

## The Humility Befitting a King: Why I Want to Go to Heaven

by Ric Shields – April 1, 2018

---

**A**s a former pastor and hospice chaplain, I have attended the deaths of scores of men and women. Though it seems to have a preference for the aged, **Death is truly is no respecter of persons.** Far too many young adults, middle-aged, and early senior adults have also deceased in my presence.

I am thankful to have never had the occasion to attend the death of a young child with one exception; the deaths of twin babies born far too early to survive. My heart broke and hot tears overfilled my eyes and ran down my cheeks as the parents held their tiny babies who struggled to breathe until their final breaths. I witnessed their parent's pain, and though it was theirs and not mine, I went to the phone after their babies passed and updated my wife with sobbing grief. *"It's just so hard,"* I told her through tears. *"This is so hard!"*

My father's passing was not attended by family or friends. He died on a summer night while parked in a small motor-home in front of his brother's house in east Texas. At that time I grieved because I wasn't there to witness Death come calling. I have no way to know if he was anxious, afraid, or just unaware of his impending appointment. Dad's death certificate lists the cause of death as "Myocardial Infarction" and indicates he lived for mere minutes between its onset and his final breath. That, too, is subject to deliberation and the truth will never be known on this side of eternity. **My heart ached at his death, distant and detached from others.**

Years later I made a commitment to my wife and myself. Though not near Death's door, I was determined my mother would not die alone. Lessons I had learned while attending the deaths of others had profoundly affected me. If it were in my power, I would be present when her final moment arrived.

Her appointment with Death approached in mid-September 2015 after a serious stroke. A few weeks later, while on a ministry trip in Eastern Europe, her physician (our dear friend) suggested it was time for my wife and me to come home. Our ministry assignment was not yet complete but Mom's days were rapidly nearing an end. **One week later, we stood at her bedside when the final punctuation mark on the story of her life was put in place.**

It was a holy moment we will never forget. Mom's breathing slowed and became irregular. The pauses between breaths grew longer, though no deeper, until her final moment. Suddenly, her eyes which had lost their glimmer since the stroke seemed to brighten and open wide. It was as if her vision, severely diminished over the years, was miraculously restored for a moment. Her brightened eyes became transfixed to the ceiling above her bed. While she never verbally expressed what caught her attention, **it seemed to us as if joy filled her senses.** We were left with the impression that Mom had just seen something far more marvelous and magnificent than one could possibly describe.

Alone in my office, I pen these words on an Easter Sunday evening, the day when all of Christendom celebrates the Resurrection of Christ and the hope springing in our souls of our own resurrection and entrance into Heaven. I pause to recall an important thing Jesus told the disciples before His crucifixion. He was going to *"prepare a place"* for them and would *"come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am"* (John 14:3 NIV).

Like a child silently waiting around the corner to jump and demand my startled attention, a question struck me during our church worship service this morning. **All day long it has begged more than a trite answer:** *"Why do I want to go to Heaven?"*

A simple phrase often used at the passing of a friend or loved one says, *"Heaven grows sweeter."* It infers one is (or at least should be) even more attracted to Heaven because of the reunion awaiting them. In reality, the Bible never refers to an eternal reunion of family or friends. While I may be curious to see which family members made it

and which ones didn't, spending eternity with them may be a few millennia more than I can handle. Though it may be a reason some cite in longing for Heaven, the eternal reunion is not at the top of my list.

One pastor from my childhood enjoyed fishing and often spoke of the day when he would be fishing on the "Crystal Sea" (Revelation 4:6) but I have doubts about his plan. At best, the sport will be "catch & release." Could a fisherman really be happy catching the same fish over and over again? What if there are no other sporting events in Heaven? No track and field, no basketball or football, no baseball, tennis, or even golf for us to sleep through on a lazy afternoon? While it's true that some of Christ's closest friends were fishermen, there is no promise of fishing or other sporting activities in Heaven. Because I am not an avid sports enthusiast, it isn't something I will miss.

The story goes of a rich man who knew his final days on Earth were numbered and managed to pack a suitcase filled with the finest gold to accompany him on the journey to Heaven. Saint Peter met him at the Pearly Gates and inquired as to the contents of his luggage. The rich man opened it and proudly displayed bars of solid gold. The old Saint looked perplexed and said to the man, "So, of all the things you could have brought to Heaven, you decided to bring pavement?"

