

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 3 May 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Condition for Entering Heaven

On **22 December of 1899**, the evangelist **Dwight L. Moody** was suffering from congestive heart failure, and was hanging between life and death. He lay down to take a nap; but after a short while, he awoke suddenly, and excitedly blurted out, “Earth recedes! Heaven opens for me!”¹ Now, Moody’s son, William, was at his dad’s bedside; and at first, William figured that his dad had been dreaming. However, Moody insisted, “This is no dream, Will...It is beautiful! It is like a trance! If this is death, it is sweet! God is calling me, and I must go!”² The family quickly gathered around him; and as they did, Moody kept shouting, “This is triumph!...This is my coronation day! I have been looking forward to it for years.” He then lit up, and said, “Dwight! Irene! I see the children’s faces!”³ (Dwight and Irene were his grandchildren, who had both died in infancy.) He closed his eyes again, and appeared to be unconscious; but he awoke yet again, and said, “No pain! No valley! If this is death, it’s not bad at all! It’s sweet!”⁴ He said that he had been “beyond the gates of death, and to the very portals of Heaven”; and he was confused as to why God had allowed him to come back.⁵ He said, “I’m not at all sure but that God may perform a miracle and raise me up. I’m going to get up and sit in that chair. If God wants to heal me by a miracle, all right; if not, I can meet death in my chair as well as here.” Moody then got up, walked to the chair, and sat down. However, a short time later, he returned to his bed; and the Lord quickly took him home. Apparently, God allowed Moody to have this little glimpse of Heaven to confirm to doubters that *there is real place called Heaven* for all who will repent of their sin, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!

Countless times over the years, I have spoken with people about salvation, and about the reality of both Heaven and Hell; and in my observation, most people don’t really believe in Heaven—even if they *claim* to believe in it. Many people theoretically believe that there is a place called Heaven; but they think and act as though there were no such place. Heaven is *not* in most people’s thoughts. (They think about its possibility only when a loved one dies, and they are forced to consider what happens after death.) I’ve also noted that those who believe in a real place called “Hell” are far fewer than those who claim to believe in Heaven. A few months ago, as I was beginning to study for this series of messages, I tried to guess at the percentages; and I figured that about 60% to 70% of the people in this country believe in a Heaven, while perhaps only 20% or less believe in Hell. As it turned out, I was close. According to recent statistics, 65% of people in Ireland claim to believe in Heaven, while only 16% believe in Hell.⁶

In our day, those who actually believe in Heaven are viewed as strange; and those who believe in Hell are viewed as unstable, or even dangerous. Even many professing “evangelicals” are now saying that there is no Hell. One well-known Hollywood actor, who professes to have placed his faith in Christ back in the 90’s, recently announced that he now believes in annihilationism—the belief that “hell” is simply “annihilation” (ceasing to exist), and not conscious, eternal torment. This belief is growing like wildfire among many professing “Christians”; however, God’s Word has not changed. The Lord Jesus Christ solemnly affirmed the reality of both Heaven and Hell; and so did God’s prophets and Apostles.

Brethren, it is more important than ever that we know what the Bible says about Heaven and Hell, and that we proclaim it, without apology, to a lost and dying world. Should there be any of you who have not been saved, it is my fervent prayer that through this series of messages about Heaven and Hell, you will see the danger that *your* soul is in, and place your faith in Christ. If you do know Christ as Saviour, it is my prayer that through these messages, you will become more heavenly-minded than ever before, and more burdened for the lost souls around you. This morning, we will launch into the first of seven messages about Heaven. The title of this message is ***The Condition for Entering Heaven.***

Read John 14:1-6.

I. The promise of the Father's House

In this passage, Jesus was speaking to His disciples during the Passover Meal, on the night before His crucifixion; and, as we just read, the disciples' hearts were very ***"troubled"*** that evening. *Why* were they troubled? Because Jesus had just dropped several troubling pieces of information on them. For one thing, Jesus had just informed them that He was soon going to *leave* them—and that when He left them, they would not be able to follow Him to where He was going. Then, Jesus dropped another bombshell: He informed Peter that that very evening, before the cock crew, he would deny that he even knew his Master—not just once, but three times. Let's "rewind the tape," and see exactly what Jesus said.

Read John 13:31-38.

