

## Why Abraham Lived in a Tent

I have actually heard ministers say we shouldn't talk about heaven. We should just live for the here and now on the earth and quit thinking so much about heaven because we have a job to do down here. So I started searching out Scriptures and found out that we're supposed to be heavenly minded. Not so heavenly minded we're no earthly good, but what gives us hope and confidence in this world is the fact we're going to see Jesus and we're going to be with Him one of these days. Although there is nothing wrong with having money and earthly possessions, just know that one day we're going to have to let those things go.

People laugh at us today and say, "You think you're going to heaven? A place you can't see, a place you've never been, a place the Bible tells you about, a place where there is no more suffering?" They think heaven is a place where everyone floats around on a cloud and there are fat babies with harps. We know there *is* a heaven because the Word teaches it, but God has engrafted in man's heart to know there is a heaven. *Man knows there is a heaven.* Man may not know Jesus as Lord and Savior, but he knows there's a heaven.

Why do you think man is trying to get rid of sickness? He envisions a place where everyone is well.

Why is man trying to wipe out poverty? He envisions a place where everyone has enough.

Why is man striving for one world government and one benevolent leader to lead the whole world? He envisions a real sweet guy sitting over the whole world and everyone around the world holding hands and singing.

Man is naïve enough to think he can do it, but people laugh at us and say, "You believe in a heaven?" while they're trying to produce it here on Earth and it's not going to work. Man and all his liberal thinking cannot do it. You can't trust man. The only one you can trust is God Himself, and when God gets inside of you *then* you can trust someone. This earth is not going to see heaven until Jesus Christ Himself brings heaven to earth, which will be the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. Until then, we look forward to a place called heaven.

The simplest definition of heaven is this: *It is the home of God.* The Father lives there, the Son lives there, the Holy Spirit lived there, and they have lived there longer than anyone. In fact, they made heaven. God created heaven. All the angels in heaven have been there for a certain length of time, but God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit had no beginning and they have always lived in this place called heaven. They created it.

One of these days, we're going to be there too. The Bible says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. (See *2 Corinthians 5:8.*) The Word of God points out that people have been to heaven and returned. Not only Jesus Christ Himself, but Paul also went to heaven and came back to Earth. Paul went into the third heaven and didn't even know if he was absent from the body or not. He said only God knows, but he saw things that were indescribable. (See *2 Corinthians 12:2-4.*)

Even though the Bible describes heaven, it's still an inadequate description. How can the English language possibly describe heaven? The streets are made out of transparent gold and the buildings are made out of the same thing. It's difficult for us to imagine that. The foundations, twelve levels of heaven, are made out of every precious stone you can imagine. Can you imagine a foundation of a city that is fifteen hundred miles square, one foundation out of twelve is nothing but diamonds, another is rubies, and another is sapphires? To think that God has so much wealth that He flaunts it like that. We get convicted if we get a new ink pen. We're not flaunting wealth down here, but God doesn't care if you have nice things as long as they don't stand between you and God. We see cement trucks rolling all around town with cement in them. Up in heaven they have gold in them. The streets, curbs, and driveways in heaven are made out of gold. How can you describe the beauty of heaven in English? That is why John, in the Book of Revelation, said even trying to put it into a language you could understand was impossible.

To describe what praise was like in heaven was just as impossible; but we know that God's will is to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Therefore, what God has given to us to help us understand heaven is Earth. Since man was made in the image of God, man is to rule and reign over a place that is as much like God's as possible. Therefore, the earth was made in the image of heaven, as man who rules on the earth was made in the image of God.

There is no other planet in the entire universe like Earth. We have yet to find a planet with trees on it. Heaven and Earth have trees. We have found no planets with rivers of water running through it. Heaven and Earth have rivers of

running water. Mansions? Heaven and Earth have mansions. When we get to heaven, we're going to find out that things are perfect there, but Earth was the mirror image of heaven in the first place. I believe the Garden of Eden had to be as close to heaven as this earth has ever seen.

*Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*  
James 2:17

God has given us faith on the inside, but we are to walk in faith and produce that faith to where the world can see it. What good does it do to have faith on the inside if people can't see it around you? God can see in your heart, but you can't see someone else's heart. That's privacy. God has given us privacy as priests to where you don't just look into someone's heart except maybe occasionally through the gifts of the Spirit, but otherwise your heart is between you and God. Since I can't see in your heart, I need to see that you have faith. Therefore, the Bible says you must produce works. Those works should be a display of what you have in your heart. These are corresponding actions — actions that correspond to your faith.

The woman with an issue of blood had faith in her heart, but her actions said, "If I can but touch the hem of His garment." She pressed through the crowd and touched the hem of Jesus' garment in faith, and that was the outward evidence or the outward manifestation of the faith she had in her heart. Other people around had faith but they didn't put an action with it. That is what James is talking about. People around us need to see the actions of our faith so they will know we have faith in our heart. We can tell people we have faith and ask them to believe it, but a person wants to see the actions of our faith.

The Greek word *dead* doesn't mean dead like dead, dead, and gone; it means *unproductive*. If faith doesn't have works that correspond with it, it is unproductive. It also says *being alone*. Faith cannot stand alone. It has to have something working with it and production or works must go along with your faith.

*Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.*  
James 2:18

Faith cannot stand by itself and produce; it must have corresponding actions to go along with it. Works are supposed to show faith.

First, new birth works from the inside out. The first part of you that gets born again is your spirit. Your spirit on the inside of you becomes recreated into the image of God. Secondly, as that spirit is reborn inside of you, the mind needs to be renewed to that. The place you need to work on is your mind. The Bible talks about the renewing of the mind. We are to be in prosperity and help as our soul prospers. God will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him, so we work on that area of the soul. Thirdly, Romans 12:1 says to present your body as a living sacrifice. Therefore, the final place that faith needs to come out is through the works or the deeds you do. It works from the inside out. Don't get this thing backwards. Don't try to do works to get faith. It won't work. Faith is not produced by works. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. (*Romans 10:17*) Only the Word of God can build faith in you.

The Word of God produces faith, and then faith should produce works. Don't get it the other way around. Works will not produce faith. The Word produces faith and faith should produce corresponding actions — things people around us can see.

*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?  
Can faith save him?  
If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,  
And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?*  
James 2:14-16

What good is it to have faith if you don't help anyone around you? What good is it to say you know Jesus Christ if you never feed anyone? You never give them the goodness God has given to you. It doesn't do any good for a man to come along and say he's starving, if you just pat him on the back and say, "Well, brother, be warmed, well fed, God bless you. Let me say a pray for you." It's good to pray for people, but prayer should also include what you

have to give them. Jesus said if you give a cup of cold water in my name, you'll receive a prophet's reward. (See *Matthew 10:41*.) It's not so much how much you give; it's what do you have to give of? Even if it's the widow's mite, Jesus said that she gave more than all those around her, because she gave out of her abundance of what she had and that was a sacrifice for her to give. (See *Luke 21:2-4*.)

Now, I don't want you to be so gullible that you fall for those who play on your compassion and take everything you have. You have the Spirit of God living inside of you and compassion; and that compassion should rise up for people who are really in need. That is an outward display of the life you have on the inside of you. That is the corresponding action of faith.

*Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.*  
*James 2:19*

Do you believe that God exists? Do you put your faith and trust in Him? Are you born again? Now if you don't have works, the end of that verse is for you. The devils also believe and they tremble. If you don't produce good works, why are you any better than a devil? Don't the devils believe in God? Do the devils do good works? No! Then why would you be any different if you say you believe in God and say you are born again, but don't do any good works? You're in no better position than a devil. Now I'm not saying you are a devil, but I am saying you're actually no better than one as far as producing anything. The devils believe in God, but never do any good works. If we are a believer in the Lord Jesus and we don't do any good works, we're really not much better than they are.

Verse 20 is a little erroneously translated. It should say this, "*But wilt thou learn, O empty headed person, that faith without corresponding actions is without production.*" This is something we need to learn: if our faith does not produce something or there are no corresponding works, then our faith is going to be without production and what good is it to have all the faith of God? What good is it to have the measure of faith inside of us, God-given faith, if it just sits there and does nothing? What good is it to have the life of God inside of us if we never set that life free? What good is it to have the presence of God inside of us if we never release it to those around us? What good is it to have all the kingdom of God inside of us if we bottle it up and keep it there? That type of faith is unproductive if it doesn't have an opportunity to release itself.

