



# Eternal Perspectives

*We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen...*

**Summer 2005**



## Enjoying God and Enjoying Heaven: Why They are Inseparable

by Randy Alcorn

*What is the essence of heaven?... [It is the] beatific vision, love, and enjoyment of the triune God. For the three divine persons have an infinitely perfect vision and love and enjoyment of the divine essence and of one another. And in this infinite knowing, loving and enjoying lies the very life of the triune God, the very essence of their endless and infinite happiness. If the blessed are to be endlessly and supremely happy, then, they must share in the very life of the triune God, in the divine life that makes them endlessly and infinitely happy.*

E. J. Fortman

examples of the modern distortion of "Heaven" in which God plays a minor role or no role at all. (Another example is the Robin Williams movie, "What Dreams May Come.") But a Heaven without God is a contradiction in terms. It is the presence of God that defines Heaven, and infuses it with wonder and joy. Without God, there is no Heaven, but only Hell.

While some people have failed to focus on God as the central joy of Heaven, others have minimized Heaven, stating that we should long for God, but not for Heaven. They suggest it is unspiritual to look forward to the secondary joys Heaven will offer us. This too is wrong, as we'll see.

In Heaven, we'll be at home with the God we love and who loves us wholeheartedly. Lovers don't bore each other. People who love God could never be bored in his presence. Remember, the members of the triune Godhead exist in eternal relationship with each other. To see God is to participate in the infinite delight of their communion. And all else God blesses us with, both in the intermediate Heaven and on the New Earth, will draw us closer to the God we love, who is the center of gravity of the entire universe.

### All-Encompassing Worship

Most people know that we'll worship God in Heaven. But they don't grasp how thrilling that will be. Multitudes of God's people—of every nation, tribe, people, and language—will gather to sing praise to God for his greatness, wisdom, power, grace, and mighty work of redemption (Revelation 5:13-14). Overwhelmed by his magnificence, we will fall on our faces in unrestrained happiness and say, "Praise and glory

Have you ever—in prayer or corporate worship or during a walk on the beach—for a few moments experienced the very presence of God? It's a tantalizing encounter, yet for most of us it tends to disappear quickly in the distractions of life. What will it be like to behold God's face and never be distracted by lesser things? What will it be like when every lesser thing unflinchingly points us back to God?

Today, many Christians have come to depreciate or ignore the beatific vision, supposing that beholding God would be of mere passing interest, becoming monotonous over time. But those who know God know that he is anything *but* boring. Seeing God will be dynamic, not static. It will mean exploring new beauties, unfolding new mysteries—forever. We'll explore God's being, an experience delightful beyond comprehension. The sense of wide-eyed wonder we see among Heaven's inhabitants in Revelation 4–5 suggests an ever-deepening appreciation of God's greatness. That isn't all there is to Heaven, but if it were, it would be more than enough.

The bestselling book *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, by Mitch Albom, is one of many

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*Worship  
involves more  
than singing  
and prayer...  
We are created  
to worship God.  
There's no  
higher pleasure.*

and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" (Revelation 7:9-12).

People of the world are always striving to celebrate—they just lack ultimate *reasons* to celebrate (and therefore find lesser reasons). As Christians, we have those reasons—our relationship with Jesus and the promise of Heaven. "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21:3). Does this excite you? If it doesn't, you're not thinking correctly.

Will we always be engaged in worship? Yes and no. If we have a narrow view of worship, the answer is no. But if we have a broad view of worship, the answer is yes. As Cornelius Venema explains, worship in Heaven will be all-encompassing: "No legitimate activity of life—whether in marriage, family, business, play, friendship, education, politics, etc.—escapes the claims of Christ's kingship. ...Certainly those who live and reign with Christ forever will find the diversity and complexity of their worship of God not less, but richer, in the life to come. Every legitimate activity of new creaturely life will be included within the life of worship of God's people."

Will we always be on our faces at Christ's feet, worshipping him? No, because Scripture says we'll be doing many other things—living in dwelling places, eating and drinking, reigning with Christ, and working for him. Scripture depicts people standing, walking, traveling in and out of the city, and gathering at feasts. When doing these things, we won't be on our faces before Christ. Nevertheless, all that we do will be an act of worship. We'll enjoy full and unbroken fellowship with Christ. At times this will crescendo into greater

heights of praise as we assemble with the multitudes who are also worshipping him.

Worship involves more than singing and prayer. I often worship God while reading a book, riding a bike, or taking a walk. I'm worshipping him

now as I write. Yet too often I'm distracted and fail to acknowledge God along the way. In Heaven, God will always be first in my thinking.

Even now, we're told, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). That God expects us to do many other things, such as work, rest, and be with our families, shows that we must be able to be joyful, pray, and give thanks *while doing other things*.

Have you ever spent a day or several hours when you sensed the presence of God as you hiked, worked, gardened, drove, read, or did the dishes? Those are foretastes of Heaven—not because we are doing nothing but worshipping, but because we are worshipping God *as we do everything else*.

Once we see God as he really is, no one will need to beg, threaten, or shame us into praising him. We will overflow in gratitude and praise! We are *created* to worship God. There's no higher pleasure. At times we'll lose ourselves in praise, doing nothing but worshipping him. At other times we'll worship him when we build a cabinet, paint a picture, cook a meal, talk with an old friend, take a walk, or throw a ball.

## Why Worship Can't Be Boring

Some subjects become less interesting over time. Others become more fascinating. Nothing is more fascinating than God. The deeper we probe into his being, the more we want to know. One song puts it this way: "As eternity unfolds, the thrill of knowing Him will grow."

We'll never lose our fascination for God as we get to know him better. The thrill of knowing him will never subside. The desire to know him better will motivate everything we do. To imagine that worshipping God could be boring is to impose on Heaven our bad experiences of so-called worship. Satan is determined to make church boring, and when it is, we assume Heaven will be also. But church can be exciting, and worship exhilarating. That's what it will be in Heaven. We will see God and understand why the angels and other living creatures delight to worship him.

Have you known people who couldn't be boring if they tried? Some people are just fascinating. It seems I could listen to them forever. But not really. Eventually, I'd feel as if I'd gotten enough. But we can never get enough of God. There's no end to what he knows, no end



to what he can do, no end to who he is. He is mesmerizing to the depths of his being, and those depths will never be exhausted. No wonder those in Heaven always redirect their eyes to him—they don't want to miss anything.

