

Overcoming Fear and Anxiety – Part III
Pastor Ty Blackburn
John 14:1-3
September 14, 2014

You guys are dismissed for your classes. May you grow in the grace and knowledge of a God who is watching over you, and a Savior who walks with those who know Him. Thank you, Todd, for leading worship. Emily, for playing, and Emily, thank you for that wonderful blessing. Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 14. We're in an extended, three-part message, so when we're in an extended message I try to tie things together a little more. I even gave you the outline before, during the Bible-reading time. I don't normally give you that.

But Jesus is concerned about His apostles, His disciples in this passage that we have before us. Remember that we are with the disciples and Jesus in the upper room, *'The Farewell Discourse'*, really the last words, as it were, of Jesus in His earthly life and ministry, to His precious disciples before the cross, and He realizes that they are troubled. He knows they are troubled by what He has already told them, and He knows what lies ahead that they don't even yet see, that is really going to trouble them. He has been telling them this night, I mean, it began with the foot-washing which, as we saw some time back, the foot-washing itself was unsettling to them. "How can it be that the Son of God is washing our feet? What does this mean?" They are perplexed by that. Then Jesus' announcement that He is being betrayed by one of the 12, one of His inner circle has lifted his heel against Jesus, and they are astonished at that, terrified by that. "Is it one of us? Is it me?" Then He announces to them, after Judas leaves, that He is going somewhere they cannot follow. For three and a half years they have been following Him, and living with Him everywhere He goes, and now He announces to them He is going somewhere they cannot follow. This is more than they can bear.

We saw how Peter voices, expresses the heart of the other disciples when He asks, "Why, Lord? Where are You going? Why can I not follow You now?" So Jesus understands that it is necessary for them to experience these burdens, and these troubles, and yet He knows that just beyond the present moment lies a storm that they can't even anticipate the ferocity of. When they see the Son of God given over by the Father to the forces of evil, to the expression of God's wrath whereby God pulls back His hand and allows evil unbridled, unlimited assault upon His precious Son so that our sins are paid for. But the disciples don't understand that, they just see the Lord of glory being destroyed and humiliated. So Jesus knows that they are about to experience the most troubling circumstances that they could ever imagine,

and He gives them this exhortation in the first three verses of John 14, “Don’t let your heart be troubled. Let’s read Verses 1-6.

John 14:1-6 ~ “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way where I am going.” 5 Thomas *said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” 6 Jesus *said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Let’s pray together.

Our Father, we ask that You might send forth Your truth, and Your light, through Your precious Scriptures. And You might illumine the dark corners of our hearts, and our lives with the glory of Your Son. We pray this in Jesus’ name, Amen.

One of our most fundamental and basic problems that Christians face is that we don’t think nearly enough about Heaven. We are entirely too earthly-minded to be any heavenly good. We saw in the Scripture we read earlier how Peter, in the beginning of His letter says, “The first thing I need to tell you, I know you are going through all kinds of suffering,” he was writing, 1 Peter was written to Christians who were experiencing persecution, and were going to experience more persecution. Suffering is the main theme of 1 Peter, as you suffer, what do you need to know? As you are troubled, what do you need to know? And he starts off by reminding them of the living hope that we have. God has caused us to be born again to a living hope. This hope is grounded in the finished work of Jesus Christ, His death on Calvary, and His resurrection. That is the basis of our hope, but the hope coalesces not in the blessings of this life, which are wonderful and glorious when you know Jesus Christ, but the blessings that we long for are the blessings of Heaven, an inheritance that is undefiled, incorruptible, will not fade away. “It is kept,” He said, *kept*, “It is guarded in Heaven for you.” Who also are guarded by God, you are kept by God. Colossians 3:1-4, the apostle Paul says to the believers in Colossae:

Colossians 3:1-4 ~ Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in

God.4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

“Listen, think about Heaven,” Paul says. Philippians 3:20-21, he says, he reminds the Philippians, “Listen, our citizenship is in Heaven...”

Philippians 3:20-21 ~ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Our own writer of this Gospel, John, in his first epistle, 1 John 3, he reminds the people he is writing to of the wonder of being a child of God.

1 John 3:1 ~ Behold, what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God:...

And such we are! We are the children of God.

1 John 3:2-3 ~ Beloved, now we are children of God, but it has not yet appeared what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in himself purifies himself, as He also is pure.