Philippians 2:12-13 says to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God that works in you both to will and do of His good pleasure. Since God is working *in* you, let Him *out*. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. The world needs to see it.

Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. (See *1 Samuel 16:7*.) Man needs to see what God has done inside of us. Hebrews 4:13 says inside of us all things are open and naked before Him. He can read our hearts and our thoughts, but the world around us needs to see the production of the faith that is inside of us.

*Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?*  
*James 2:21*

Wait a minute! Doesn't the Bible say Abraham was justified by faith? Yes, it does. And does not this verse say he was justified by works? Yes. Then how do we know? Doesn't the Bible say we're justified by faith and not by works? Yes, it does. Then what does the Bible mean here? Martin Luther didn't even believe the Book of James belonged in the Bible. His revelation of *the just shall live by faith* came out of Romans 4, and the one that walked by faith was Abraham himself. Martin Luther got such a revelation that the just shall live by faith that when he saw this verse in the Book of James that says Abraham was justified by works, he thought the Book of James didn't even belong in the Bible and classified the Book of James as an epistle of straw. In other words, he means it has no value; it's just an empty epistle.

But what James was teaching is something Martin Luther didn't understand. James is not talking about the new birth. You're not born again by works. The justification James is speaking about here is before men. He said show me your salvation — this justification is before men. Romans 4 speaks about your justification before God. You were born again without works. Isaiah 64:6 says your own righteousnesses before God are as filthy rags, so it is impossible to work and get your salvation. However, men need to see you justified and they can only see you justified by the works you produce.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, *for by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast.* However, in this verse of scripture, James is bringing out that what men need to see around you is the production of your faith. We live toward God, but we also live toward man. Justification before God is faith only without works. Justification before men is works — something they can see in your life which is an outward display of the faith in your heart.

Abraham was justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac upon the altar, but he was saved long before that time. He was saved in Genesis 15:6 when he put his faith and trust in the Lord and it was accounted to him for righteousness without works. Some twenty-five or thirty years later, he was justified in front of men. Abraham went to that mountain with a great group of men carrying all of his things. When he got to the bottom of the mountain, Abraham said, "You stay here. We will return." What a statement of faith! He knew God had told him to take his son up the mountain and kill him and offer him up as a sacrifice. Hebrews 11 tells us that inside the heart of Abraham, he knew that even if he did slay his son, God was going to raise him from the dead. What a testimony of faith. No one had ever been raised from the dead before that time. He didn't believe it because he had seen it; he believed it because he had that much faith and trust in God. So Abraham took Isaac up to the mountain, and when he came back down the mountain it was a witness to those men around him that he was truly justified.

This justification in James 2:21 was not toward God; it was toward men then, and men reading the Bible today can see the faith of Abraham because they can see he was willing to offer up his son. They see that he raised his knife and would have killed him, but God stopped his arm because no one can redeem mankind except the Lord Jesus Christ. When Abraham's hand was raised and just about to come down, God brought in a substitute. That substitute speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ. You and I were the ones laying there on the altar and we were under the death penalty; but aren't you glad the hand was stopped one day and Jesus went to the cross for us? Our Great Substitute came on the scene and we were released and allowed to go free. Glory to God!

*Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?  
And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness:  
and he was called the Friend of God.  
James 2:22-23*

Faith worked together with his works, and by works his faith became fully developed.

Although Hebrews 11 is called *the faith chapter*, I like to call it *the works chapter*. It's really corresponding actions. These verses say, *by faith* Enoch, *by faith* Abel, *by faith* Noah, *by faith* Abraham, *by faith* Sarah, *by faith* Joshua, *by faith* Moses, and all the ones listed in this chapter did *something* by faith. They had outward actions that showed their inward faith. They had faith long before their actions, but their outward actions were a display toward men of the faith they had in their heart.