At times throughout the day, as I work in my office, I find myself on my knees thanking God for his goodness. When I eat a meal with my wife, talk with a friend, or take our dog for a walk, I worship God for his goodness. The world is full of praise-prompters—the New Earth will overflow with them. I've found great joy in moments where I've been lost in worship—many of them during church services—but they're too fleeting. If you've ever had a taste of true worship, you crave *more* of it, never less.

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:19-20). The music we make isn't congregational singing. It's in our hearts and in our daily lives. Has someone ever done something for you that makes you so grateful that you just can't stop saying thank you? This is how we should feel about God.



The holiness of God that overwhelmed Isaiah will be utterly engrossing to hearts made holy. J. C. Ryle writes, "Without holiness on earth, we shall never be prepared to enjoy heaven. Heaven is a holy place, the Lord of heaven is a holy being, the angels are holy creatures. Holiness is written on everything in heaven....How shall we ever be at home and happy in heaven if we die unholy?"

In Heaven, worshipping God won't be restricted to a time posted on a sign, telling us when to start and stop. It will permeate our lives, energize our bodies, and fuel our imaginations.

## Absorbing, but Not Absorbed

Jonathan Edwards said of people in Heaven, "As they increase in the knowledge of God and of the works of God, the more they will see of his excellency; and the more they see of his

excellency...the more will they love him; and the more they love God, the more delight and happiness...will they have in him."

We must distinguish the biblical promise of seeing God from the beliefs of Buddhism, Hinduism, or New Age mysticism, in which individuality is obliterated or assimilated into Nirvana. Though God will be absorbing, we will not be absorbed by him. Though we may feel lost in God's immensity, we will not lose our identity when we see him. Instead, we will find it. "Whoever loses his life for me will find it" (Matthew 16:25).

"The people of God will not be absorbed into or partake in an immediate way of the being of God," writes Cornelius Venema. "God's people will see him without any of the sinful limitations of the present. No sin-induced stupor, no failure of hearing, no blindness of vision will obscure the beauty of God from their knowledge."

We will not know God exhaustively, but we will know him accurately. We will no longer twist and distort the truth about God.

Some have portrayed the beatific vision as a pursuit in which every person seeks God individually. It is characteristic of our Western cultural independence that

we think of Heaven in highly individualized ways. But God also views us corporately, as Christ's bride, as part of a great eternal community in which we'll love our Lord together and undertake cooperative pursuits for his glory. We will always be individuals, but Heaven will not be a place of individualism.

We aren't individual brides of Christ; we are collectively the bride of Christ. Christ is not a polygamist. He will be married to one bride, not millions. We belong to each other and need each other. We should guard not only our own purity, but each other's. We *are* our brother's keeper.

The fact that countless professing Christians are not part of a local church testifies to our over-individualized spirituality. Scripture teaches that we need each other and should not withdraw from each other's fellowship, instruction,

*Has someone ever done something for you that makes you so grateful that you just can't stop saying thank you? This is how we should feel about God.*

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*There's no dichotomy between anticipating the joys of Heaven and finding our joy in Christ.*

or accountability. It's unbiblical to imagine that we can successfully seek God on our own (Hebrews 10:25). Because we will be part of a community of saints that constitutes the bride of Christ for eternity, and because we will worship and serve him together, to prepare properly for Heaven we must be part of a church now.

## **No Rivalry Between Christ and Heaven**

A man said to a few of us at a gathering, "I find myself longing for Heaven." After he left, someone said to me, "Shouldn't he be longing for *God*, not Heaven?" This may sound spiritual, but is it? Scripture speaks positively of "longing for a better country—a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:16). Indeed, the next verse tells us of those people who long for Heaven, "therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God because he has prepared a city for them."

I don't know the man's heart, but his statement was biblically warranted and commendable. The right kind of longing for Heaven is a longing for God, and longing for God is longing

for Heaven. If we understand what Heaven is (God's dwelling place) and who God is, we will see no conflict between the two. A woman who longs to be reunited with her husband could well say, "I just want to go home."

I'm often asked the following question in various ways: "Why talk about Heaven when we can just talk about Jesus?" The answer is that the two go together. We were made for a person (Christ) and a place (Heaven). There is no rivalry between Christ and Heaven.

Any bride in love with her husband wants to be with him more than anything. But if he goes away to build a beautiful place for her, won't she get excited

about it? Won't she think and talk about that place? Of course. Moreover, he *wants* her to! If he tells her, "I'm going to prepare a place for you," he's implying, "I want you to look forward to it." Her love and longing for the place he's preparing—where she will live with him—is inseparable from her love and longing for her husband.

Some erroneously assume that the wonders, beauties, adventures, and marvelous relationships of Heaven must somehow be in competition with the one who has created them. God has no fear that we'll get too excited about Heaven. After all, the wonders of Heaven aren't *our* idea, they're *his*. There's no dichotomy between anticipating the joys of Heaven and finding our joy in Christ. It's all part of the same package. The wonders of the new heavens and New Earth will be a primary means by which God reveals himself and his love to us.

Picture Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Eve says to Adam, "Isn't this place magnificent? The sun feels wonderful on my face, the blue sky's gorgeous. These animals are a delight. Try the mango—it's delicious!"

Can you imagine Adam responding, "Your focus is all wrong, Eve. You shouldn't think about beauty, refreshment, and mouthwatering fruit. All you should think about is God."

Adam would never say that, because in thinking about these things, Eve *would be* thinking about God. Likewise, our enjoyment of what God has provided us should be inseparable from worshiping, glorifying, and appreciating him. God is honored by our thankfulness, gratitude, and enjoyment of him.

I've heard it said that "God, not Heaven, is our inheritance." Well, God *is* our inheritance (Psalm 16:6), but so is Heaven (1 Peter 1:3-4). God and Heaven—the person and the place—are so closely connected that they're sometimes referred to interchangeably. The Prodigal Son confessed, "I have sinned against heaven" (Luke 15:18, 21). John the Baptist said, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven" (John 3:27). Why didn't he say *God* instead of *Heaven*? Because God has made himself that closely identified with Heaven. It's his place. And that's *his* idea, not ours. He could have offered us his person without his place. But he didn't.