John is saying, “Listen, it is a wonder to be the child of God today, but we can’t even imagine what it is going to be like when Jesus comes back. Set your hope on that, because if you put your hope on Heaven, it has a purifying power in your life today.”

Richard Baxter, a wonderful Puritan pastor, has written some tremendous things in his ministry. Look what he says in one of his sermons, he says:

A heavenly mind is a joyful mind. This is the nearest and truest way to live a life of comfort, and without this, you must needs be uncomfortable. Can a man be at a fire and not be warm? Or can a man be in the sunshine and not have light? On the other hand, what could make such frozen, uncomfortable Christians, but living so far as they do from Heaven? Oh, Christian, get above, believe it that region is warmer than this below.

He goes on to say:

There is no man who so highly honors God as the man who thinks about, and has his conversation...

The old English way of saying his thinking. Conversation to us is just speaking, right? But that way, his conversation, his life, his living, his thinking.

There is no man who so highly honors God as the man who has his conversation in Heaven.

That is he is continually living his life anticipating Heaven, thinking about Heaven. He goes on to say, make the analogy how it would dishonor a parent, what great dishonor it would bring upon a parent if his child was seen eating the husks out of a slop trough. Think about that, you sent your child off hungry, and he is eating leftover food from the animals, what they've eaten. Wouldn't that be humiliating to the parent? Or you send your child off to school on a cold, snowy day without proper shoes on, without a proper coat, "What kind of parent do you have?" So we dishonor God when we don't use all the resources that He's given to us, and we limp through life just like a naked, freezing, hungry world. It's a wonder what a difference it makes when you have the right equipment for something.

You know when you are fixing something and you have the right tool? I've lived long enough, even though I'm a terrible handyman. That is something you can pray for my wife about, that is a cross she has to bear. Isn't it a joy when you actually have the right tool and it works? I mean, for me it's like celebration time! "I drilled the hole and it worked!" In a fallen world, life is tough, but when you have the right tool, when you are rightly equipped. Think about when you go out in the snow. You know we had some wonderful snow storms last year, for those of us who like to go outside and play. So we got out and played in the snow. But you know if you have, when you are responsible for all of your kids, and if one of your children doesn't have the right gloves, or doesn't have the right shoes, or doesn't have the right coat, they are going to become miserable. I mean, they can get frostbite. Especially little kids, they are just are so happy doing what they are doing, they don't want to miss out, and the next thing you know, you look at their hands, "Oh my goodness, what is wrong with your hands?" Their gloves aren't waterproof. But man, isn't it amazing, if you are out in the cold, one of those days last year was really cold, and we are out in the snow, and playing, and I remember thinking, "I'm so glad I have my hat on, and I'm so glad I have good gloves, and I've got these boots," because if your head, and your hands, and your feet, I mean you are really in good shape. And then if you've got the right coat, it is just, you

are defeating the elements. You are ruling over creation the way God intends you to. There is such joy in that.

Well, God has given us everything necessary for life and godliness. He has equipped us. He wants us to be thoroughly furnished for every good work. He has given us all that we need, but the problem is, we go out without our gloves on, without our hat on, without our shoes on, and we wonder why we are miserable. And we have the audacity and the foolishness in our hearts to blame Him. He lays it all out for us. That is really what you can think about that as it relates to this issue of overcoming fear and anxiety. How many Christians live lives overwhelmed with anxiety and fear when they need not be overwhelmed by anxiety and fear. They are like the child going out in the snow inadequately prepared. God has done everything necessary.

He's given in this passage just an amazing picture of what we need to do when we are troubled, when we feel anxiety and fear pressing in upon us. Remember the image is, the word *'trouble'*, "Do not let your heart be troubled," the verb there *'be troubled'* is a graphic verb, a strong verb. It pictures agitation, to be stirred up, waters and wind would be troubled. They would use that verb to speak in that way in the natural realm. The sea is troubled, the winds are troubled. We don't use that phrase that way, but the idea is strong wind, chaotic wind. That is the idea and the agitating, disruptive force. And so life is full of troubles, life is full of agitation, disruptive forces, disruptive circumstances that surround us in this world, and Jesus knows His disciples are walking into a storm, a troubling time, an incredibly troubling time. Not just the next 24 hours, which is going to see the cross, but even after Jesus is resurrected and goes to Heaven, they are going to live their lives separated, the rest of their life from the physical presence of Jesus. Except for those few times He comes and meets with them over the next 40 days. They are going to be not able to see Him anymore. They are not going to be able to touch Him anymore. They are not going to hear His audible voice anymore.

