

90 Minutes in Heaven: The Trip

Good morning!

Unfortunately, our summer is at an end, but I hope that all of you enjoyed your summer with a nice trip somewhere. Summer is the time most of us take a trip, visit family or friends, or get away on a vacation, and re-charge and relax before school and work kicks in.

And like many of us, I like to read a good book on our vacation. I opened a book, a *New York Times* best-seller, and since it's sold over 7 million copies I think it's a book many of you may have already read. It is a very, very special book.

This is the first line: *"I died on January 18, 1989."*

If that isn't a hook, I don't know what one is.

A book written by a dead man is a little unusual, and this one is unique in every respect. This is the story of a man's spiritual journey and his trip with Death. It's relevant this morning for everyone in this room because it is a trip all of us will also have to take one day too.

And I have the good fortune to tell you that this astounding book is now a movie that you can see in theaters all across the country beginning on September 11th.

As you can see from our title, it's ***90 Minutes in Heaven***.

90 Minutes in Heaven is the true story of a pastor named Don Piper and his 90 minutes of being dead in a car crash, and then as the title suggest...visiting Heaven and returning. He was pronounced dead. No pulse. No heartbeat. Dead. For an hour and a half.

That bears repeating.

This man was pronounced dead at the scene of his accident for an hour and a half...a full 90 minutes, even being placed in a body bag! Can you imagine that? Do you know what happens physiologically to a body when it ceases to function? What sort of brain damage occurs without oxygen for that long?

The man who wrote the book with Don Piper, Cec Murphey, was initially reticent to write this book. Here's what Cec had to say:

Don met me at a writers conference in Albuquerque and asked me to write his story.

"Tell me about it," I said.

After he related the highlights I said, "I'm not interested in writing NDE stories."

"Mine was not a near-death experience," he said. "I died."

Although I smiled, I thought, Yeah, Don, of course you did. Not that I thought he lied, but I assumed it was another NDE. As a former pastor, I'd heard many such accounts even my own wife had an NDE.

Because Don insisted his was not an NDE, I said, "I'll pray about writing the book for you."

Although I meant those words, Don later said cynically to himself, "I'll bet you will."

I did pray every day and corresponded with Don by email. After several weeks, an email from Don went something like this: "I don't think you understand. If my heart had continued to beat during those 90 minutes, I would have bled to death. Also, the brain can be deprived six minutes at most before the damage is irreversible."

That message convinced me. I contacted him and we wrote the book.

And yet, Don Piper is alive and normal today, with no brain damage at all. Look with me at the trailer for this amazing movie about his unbelievable trip home:

[90 Minutes in Heaven](#)

Don was on a trip to investigate planting a new church when his "accident" occurred, and then God re-routed him, and took him on a completely different journey that we can all benefit from this morning.

Although his recovery was brutal, enduring a dozen operations and rehab and excruciating pain that was and is still constant today, looking back now I don't think Don would change any of it. It was God's perfect plan.

Don got a taste of a trip we will all take one day, a trip with Death. His trip turned out to be a glimpse for all of us what awaits us in eternity, and a gift to us to know that Heaven is a real, actual place, with real, actual people, and a real, actual Jesus. Friends, Heaven is for real!

This affects all of us in this room. I want to talk to you today about his trip so vividly shown in this film, ***90 Minutes in Heaven***, and also about your trip. Does it scare you? Does it excite you? Does it seem far off to you?

Whatever you think, whatever your worldview this morning, you are going on this trip, and you need to give your final destination some serious thought. I'd like to help you with your travel plans because these plans are much more than an itinerary from your travel agent.

It is forever and ever and ever.

Planning Your Trip

Let's look at the Old Testament, a book attributed to King Solomon and the wisdom he gleaned as he looked back on his life. Turn to Ecclesiastes 7:2 with me, please.

"It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes it to heart."

Solomon says it's better to go to a funeral home than a birthday party. Why?

Because death is *"the end of every man,"* and seeing a body in a casket, of a loved one who was alive and vibrant only the day before, but now motionless and only a clay shell, is important for our mindset.

It's important because it is our reality, every single one of us. We are all going somewhere else some day. This life on earth, this 70 years, is not reality. The Bible says reality is in our future, in the trip to a place that is much longer than a mere 70 years...and He calls that place eternity.

Why does God want us to *"take it to heart?"* Well, let's first consider your last trip for some commonsense perspective.

