

Heaven: Unmixed and Unending Joy

by Albert N. Martin

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One of the verses that several of you have quoted to me in the course of these studies on the subject of heaven is the well-known verse which the Apostle Paul quotes from the Old Testament in which we read: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). And often you've quoted the more familiar language from which this is taken in Isaiah 64:4: "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him." But the Apostle goes on to say, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." And then he goes on in the passage to say that what was veiled in the past and now is unveiled is revealed in words, not which man's wisdom teaches but which the Spirit teaches. And those words are the words which we now have in this book we hold before us, the Bible. And all we can know for certain about the inheritance that awaits us is that which God has been pleased to reveal in the very words which the Spirit has chosen. And how much we feel our need of the same Spirit to open our minds that we might understand those precious words. Let us, then, seek His face again for the blessing of the Spirit as we seek to understand the words of God.

Our Father, we confess again that we have felt so keenly in these past days our own weakness and limitations as creatures and sinners as we have sought to concentrate our minds upon the glories that await the children of God. Yet we thank You that You have revealed these things to us for our edification. And we pray that the Holy Spirit will be given to us tonight in copious measures that we may understand more accurately and may have a firmer grasp upon the inheritance so dearly purchased for us in the blood of Your own dear Son. Hear us and draw near us in the ministry of the Word. We ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now, although God has stamped upon the consciousness of each one of us and all of His creatures made in His image, that is, all mankind, that haunting awareness that we are not just animals, and that when we die, that's not the end of it all. In spite of that haunting consciousness common to all mankind, we are utterly dependent upon the Word of God written for any certain and clear knowledge of what lies beyond the grave. Men cannot escape the haunting consciousness that the grave is not the end of it all. But when they begin to pursue that haunting consciousness to some clear understanding of precisely what lies beyond the grave, they cannot find the answer in themselves; they cannot find it in scientific investigation. They can find it in no other way than in the Scriptures of God. And therefore, with the Scriptures open before us,

we have been seeking for some weeks now to answer, first of all, these two basic questions: "What is hell?" and "Who is going there?" And now we've been wrestling with the question, "What is heaven?" and, God willing, next week, "Who is going there?"

Now tonight, we come to examine the final element in the Biblical answer to the question, "What is heaven?" And the sixth thing that heaven is according to the Scriptures is this: heaven is a place of unmixed and unending joy for all of its inhabitants (God, angels, and all of the redeemed). Joy, bliss, happiness--these commodities universally sought, but O how allusive they are. And with our Bibles in our hands and an eye to perceive reality as we see it about us, it is no understatement to say that there is no true joy, bliss, or happiness apart from the salvation of God in Jesus Christ. It is for this very reason that one of the distinguishing marks of the Gospel is that it and it alone brings true joy to sinful man.

You remember when the angel announced the birth of the Lord Jesus, he announced it in this language: "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). And there is no great joy apart from the knowledge of the Savior who is Christ the Lord. Furthermore, in a text such as Romans 14:17, we read: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." One of the distinguishing marks of the privileges of those in Christ's kingdom is that they have joy rooted in the Holy Spirit, a joy found in companionship with righteousness and with peace. Or we could take Galatians 5:22: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...." Or 1 Peter 1:8: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Or Paul's word in Romans 15:13: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." And these text and others that could be brought to underscore the same point clearly assert that it is an exclusive privilege of the Gospel to bring true joy. And wherever the Gospel comes with power, it always brings with it some of that measure of true spiritual joy.

It is impossible for the Holy Spirit to indwell a man or woman, boy or girl and for that person not to experience something of the fruit of His indwelling, namely joy along with love and peace and all the other dimensions of the ninefold fruit of the Spirit. It's impossible to be introduced into the kingdom of God by the new birth and not to have some measure of joy in the Holy Spirit along with an imputed righteousness and peace with God and something of the peace of God. However, the Bible that makes it clear that the highest, richest, most abounding joy experienced by any child of God in this life is at every point to some degree a joy that is mixed with sorrow. Whatever joy that comes in the dynamics of grace here and now, it is never unmixed joy. It is always joy mingled to some degree with sorrow and grief. And whatever point a Christian may experience in his Christian life where it seems as though his consciousness is one of unmixed joy, it will not be long before he realizes it was not unending joy. And so I have chosen these two words carefully and purposely in asserting that heaven is a place of unmixed and unending joy for all of its inhabitants.