So He knows they are going to go through all kinds of troubles. They are going to be persecuted, all but one are going to die martyr's deaths. The one that doesn't die, John, our author here of John's Gospel, according to tradition they tried to kill him a few times, but God didn't let him die by a martyr's death. He let him die of old age. He wasn't through with him yet. He had to write Revelation and so God kept him alive. You need to know we are all indestructible until God is finished with us. No matter what Satan wants to do, or no matter what the world wants to do, but we are to use these resources that He's given us. Jesus says, "Listen, don't let your heart be troubled. You need to stop letting your heart be troubled. You've

got to make a decision to stop letting your heart be troubled.” We looked at that the last time, this is our third message in the series of three messages on John 14:1-3.

The first message we said there was one thing you need to stop doing, and there are three things you need to start doing. You need to stop letting your heart be troubled. You need to make a decision by God’s grace, you’re not going to let your mind keep going just as it wants to, running amok. Circumstances come in and trouble you, and inside your heart starts getting troubled. You’ve got to decide you want to stop it, but the way that you actually put that into action is you start doing three things. He says you start believing in God. “I thought if you’re a Christian you already believe in God? His disciples believe in God.” No, He means your faith, true faith, true Christian faith is not a one-time event. It is something that you continue to exercise. It begins at a point in time when someone realizes and believes the Gospel. When you believe that you are a sinner without hope, and you are ready to stop trusting in yourself, to stop trying to meet God’s standard on your own, to stop living in that kind of fiction and fantasy world that you can make yourself fit for God. You stop believing all the lies out there that tell you that. Many of them in the name of Christianity.

And you believe the Bible, what the Bible says about us, and it says we are dead in trespasses and sins. We need to be made alive and it is a miracle of God that we need. Something outside of us has to happen. When you believe that Jesus Christ has done everything necessary, that He paid for the sins of everyone who would ever believe, that He paid for them in full when He hung on the cross, when God abandoned Him to the powers of evil. When God expressed His wrath by delivering Him over, and poured out upon Him the punishment that was due to everyone who would believe. When you believe that Jesus took away your sins, and you believe He rose again from the dead, and you place your trust in Him, you begin to believe, and you are saved. But the Christian life is a call to continual believing. It is a call to continuous repentance and continuous faith. Ongoing repenting, and ongoing believing every day of your life. So Jesus is saying that to His disciples. “Listen, when you are letting your heart be troubled, what you need to do is start believing in God. Start trusting in His sovereign purposes.” We talked about the providence of God. We believe that He is good, that He is in control, that He is wise. That is what we talked about two weeks ago, but He says, “Don’t just start believing in God, that is the first thing you need to start doing.”

The second thing you need to start doing is start believing in Jesus Christ. “I already believe in Jesus Christ.” The disciples are already believing in Him, all but Judas. No, He means keep on believing, keep on exercising your faith, keep on

trusting that Jesus is present with you in the circumstance. He's not only sovereignly reigning over things, but He is with you in the boat as you go through the storm. We sang about that in the song *'What a Friend We Have in Jesus'*. Have you ever imagined having a friend that understands what you are going through and that shares your sorrows? He shares them. He doesn't just tell you, "Snap out of it," He feels and mourns with you when you mourn. So when you trust in a God that is sovereign and guiding everything, and a Savior that is with you in the midst of it, what else do you need to do? "There is one more thing," He says, "Don't just stop letting your troubles trouble you, and start trusting in God, and start believing in Jesus," He says, "Start anticipating Heaven, and keep on trusting in God, keep on trusting in Jesus, and keep on anticipating Heaven." Think about it, anticipate it, anticipate your arrival.

The idea is you are on a journey, you are on a tumultuous, troubling journey. You can't see what is going to happen next. Have you been on those roller coasters, some of those roller coasters they have nowadays? They make the ones we had when we were kids look like just Mickey Mouse stuff. I guess you get older too, your brain can't handle it, your inner ear stuff. I don't know, it's just misery to me some of those roller coasters. There is a couple of them at Six Flags that I rode, I rode the Batman roller coaster one time, and that's all I'm ever going to ride that roller coaster. I thought halfway through, "If I ever get off of this, Lord, I'm not getting back on." The thing about it was, you couldn't see what was coming, at least I couldn't. I had no idea it was like terror after terror, unanticipated, you know, we are turning around, we're going upside down, we're making all these kinds of incredible turns. I had a migraine headache when I was done. That is about ten years ago, and I've been faithful. I've been back a lot of times, but I haven't gotten on Batman. That is just no fun to me. Well that is what life is like sometimes isn't it? Doesn't it feel like you actually are going on a roller coaster like that? You didn't know this was going to happen, you didn't know that was going to happen, and it is out of control. The reality is, when you trust in God, you are trusting that the sovereign God of the universe is governing every turn. That is the providence of God. But you are also trusting in Jesus, that He is with you in the car as you are making these turns, and He is comforting you, and He's saying, "Listen, it is necessary that we have to go this way. I know it is hard. I understand how hard it is. I know what you are feeling. I love you and I'm with you."