If you did take a trip this summer, or even in the last year, you probably gave it a lot of thought. You may have even thought about it so much that you actually dreamed about it. You made detailed plans on all the particulars of your trip, mapping out each day's activities.

You decided on how you would get there, by car or plane or train. You decided on how much it would cost you before you even decided to go, and you probably made arrangements on where you would sleep each night. And I'm sure you made plans on what you would do each day, where you would go, and the places you wanted to see.

And finally, you decided on you would get back home when it was all over when you had to get back to work on Monday. In short, you put a lot of thought into your trip. You invested time and money on a vacation. And you thought about your destination, twice!

In short, you were prepared and took careful consideration to plan it so there'd be no surprises.

My friends, why is it that we put so much effort into a trip we hope to make for a brief week or two, and put almost no thought into a trip we definitely will take forever...a trip with Death into eternity?

Doesn't that seem odd?

The Bible says in Ecclesiastes that it *"is the end of every man."* We will die. We will cease to breathe, and we will be buried or cremated. A funeral is in your future, but we give it almost no thought at all. How strange. Why is that?

Why is it that we give no thought to eternity, until we have to attend a funeral of a loved one?

I want to show you a clip from *90 Minutes in Heaven*, when Don's miracle occurred on that Texas bridge amidst mangled metal, broken glass, and blood. Now keep in mind, this will most likely not happen to you. Death is final. But this sets the stage for his miraculous experience.

I Have to Pray for Him Scene

Can you imagine the joy and confusion in that moment there on the bridge? Wow!

Now, according to the Bible, there are two kinds of travelers on this pending journey we'll all take. Let's look at what the Apostle John said about them, and determine which one you are right now. Turn with me to 1 John 5:11-12.

Two Kinds of Travelers

"And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life."

This isn't rocket science, so I won't spend a lot of time on it, but God says all of mankind is separated into two camps. Those with the Son and those without the Son. Those with the Son have eternal life, like Don Piper. Those without the Son do not have eternal life.

How do you know if you have the life John speaks of? It's beyond simple. God loves you and wants you to understand so He made it very, very simple.

Satan in all his diabolical twisting of truth, to keep us from God and His Son's live-giving sacrifice on the cross, has made a mess of everything with works-based religions to the point that we don't know what to think. Religion is confusing. It's all a murky mystery of hopes and guesses and doing more good works than bad works, right?

Not according to this verse. If you have the Son then you have the life. Not sure if you have the life? Chances are if you are not 100 percent positive, absolutely certain beyond a shadow of a doubt that God will welcome you into His Heaven, then you don't have eternal life. And here's the question that you need to ask yourself.

Where is the Holy Spirit right now? Where is He?

Take some time, right now, where you are sitting, and answer that question for yourself. Where is the third Person of the trinity...the Holy Spirit?

Let's look at Paul's answer in Ephesians chapter one for those of us who want to know for certain if they have eternal life. Look at verses 13 and 14,

*“And you also were included in Christ when you **heard the message of truth**, the gospel of your salvation. When you **believed**, you were **marked in him with a seal**, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.”*

There are three parts to this answer:

- First you listen to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation
- Then you believed it,
- Then you are sealed with the Holy Spirit

Friends, if your answer was anything but the Holy Spirit is inside of your body, right now, this very minute, do not kid yourselves. You do not have the Son and you do not have eternal life.

When we believe the gospel (in genuine faith we accept His terms and surrender to Him, not an intellectual agreement, but a sincere belief that is evidenced by a broken spirit of repentance, a changed our mind about who is in charge. In essence, we give up, knowing our good works aren't enough, and that without His payment for our sin we're lost.), then God's Spirit comes inside of our body, literally, and changes us, seals us, and takes away our sin.

And what is the gospel, the message of salvation?

It is simply admitting that we have no righteous standing before a holy God, that none of our good works can abolish all of the sin we have committed, and that we are lost...unable to be with a holy God for eternity and need His Son Jesus Christ's forgiveness that is solely based on the cross' blood.

*“He saved us, **not because of righteous things we had done**, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).”*

Titus shows us that salvation has nothing to do with us, or our efforts. Ephesians 2:8-9, says the same thing:

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—**not by works**, so that no one can boast.”*

Friends, we are guilty before a holy God, and we cannot “work” that off trying to be good enough or doing enough good works to tip the scale. There is no scale. There is perfect and holy, without any sin...like Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God and there is sinners who are not.