While we are here, whatever joy we know, we do indeed mourn and grieve over our remaining sin and the sin that is about us. And any professed joy that is supposed to be the joy of the Gospel that is not mingled with grief and pain for sin is a Satanic delusion. Beware of a Gospel that promises and professes to bring its adherence to unmixed joy in this life. It will be a Gospel that takes lightly the reality of sin. For

Jesus described the subjects of the kingdom in present tense verbs when He said, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." As long as the reality of remaining sin is our earthly companion, we will with the Apostle be forced to cry sometimes with greater intensity than others, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." And no man says those words with felt spiritual experience with a thirty-two tooth grin on his face. If he doesn't say them with tears coming out of his eyes, he says them with a tear-drenched heart.

Furthermore, we mourn and grieve with our brothers and sisters who pass through seasons of grief. And when we hear our Lord saying to us through the pen of the Apostle, "Weep with them that weep" as well as "Rejoice with them that do rejoice," we take that seriously. We're not content to simply to come with some pious dribble and pat them on the back and tell them, "The joy of the Lord is your strength, brother. Rejoice in the Lord." There is a time when they sob and we draw near until the felt realities that produce their tears are ours by way of spiritual empathy. That's Christianity. This chuck a man under the chin with a shallow word of Biblical promise is cruelty, not Christianity. We are to weep with those who weep.

Furthermore, according to the Scriptures, whatever heights of joys we may know, as long as we're in this tabernacle, we groan. As the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:4, "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened [longing to put on our habitation from heaven]." And furthermore, whatever joys we may know in the Christian life, alas, so often that joy is clouded by spiritual declension, spiritual dullness, and backslidings of heart. And O what a grievous thing it is to discover in yourself a backslidden heart. So you see, though joy is an indispensable commodity of saving experience and one of the unique commodities of the Gospel, in this present state, it is never unmixed, nor is it unending joy. But blessed be God, one of the cardinal blessings of heaven is that it is a state, a place, a condition, an eternal experience, if I may use the terminology, of unmixed and unending joy. And for the true child of God, no little part of the glory of heaven consists in that great reality.

Now let's turn to those Scriptures which teach us that heaven is a place of unmixed joy. We have the clear statement of our Lord in the parable given to us in Matthew 25. We have the parable of the man who goes into another country, calls his servants, delivers his goods to them: one five talents, another two, another one. And then the parable tells us in verse 19, "After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." Obviously a reference to the second coming of the Lord Jesus, at which time there will be a reckoning with all men before His judgment throne. Verses 20 and 21:

"And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things [and we looked at that phrase in conjunction with the idea that heaven will be a place of active responsible service. But now we concentrate on the last phrase. And here the entire inheritance is described in this one simple phrase]: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

We find exactly the same terminology with regard to the man who took the two talents and brought a return to his Lord. In verse 23: "His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make

thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Now this is a fascinating phrase: "The joy of thy Lord." Is it the joy which your Lord has prepared for you? Or is it the joy that is your Lord's which He deigns to share with you and all His faithful servants? Linguistically and grammatically, it could be either. And frankly, I don't have a clue to say which one it is with dogmatism. But this much is certain, whether it is the joy which is the Lord's in His own eternal dwelling now shared with all His faithful servants, or whether it is the peculiar joy prepared by the Lord for His servants, this much is clear: the dominant characteristic of the inheritance into which the faithful are ushered is joy.

"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Now was there no joy in the heart of the servant who out of love to his Master served Him? Why of course there was. The very flavor in which the servant seems anxious to appear before his Lord and say, "You gave me five and I've traded for you." He had no narrow conceptions of His Lord as the unprofitable servant who called Him a hard man (narrow-hearted and tight-fisted). There was no joy in his service whatsoever. Obviously, the faithful servants had joy in their service. And whatever joy they knew while they were administering the stewardship of their Lord, it was but an earnest, a down payment, a preview of the consummate joy that was theirs upon the return of their Master. And isn't it interesting that when the Lord Jesus would underscore the great reality of the kingdom to come and our place in it, He describes it in this pregnant terminology: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And that's what it will be--unmixed joy. It was an entrance upon joy undiluted by grief and groaning and sorrow and pain. It was the joy of the Lord--joy unmixed.