But the last point is, it is almost over. It is almost over! And it is not just like getting off a roller coaster that you are so glad that it is over, you are going home for the first time. Listen to me, for the first time you are truly going home. That is what He is saying here. "Believe in God, believe also in Me, in my Father's house

are many dwelling places.” One of the reasons we get weighed down by concerns and burdens is because we don’t realize how short our life is, and how close Heaven is. I love the verse Romans 13:12, Paul says, “Arise, wake from your sleep.” He’s talking to Christians who aren’t really asleep, he’s not like really waking them up. He’s saying, “Spiritually you are in a stupor. Wake up! Realize our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. We are almost home,” he’s saying. “Wake up and realize that! Put off the deeds of darkness. Forget all the sin that surrounds you, that seems to appeal to your flesh. The burdens that you carry unnecessarily, throw them aside and anticipate. Stretch out for the goal line, we’re almost there.” He says we’re supposed to live the Christian life this way. It is so hard because we are surrounded by the things of the world continuously, and the message *‘Live for today’*, and we think about, and we feel in our own bodies the yearnings of the flesh. We get hungry, we’re tired, those things are pressing on us continually. This life, the concerns of this life, the cares, the burdens, the bills that come in, the health issues that we develop, the things that happen in our relationships, they are always pressing upon us. And they need to be tended to, yes, we’re responsible to be faithful in all those areas, but he’s saying there must, as you’re going through the storm, think about where you are going. Isn’t it amazing how powerful anticipation is? God made us this way. You know, isn’t it the anticipation is almost better in this world than when you actually get there? Have you had that experience? You anticipate something, and the anticipation is half the fun of it. I mean, Christmas as a child, Christmas is wonderful, isn’t it wonderful knowing, even though it can wear you out, and they don’t realize what the calendar is? “Is Christmas today? Is it tomorrow?” “No, this is November 1,” but it is coming.

One of my favorite things in college, we’ve got some of our kids who have gone back to college, or started college this year. I remember finishing finals, and I always loved the fall semester because you finished your last papers, and you went through final week, and final week was kind of like a little storm. You know, “I’ve got another final. I’m cramming everything I can in this brain for that final. Then I’m going to this one, but when I’m done with that last final,” when you finish that last final, even if you don’t think you did that great, “It is over and I’m going home for the holidays. I’m leaving behind the cafeteria, and I’m going home to home cooking. I’ve got friends at college but I’m going home to my family, and I’m going home to my family for Christmas.” That was something. I loved that more than the summer break. Well, he is saying, “Listen, live your life anticipating your arrival home, and let the joy of that sustain you through the arduous, long days. Just think about Heaven.”

Now, there has been a lot written about Heaven recently, a lot of people who have claimed to go there. It is written down, fanciful things that I think are more rooted in their imaginations, or probably a lot of times just imagination, but sometimes Satanic deception. The Bible has told us all we need to know about Heaven. We don't need somebody to go to Heaven and come back and tell us. We already had somebody who came from Heaven to tell us everything we need to know, and that is Jesus Christ. He didn't leave anything out that He wanted told. He didn't make any mistakes. He doesn't need some little boy in Nebraska to correct the problems. He has told us everything we need to know, and here He has told us exactly what He wants us to know as we deal with the troubling circumstances of life. This is one time where He says, "Listen, you are going to go through troubles. Let me tell you what you need to be thinking about, about Heaven." I want to share, I think there are six things that we can pull out that we need to realize about Heaven in this passage. "Think about Heaven," He says.

First of all, Heaven is a glorious place. Now, I say that because it's the Father's house. It's God's house. It's a place of glory because it's the place where God lives, and where God lives is glory. But isn't that amazing? He says, "In My Father's house..." In fact, one of the things is I think it brings about the glory of that particular language. Jesus chooses that. He doesn't say, "Listen, I'm going to Heaven, and I'm going to make a place for you." He said, "I'm going to My Father's House." What does that say about the glory of God that we need to understand? Why did He say it that way?