The good news of the gospel is that despite being unholy, wicked, and wretched beings who deserve God's justice...he has pardoned us in that His Son took our punishment for us. look at the last verse in 2 Corinthians 5:

"He made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin (holy) to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

That means that in believing and trusting in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross—when He became sin, your sin sacrifice to God for all the horrible things you've done—you can now be clean, and as righteous as God Himself...so righteous and holy in your standing before Him that His Holy Spirit can come inside of you and give you eternal life!

Does that mean that Christians are perfect, that we don't fail and sin? Of course not! God has cleansed our soul and is in the process of transforming us to be like Him, but we are still stuck in a broken body, corrupted by sin. Just because someone is a Christian, doesn't mean life is easy or they're perfect.

Let's look at this scene from *90 Minutes in Heaven* where Don is mired in depression and his faith is at an all-time low:

It's Not About You

Christianity is all about others. It started that way when Jesus gave Himself away for us, and that's what Don had to re-learn here in this pivotal scene. He was still a Christian because he was sealed with the Holy Spirit. He was just battling his sinful flesh and his depressed state. His trip got bumpy, the understatement of the year, but it didn't change his final destination. That's why it's called eternal life.

We are all headed to one of two destinations.

Two Destinations

"For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:9)."

Did you know Robert Redford, the heart throb of millions, will be 80 years old next year? His trip is drawing closer every minute. I remember seeing him in an old *Twilight Zone* episode called "*Nothing in the Dark*" where he played Death, and he was trying to take an old woman with him. He had to touch her to kill her, and it was all about his trickery to get into her apartment to do that.

In the end, Death succeeded and took her off to a wonderful bliss, no judgment of sin, no offense against a holy God who loved her and tried to rescue her from Hell. It was Rod Serling's imagination. No guilt, no righteous condemnation, no Savior. It was fiction.

What I'm sharing with you today is real. It's non-fiction. It's holy truth from a holy God written in His holy Bible to save you from Death. And as Don Piper said, "Heaven is real" and we want you to be there with us who have trusted in Jesus.

Is this a blind hope? A guess? A myth from 2,000 years ago? Or can we be sure, absolutely certain, 100 percent positive that Heaven is real and can be guaranteed?

The Bible is crystal clear that we can know for sure where we are going when we die. That's why it was written for us—to **know** we have eternal life.

*"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know** that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13)."*

*"There is **now** no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1)."*

That's what happens when you ask Him to save you! God's justice and wrath and love all merge together at the cross and you are set free!

That is good news!

Two Deaths

"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Revelation 21:8)."

1:13:57 to 1:16:21

Isn't that beautiful! *"I have strived in vain to redeem my name, but God in his mercy has done the work I could never do. He has redeemed my name and given me His."*

Will found a new identity in Christ...and so can you, today...right now.

We fought a revolution against the British, flesh and blood, but Christ Jesus fought a spiritual revolution against the power of Death. Paul said in Romans 6:23 that if we're employed at *Sin, Incorporated*, then our paycheck in two weeks would be death. That's our wage.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Simple, isn't it? You don't have to do any thing at all. It's a free gift. You don't earn a birthday gift...you just take it. It's just faith, believing He did it all. Paul said the same here:

*“For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but **Christ lives in me**. The life I now live in the body, I live **by faith** in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for **if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing** (Galatians 2:19-21)!”*

Think about that. If we can be good enough for a holy God by what we do, works of righteousness like charity and service, then Jesus died for nothing!

One Reservation

Find Your Purpose

The Bible is crystal clear that we can know for sure where we are going when we die. That’s why it was written for us—to **know** we have eternal life.

*“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know** that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13).”*

Finally, look at Isaiah 64:4,

*“**All** of us have become like one who is unclean, and **all** our righteous acts are like **filthy rags** (to a holy God);*

The Hebrew word for “*filthy rags*” means our very best is a “woman’s menstrual cloth” to a holy God, bloody, and soiled beyond any usefulness for righteousness.

If you do not know for sure you’re going to Heaven, I pray today you will find the liberty made available to you in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a free gift that you only need to ask for in humility, realizing you can’t be righteous apart from Jesus Christ.

You can do that today, right now where you’re sitting, as 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, “*For he says, ‘In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.’ I tell you, **now** is the time of God’s favor, **now** is the day of salvation.*”

As Jesus said in Luke 4, **today** is the “*favorable year of the Lord.*” **Now** is the day of salvation. I hope you’ll make some real history today and go **Beyond the Mask** for Genuine Liberty!

Let’s pray.

**Pray All night
You're Going To Make It**