## God Wants You To Want Heaven

So, thinking about Heaven shouldn't be viewed as an obstacle to knowing God but as a *means* of knowing Him. The infinite God reveals himself to us in tangible, finite expressions. Next to the incarnate Christ, Heaven will tell us more about God than anything else. Some people have told me, "I just want to be with Jesus—I don't care if Heaven's a shack." Well, Jesus cares. He *wants* us to anticipate Heaven and enjoy the magnificence of it, not to say, "I don't care about it" or "I'd be just as happy in a shack." When you go to visit your parents in the house you grew up in, it's no insult to tell them "I love this place."

It's a compliment. They'll delight in it, not resent it.

We must understand that all secondary joys, including all the secondary joys of our current life and our lives to come in Heaven, are *derivative* in nature. They cannot be separated from God. Flowers are beautiful for one reason—God is beautiful. Rainbows are stunning because God is stunning. Puppies are delightful because God is delightful. Sports are fun because God is fun. Study is rewarding because God is rewarding. Work is fulfilling because God is fulfilling.

Ironically, some people who are the most determined to avoid the sacrilege of putting things before God miss a thousand daily opportunities to thank him, praise him, and draw near to him, because they imagine they shouldn't enjoy the very things he made to help us know him and love him.

God is a lavish giver. "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). The God who gave us his Son delights to graciously give us "all things." These "all things" are in addition to Christ, but they are never *instead* of him—they come, Scripture tells us, "along with him." If we didn't have Christ, we would have nothing. But because we have Christ, we have everything. Hence, we can enjoy the people and things God has made, and in the process enjoy the God who designed and provided them for his pleasure and ours.

God welcomes prayers of thanksgiving for meals, warm fires, games, books, relationships,



and every other good thing. When we fail to acknowledge God as the source of all good things, we fail to give him the recognition and glory he deserves. We separate joy from God, which is like trying to separate heat from fire or wetness from rain.

Every thought of Heaven should move our hearts toward God, just as every thought of God will move our hearts toward Heaven. That's why Paul could tell us to set our hearts "above" in Heaven, where Christ is, not just "set your hearts on God" (Colossians 3:1-2). To do one is to do the other.

If we think unworthy thoughts of Heaven, we think unworthy thoughts of God. That's why the conventional caricatures of Heaven do a terrible disservice to God and adversely affect our relationship with him. If we come to love Heaven more—the Heaven God portrays in Scripture—we will inevitably love God more. If Heaven fills our hearts and minds, God will fill our hearts and minds.

The next time you're tempted to think that God doesn't want you to long for Heaven's joys, remember that He commends his people who are "longing for a better country—a heavenly one," and because they long for Heaven "therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God because he has prepared a city for them" (Hebrews 11:16-17).

Those who love God should think more often of Heaven, not less.

(Randy Alcorn, adapted from Heaven [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004])

*Every thought  
of Heaven  
should move  
our hearts  
toward God,  
just as every  
thought of God  
will move our  
hearts toward  
Heaven.*



*He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe.*

## Charles Spurgeon on the Subject of God

**Note from Randy:** *160 years ago, on January 7, 1855, a pastor in England rose to preach. His name was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He was only twenty years old. This is the introduction to his sermon about God:*

It has been said that “the proper study of mankind is man.” I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.

There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, “Behold I am wise.” But when we come to this master science, finding that our plumbline cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass’s colt; and with solemn exclamation, “I am but of yesterday, and know nothing.” No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God...

But while the subject *humbles* the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe.... The most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and Him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.

And, while humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently *consolatory*. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is a balsam for every sore.

Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead’s deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. It is to that subject that I invite you this morning.

*Excerpted from “The Immutability of God,” A sermon by Charles H. Spurgeon at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark. J. I. Packer quotes from this message in Knowing God.*



(Safely Home artist: Ron DiCianni)

## A Divine Appointment

Dear Randy:

You may not remember me, but about 4 years ago you saw me reading a Bible in the Chicago airport on your way home from a conference. You stopped and gave me a copy of your book, *Safely Home*. I read it and a couple years later wrote you an email telling you how it impacted my life.

Well, now I am writing you again and telling you that Father used your book to begin and grow a passion and love for China in my heart. Now I am an teacher in China. Without saying much more you can guess what else Father has given me: the chance to share with hundreds of locals who have never heard the good news. I just thought that I’d let you know how Father used your book in my life and how He has led me to a team in China sharing and spreading His story.

Thank you and God bless. (Name withheld for security reasons)

# A Grieving Mother's Two Responses To Her Son's Death by Sandy Traugott

Randy's book *Heaven* was dedicated to many people who departed prematurely, yet in God's good time. Daniel Traugott was a 13-year-old boy who died in a car accident, leaving behind his mother, father and four siblings. His mother, Sandy, sent us the following poems she wrote that reflect two different perspectives on his death. (Reprinted with permission.)

## Daniel's Death

This is *horrible*. How could this have happened?  
Why did it have to happen? Daniel was only 13 years old.  
He shouldn't have died. What good is in this?  
Why weren't they looking?  
The accident could have been prevented.  
Why?...How come?...If only....  
Did I kiss Daniel on the forehead or  
just hug him when he left me for the last time?  
I wish I could have said "good-bye."  
I wish I had seen him that morning.  
I love you, Daniel....I miss you so much. The pain is too deep.  
The ache in my heart is piercing like a raw, open wound.  
It's hard for me to breathe. Why was it my son?  
Why did God allow Daniel to die?  
Why does everyone else still get to enjoy their son?  
I don't want this to be true....Daniel, I want you back.  
People say I will have to go through all the stages of grief.  
It feels like I didn't love Daniel enough if I'm not in despair.  
To be happy feels like I'm turning my back on Daniel  
and not caring about him or missing him...  
Life is not complete without Daniel.



When I allow my mind and emotions to focus and dwell on these thoughts I can sink into deep sorrow, despair, anger and self-pity. All these thoughts and more have gone through my mind.

Of course, there is a natural grieving that I am walking through. Each day there are tears. I have found the grieving to be like waves of deep emotion. Sometimes it comes quietly and gently, and other times it comes like strong, rushing waves that crash upon me.

There is a difference though between grieving and despair. We must grieve, but we don't have to be stuck in despair.

I have the choice to feed on these thoughts or to take my thoughts captive by bringing them to the foot of the cross as I weep in deep agony before Him, laying Daniel along with all my questions and all my sorrow at His feet. The grief must be expressed but am I going to turn the sorrow inward or outward towards Him? Lord, may I come with confidence and draw near to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace to help me in this time of need. (Heb. 4:16). In fact, I need to immerse myself in Your river of mercy and grace! May I grieve and weep at Your feet and honor You in my grief.