I think that He's telling us there is something about Heaven that we need to understand. There's an intimate glory in Heaven. Sometimes theologians or philosophers will raise a question. Heaven is God's dwelling place? Wait a minute. The Bible says God is everywhere, doesn't it? Can you go anywhere apart from God's presence? David said in Psalm 139 that you cannot escape His presence. He is omnipresent. He is present everywhere. In what sense is He present in Heaven that He's not present other places? I think it's in this phrase here. Heaven is His house. Heaven is His home. He's present everywhere, but there's something about Heaven, the dwelling place of the angels, the dwelling place of the saints, and God says, "My glory shines brightest there." His glory is everywhere, but it shines brightest in Heaven, because it's His home.

Think about how you know somebody. You get to know somebody and they are a dear friend to you. You get to spend time with them, but then you go to their house, you spend time in their home, you see how they live, and you get to know them in a different way, a more intimate way, don't you? You really see who they

really are without the fineries of the world that we put on, our coats and ties, image that is just a formality. Heaven is a place of informal glory. Somebody told me—I can't remember who it was—one of you, I think, told me about a friend of yours. Maybe it was James Rouse, I don't know, who had a friend who went home with a girl from college. This is somebody that was in school 20 or 30 years ago. They went home from college and they went to visit the girl's family, and she didn't know much about the girl's dad and mom, but she went home and she remembered walking into the house, and one of the rooms had all these trophies in it. "Wow, what's this? Your dad must have been something and done a lot." There are trophies everywhere. She was in Jack Nicklaus' house. She just knew Jack Nicklaus' daughter, and she didn't know anything about golf at all. In fact, she was telling the story later to her then husband, or fiancé, or whatever, saying, "I went to Jack Nicklaus' house." "You went where?? He's won more majors than anybody," and all this kind of thing. "You were there with the glory of his golf? You saw all those trophies?" "He was just a guy. He was very nice. He made pimento and cheese sandwiches for us one day."

If you belong to Jesus Christ, you are going to the Father's house. You're coming into His home. He used this language to say, "I'm inviting you in to the place where My heart is on full display. No formality. You're coming to be a part and you're going to sit at My table. You're going to have a place in the family room, and you're going to see the glory that shines out of who I truly am, unveiled, undistracted. You're going to see Me as I am." We're going to see Jesus that way. It is a glorious place.

The Bible tells us that God is glory. Everywhere it tells us that, and the reality is that we were created to see His glory, that the one thing that truly every human being longs for, though unbelievers, when we were in our unbelief, we hated God and we did not want Him, but yet in our hearts, though sin is so insane that it hates the thing it needs most. We were created to see God, and the image of God was created to look at God and as we reflect God, in some way like a mirror, we replicate Him. We're not God, but we reflect Him to the universe, to the creation. That's what we were made for is to live in communion with God and to reflect Him. So the heart of man yearns for the glory of God. We yearn to see beauty. We delight in seeing beauty. We delight in praising beauty. We delight in praising accomplishment. Why is that?

Why is it that yesterday all over America and today all over America, people are going to fill stadiums to watch people run around chasing a pigskin? I mean, I have a lot of respect for that. I watched Georgia lose yesterday, but isn't that

something? You could all do it alone. There's something about getting together, watching it together, and seeing an excellent play, someone do something well, and what happens? We're made to praise. We're made to see it and we're made to praise. When you see somebody score a touchdown and it's your team, you don't just sit there and say, "That was well done." I mean, in the stadium, people are jumping up and down, because God made us to see greatness and respond. That's why people applaud. That's why we go to art galleries. That's why we listen to beautiful music played and our hearts are thrilled, and we talk about it.

God made us to want to see beauty, to want to see greatness, to want to see glory, and we applaud it wherever we see it, but how much more will we applaud it when we see it with unveiled face, the One who is the architect, and the sustainer, and the giver of everything we're looking at? Jonathan Edwards said when you think about God's glory in creation, think about the ray of the sun. When you feel the warmth of the ray of the sun on a cool autumn day, and you walk out into the sun and you feel the sun on your face, you're being touched, you're being warmed—how encouraging that is. Think how much more glorious and radiant is it to be at the surface of the sun. That's what Heaven is. Heaven is seeing all of beauty, all of goodness, all of greatness, in God who is the source of it all. Our hearts will be thrilled. We'll be feeling like jumping up and down all the time, and it won't ever get old. So it's a glorious place. It's where we all long to be.