These announcements must have been devastating to the disciples—and especially to Peter! Peter couldn't imagine that he would, under *any* circumstance, deny his Lord. Though Peter knew that Jesus' words are always true, he didn't want to believe *these* particular words. The very thought of it was almost more than he could bear. Yet, no sooner had Jesus foretold Peter's denial, than He gave the disciples words of comfort. Even though He was about to leave them—and even though Peter would soon deny that he even knew Him—Jesus assured the disciples that He would *not* abandon them. He wanted them to know that He was, in fact, going to prepare a place for them in His Father's House in Heaven. He also assured them that there are many ***"mansions"*** in His Father's house. The Greek word for "mansion" is *moné*, which means "dwelling place, abode, or residence." This word is used in only one other place in the New Testament—in **John 14:26**. In that verse, Jesus said, ***"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."*** Jesus promised the disciples that very soon, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit would all come to make their "abode" inside the bodies of believers.

Now, think about that word "abode." Is Jesus' "abode" inside believers' bodies temporary? Is it *probational*? Does it depend on how good a Christian you are? No, it does not! (*Thank God* that Christ's abiding in me doesn't depend on my good behaviour. If it did, Christ would

have forsaken me a long time ago!) No, Christ's abode in believers is *permanent*. Jesus said, "***I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.***" Well, so it is with the "mansions" in Heaven: they are *permanent* dwelling places for God's people. Will our mansions be beautiful? No doubt they will be! If the walls of the New Jerusalem are made of jasper, and the streets of gold, and the gates of pearl, then I'm sure that the saints' dwelling places will be dazzling! However, the most wonderful thing about the "mansions" in Heaven is that they will be the *eternal* home of all who believe on Jesus. We who are saved will dwell *forever* in our Father's House, and will be perpetually flooded with the light of His presence. Someday, Jesus will appear in the clouds; and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, He will receive all believers of this church age unto Himself. The dead in Christ will resurrected to immortality; and those who are still living will instantly receive immortal, incorruptible bodies. We will all be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and will take up our everlasting residence in the Father's House.

With this in mind, let's return to Peter. Even though Peter was about to commit the most conscience-scarring sin of his life—the sin of denying that he even knew his Master—Jesus wanted Peter to know that he still belonged to Him. He wanted Peter to know that he would *not* be cast out of God's family—that he *would* go to live with Him in Heaven one day! Peter was a sinful man; but his salvation was real. Let's go back to the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and read about the time when Peter first began to follow Jesus.

Read John 1:40-42.

The Bible doesn't give us a huge amount of detail about what happened on the day when Simon first met Christ. However, based on what is recorded here, there are a couple things we can be sure of. First, we know that when Simon's brother Andrew invited him to see Jesus, he went to meet Jesus straightaway. That, in itself, tells us something about Simon's heart. Simon obviously *desired* to see Jesus for himself, or else he wouldn't have hurried to see Him. Even more importantly, it appears that Peter had *already believed* on Jesus *in his heart*, before he even personally met Him. How can we be sure of this? Let's take another look at our passage, and see exactly what Jesus said to Peter. **(Read John 1:42 again.)**

What did Jesus do as soon as He saw Simon coming? *He gave Simon a new name.* This is very important. Whenever God gave a person a new name, it was a sign that that person had a personal relationship with God; and it was a sign that God was showing *special favour* to that person. For example, God renamed Abram "**Abraham.**" He renamed Sarai "**Sarah.**" He renamed Jacob "**Israel.**" He renamed Levi "**Matthew.**" He renamed Saul "**Paul.**" And He renamed Simon "**Peter.**" All these people were unworthy sinners; but they were *saved sinners*. At some definite point in their lives, they repented and trusted in the Lord for salvation; and they entered into a personal relationship with Him. God showed His favour and mercy to them; and just to let them know that they were favoured, He gave them new names.

Can you imagine being given a new name by Christ Himself? Simon had that privilege! The name that Jesus gave him was **Cephas**. **Cephas** is an Aramaic word, which means “small stone”; however, the Greek name that Jesus gave him (**Peter**) is what most of us are familiar with. Just like the name “Cephas,” “Peter” also means “small stone.” Jesus gave Simon this name in order to remind him of the kind of character that He wanted him to have. Jesus had plans for Simon. He intended to transform Simon from the brash, proud, impatient, quick-tempered, and spiritually weak man that he was, into a loving, humble, patient man of God, with tremendous faith in God. Little by little, Jesus transformed Simon into “Peter” (“little rock”)—a man of hard, firm, unbending, rock-like faith.