But now we add to this clear statement of our Lord in Matthew 25 the graphic descriptions found in the book of the Revelation. First of all, Revelation 7. Remember now what we're seeking to see from the Scriptures, that heaven is a place of unmixed joy. Verses 13-17:

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, 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 sitteth 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: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Here is a situation, a state, a condition in which everything that would provoke a tear is forever banished. God wipes away every tear from their eyes. Then in Revelation 21, there's an exposition of how it is that God wipes away those tears. Here in the vision of the new heaven and the new earth coming down out of heaven, we read:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem [the church], coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And 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" (vv. 1-4).

As I was mentioning to my wife this afternoon, though I trust I preach with as much confident dependence upon God tonight as I did last week, I preach with a little less frustration. Because when we're determined to stick by what Scripture says, Scripture gives us very few materials with which to expound what it will mean to have face to face vision of God. And all you can do is state it and stand back amazed and overwhelmed with wonder. But you see, here God describes what a state of unmixed joy will mean in terms of negatives to which we can now relate. You see the difference? God doesn't give us many positives to describe what it will be to have immediate communion with Him and face to face vision of Him. He simply states it. Here He says, "unmixed joy." Well, what will that mean? God says, "I'll help you," and He describes it in terms of negatives to which we can readily relate.

The first great negative is that there shall be no more death. Now think of all the grief and sorrow that surrounds the awful intrusion of death upon the human race. "In the day that thou eatest [of that fruit] thou shalt surely die." And the seeds of death were sown in that moment of disobedience. Spiritual death became an immediate reality. And then, that which leads dust to dust began to work in Adam and Eve upon the moment of their sinning. There was the agonizing work of causing an unyielding earth to yield its produce. Adam and Eve began to feel aches, pains, and the seeds of death in terms of their mortal bodies, and the seeds of death in terms of the torture of soul that they would feel when they see their own firstborn become a murderer and slay his own brother. And all that surrounds death: the pain and the grief of the graveside, the disappointment of the life cut short, the horrible frightening specter that this body, the only reality I have ever known of my own existence--to think that it shall be eaten of worms in a few years. But death shall be no more. And then God goes on, as it were, to expound and expand on some of the things that grow out of this situation in which the curse and death are still with us.

Death shall be no more. And since death is no longer with us, neither shall there be mourning. There will be no black shrouds to show respect and heaviness of heart for a departed loved one, no mourning, no outcry, none of that sob that comes from the depths of the soul of one who has seen a loved one, a child, a husband, a wife, a beloved father, grandfather, friend, or neighbor, noble leader cut down and taken from us. No longer will there be the outcry, the mourning.

And I love these two words--"nor pain," that mysterious thing that the doctors continually try to analyze. What is pain? Everyone knows what it is, but no one knows what it is. You kids know what pain is, don't you, when papa puts his hand or his belt on your behind when you've been disobedient? With your bad heart, you do things that are naughty, and mommy and daddy have to spank you. You know what pain is, don't you? But when people try to analyze precisely what is pain, it alludes them. But we all know the reality of it. And many of us, the older we grow, pain is a constant companion to us whether it's an arthritic joint, or whether it's something that becomes more severe. And what a blessed thing to know no pain. Your joy in communion with God so often is interrupted because of physical pain, physical limitations.