Now, we don't think we do. We get distracted by this. We get fooled by the world. We think we're at home here too much. We think things like, "You know, I don't want to die yet, because I don't want to leave my family." That's an understandable thought. I mean, Paul even was torn, wasn't he? He said in Philippians 1, "I don't know which to choose, to go on to be with Christ, which is better by far, or to stay here for your sakes to minister to you." Jesus understands that tension. But if our heart is really thinking correctly, we'll be able to say with Paul, "It's better by far to go on and be with Christ, better by far, because I get to be in His glory."

He says it's a glorious place. It's His Father's house. Secondly, it's a spacious place. There are many dwelling places. ***In My Father's house are many dwelling places;*** The ESV and the NIV say ***...many rooms...*** The King James says ***mansions***. This is one of the problems with an older translation like the King James. Mansion today means something very different than it meant then. What does a mansion mean today? It means a big house. So in My Father's house there are many big houses, it sounds like, many mansions. That's not what it's saying. It's saying many large rooms.

In fact, the word as dwelling place is a very good translation. The noun is taken from a verb which means to remain, to continue, to abide, to dwell. So He said there are many, but the issue here on spacious, though, there are many of them. When you and I get to Heaven, we're not going to go in and say, "Uh oh..." Have you come to sit at a table and there's no place? "I'll sit over here." Or you come into a room and there's no place to sit down, where everybody's gathered around. You feel a little awkward. In Heaven, it's not like that. He's made account for everyone. It's a spacious place.

Thirdly, it's not just a glorious place and a spacious place, but it is a personal place. He says, "I go to prepare a place for you." Twice He says, "A place for you." There is a place for you in Heaven. He doesn't say a *places* for you. He's talking to His disciples. He's talking to them (plural), but He says, "I'm going to prepare a place, a specific place, for each one of you." It's an individual and unique place.

Now, you're in the presence of glory. You are seeing the glory of God unbridled, but there's room for everybody and there's a personal place for you. It's like you come to the table—in our families, don't we all have the pattern of when we sit down at the table, we sit at certain chairs, don't we? In our family, that's Maggie's chair and that's Jonathan's chair. That's Patti's chair and this is my chair. When folks come over, if somebody sits in the wrong place when we're having folks over, we don't get all bent out of shape. I mean, you know, it's one of those things you kind of notice. In the back of your mind, you're thinking, "He's sitting in Maggie's chair, so Maggie's going to sit over here." But every time we don't set the table and forget to set a plate for Jonathan or a plate for Maggie. "Oh, I forgot we had two children." No, we don't forget that. We know. We're thinking about that. Patti and I, when we're setting the table, or when the kids are setting the table, they don't forget to set one for me. There's a place.

When we sit down and we watch a movie together, we think about where there's going to be a place, and when one of them can't find a place, I make a place. "You can sit with me in this chair. I know there's not as much room. We're at somewhere else. I make a place for you because you're my child." That's what He's saying. God is making a personal place for you. He's thinking of you and He's making a personal place for you. It's a glorious place. It's a spacious place. It's a personal place.

Fourthly, it's a prepared place. Twice He says *prepare*. He didn't have to say it this way. He could have said, "Look, in My Father's house, there are many dwelling

places. If it were not so, I would have told you. For I go to prepare a place for you. If I do that, I will come again and receive you to Myself.” He could have said that. It would have been shorter, and it would have said the same thing, right, almost. “I go to prepare a place for you. If I do that, I’ll come again...” No, He said, “...I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you...” He’s saying, “Don’t miss this. I’m going and preparing a place for you. It’s a place for you and it’s a prepared place.”

I mentioned this word last time. It means to take care of every detail, to make ready, to hold in readiness. It was often used of preparing the way for a king, but the idea is every single detail is thought about and attended to. This tells us that in Heaven, I believe God, the place He’s preparing for you is tailored for you. He knows everything about you and me. It’s not like a hotel. Have you’ve gone to a really nice hotel and things are laid out for you? Isn’t that neat? The towels are folded just so. The sheets are turned down. Wow. There are mints on the pillow. Occasionally I’ve been in a place like that. Wow. They knew we were coming and prepared a place for us. But it’s even better than that, because they just prepare the same thing. It’s the same color sheets, the same color walls everybody else has got in all the other rooms. But what He’s talking about for us is a prepared place specifically with you in mind.

