

“A Tablespoon of Heaven”

Psalm 16:9-11 & 1 Peter 1:3-4

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Psalm 16 v9-11

“No wonder my heart is glad, and I rejoice. My body rests in safety. For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your holy one to rot in the grave. You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.”

Therein lays a prophetic reference to Jesus Christ and the resurrection.

1 Peter v3-4

“All praise to God, father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now, we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance- an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.”

By our physical death here, we are “born” again into heaven, where time as we know it, does not exist, nor do famine, disease, poverty, infirmity, or evil.

Two young college men were canoeing in April 1987. After a detailed review of safety precautions, the two had decided the more experienced canoer would take the stern, while the other would paddle from the bow. After securing their gear, they began their trip. While the air seemed warm, the water was quite cold between 38 and 42 degrees, the current fast from melting snow. The trip was rather uneventful, but enjoyable after the winter’s effect on a person. Spring air hits and makes you want to get up, get out, and get moving. Nearing the midpoint of the trip where two rivers connected, there was a low overhanging branch. Now, rather than listen to the safety rules, particularly about branches, the young man in the bow, rather than duck, grabbed firmly upon the branch. This was not good. The current, of course, proceeded to grab the back of the canoe, swinging it sideways. While still embracing the branch, the canoe tipped, the young man in the back plunging into the water, the other still clinging to the branch. It was at this point that the more experienced canoer realized a fatal error in judgment on two fronts. Not because of whom he had chosen to canoe with, but first, that he had not properly dressed for the water was so cold it burned like fire. Secondly, he had forgotten to close the clasps on his life vest. The current was so fast, it stripped the vest completely off. With adrenaline pumping at this point, the canoer now turned swimmer began to swim to the riverbank not far away. However, the current had moved him just far enough

toward the junction of the second river. The cross current had created an undertow which immediately pulled him under. Normally this still would not have been an insurmountable task. Ride the undertow past the convergence in the main river and simply 'pop' up. But wouldn't you know it, about 5-8 yards into it was a large boulder. The young man was pinned under the edge. As hard as he tried he could not free himself. As he inhaled, his lungs filled with burning cold water, he closed his eyes, and died.

You can imagine his surprise when upon opening his eyes, the water was gone. A warm light enveloped him as there were people singing and dancing, walking around, saying something to him and each other as if welcoming home a long lost friend or family member. They were countless in number, but it was not crowded. Some things began to dawn upon the young man. He felt much better than only moments before. In fact, it felt like he could move an entire mountain with just his fingertip, outrun the fastest of animals, or fly like an eagle soaring. Second, he began to recognize some of the people. They had passed on years or even decades before. As the fuzziness in his eyes began to clear, he looked around in pure amazement. What wonders he beheld, what beauties surrounded him, to the point of overloading his senses. It wasn't until he stood in the presence of Jesus Christ that he finally understood what had happened. And he didn't care about the drowning at all. He wasn't concerned about family and friends left behind, or his job, or school, or anything else. He was finally understanding as the Holy Spirit said "God has everything well in hand. Trust Him and you need not want nor worry for anything".

He saw what heaven was like: Oceans running into deserts, deserts meeting snow-capped mountains with lakes, rivers, streams, waterfalls. Forests spread among jungles and open prairies. Lush green valley's stretching farther than the eye could see. Colors so vivid and real that he could touch them, almost like touching a rainbow, but with so many more colors as to be indescribable. The feeling of utter joy and contentment beyond belief filled the young man. No more man-made burdens or sins upon his back. Heaven truly was heaven. As he spoke to Jesus he began to feel different, almost nauseous and sick. As he reached for Jesus, Jesus smiled and gave a little wave.

A pain seared through the young man. He sat bolt upright. Looking at the two EMT's that had shocked his heart back with a defibrillator. Furious beyond words, the young man began cursing at the men with language that would make a truck driver blush. "Why? Why did you do that?" the men were stunned to say the least. The angry young man noticed his friend and said "we're outta here" leaving despite the pleas and resistance of the EMT's. While driving back, the friend reminded him of the lost canoe and belongings at the bottom of the river. The young man simply replied "leave them. They mean nothing."

After several months of being in the foulest of moods, the young man ran into the EMT's in an establishment one evening. All three knew the moment they laid eyes on each other. They offered the young man a drink if he would sit down with them. They wanted to know how he was, what had happened that day, and since. The young man, having never listened to his friends rendition, said "you first". They told of having a "firefighter appreciation day" in the park across the river. You know the kind where the kids can sit in the fire trucks and ride the ladders. They had heard the friend frantically screaming for help as someone was drowning. After finally arriving, the friend told them approximately where the canoe had tipped. One of them had decided, he didn't know why, that he thought the young man was under the edge of the boulder. He dove in, felt around and found the young man. Pulling him sideways, he brought him in with the help of the others. After the second "zap" was when the young man sat upright surprising them, and so the rest of the story. The older of the two looked at the young man who now had a sad look on his face. He put his hand on his shoulder and said "Son, did you know that you only expelled one tablespoon of water? Your lungs should have been full of water and almost frozen. You are a walking, talking miracle from God. There's no way to explain why you are here. You should be dead." The young man made his apologies, but did not tell them of his journey into heaven and what he had seen, heard, and felt. Most would have considered him "touched" in the head, rather than touched by the Holy Spirit. The whole idea of hanging out with the Big 3 would have seemed preposterous, even insane. They probably would have tried to have him committed or at the very least checked for brain damage. No, he decided that he would tell very few, those he could trust until the time seemed right, if ever.

That young man has been trying to figure out God's plan for him for the last 27 years. You see, that young man who died, yet lives, was me. I don't have all the answers. I still wonder why there is suffering in the world, especially the suffering of children. Why is there war, disease, hate, and evil? I don't know. But I do know where we are going, the vast inheritance that simply awaits for us to collect. When it was said that He saved the best for last, it was an understatement. When you offer words of solace and condolence to someone who has lost a loved one by saying he or she "is in a better place now" that, too, is an understatement.

Luke 13: vs 29-

"And they will come from the east, and from the west, and from the north and south, and take their places in the Kingdom of God."

Would you please take the hand of the persons sitting next to you. Close your eyes (pause) and see yourself in heaven, reunited with your loved ones, family and friends gone on before you (pause). See and feel the celebration as they joyously greet you with open arms, smiling and laughing with you at your return home. As you open your

eyes once again, don't let those thoughts and the feeling leave you. Great and awesome wonders await us all.

I will make one final remark. He made the kingdom of heaven for all of us. Remember that when a harsh feeling enters your heart or a harsh word comes from your voice: eternity is a very, very long time. You will be spending it with people you love, people you know and don't know, and people you may not even like. But God wants us to love one another, even if we don't like them. Amen.