Maybe you wish that *you* could have a new name. Well, guess what? If you have placed your faith in Christ, you *do* have a new name. (You just haven’t been told what it is yet.) In Heaven one day, *every* saint will receive a new name; and these new names will bespeak the special, intimate relationship that God has with those who belong to Him. In **Revelation 2:17** Jesus says, ***“To him that overcometh [in other words, to everyone who is born again] will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”*** Before Peter even met Jesus face-to-face, he already belonged to Him. In his heart, he believed the message that John the Baptist had been preaching—the message that the Messiah had arrived, and would soon be revealed to Israel. In his heart, he had believed that the Messiah had come to take away his sin; and when he actually saw Jesus in person, Jesus confirmed that Peter belonged to Him by giving him a new name. And it’s still that way today. *None of us* have ever seen Jesus; but if you have believed on Him, you belong to Him—even though you haven’t seen His face yet. Someday, you *will* see Him; and when you do, He will reveal your new name!

If you know Christ as your personal Saviour, this is a promise on which you may bank. Salvation is an eternal promise to all who have received it. It cannot be lost, even though you often fail your Lord. You did nothing to earn or deserve your salvation in the first place; and you can do nothing to *keep* it after you are saved. You are kept by the Christ’s faithfulness, and not by your own faithfulness. In **1 Peter 1:5**, Peter assures Christians that they are ***“kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”*** Christ Himself said, ***“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”***

II. The power of restoration for erring believers

(Read John 13:37 - 14:1 again.) Why did Jesus urge Peter not to be ***“troubled,”*** just after informing him that he would soon deny Him? Was Jesus saying that Peter’s denial wouldn’t be a big deal, and that he needn’t feel too troubled about it? Of course not! What Peter did

was heinous; and he *needed* to feel sorrow for what he had done. Nevertheless, Jesus said, **“Let not your heart be troubled.”** Why? Because Jesus was assuring Peter that even though he was about to fall on his face, he would *not* remain floundering in sin. Not only would Peter not lose his salvation, but he would, upon repenting, be restored to close fellowship with the Lord. In fact, Christ would personally *draw* Peter to repentance. He *would not* let Peter go.

Even as Christians, we often wander and stumble in sin, don't we? Yet, Christ *will not* allow a true child of God to fall into permanent apostasy, or to remain in sin. He will *not* allow His child to wallow in the muck of lying, or hatred, or bitterness, or pornography, or sex outside of wedlock, or cheating on tests, or cheating on their spouse, or alcohol, or jealousy, or coveting after money and things of this world. The Lord allows us to be broken by our own foolish choices; He takes things away from us (just as He took all Lot's possessions away from Him); He allows painful circumstances in our lives; and He continually convicts and woos us, and seeks after us, until we finally surrender, and allow the Good Shepherd to take us back to the fold in His loving arms. He chastens His child when necessary; but He *will* prevail with him. He will *restore* our souls through the nourishment of His Word, and by His abundant grace. As Charles Spurgeon put it, “When the soul grows sorrowful, He revives it. When it is sinful, He sanctifies it. When it is weak, He strengthens it. **He** does it. His ministers could not do it unless *He* does it... **He restores my soul.**”⁷ Throughout our sojourn on earth, our Good Shepherd will continue to restore our souls, until the day when He takes us to dwell **“in the house of the LORD for ever.”**

Read Hebrews 12:6-11.

Read Psalm 23:1-6.

If you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, you have the ability, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to have true sorrow for sin; and true sorrow for sin produces true repentance. When you've sinned against God, and you are filled with sorrow, don't allow that old Accuser, Satan, to cast you into the depths of despair. The fact that you have godly sorrow is an evidence that you truly belong to Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul said that **“godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”** Christ Himself said, **“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”** Lost people don't sorrow over their sin with “godly” sorrow, because they don't know the Lord whom they are grieving by their sin. In contrast, Christians *do* sorrow over sin with godly sorrow, because they *do* know the Lord; and it cuts them to the heart when they see their sin for what it is, and realise that they have grieved their Lord.