Patti spent some time recently preparing Maggie’s room for her. She turned 13, and it only took us five months to finish her birthday present, which was a new room. We’re thankful to Diana Goodwin, Lydia Hancock. We’ve had a team effort. Painting it colors and all of that, artwork on the wall, everything prepared for her. It just came together in the last week. So I’ve been doing a lot of that handiwork I was talking about and not doing so well. It’s been very fresh in my mind. But it’s prepared for her. We didn’t do what we want. We did what she wants. We talked to her about the colors all the way. Patti talked to her about the fabrics. It’s a prepared place.

Jesus said, “Who of you if you’re evil, if your son asks for a fish, gives him a snake, or if he asks you for bread, give him a rock? If you being evil give good things to your children, how much more will your Father give good things to those who love Him?” Heaven is a prepared place, exactly what you want, exactly what you’ve longed for. The noble and right desires in your heart, God is going to give you exactly what you long for. You’re going to be going into a place thinking, “I am truly at home.”

I don't know exactly what that all looks like, because we're going to be together, we're going to be with God, we're going to feel at one with Him, at one with Christ, at one with the Spirit, and at one with each other in a way that we haven't before, and yet there's still that individual, distinctive relationship, and it's seen in the prepared nature of the place that we have.

Fifthly, it's also a permanent place. It's not just a glorious place, a spacious place, a personal place, and a prepared place. It's a permanent place. When He said *dwelling place*, the word there means to abide, to remain, to continue, to dwell. It's not that your passing through. No, you're dwelling there. But then He makes it even more emphatic in Verse 3 when He says that where I am, there you may be. In Heaven, I am going to be there, and you may be there. You're going to go on being there. When you get there, you're there forever. All the temporariness is over. In this world, everything is temporary, isn't it?

Haven't you had the experience when you're having a wonderful moment, maybe just time with friends, and you're laughing together in a Godly way? You're enjoying life and laughing, and you think, "This is just so wonderful," and you'll have that thought, "I wish it would never end," but it ends. It always ends. But in Heaven it won't. It will not end. It's hard for us to imagine that, isn't it? It will only get better, and richer, and deeper. That's what He's saying. It's a permanent place.

Lastly, it's a perfect place. It's a perfect place because it is a place of perfect relationship. He makes this emphatically clear in Verse 3, when He says, "I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." The language in the Greek is really emphatic in both of those clauses. When He says *receive you to Myself*, He uses a verb. He could have said this much less emphatically. It's hard to bring it out in the English, and it doesn't really come out at all in the English, but the idea is the verb itself, *receive*, is a compound verb which itself means *receive to Myself*. It's made up of a word *receive* and a preposition alongside of it. It's *παραλαμβάνω* (*paralambanō*). *Para* means *alongside of*. That is, *lambanō* means *receive*, and *para* means *alongside of*. "I'm going to bring you beside Me," is what He's saying. "I'm going to bring you beside Me to Myself." That's the literal in the Greek. "I'm going to bring you beside Me to Myself." He adds the *to Myself*. Another preposition (to) is there in the text. To, toward, "I'm going to bring you alongside Me and bring you to Myself." It's a picture of intimate relationship.

“Listen, we’re separate during this time. While I’m in Heaven, yes, I’m with you in Spirit, the spiritual presence of Christ. I will never leave you nor forsake you. I will be with you every step of the way. You will understand My presence. 1 Peter says that though you don’t see Me, you believe in Me. Though you can’t feel Me, you know I’m there. Yes, and you’re filled with joy inexpressible full of glory, but one day I’m going to bring you to Myself in a different way. I’m going to touch you and hold you in My arms, hug you. You’re going to know the joy of hearing My voice with your ears, looking into My eyes and seeing in the eyes of the Holy Savior, the Son of God, love, and acceptance, and personal knowledge.”

When you look at Jesus, it will never be like—you look at somebody and you’re not sure if they remember you. “Hey, we met last year,” and sometimes we forget, don’t we? It will never be that way with Jesus. “I don’t need you to tell Me who you are. I formed you in your mother’s womb. I know the number of hairs on your head every day of your life. Every moment you lost one as you got older, I knew it, and I’ve been waiting to bring you to Myself, and now the waiting is over.”