**Daniel wrote and sang worship songs telling of his Savior and how he was desiring to spend all of eternity with Him.**

## Daniel is in Heaven!

*We do not "grieve as others who have no hope" (I Thess. 4:13).*

I have *much* to be grateful for!  
To start out, I thank You,  
Lord, that I *know* Daniel is with You!  
I know he is fully

rejoicing, laughing, and worshiping You.  
What a picture I have of him before Your throne.  
Heaven has come closer to me now because Daniel is there.  
As a mom, part of my heart is there with him and You.  
I look forward to coming to You and hugging Daniel again.  
At times I picture my reunion with him....for my hope is in You.  
How *grateful* I am that I am sure of Your salvation for Daniel!  
I am *grateful* beyond words that I am sure of where he is!  
Though we won't be together any longer on this earth,  
we will be together for all eternity.  
How I praise You, Lord, for that secure assurance.  
This life will pass quickly, and though each day I think of him,  
and miss him, my eyes look forward to being together again in  
Your holy presence....rejoicing with no more tears.  
Your mercy and grace has been abundant on us, Lord.

Thank You for the testimony You have brought about through Daniel's life. Thank You for the lives who have been saved.

Thank You that You will continue to use his young life.  
May many individuals be brought into Your kingdom because of his testimony.

You have turned what could have been evil into good.  
May You continue to be praised through Daniel's life!  
How blessed I was to be Daniel's mom and to enjoy him for 13 years. Lord, You held his life in Your hands.  
You knew he would only live for 13 years. You just hadn't told me.  
You held him at the time of the accident. It was no surprise to You. You weren't looking away, but You were holding him.  
You held him for me.

Thank You for Your mercy that allowed him to die instantly.  
He faced no pain, no fear.

When Daniel was in the hospital being pumped by machines,  
I thank You that You quickened my heart to say good-bye  
and we had time alone.

Thank You that I got to hug and kiss him one last time and I was able to express my love to him and told him that I would be with him again soon.... I believe You allowed him to hear me.

You are my focus, Lord. You are the giver and taker of life.  
All of our breaths are in Your hands. Therefore, I will trust in You.

You are the beginning and the end. You are my hope.  
You are my resurrection. You are my Savior.  
When I dwell on these thoughts there is joy in the midst of my grieving and sorrow.



## What Do The Pictures Tell Us? by Randy Alcorn

The biggest disadvantage to the preborn child has always been that there's no window to the womb. His fate is in the hands of those who cannot see him. But in recent years this has radically changed.

*Time* in 2002 and *Newsweek* in 2003 devoted cover stories to the breathtaking ultrasound images of preborn children.<sup>1</sup> *Newsweek* asked on its cover, "Should a Fetus Have Rights? How Science Is Changing the Debate."

All arguments vaporize in the face of the unborn child.

### The Power of Ultra-Sound

Rebekah Nancarrow received an \$80 ultrasound at Planned Parenthood, but wasn't allowed to see the results because "that will only make it harder on you." Unsettled, she went to a Pregnancy Resource Center, where she was given a free ultrasound and allowed to view it. She said, "Had I not had the sonogram, I would have had the abortion. But that sonogram just confirmed 100 percent to me that this was a life within me, not a tissue or a glob."<sup>2</sup>

According to Thomas Glessner, "Prior to ultrasound technology, pregnancy centers reported that of the 'abortion-minded' women who came in for testing and advice, about 20 percent to 30 percent decided to remain pregnant. With pregnancy centers using ultrasound machines, that proportion has jumped to 80 percent or 90 percent."<sup>3</sup>

Audrey Stout, a nurse, told me of an ultrasound she performed. This particular time the baby "opened and closed her mouth, had the hiccups, laid back as if in a beach chair, stretching her little legs. She even held up hands so Mom could count her fingers. The mother was visibly touched."

When Audrey finished the scan she asked the woman what her plans were. "She replied, 'I am going to have my baby.' I asked if the scan had made a difference; she said, 'Big time. I just came in here to get a pregnancy verification so I could go have an abortion.'"<sup>4</sup>

Thousands of stories like this have emerged from pregnancy centers across the country, which now use ultrasounds. Internet sites display astounding ultrasound images—some clearly show the unborn smiling, yawning, stretching, and sleeping.<sup>5</sup>

Still, denial remains surprisingly strong. When I showed an intrauterine photograph of an eight-week unborn child to a pro-choice advocate—an intelligent college graduate—she asked me, "Do you really think you're going to fool anyone with this trick photography?"

I told her she could go to Harvard University Medical School textbooks, *Life* magazine<sup>6</sup> or Nilsson's *A Child Is Born*<sup>7</sup> and find exactly the same pictures. She didn't want to hear it. Why? Because she was really saying, "That's obviously a child in this photograph, and because I don't want to believe abortion kills a child, I refuse to believe that's a real photograph."

### What the Remains Indicate

A film called "The Gift of Choice" claims that the unborn is "a probability of a future person." But what's left after an abortion are small but perfectly formed body parts—arms and legs, hands and feet, torso and head. The physical remains indicate the end not of a potential life but of an actual life. If you don't believe this, examine the remains of an abortion.<sup>8</sup> If you cannot bear to look, ask yourself why. If this were only tissue, rather than a dismembered child, it wouldn't be hard to look at, would it?

In his how-to manual *Abortion Practice*, Dr. Warren Hern states, "A long curved Mayo scissors may be necessary to decapitate and dismember the fetus."<sup>9</sup>

One must have a head in order to be decapitated and



**3-D ultrasound, 9 weeks**  
body parts in

order to be dismembered. Lumps of flesh and blobs of tissue aren't decapitated or dismembered.

