

In These Dark Times, We Have the Hope of Heaven on Earth

Last week I watched one of my favorite movies, *The Hiding Place*. I've probably watched it 50 times. Near the end of the film, Corrie ten Boom goes to the crude hospital in the Ravensbrück camp to see her sister, Betsie, through the ice-covered windowpane. Betsie can barely lift her head, but she waves and tries to smile. Corrie knew this might be the last time she would see her.

I cried at that point in the film because the scene reminded me of the last time I saw my 92-year-old mother through the glass door at her nursing home. Even though her facility is 10 minutes from my house, I'm not allowed to visit her because of a COVID-19 outbreak there.

When we know a loved one is close to death, we naturally feel sad. But I was reminded afresh that even though Corrie experienced unspeakable loss when Betsie died in that awful Nazi camp, the two sisters are now reunited. They both loved the Lord. They are together now—and there are no lice, filthy barracks or sadistic guards with whips. The sad goodbye in that horrific hellhole in Germany was followed by a joyful reunion in the presence of Jesus in heaven, where all tears are wiped away.

Have you ever wondered if you will see your loved ones in heaven? Of course you will, if they are followers of Jesus. When we are raised to life in Christ, we will still have our identities. I will still be me. You will still be you. And if we have a friendship now, we will have a friendship in heaven. And we will make many new friends from all over this current world.

Whenever life gets tough, I remind myself that something so

much better awaits me. I know I have more work to do on this side of heaven, and I am praying for fresh strength to fulfill my assignment. Jesus gives me supernatural joy to face any trial here on earth. But I am also filled with hope that a glorious future awaits all who love Jesus.

I read the book *Heaven* by Randy Alcorn at the beginning of 2021. It's my favorite book on the topic because it clearly shows how much the Bible says about our eternal life with God after this fallen world has passed away. Alcorn writes: "If you're a child of God, you do not just 'go around once' on Earth. You don't get just one earthly life. You get another—one far better and without end. You'll inhabit the New Earth! You'll live with the God you cherish and the people you love as an undying person on an undying Earth."

Most Christians think very little about heaven. We stay focused on the here and now, until we attend a funeral and get a quick reminder of how short life really is. We lack an eternal perspective.

In previous generations, Christians sang often about heaven. Today, our music avoids the topic. That's why I've added a classic gospel song to my playlist. Vestal Goodman's version of "The Holy Hills of Heaven" is old-fashioned, but it makes me cry every time I hear it. One compelling part of the song says: "I see loved ones over yonder/ Their tears are gone/ and their hearts are free/ and from the throne King Jesus beckons/ Oh the hills of gold are calling me."

Colossians 3:1b says, "set your hearts on the things that are in heaven, where Christ sits on his throne" (GNT). We should sing about heaven more and preach about it constantly. It is the greatest hope we have. One day this dark, sinful world will end, and a glorious new earth will become our eternal home.

Thinking about heaven is not escapism; it is the best kind of

therapy. When I grow weary of this world—the corruption, racism, political divisions, viruses, cancer, tyranny, hatefulness and injustice—I remind myself that Jesus has defeated death and will one day recreate this world to be the sinless paradise He always intended for us.

In heaven there will be no hospitals, nursing homes, masks, ventilators or social distancing. There will be no pandemics. There will be no murders, riots or funerals. I have read the last chapters of the Bible. Revelation 21:4b (NASB) says: “There will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain.”

If you are a believer in Jesus, you have the sure promise of a home on the other side. Think about that often; sing about it, and tell everybody else about it. {eoa}