What this passage says is Heaven is really all about being with God. It’s not about all of the physical trappings. It’s all about being with Him. It’s all about standing in His presence. He is the glory of Heaven. He is the wonder of Heaven. For the first time, you’ll be home, because you will be with God and you will see God as He is. You’ll reflect back to Him the radiance of His worth. You’ll be delighted more than you’ve ever been delighted, and yet in that delight, you won’t feel any hesitation, because there will be no more guilt. You won’t have any semblance of sin. It’s like you’re stepping out of it.

That’s really kind of the picture of when Jesus comes back or when we die, what happens? As Paul said, you step out of this body of flesh, this body of sin. You take it off and you put it away, and you’re free, and you’re holy, and you’re clean. How wonderful it is to feel clean after you’ve been grimy and dirty. How much more will it feel to be clean when you put of the sin nature.

The image in Malachi, I love, in Chapter 4. When he pictures Heaven, he says that the Son of righteousness is going to rise, and it’s going to be terror for the wicked. It’s going to be fire that devours, but for the righteous, it’s like the sun rising after a long and hard night (and this is what I love), and you’ll skip like calves from the stall. Cows don’t skip, calves do. You will be like a calf that’s been pent up over night in the stall, can’t move, can’t move, and has got so much energy. They lose their energy later, don’t they? You don’t see cows running, but as calves, they want to get out, they want to get out, they want to get out, and then suddenly the doors

are opened and they skip. Freedom, freedom! They're jumping around enjoying their freedom. That's what you're going to feel like if you belong to Jesus Christ, when He comes back. You will feel like you've been set free. And as you've been set free, the joy of it is not squashed in you. It's only deepened, and you'll feel like as you run into the throne room of God, you are received there and there's a place for you, a perfect, personal place, a permanent place.

The glory of Heaven is not the things that you receive. The glory of Heaven is the relationship that you experience. You will see Jesus, the One who loved you and bought you, the One who knowing your sin and your ugliness, washed you, purchased you as His own precious possession. I love the song *The Sands of Time are Sinking*. It talks about the glory in Immanuel's land and what the glory is. That's the refrain:

*The sands of time are sinking,
The dawn of Heaven breaks;
The summer morn I've sighed for,
That fair, sweet morn awakes:
Dark, dark had been the midnight
But dayspring is at hand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Emmanuel's land.*

*The King there in His beauty,
Without a veil is seen:
It would be a well-spent journey,
Though seven deaths lay between:
The Lamb with His fair army,
Doth on Mount Zion stand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Emmanuel's land*

*Oh Christ, He is the fountain,
The deep, sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted;
More deep I'll drink above:
There to an ocean fullness
His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Emmanuel's land.*

*The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear Bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But at my King of grace.
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand;
For the Lamb is all the glory
Of Emmanuel's land.*

He is what is most beautiful, to see Jesus. Everything else is secondary, and our hearts will be thrilled. What John is saying here in repeating the words of Jesus, Jesus is saying, "Listen, when you are troubled, when you are overwhelmed, remember God's providence. Remember My personal, spiritual presence with you every moment, and anticipate Heaven," because if you really are anticipating Heaven, what can you lose? If you're setting your treasure in Heaven, what if even though you've done all the Dave Ramsey courses and you've done everything else and you're trying to be faithful with your finances, but God allows just the wind to blow on it and everything is gone? What have you lost? Just a drop. My treasure is in Heaven.

Even our loved ones, you're afraid I'm going to lose them. What if something happens to my child? What if something happens to this person I love so much? Well, of course it's going to hurt, and you can trust God sovereignly governing it, and Jesus is with you, but you also realize that we don't really lose anything. It's a loss, but compared to the glory that is coming, it's nothing. And if they take our lives, if they persecute us, and follow us, and hound us down, and put us to death, if that were to happen, what did they do? All they've done is hasten my arrival. That's all you can do is hasten my arrival. When our hearts are set on Heaven, we are an unstoppable force, and we are the happiest of all people. May God help us to trust Him and to long to be with Him.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer...

Father, we rejoice in Your amazing provision, that You have done everything necessary to justify the ungodly, so that we who were conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity are through faith in Jesus Christ able to stand in Your presence holy and without blame. And not only are we acquitted by a judge not guilty, and not only are we declared righteous, but we are brought near to Your own heart in to Your very family room.

Lord, these things are too amazing for us to even comprehend. Grant us grace, that our hearts might meditate more fervently on that, and as we do, that You might thrill our souls with the anticipation of what is to come, and in doing that, would You purify us as our Savior Himself is pure? We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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