Why are the same people who watch bloody killings and gruesome autopsies in prime time dramas disturbed by abortion photographs? Pro-choice feminist Naomi Wolf, speaking of pictures of aborted babies, acknowledges,

To many pro-choice advocates, the imagery is revolting propaganda. There is a sense among

*"That sonogram just confirmed 100 percent to me that this was a life within me, not a tissue or a glob."*



us, let us be frank, that the gruesomeness of the imagery belongs to the pro-lifers...that it represents the violence of imaginations that would, given half a chance, turn our world into a scary, repressive place. "People like us" see such material as the pornography of the pro-life movement. But feminism at its best is based on what is simply true.... While images of violent fetal death work magnificently for pro-lifers as political polemic, the pictures are not polemical in themselves: they are biological facts. We know this."<sup>10</sup>

## The Right to Remain Ignorant

When a pro-life candidate ran television ads showing aborted babies, people were outraged. A "CBS Evening News" reporter declared the abortion debate had reached a "new low in tastelessness." Strangely, there was no outrage that babies were being killed...only that someone had the audacity to *show* they were being killed.

The question we should ask is not, "Why are pro-life people showing these pictures?" but "Why would anyone defend what's shown in these pictures?" The real concern about pictures of unborn babies isn't that they're gory, but that they prove the accuracy of the pro-life position.

Intrauterine photos and ultrasounds aren't hideous, but beautiful and fascinating. So do pro-choice advocates welcome *these* pictures? No. Abortion rights organizations have referred to ultrasound images as a "weapon" in the hand of the pro-life movement.<sup>11</sup> Businesses now offer 4-D ultrasound professional photographs of unborn children smiling, sneezing, and yawning. In a PBS discussion, one panelist claimed that such pictures reflected "an unhealthy preoccupation with the baby."<sup>12</sup> Notice the terminology: "the baby." Ultrasound technologies are dismantling the age-old pro-choice argument, "It isn't a baby." People are saying, "What are you talking about? Of course it's a baby—just look!"

## Overcoming Denial

The Holocaust was so evil that words alone couldn't describe it. Descriptions of Nazi death camps had long been published in American newspapers, but when these papers started printing the pictures of slaughtered people, the American public finally woke up. If not for the pictures, even today most of us wouldn't understand or believe the Holocaust.

I visited a college campus where a pro-life group had set up displays of aborted babies alongside the victims of the Nazi death camps, the Killing Fields, American slavery, and other historical atrocities. Signs with warnings about the graphic photographs were posted clearly, so all those who looked did so by choice. I witnessed the profound effect on students and faculty, including those who didn't want to believe what they were seeing.

Animal rights advocates argue that in order to make their case they must show terrible photographs, such as baby seals being clubbed to death. If there's a place to look at such pictures, isn't there a place to look at pictures of abortions? And if abortion isn't killing babies...then why are these pictures so disturbing?

Was the solution to the Holocaust to ban the disgusting pictures? Or was the solution to end the killing?

Is the solution to abortion getting rid of pictures of dead babies? Or is it getting rid of what's making the babies dead?

*(Randy Alcorn, adapted from Why ProLife? [Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004])*

<sup>1</sup> Madeline Nash, "Inside the Womb," *Time*, November 11, 2002, 68-77; Debra Rosenberg, "The War over Fetal Rights," *Newsweek*, June 9, 2003, 40-51.

<sup>2</sup> Mark O'Keefe, "Activists Tout Ultrasound Images to Discourage Abortion," Newhouse News Service, <http://www.newhouse.com/archive/okeefe021903.html>, © 2003

<sup>3</sup> Jennifer Kabbany "Abortion vs. UltraSound," *Washington Times*, October 29, 2003

<sup>4</sup> Audrey Stout, Marietta, GA, email to Randy Alcorn, 12 February 2000.

<sup>5</sup> See [www.logiqlibrary.com/browseAction.cfm?productID=20](http://www.logiqlibrary.com/browseAction.cfm?productID=20); [www.geddeskeepsake.com/showcase.html](http://www.geddeskeepsake.com/showcase.html); <http://www.clearviewultrasound.com/gallery.asp>; [http://firstsightultrasound.com/4d\\_liveSA.htm](http://firstsightultrasound.com/4d_liveSA.htm); [www.gemedicalsystems.com/rad/us/4d/virtual.html](http://www.gemedicalsystems.com/rad/us/4d/virtual.html); to find other images, enter the words ultrasound, images and unborn into a search engine.

<sup>6</sup> *Life*, August 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Lennart Nilsson, *A Child is Born* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1977).

<sup>8</sup> [www.abortiontv.com/AbortionPictures1.htm](http://www.abortiontv.com/AbortionPictures1.htm)

<sup>9</sup> Warren Hern, "Operative Procedures and Technique," *Abortion Practice* (Boulder, CO: Alpenglo Graphics, Inc., 1990), 154.

<sup>10</sup> Naomi Wolf, "Our Bodies, Our Souls," *The New Republic* October 16, 1995; *Republic*, 16 October 1995; [www.epm.org/naomiwolf.html](http://www.epm.org/naomiwolf.html).

<sup>11</sup> *Care Net Report*, Vol. 4, number 5, November 2003, Sterling, VA.

<sup>12</sup> Oregon Public Broadcasting, "To the Contrary," former Clinton administration staffer Maria Echaveste, et al., January 4, 2004.



23 weeks



29 weeks



## A Call for Christian Risk by John Piper

By removing *eternal* risk, Christ calls his people to continual *temporal* risk. For the followers of Jesus the final risk is gone. "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). "Neither death nor life...will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 3:38-39). "Some of you they will put to death...But not a hair of your head will perish" (Luke 21:16, 18). "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

When the threat of death becomes a door to paradise the final barrier to temporal risk is broken. When a Christian says from the heart, "To live is Christ and to die is gain," he is free to love no matter what. Some forms of radical Islam may entice martyr-murderers with similar dreams, but *Christian* hope is the power to love, not kill. Christian hope produces life-givers, not life-takers. The crucified Christ calls his people to live and die for their enemies, as he did. The only risks permitted by Christ are the perils of love. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you" (Luke 6:27-28).

With staggering promises of everlasting joy, Jesus unleashed a movement of radical, loving risk-takers. "You will be delivered up even by parents...and some of you they will put to death" (Luke 21:16). Only some. Which means it might be you and it might not. That's what risk means. It is not risky to shoot yourself in the head. The outcome is certain. It is risky to serve Christ in a war zone. You might get shot. You might not.

Christ calls us to take risks for kingdom purposes. Almost every message of American consumerism says the opposite: Maximize comfort and security—*now*, not in heaven. Christ does not join that chorus. To every timid saint, wavering on the edge of some dangerous gospel venture, he says, "Fear not, you can only be killed" (Luke 12:4). Yes, by all means maximize your joy! How? For the sake of love, risk being reviled and persecuted and lied about, "for your reward is great in heaven" (Matthew 5:11-12).