Here the text tells us no death, no mourning, no crying, nor pain. Why? "For the former things [all of the things pertaining to the present heavens and the present earth under the curse of God] are passed away [gone, forever put behind us]." All of

the things that have intruded themselves upon us in this present state as a result of the fall--they shall all be passed away. That's unmixed joy, joy that will not know one millisecond of interruption. Just as it will be unbroken face to face communion, it will be unmixed joy. With perfect bodies, glorified bodies, perfected souls in a perfect environment with nothing but sinless associations (God, angels, redeemed sinners), an environment that has been utterly transformed by the power of a returning Lord and all the curse purged from it, an environment no longer unyielding and hostile but perfectly consistent with and adapted to all of the realities of the glorified humanity. And everything we look upon will cause our joy to expand. And everything we hear will cause it to increase. And everything we see will cause it to spring up like a well within us. Blessed be God for the prospect of a heaven of unmixed joy.

The same Bible that teaches us that heaven is a place of unmixed joy teaches us that it is a place of unending joy. The conditions which make it unmixed will never change. There will be no death, not the intrusion of death once in a millennium to remind us of what death once was--no death, no sin, no pain, no curse. And added to those negatives, those blessed positives of looking upon the face of an unchanging God and upon the Lamb in the midst of the throne, the infinite source of blessedness. You remember that beautiful picture of the river of the water of life. Where does it come from? It comes out of the midst of the throne of God and of the Lamb. That river that is the source of the life of heaven flows out from God and the Lamb. And therefore, because that God is eternal and infinite and unchanging, the Word of God teaches us that our joy will not only be unmixed, it too, like God, will be unending.

And how is it expressed in the language of Scripture? Well, look at Revelation 22:5. Here, after this vision of the river clear as crystal that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, we read: "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." It's a Greek idiom literally translated as you see in the marginal rendering of many of your Bibles "unto the ages of the ages." And it's the classic terminology used to express eternity. There are times when these words obviously do not mean eternity, but there are other contexts in which if they do not mean eternity (unendingness), then the Bible has left us without language to describe the concept of unendingness. Where we read in this passage "they shall reign for ever and ever," it is an explicit assertion of the unendingness of the state secured for the redeemed by grace so that the unmixed joy has added to it the glory that it shall be unending joy. It's like the text in Matthew 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." And the language there is parallel language. The same kind of usage is found in Revelation 14:11: "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." God cannot accommodate Himself more clearly to speak of unendingness than to use that word, to use that phrase, to use that combination of words. And that is the glory of the heaven that awaits us, and particularly the joy that is ours. It will be unending joy. We shall reign in that state of no curse, no pain, no sorrow, no death forever and forever.

Now I'm very conscious, dear people, that we enter a kind of mental paralysis in the very effort to think of unendingness. And I've read many illustrations that try to illustrate eternity, but all they do is cloud the issue. You've just got to be willing to feel that measure of mental paralysis. Everything we do is in terms of the pressure of time. We think in terms of yesterday and tomorrow. We think in terms of 8:00 this

morning and 10:00 tonight. Our whole life is geared to that recurring cycle of darkness and light and 24 hours constituting a day and 7 days a week and 52 weeks a year and 10 years a decade. Why? God has made it that way. Again and again, He tells us in those beautiful pictures in the book of the Revelation, "no night there"--no sequence of night and day. So to talk about a billion years and use illustrations about birds picking up drops of water and depositing them somewhere until they empty the oceans--my friends, it's futile. I've heard all the illustrations; alas, in the past, I even used them. But I find they haven't really helped me, because, you see, the flaw in all of them is thinking in terms of our present state of affairs in which everything is calculated in units of time. But all we can do is assert what the Word of God says. It will be joy unending in all the glory of that blessed revelation.

And lest you think that that's just some kind of a wishful hope, it struck me in my preparation that in both of these points in Revelation 21 and 22, after setting forth some of these most exotic glories that await us, notice what God says in Revelation 21:5: "And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful." They are worthy of your consideration and trust, for they are truth. They present concepts which our minds cannot fully grasp. We stagger and feel the paralysis when we attempt to focus upon them, but they are trustworthy and they are true. Likewise, in chapter 22, after speaking of that glory of the unendingness of our state ("They shall reign forever and ever"), what does verse 5 tell us? "And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful." And my friend, all you can know about heaven is what you have in the words of God, and they are faithful, trustworthy words. They are worthy of pinning all of my hopes and expectations upon their validity. They are true words, trustworthy words. And an hour is coming in which I shall know unmixed joy and unending joy; so will every true child of God.