*By faith* Noah, *being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.  
Hebrews 11:7*

Noah was justified by faith long before he built the ark. The ark was merely the manifestation of his faith. In fact, God looked all over the earth and said, "I found a perfect and upright man." (See *Genesis 6*.) That's when God spoke to Noah about the flood that was about to come. God warned Noah about something he had never seen before — rain. No one had ever seen rain until that day. Genesis 2:6 says the earth was watered by a mist that came up out of the ground. Can you imagine a man walking around for over a hundred years, preaching that water is going to fall out of the sky? Everyone thought, "What? Yeah, water is going to fall out of the sky. You're crazy. Water comes up from the ground." That is all they ever knew. A mist came up each day and watered the ground. They had never seen rain come down from the sky. Noah was warned of things not yet seen, and since Noah had never seen it before, he had to thoroughly trust God's Word for over a hundred years while he built an ark in the middle of a field somewhere.

Noah begins to tell all the people, "Yes, water will fall from the sky. In fact, so much water is going to fall from the sky that this boat is going to float, and you're going to wish you were inside of it."

They probably said, "Sure, I don't know if I want to be in the boat with that guy or not." As Noah began to tell people this, only his family believed him. You know the story. Can you imagine Noah saying, "Yes, lightning is going to come."

The people then asked, "What's lightning?"

"Well, a bolt of light will fly through the air and then you'll hear the thunder."

"What's thunder?"

"Well, that's what you'll hear after the lightning."

Can you imagine people trying to understand what Noah was describing? It all happened for the first time and that is why God put a rainbow in the sky. It was to let people know that this will never happen again. Rain will come but never to flood the whole earth. The people had never seen a rainbow before. They had never had rain come down. Through his outward action of building an ark, Noah condemned the world. The people didn't believe him so this became their condemnation. It was an outward display of the prophecy of God coming to pass. He condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness, which is by faith.

*By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.  
Hebrews 11:8*

This describes the corresponding actions of Abraham — the outward display of the faith of Abraham. Abraham was saved before he left his home. He lived in Ur of the Chaldees and before that, the Lord appeared to him. He put his faith and trust in the Lord and it was accounted to him for righteousness. After that, he was to leave his home country with his wife only and leave everyone else there. Now I want you to understand one thing. When it says in this verse of scripture, *he obeyed and he went out*, that's not quite totally true. He *partially* obeyed and went out.

Acts 7:2 says, *And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran.* This is the sermon of Stephen before he was stoned and Stephen is referring to Abraham when he left the Ur of the Chaldees. Stephen had an opportunity to preach to the Pharisees, to the Sanhedrin, before they stoned him. The God of Glory Stephen speaks of is Jesus Christ. The *God of Glory* really means the *God who spoke from glory*. Jesus appeared to Abraham in a cloud and spoke to him from the cloud. Jesus Christ Himself appeared to Abraham. He's the manifested member of the Godhead.

Galatians 3:19 tells us that it was God in Christ confirming the covenant with Abraham. Christ actually appeared to Abraham and talked with him. Just because Jesus came in bodily form two thousand years ago in Bethlehem doesn't mean that was the first time he ever appeared. He appeared many times in the Old Testament as the Angel of the Lord, the Rock that followed the children of Israel, and the cloud by day and the fire by night. That was the presence of the Lord Jesus, but He actually appeared here to Abraham. In John 8, Jesus spoke to the religious leaders and said, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day." Abraham saw it and was glad.

They said, "How could Abraham have seen you? You're not even fifty years old yet."

He said, "Before Abraham was, I am." In other words, "I've always existed, guys. Just because my body is thirty years old doesn't mean I've never been here before. I've been here plenty of times and I came down and personally talked with Abraham." That is when they picked up stones to throw at him.

Mesopotamia in Acts 7:2 is the modern name for Ur of the Chaldees. Before, he dwelt in Charran or, literally, Haran, and he was in Haran in Genesis 11:31. Notice what God told him in the next chapter.

*Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.  
Genesis 12:1*

Abraham left the country but he took his kindred with him. He *partially* obeyed God. He took his father with him and his nephew, Lot, and went to Haran. God didn't say, "Go to Haran." God said, "Go to the Promised Land." He got hung up at Haran for five years until his dad died. He finally went from Haran to the Promised Land when his father died, but once he got to the Promised Land, things were all messed up because he took Lot with him. We know the story about Lot choosing to go into Sodom and Gomorrah and it slowed the whole thing down. It slowed Abraham getting to the Promised Land for many, many years, and then finally when Abraham got to the Promised Land it was not what he expected. God had told him it was a land that flowed with milk and honey. However, it didn't flow with milk and honey; it flowed with dust. They were having a drought when he got there and it says Abraham was moved by what he saw. He forgot the promises of God and said, "This isn't right. I'm not going to stay here." So he ran off to Egypt and took his wife with him.