There is a great biblical legacy of loving risk-takers. Joab, facing the Syrians on one side and the Ammonites on the other, said to his brother Abishai, "Let us be courageous for our people...and may the LORD do what seems good to him" (2 Samuel 10:12). Esther broke the royal law to save her people and said, "If I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16). Shadrach and his comrades refused to bow down to the king's idol and said, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us...But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods" (Daniel 3:16-18). And when the Holy Spirit told Paul that in every city imprisonment and afflictions await him, he said, "I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course" (Acts 20:24).

"Every Christian," said Stephen Neil about the early church, "knew that sooner or later he might have to testify to his faith at the cost of his life" (*A History of Christian Missions*, Penguin, 1964, p. 43). This was normal. To become a Chris-

tian was to risk your life. Tens of thousands did it. Why? Because to do it was to gain Christ, and not to was to lose your soul. "Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25).

In America and around the world the price of being a real Christian is rising. Things are getting back to normal in "this present evil age." Increasingly 2 Timothy 3:12 will make sense: "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Those who've made gospel-risk a voluntary life-style will be most ready when we have no choice. Therefore I urge you, in the words of the early church, "Let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come" (Hebrews 13:13-14). When God removed all risk above, He loosed a thousand risks of love.

(*Fresh Words from Desiring God*, June 3, 2003, [www.desiringGOD.org](http://www.desiringGOD.org))



*In America  
and around  
the world  
the price of  
being a real  
Christian is  
rising.*

## Letters to EPM

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I spent a great deal of time absorbing your book *Heaven*. I want to tell you what a remarkable joy it was to find your book. I grew up in church and never understood anything about heaven. I'm 55 years old and always secretly dreaded dying and spending eternity in the kind of heaven where you sit around bored and singing, etc. I grew up hearing far, far more about hell. It always seemed too real. Now I can picture a heaven that is joyous to think about. It makes me even more anxious for my loved ones to know Christ and experience heaven with me.

Thank you for a well-written, in-depth, documented look at a subject that should be near and dear to every believer's heart. *H. C.*

I've just finished reading *The Grace and Truth Paradox* for the second time in two weeks, and it's been an amazing blessing in the deep troubles in my marriage, and in my own walk with Christ. *D. B.*

I just wanted to thank you for the answers to many of my questions in your book, *Prolife Answers to Prochoice Arguments*. I have some prochoice relatives and this information will help me to be able to answer their arguments with more intelligence and backup information to my answers. Thank you for your help in the prolife cause! *A fellow believer, B. D., age 12*

I'm now re-reading *Heaven* and holding myself back from underlining almost every sentence. In 1998 my husband had a massive stroke. In 10 seconds, after 50 years of marriage, our lives changed dramatically and, for the next 5 years, he was confined to a wheelchair and hospital bed.

By God's grace, we were both strong believers and my husband longed for death and release from his pain and suffering. He died a year and a half ago and there were days when I thought I never wanted to live without him. However, your book has given me a new, fresh perspective on life and death that has enabled me to understand the Bible more clearly and fully.

When our 4-year-old granddaughter asked, "Can Grandpa walk now?" I had visions of him jumping nimbly from rock to rock in a beautiful mountain stream (filled with rainbow trout). I can hardly wait to see him again and take up life where we left off. *M. P.*

EPM's website really is a treasure trove of great resources for today's Christians. I plan to do many of my future devotionals simply reading through some of the articles written by Randy and the EPM staff in addition to reading the Scripture. The front page to this site is really just a tip of the iceberg! Underneath it lies a huge block of ice containing so much wisdom and information that we need today to think eternally. *K. K., Champaign, IL*

I was born and raised in the Buddhist religion but when I was eight I did pick up a Bible and converted to Christianity. Four years later I converted my mother.

I received a copy of your book, *Edge of Eternity*, when I was a sophomore in high school. I read it at a leisurely pace, not really getting into much detail. I am rounding 20 now, and have read the book over 9 times, only just now taking a highlighter and a fine tooth comb to the book. It truly is a work of art, and more importantly of God. *C. D.*

Your book *The Ishbane Conspiracy* has been an incredible blessing and helped work a miracle. My 22-year-old daughter was looking for a book to read and read *Ishbane*. It moved her much closer to the Lord in an amazing way and helped her to see stuff I had been trying to get her to see for years!

Then she gave it to my wife (whom I have been separated from for 51 weeks after repeated adultery by her). I had moved out and was about to serve divorce papers—here in Australia you have to wait 12 months.

The scales fell from her eyes like for Rob when he entered heaven in the book. She humbled herself before the Lord and repented. She came to my church this Sunday (the first time she had attended church in years). She is now saved and the Lord is calling us back together. He had kept me from finding anyone else during the last 12 months. Praise the Lord—His ways are mysterious but He has worked a miracle here. It will not be easy given the past but I know He is already renewing us both and our relationship. *P. H., Australia*



*"EPM's website really is a treasure trove of great resources for today's Christians."*



## When God Doesn't Heal by Mark M. Yarbrough

### *Why doesn't God cure everyone who prays fervently for healing?*

The life context of the question is all too familiar. The issue arises in our darkest hours—in the hospital ward, in the doctor's office, when the unfavorable test results return. Our need often arises unexpectedly and then consumes us.

Embedded in the question are two key assumptions. First, that ours is a God of miracles, including healing. A quick evaluation of Scripture attests that miracles display God's power (Jeremiah 10:12), arouse wonder (Exodus 4:21), and function as a sign to confirm his message (Matthew 12:39-40).

The second assumption is that believers are instructed to pray fervently. The Thessalonians are commanded to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) because habitual prayers express dependence on God. And positioned as little children, we anticipate "good things" from our heavenly Father (Matthew 7:11). Yet three additional points are critical.

First, God does not always respond to our desires, and he frequently allows circumstances we wish he would not. Theologically we call this sovereignty. Inherent in our faith is the scriptural truth that God is in control. This includes the events he directs and the circumstances he allows. He has the power and responsibility to exercise his right over creation according to his will (Psalm 50:1, 115:3).

Yet God repeatedly chooses to veil the ways in which he exercises those rights. Hence our requests will not always coincide with God's response. Peter understood this as it applied to suffering: "So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good" (1 Peter 4:19).