Well, you may ask me tonight, "Pastor Martin, I can see getting excited about these concepts and perhaps occasionally indulging the luxury of thinking of what my prospects are, but really, is there any practical relevance to all of this?" My friend, if you even ask that question or think it, you show abysmal ignorance of the Bible because, according to the Word of God, it is this hope intelligently and believingly grasped which is one of the major motivational factors in true Biblical Christianity. Let me just give you a couple of suggested lines of thought, and that's all they are. They're not exhaustive.

It's relevant in relating to opposition, which comes to every Christian. "All who live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." That's what the Word of God says. Well, in the midst of persecution, what is it that nerves us to unyielding allegiance to Christ and His ways? Well, listen to Christ: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." In the midst of feeling the pain of opposition--and it is pain when that opposition sometimes comes from the members of your own household, your neighbors (you feel their cold shoulder), work associates and friends at school or one time friends. You think God wants us to go around clapping our hands and clicking our heels when we feel that pain of rejection? Of course not, it causes grief to us. But in the midst of that grief, we rejoice in what? Great is our reward in the place of unmixed joy. It will be unmixed joy because no one there will reject me for loving Christ. No one will cut me off and isolate me because I want to do His will and follow Him. Everything about that will spur me on to serve Him more devotedly, to want to do more for Him in a growing

cycle of loving obedience and the return of praise and adoration to the Lord who has redeemed us. You see how relevant it is.

Or again, it's as relevant as your purse strings when it comes time to say, "What will I do with what's been entrusted to me in terms of my being able to earn a living. Jesus said in Matthew 6, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." It's as relevant as what you do with your purse strings: how you apportion the balance in your checkbook, how much goes into savings, how much goes into stocks and bonds and lands and houses and cars and possessions. It's just that relevant. If you're seeking to find your joy in things, it will be reflected, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be. And where your heart is, that's where your pen goes with your checks and your hand goes with your money. That's how relevant it is.

It's relevant if the time should come when some of us will be called upon either to deny Christ to spare our lives or to seal our testimony with our own life's blood. You better have this hope burning brightly and intelligently in your breast. Look at the moving account in Hebrews 11. Speaking of the heroes of faith, we read in verses 32-35:

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance [redemption]; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

In other words, someone came to them and said, "Look, you continue your course of confessing Christ and obeying Christ, and the price is death. Now here's the price to avert death." Here was a price offered to redeem them from death, a kind of resurrection, a kind of coming back from the dead. The sentence of death was put upon them by their opposers. Now they come and say, "Here's the price of your release. Do you want, as it were, a resurrection from the dead?" The text says, "No." They wanted a better resurrection, and they refused the redemption price for this pseudo resurrection. They said,

"If my neck must undergo the guillotine, the guillotine it must be. If my body must be sown in an animal skin and thrown to the lions, sow it and throw it. But I'm convinced that my Lord has purchased for me a heaven of unending, unmixed joy. He will give me grace for this interim of pain, of sorrow, and of grief."

I'm convinced if a bloodbath was let loose on the church in America tomorrow, probably the vast majority of professing Christians would accept any redemption from martyrdom. Because if we're faithful in little, we're faithful in much. And a soft anemic Christianity that won't deny itself the comfort of the easy chair Wednesday nights to pray, won't deny itself food and other things occasionally even to fast and cry to God - a fat, flabby, self-indulgent evangelicalism is a sitting duck for mass apostasy if God allows the unsheathing of the sword of open opposition to the Gospel.

I tell you, my friend, you better feed your soul upon this hope until you become what those blessed people in Hebrews were. They were identified as sojourners. Their eye, their heart, their affections were fixed on a city that has foundations whose builder and maker is God, not a Christian retirement center in Florida. It's sickening to see the ads pandering to this anemic, self-centered, earthbound evangelicalism at every level. Full page ads in *Christianity Today* and *Moody Monthly*: "I never thought I could be a successful business man while a Christian." And it shows him standing by his new car with his golf bag over his back. And he tells you how you like him can really make it big in a Christian organization. What an abomination in the sight of God. How contrary to Biblical Christianity. Take your bucks. They'll be burned up when Jesus comes. Take your prestige; take your titles; take your names--what are they when we have such a prospect as this: unending, unmixed joy in the presence of God and of the Lamb.