Christian, when you stumble in sin, don't despair: repent! Confess your sin, and ask Christ to cleanse you, and to help you to overcome that sin. He will cleanse and forgive you; and He will do it immediately. ***"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."***

III. The provenance (source) of believers' faith

(Read John 14:1 again.) Thus far, we've looked at the first half of this verse (***"Let not your heart be troubled"***); but now, we will move on to the second half of the verse. The next thing that Jesus said was, ***"Ye believe in God, believe also in me."*** What was Jesus saying? He was saying, "Before you met me, you believed in God the Father, even though you couldn't see Him; and now that *I* am leaving you bodily, and you won't see *me* anymore, you must continue to believe in *me* without seeing me, just as you believe in the Father."

The disciples had the privilege of seeing Jesus throughout the 3 ½ years of His ministry. In contrast, we have *never* seen Jesus with our physical eyes. Yet, we who are saved still believe in Him. Remember what Jesus told Thomas? He said, ***"Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."*** Brethren, Jesus was speaking about you and me! Countless millions, if not billions, of people have believed on Jesus over the last 2,000 years, without the advantage of seeing Him with their physical eyes; and we are among them. Not only do we believe in Christ, but we have the ability, by the grace of God, to *keep* believing and trusting in Him, even through the darkest of circumstances. I often meet unbelievers who caustically say, "Well, you may believe in your Jesus *now*, and you may believe in Heaven *now*; but if you ever go through what *I've* gone through in my life, you'll stop believing. Where was God when this or that horrible thing happened to me?" When people say such things, I confidently say, "I may not have been through what you've been through; but I do know this: I *cannot* stop believing in my Lord! He has lived inside me ever since the day I received Him as my Saviour; and the Spirit of God, through the Word of God, bears witness with my spirit that I am a child of God." **Romans 8:16** says, ***"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."***

Folks, this is not a "theory": this is a bedrock promise from God. I've experienced Christ's faithfulness to me time and time again, even through some very dark chapters of my life. I've seen God's faithfulness to other believers, as well, as they went through even darker, and far more devastating, trials than what I've been through. Not only did we not stop believing on Christ through those dark times in our lives, but our faith has been made even stronger. No matter what happens to me, nothing can stamp out my faith in Christ, or in the promise of Heaven. And why not? Because *Christ Himself* provides me with the faith to trust Him! Let's see what Paul said about this.

Read Galatians 2:16 .

Did you catch what Paul said about “faith”? He said that we are justified **“by the faith of Christ.”** Should it sound as though Paul is saying “by Christ’s faith”...you’re right! The Greek phrase *písteōs Christou* means “the faith of Christ,” or “Christ’s faith.” Simply put, it is the faith of *Christ Himself* that saves us. All the faith that a sinner needs in order to believe on Christ and be saved is available in the Person of Christ Himself. Not only did Christ die on the cross to pay for our sins, and rise again to conquer death for us, but He also gives sinners the power to do the one thing that is needed in order to receive His gift of salvation. Christ literally gives us the faith to *believe on Him*.

Christian, when Christ first began to call you to believe on Him, you weren’t seeking Him: He was seeking after you. The Bible makes it clear that **“there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.”** However, as Christ wooed you and called you through the Holy Spirit, you began to listen to His voice, and understand the Gospel. You then began to respond to Him, and seek after Him. You now *desired* to be saved. Yet, you couldn’t muster the faith to believe on Him. That is why Christ *gave* you the faith to be saved—on the simple condition that you sought it, and asked for it. Remember in **Mark 9**, when the man with the demon-possessed son came to Jesus for help? What did Jesus say to that man? He said, **“If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”** Jesus knew that this man needed more than deliverance from demons for his son: he needed deliverance from sin, death, and hell! The man needed faith to *believe on Christ*, so that He could be saved. However, Jesus also knew that this man didn’t have the power *in himself* to believe on Him. That’s why Jesus challenged the man about his need for faith. And how did the man respond? With tears streaming down his face, he said, **“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”**

Now, you know the rest of the story: Jesus cast the demon out of the man’s son immediately. However, something far more important happened that day: that father was given faith to believe on Christ. When the man *asked* Jesus to help his unbelief, Jesus responded immediately. *That* is when that man became a child of God; and it all began with a plea for faith. And so it is throughout the rest of a Christian’s life. In ourselves (in our old, sinful nature) we have no power to trust God. However, *in Christ* we have all the faith we need. It’s as though there were a heavenly vault, filled with the infinite treasure of God’s grace; and God’s children may withdraw from that vault all the faith they need, at any time—on the sole condition that they *ask* for it. In *Christ*, Christian, you have all the faith you need to believe that He will **“never leave you nor forsake you.”** He has promised that until the Resurrection Day, He *will* be faithful to complete the good work that He has begun in you; and no matter how many fiery trials you may go through, you may be sure that you have **“an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”**

Read 1 Peter 1:4-9.