Second, our tendency is to doubt God's sovereignty in the midst of tumultuous times.

Unfortunately, when we doubt we presume to comprehend more than he does. Yes, from our vantage point, we might think that God's miraculous intervention would produce waves of affirmation to his authority. Yet, in reply to the "rich man," Jesus said, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

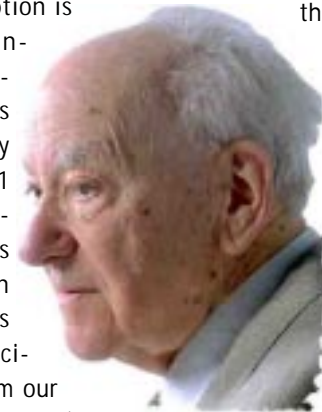
Instead, the nature of our faith is to be "certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). While the world looks for proof in signs and wonders, we should never forget that "the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). It is in this power that he asks us to trust in him.

Third, we must embrace the sufficiency of God's grace in all circumstances. In other words, it is imperative that the God of the mountaintop also be the God of the valley. The apostle Paul requested three times to be healed of his "thorn in the flesh." "The response from the Lord? "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). The sufficiency of God's grace is found in that we can endure suffering just as Jesus endured the Cross!

Jesus endured for the "joy set before him" (Hebrews 12:2), and God's grace allows us to do the same. Our affliction is purposeful and passing, and although we may not be able to understand it, we must cling to God's goodness and follow the pattern of his Son.

So we are left with this: We do not know why God allows one to be healed and others not. We have all been touched by situations where God did not heal despite the faithful prayers of his people.

The words of Alister McGrath in *Mystery of the Cross* (Zondervan, 1990) are well posed: "Experience cannot be allowed to have the final word—it must be judged and shown up as deceptive and misleading. The theology of the Cross draws our attention to the sheer unreliability of experience as a guide to the presence and activity of God. God is active and present in his world, quite independently of whether we experience him



*We must embrace the sufficiency of God's grace in all circumstances. It is imperative that the God of the mountaintop also be the God of the valley.*

as being so. Experience declared that God was absent from Calvary, only to have its verdict humiliatingly overturned on the third day."

As with the Cross, our darkest hour may be God's finest moment. It may be there that he does his greatest work—albeit unseen to us. Thus instead of letting circumstances consume us, we are to be consumed with God. To that end, we pray without ceasing, trust in his sovereignty, and find comfort in his hope.

*Mark M. Yarbrough is pastor at Eastfield Bible Chapel and executive director of communications at Dallas Theological Seminary. (This article first appeared in September 15, 2004 issue of Christianity Today.) Used with permission.*



*Lord, your no answer to physical healing meant yes to a deeper healing—a better one. Your answer has bound me to other believers and taught me so much about myself. It's purged sin from my life, it's strengthened my commitment to you, forced me to depend on your grace. Your wiser, deeper answer has stretched my hope, refined my faith, and helped me to know you better. And you are good. You are so good....*

*It wasn't often I could presuppose God's motives, but I could this one. He had brought me to the Pool of Bethesda that I might make an altar of remembrance out of the ruins. That I might see—and thank him for—for the wiser choice, the better answer, the harder yet richer path....he had brought me here, all the way from home—halfway around the earth—so I could declare to anyone within earshot of the whole universe, to anyone who might care, that yes—there are more important things in life than walking.*

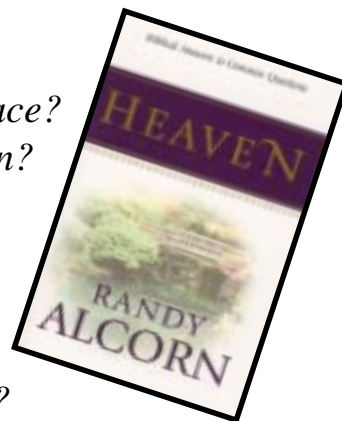
*(Joni Eareckson Tada, excerpted from The God I Love [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003, p. 356-7])*

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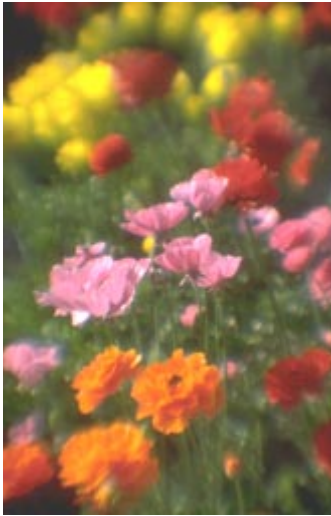
- What will Heaven be like?*
- Will Heaven (the New Earth) be an actual place?*
- How can we know for sure we'll go to Heaven?*
- Will we really have bodies?*
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*I see common grace as a magnificent and beautiful doctrine that flows right off the pages of Scripture and is repeatedly confirmed by daily observation.*



## Common Grace by Randy Alcorn

**Question:** *I have read about common grace, and heard that it is a term invented by John Calvin, and not found in Scripture, and that he used it to slice up the concept of grace, and who God offers grace to and who he doesn't. What does "common grace" mean, and is it something I should believe?*

**Answer:** I do not see common grace as an invention of John Calvin or any other man. Rather, I see it as a magnificent and beautiful doctrine that flows right off the pages of Scripture and is repeatedly confirmed by daily observation.

In his excellent book *Bible Doctrine*, Wayne Grudem says, "Common grace is the grace of God by which he gives people innumerable blessings that are not part of salvation. The word common here means something that is common to all people and is not restricted to believers or to the elect only."

Any Bible-believing Christian should agree that some people are saved and others aren't. No matter how you understand the "elect" (whether God elects them, as I believe, or that they somehow are involved in their own election) it is a biblical term, used of people about ten times in the New Testament, and of angels at least once.

All "common grace" does is point out that God loves the whole world, and exercises patience and kindness even to those who ultimately reject him. In my opinion, an Arminian (non-Calvinist) could agree with that also, and probably would if he didn't know John Calvin had used the term. (I'm wide open to another term, by the way; it's the doctrine that I wouldn't want to part with.)

Regardless of the reasons for it, if someone doesn't become saved, he doesn't experience saving grace, correct? But he does experience other aspects of God's grace, what is here called "common grace." To me this just shows the depth and breadth of

Christ's love. Common grace is demonstrated in Christ's words, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:44-45). If not for this, we would have "all grace to believers, no grace to unbelievers," and this would be impossible, since if no grace was shown to someone in rebellion against Christ, he couldn't draw his next breath, let alone commit his next sin.