Well, those are just a few lines of thought as to the relevance of it all. As I seek to bring this word to a conclusion, let me press this simple question upon your conscience tonight. We've been contemplating heaven. What is it? And we've sought to concentrate upon one element of what the Bible reveals about heaven, namely that it is a place of unmixed and unending joy. Do you remember when we asked the question, "What is hell?" One of our points was that hell is a place of unmixed and unending torment and woe. Everything that heaven is, hell is not. Do you like pain? God appeals to that innate fear of pain in man. And my dear friend, man, woman, boy, or girl, if you choose a course in opposition to God and His Son, indifference to His cross, indifference to His claims, what you're saying is, "I'm prepared to meet Almighty God and let Him pour out upon me the vials of His wrath that will bring me to a state of intense, unending, unmixed pain and woe. And that's not the language of a preacher trying to scare you to Christ. It's the language of Christ Himself who used this terminology again and again: "Outer darkness. There is the weeping, the wailing, and the gnashing of teeth." Nothing but weeping, nothing but wailing, nothing but gnashing of teeth. Why? Because hell is a place of unmixed and unending torment and woe. And those are the issues set before you.

As clearly as Pastor Nichols laid before us two Lord's Days ago in the morning with regard to propitiation, either Christ bears the wrath of God for you, or you bear it in your person. So likewise, I set before you the way of life and of death. And I am not at all ashamed to present what some would call mercenary selfish motives. My friend, will you go the direction which leads to unmixed and unending pain? Or would you join those who are on their way to a place of unmixed and unending joy? That way stands before you in Jesus Christ and the Gospel. He opened up that way by His own perfect life and by His death upon the cross for sinners. And He says to us in the Gospel, "Enter in at the narrow gate." O yes, it is a narrow gate and a compressed way, but thank God, it leads to life. I would not be true to the Gospel if I told you it was a wide gate. It's a narrow gate. You've got to leave your love of self, your pride, your self-righteousness, your self-sufficiency, your self-will. You've got to sell out to Jesus Christ lock, stock, and barrel with no hidden print, no mental reservations. "Lord Jesus, I'm yours." That's it. And then you don't breathe easy as though it's over, because you get through that gate and look around and say, "Wonderful! This is the gate that leads to life." Yes, but it's a way. Do you know what the way is? It's a narrow compressed way. It's a way beset with all kinds of dangers, beset by many enemies, but it's a way that leads to life. And my friend, if you want that life of unmixed and unending joy, there's only one way to get there: through the gate and along the way. There is no other option before you. God's boxed us up and hedged

us in. And O, I plead with you, choose life tonight. And you choose life as you choose Him who is the way, the truth, and the life.

And dear child of God, don't be battered into thinking this pie in the sky by and by religion is somehow not respectable in the sophisticated, social consciousness of the twentieth century. Take all of that business and burn it. We will serve this generation best and most fervently and zealously in direct proportion to which heaven burns in our vision and in our hearts. This is where we're going. We can afford to be a little reckless, not irresponsible. We can afford not to hedge all our bets and take risks for Christ and His kingdom. We can afford the luxury of saying,

"Lord Jesus, I'm yours. I have but a few short years to serve you at best. Nothing else matters. Lord, I'm expendable. Use me that I might take a few others with me who in that day will stand resplendent with the glory of Your redemptive grace and power. And together, we will know as never the preacher could have told us what it is to be in a place of unmixed and unending joy."

O, may God grant that you be there with me. That's the thing for which we labor; that's the thing for which we pray. It is to that end we plead with you. Don't slight the claims of Christ and the overtures of grace in the Gospel. Professing Christian, don't sell your soul for a pittance. Reject anything and everything that makes you the least bit indisposed to press on in that narrow way. It and it alone leads to life. Anything that indisposes you to love that way, to walk that way, to stumble in that way is a mortal enemy. Treat it as such. That's reality.

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