In his vision of Heaven, the Apostle John wrote in Revelation 21, "The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass." Admittedly, I look forward to walking barefooted on the golden street and doubt anything else will ever compare to such an experience. The treasured element that has adorned the heads of royalty since recorded time will no longer set people apart. We will not fret nor worry about its loss as all will share its brilliance and luster without gazing upon it in envy or lust. No longer stored in vaults or displayed beyond our reach, **that which once established this world's financial markets will become worthless.** There will not be one richer, or another poorer, as all who walk those streets will have wealth beyond imagination. In that regard, **Heaven will be a great equalizer and the absolute eliminator of social classes and distinctions.**

While the golden streets may beckon me, they are not my primary reason for going to Heaven. Neither are the Twelve Gates (each made of an individual pearl), the city's foundation of precious stones, nor the Father's mansion with many rooms (John 14:2 NIV). Admittedly, they will be spectacular sights to behold and far beyond the limitations of our imaginations. Nevertheless, it seems that all too soon we might acclimate to our surroundings. Perhaps we will be eternally grateful...at least one should hope we will...but can the previously unseen architecture be the most compelling feature that draws us to Heaven? In the end, they are mere accommodations ordered by the King of Kings for those upon whom He lavishes His love (1 John 3:1 NIV). It occurs to me that **when planning a trip one first decides upon a destination and then accepts whatever accommodations are available.** Based upon what I have come to believe about Heaven, it seems any of us would happily accept the sparsest living quarters in that ultimate destination.

The Apostle Paul's words to the Thessalonians fill my heart with anticipation. He speaks of a Heavenly reward when he writes: "What is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy" (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 NIV).

Most of my adult life has been spent as a minister of the Gospel. It humbles me to consider that a boy who grew up in a rented house on a small farm near Goose Lake, Iowa has been blessed with the opportunity of travel to 40 nations on six continents. In the course of those travels I have been accompanied by 1,200 people and ministered in one way or another to tens of thousands of others. Those whose lives have been touched through our ministry have gone on to minister to others. In some ways, it is the grandest pyramid-marketing plan in the world with rewards accumulating in Heaven.

Several months ago, a young man in Bangladesh applied for a job in a ministry-related position. A friend in Dhaka sent me this heart-warming story:

*"We did [job] interviews today. I asked one of the guys if he had*

*accepted salvation. He said, 'Yes,' and I asked, 'How?' We get some pretty different answers sometimes, but this guy said he 'accepted the Lord in 2001 in [a youth conference] in Dhaka. A guy was there preaching. His name was Ric Shields!!!' Pretty cool, huh??"*

While our ministry efforts may have presented a level of sacrifice at times, the rewards have far exceeded it. Students we have financially supported at a Bible School in Bangladesh have started hundreds of churches and fresh-water wells our donors have funded helped to provide an accessible means to share the Gospel in small villages. Other students were sponsored in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Egypt, Mexico, Myanmar, and Russia. **I hope their efforts and successes will also be included in the final accounting of my life.**

I don't consider it selfish. One day I hope to hear Jesus say to me, *"Well done, good and faithful servant"* (Matthew 25:23 NIV). I want to know I have been faithful for His sake and not because of some prize I hoped to achieve. While His words will be reward enough, I am confident of gaining a perspective far greater than I could ever gain on Earth. **I hope to see and meet those whose lives were eternally impacted because I was faithful to be His messenger.** Therein lays another important reason why I want to go to Heaven and I hope it provides the same for each who receives these words. **Your eternal impact is greater than you can see or possibly know.** The child you took to Sunday School, the discouraged divorcee you helped through their pain, or the missionary you funded to go share the Gospel in your place; none have gone unnoticed by our Heavenly Father who will one day reveal the full impact of our otherwise ordinary lives.

There remains a primary reason why I want to go to Heaven which dwarfs any of the others. It is far greater than a reunion of family and friends, grander than leisure activities, superior to architecture and accommodations, and even more magnificent than a mind filled with knowledge and understanding.

**One day, maybe sooner than I imagine, I will stand before my Savior.** Actually, I am more likely to lay prostrate before him with the

humility befitting the grandest King of the Universe and of Time Immemorial. **The awe and splendor of that place will be overshadowed by the glory surrounding Him.** While some may think it unlikely for me, I am doubtful of my ability to speak a single word. In that moment and for the eternity to follow, I hope He can hear my thankful heart and soul since nothing I have ever done will have deserved His love and sacrifice for me.

Should an utterance ever escape my mouth it will be simple. **Not because He deserves simplicity but because words will escape me.** My stammering lips may express little more than a pitiable reflection of His words to me: *"Well done, your Majesty. Well done."*

---

Ric Shields – © 2018  
P.O. Box 2023  
Broken Arrow, OK 74013  
Email: Ric@DoorWays.cc

Permission is granted to display, copy, distribute, and download this material for personal, noncommercial use only provided the material is not modified and that the copyright notice remains contained in the material. Permission is denied to distribute, copy, reproduce, display, republish, download, or transmit this material for commercial use without prior written approval of the copyright owner.