if God were to send them some despised halfwit to turn them to the Lord Jesus and to Heaven.

But we were speaking of Heaven. If you were to ask me I could not tell you just where Heaven is. But Jesus told us that God IS there. He taught us the Lord's prayer in which the word Heaven appears twice. The word Heaven is used ever so many times in the four Gospels. Jesus also said, I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.

If you are a Christian you believe that the Son of the virgin Mary was crucified, dead and buried, rose again from the dead, and ascended into Heaven. That is where Jesus of Nazareth is now. If you are a Christian you can say with Paul and his born again friends in Philippi, Our Homeland is in Heaven, with our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ.

One outstanding fact about Heaven is that God's will is done there always. We pray, as Jesus taught us. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. When you read the newspaper you are perfectly sure that God's will is not now being done in this year 1974. How happy we will be when we enter the place where God's will is being done always forever!

Can you say that Heaven is your homeland? If not, then why not? God's passport to Heaven is waiting for you. Whosoever will may come. Why not apply for it before it is forever too late?

Many years of my life I lived in Belgian Congo where we had to boil all our drinking water because of the abundance of disease germs. And even in this fair America there is a perpetual battle to escape from polluted water. Do you mean that you are not interested in the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb? If you care at all about the marvelous benefits waiting for Christians in the City of God, you are urged to remember that now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will certainly be saved. If you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

You will enjoy the blessings of Heaven forever and ever-no worries, no temptations, no sin, no sickness nor weakness, no fear of death, no war, just everlasting peace and joy. But to qualify for the benefits of Heaven, you must accept God's free offer of salvation through the shed blood of His

Son Jesus Christ. But now, wherever you are today, here and now is the time to repent, confess your sins and accept your savior. If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now is the time to repent, which means to turn around. Turn away from the ways of the world, the broad road that leads to destruction, and enter the narrow road that leads to Heaven, the glorious city of our God. If you do not now have a homeland in Heaven, you may get your passport to Heaven before another hour passes. You may know before you eat another meal, or before you sleep tonight, that Jesus Christ who died on the cross for your sins has accepted you as one of God's own children, that your name is written in the Book of Life.

When you reach age eighty-five as I have done, you become quite conscious that any day may be your last. You feel that your body is growing weaker. Little by little it is dying. But if your homeland is in Heaven, with your Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, you may look forward joyfully to going Home. You can practice with Paul what he preached to the friends at Philippi, Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.

When Jesus comes He will change these dying bodies into glorious bodies like His own. We are told that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. Our dear old professor of theology at Louisville Seminary, Dr. Robert A. Webb, had an impressive face, which made me think of Ichabod Crane. He knew he was not handsome. The subject under discussion was whether we could recognize each other in Heaven. A student asked him whether in Heaven we will look just like we do now. He answered, "What, do you think I would want to wear an old noggin just like this all through eternity?" Thank God, we shall have glorified bodies, perfect in every way! We shall be like Him for we shall see Him even as He IS.

How He can change these dying bodies to look like His glorious body without destroying our identity we do not understand. But surely we shall know our loved ones, and they will know us. That calls for almighty power and wisdom. So we are told that He will use the same mighty power that He will use to conquer everything else everywhere.

Do you ever marvel at the power and wisdom of Christ the Creator of all things, who made all the diverse beauty of birds and flowers, so that generation after generation, each brings forth so its offspring is just like itself? He who could devise and create such marvels as birds and flowers, and create our bodies in the first place, can surely take care of what we look like in Heaven.

But far above all other friends we shall recognize will be that dearest Friend and Saviour whom doubting Thomas recognized by the prints of the nails in His hands. Thomas humbly recognized Jesus with the words, My Lord and My God!

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