Common grace emphasizes the goodness of God. It exactly reverses the standard logic, e.g., Rabbi Kushner who asked "Why do bad things happen to good people?" and concluded in his bestselling book that God is either not all-good or not all-powerful. He bailed God out (so he thought), rescuing him from not being good by concluding God is not all-powerful. This has become the predominant logic.

Understanding neither God's holiness nor the reality and extent of our sin, we fail to realize that the question of why bad things happen to good people is exactly backwards. It's the wrong question. The real question, which angels likely ask (having seen their angelic brethren permanently evicted from Heaven for their rebellion) is "Why do good things happen to bad people?" If we understood how God is and how we are, that is exactly the question we would ask.

This is the wonder and awesomeness of the doctrine of common grace. God graciously and kindly brings good to people who deserve the fires of Hell not simply eventually, but right now. (This goes back to the doctrine of human depravity.)

It is characteristic of bad people to not THINK of themselves as being bad. We imagine we are good (not perfect, but good enough). So we fail to marvel at God's common grace. When a tsunami happens we ask, "Where is a good God?" But when a tsunami *doesn't* happen we usually fail to thank Him for restraining from us the devastations we deserve in our rebellion against God. And certainly we never say "Where is a just God? Why hasn't he struck me down for my sin today?"

Instead, we moan that we can't find a close parking space on a rainy day.

Jesus appeals to God's common grace as a basis for our extending grace to others, even those who hate us (cf. Luke 6:35-36). If not for God's common grace, i.e., if God brought immediate terrible judgment on unbelievers, the world as we know it wouldn't exist. Among other things, no one would have an opportunity to come to Christ, since we would be immediately cast into Hell.

Paul said to unbelievers, "In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:16-17). I find this a very touching statement of God's grace toward all, and an appeal for all people to realize his love, even in a world under the curse. Satan is taking his toll on this world in bondage to sin, but even though none of us deserve his grace, God extends it to us. This world gives foretastes of both Heaven and Hell. Tragically, it is the closest to Heaven the unbeliever will ever know, and wonderfully, it is the closest to Hell the child of God will ever know.

David says, "The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made....The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand, you satisfy the desire of every living thing" (Psalm 145:9, 15-16). God cares for his creation and extends his grace to all, not only people but animals, though they suffer under the curse and will until Christ's return.

Another thing I appreciate about common grace is its irony. God gives atheists not only food to eat and air to breathe, but the very minds and wills and logic that they use to argue against him. The man who says God cannot be good since he allows suffering doesn't grasp that God is withholding from him the full extent of suffering he deserves for his evil, and that is the very thing that gives the man the luxury of formulating and leveling his accusations against God.

Common grace, along with the fact that we are created in God's image, also explains how sinners can still do good. Jesus says, "If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit

is that to you? For even sinners do the same" (Luke 6:33). This explains how human culture has developed much that is good alongside the evil.

I love John 1:9, that Jesus came as the light that "enlightens every man." I think this reflects the fact that all people in history have benefited from the coming of Christ, even those who reject him. The model of Christ, his grace and truth, his elevation of women and conciliatory words created a reference point for bringing freedom and civil rights to many societies. As far as we still have to go, the progress in affirming the rights of women and racial minorities in our own culture is due not to the current beliefs of moral relativism, but to the teaching and model of Christ which sowed the seeds for later reversal of the injustice (including slavery, women unable to vote, etc.) that still hung over this country when it was founded.

As for distinguishing between common grace and saving grace, not all people will be saved and go to Heaven (even if we disagree on the meaning of election), yet all people are nonetheless recipients of many of God's kindnesses and provisions and acts of grace. I think John Wesley could have coined the phrase "common grace" as easily as John Calvin (though of course he would have attached different nuances to it). To me it is a wonderful doctrine, true to Scripture and true to the world we see around us.

If someone prefers to call it something besides "common grace," that's fine (though I like the term), but whatever we call it I think it's biblical and significant, and it causes me to praise God for the breadth of His grace.



*All "common grace" does is point out that God loves the whole world, and exercises patience and kindness even to those who ultimately reject him.*



## A. W. Tozer on Prayer . . .

### The First Lesson to Learn

*Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*  
—Matthew 26:41

To pray successfully is the first lesson the preacher must learn if he is to preach fruitfully; yet prayer is the hardest thing he will ever be called upon to do and, being human, it is the one act he will be tempted to do less frequently than any other. He must set his heart to conquer by prayer, and that will mean that he must first conquer his own flesh, for it is the flesh that hinders prayer always.

Almost anything associated with the ministry may be learned with an average amount of intelligent application. It is not hard to preach or manage church affairs or pay a social call; weddings and funerals may be conducted smoothly with a little help from Emily Post and the Minister's Manual. Sermon making can be learned as easily as shoemaking—introduction, conclusion and all. And so with the whole work of the ministry as it is carried on in the average church today.

But prayer—that is another matter. There Mrs. Post is helpless and the Minister's Manual can offer no assistance. There the lonely man of God must wrestle it out alone, sometimes in fasting and tears and weariness untold. There every man must be an original, for true prayer cannot be imitated nor can it be learned from someone else.

*God Tells the Man Who Cares, p. 69*

### Closed Mouth, Silent Heart

*My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue.*  
—Psalm 39:3

Prayer among evangelical Christians is always in danger of degenerating into a glorified gold rush. Almost every book on prayer deals with the "get" element mainly. How to get things we want from God occupies most of the space. Now, we gladly admit that we may ask for and receive specific gifts and benefits in answer to prayer, but we must never forget that the highest kind of prayer is never the making of requests. Prayer at its holiest moment is the entering into God to a place of such blessed union as makes miracles seem tame and remarkable answers to prayer appear something very far short of wonderful by comparison.

Holy men of soberer and quieter times than ours knew well the power of silence. David said, "I was dumb with silence. I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue." There is a tip here for God's modern prophets. The heart seldom gets hot while the mouth is open. A closed mouth before God and silent heart are indispensable for the reception of certain kinds of truth. No man is qualified to speak who has not first listened.

*The Set of the Sail, pp. 14-15*



*No man is qualified to speak who has not first listened.*

### Eternal Perspective Ministries

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