IV. The path to Heaven

In the next six weeks, we will be examining the unspeakable glories of Heaven. We will turn the subject over like a diamond, and inspect every facet. We will look at all the beautiful truths about Heaven, and will see what makes it the glorious place that it is. However, before we start talking about the beauties of Heaven, there is a question that I must ask: **“Are you on your way to Heaven?”** Talking about Heaven, singing songs about Heaven, listening to sermons about Heaven, being around people who are on their way to Heaven, *wishing* to go to Heaven, and even *believing* that you’re on your way to Heaven, **doesn’t put you on the path to Heaven!** Countless people go to church every Sunday, with the assumption that they are on their way to Heaven—when, in fact, they are still on their way to Hell, as they have been all their lives! Why? Because they have never stopped thinking that they are good people. They have never humbled themselves before God. They have never seen themselves as Hell-deserving sinners in need of the Saviour. They have never gotten *off* the path to destruction, and gotten *onto* the only path that leads to everlasting life. Heaven’s gates are open *only* to those who have gotten off the broad highway of sin, and have gotten *onto* the Way that leads to life: and Jesus *is* that Way! You must repent and believe on *Him*! Let’s look again at what Jesus said in **John 14:6**; and then we will look at another Scripture. **(Read John 14:6 again.)**

Read Matthew 7:13-14.

Probably most of you have heard the words of these Scriptures before: but do you *really understand* what these words mean? The way to Heaven is not a path of morality, or self-reformation, or “turning over a new leaf,” or being religious. No amount of good works or good living can “make up” for your sins, or wash them away. The Bible says that **“There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”** Being born into a Christian family does not make you a Christian. Going to church, reading the Bible, or trying to do a good turn to people, does not make you a Christian. There must come a definite point in your life when you enter in at the **“strait”** (“narrow”) gate. You must get *off* the way of sin (which you have been on since birth, because you are a sinner), and get *onto* the Way of Life. You must confess to God that your good works are worthless, and that you can’t save yourself. You must, in your heart, turn *to* Christ, *from* sin. (This is called **“repentance”**—a change of mind, which leads to a surrender of the will.) And, you must *believe*—believe that Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is all you need. When you come to Christ on His terms of simple repentance and faith, Christ gives you

eternal life, and places you in Himself. He puts you onto the road of *Life*; and *He is* that Life. **John 1:12** says, ***“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”***

Conclusion: Have you received Jesus as your Saviour? Have you *really* believed on Him? If not, repent of your sin, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ today! Believe that the one-time payment that Christ made for your sins on the cross can wash away all your sin; and by faith, ask Him to forgive you of all your sins, and to come into your life, and be your Lord and Saviour! Heaven is a *real place*, my friend—a place of unimagined glory; and your Creator wants to save you, and reconcile you to Himself, so that you might spend eternity with Him. Don’t throw away Christ’s offer of eternal life because you chose to cling to the sins and pleasures of this world, or because you are afraid of what people might think of you. Repent and believe today! If you are saved already, I would urge you to set your affections on things above! **Hudson Taylor**, the missionary who opened inland China to the Gospel, said, “Would that God would make **hell so real to us** that we *cannot rest*; **Heaven so real** that *we must have men there*.” Death is coming, and Hell is moving; and multitudes of souls are dropping, every hour, into the fiery pit. Christian, let God put a burden in your heart for lost sinners, and compel you to be a witness for Him!

¹ Robert J. Morgan, “Preacher’s Sourcebook of Creative Sermon Illustrations” (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007) pp. 188.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ “What Ireland Really Thinks About Funerals, And What That Says About Us” <https://rip.ie/grief-and-bereavement-support/what-ireland-really-thinks-about-funerals-and-what-that-says-about-us-335>

⁷ Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Spurgeon’s Great commentary on Psalms* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), p. 164.