After he was in Egypt for a while, he finally woke up and said, "No, this isn't where God wants me." He went back to the Promised Land but this time he took little Egypt with him — Hagar. He then had a son through Hagar. Abraham was always messing up the plan of God! Just like Abraham, we've all messed up the plan of God at one time or another!

You say, "After all that, God still used him?"

Yes! That's the mercy of God.

"You mean after all that, God's promise was still there?"

Yes, he left God's promise sitting off to the side, ran off, and did his own thing for a while, but when he came back the promise of God was still sitting there. He had to get rid of the woman and the son that he had with her. It was difficult for him because I'm sure he loved both of them. But this was necessary so the promise of God could work for her and for him. She couldn't be blessed in the house. He couldn't be blessed having her there. God had a plan for both of them, but she had to go.

Once she left with her son, God made a whole nation out of them and made a nation out of Abraham. That is when Isaac came along and God blessed Isaac. Abraham finally got with the plan of God and he eventually trusted God so much that he was willing to take his son, that supernatural son, up to a mountain and slay him if God asked him to. But when he raised his hand, God said, "Oh, I know it now. And all those around you know it now. You really do trust Me." That is when his faith rose to that pinnacle and was matured through his outward actions.

Hebrews 11:8 says, *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and went out, not knowing where he went.* He had never been there before. All God said was, "Go over here. It belongs to you." Abraham left his home, went out there, and started looking for it, and when he got there, the Lord said, "I have given this to you for an inheritance."

The land belonged to Abraham and his descendents. It doesn't matter who was living there at the time, the land belonged to Abraham. The Canaanites lived there, but their days were numbered. God gave that land Abraham and his descendents. It was his possession.

Verse 9 says, *by faith he sojourned in the land of promise.* Once he got there, he sojourned. The Greek word for *sojourn* means *to live as a temporary resident*. When he got there, he owned it. God gave it to him, but when he got there, he lived like a temporary resident. It says he sojourned in the land of promise, even as in a strange land. He acted like it was a foreign country even though it was his country. Next, it says, *dwelling in tabernacles*. The word *tabernacles* means *tents*. This is a tent. *He lived in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.*

Suppose you own one hundred acres. You've paid for it. It's yours lock, stock, and barrel. You own it so you move your family out there and put a tent up. About every two or three days, you tear the tent down and move it to some other place on your property and you do that for the rest of your life. What would people think of you? Weird! In addition to that, you raise your kids to do the same thing and for three generations they all do the same thing. They have their tents and they just move them all around. The old ones die off and are buried on the property. Those left behind just keep moving their tents all around — to the front of the property, to the back of the property, to the side of the property, to the middle of the property, over by the creek, over by the rocks, and over by the hills. Every week you move it. You tear it down, put it up, tear it down, put it up. People would consider this strange behavior because

you're acting like a stranger on your own property. You never do settle down, but that is what Abraham did the entire time he was in the Promised Land. His kids did the same thing.

Let's take a look at his wife. Her name was Sarai before it was Sarah. *Sarah* means a *princess*. Isn't that beautiful? *Sarai* means *contentious*. In fact, the Book of Peter tells us that she was contentious until finally she settled down and submitted to her husband. She was always complaining and always nagging. In fact, the whole thing with Hagar was Sarah's idea. Once it happened, she didn't like it. She was always changing her mind, never happy with what she did, always mad, always upset, always trying to run the household.

Then there was Abraham, running around saying, "Yes, dear. Yes, dear. Yes, dear." I'm sure one reason Sarah was so upset was that Abraham was very wealthy. He could start his own bank. He was probably wealthier than the whole nation rolled together and when he left Ur of the Chaldees he was broke, didn't have a penny, left his home, left his possessions, left everything. He and his wife left and brought his father and nephew with him, which they were not supposed to do. God simply wanted them to walk out with the clothes on their backs and He said, "I'll provide for you." By the time Abraham got to the Promised Land, he was wealthy beyond measure. He had so much gold that he and Lot's gold piles were running together! Their silver piles were running together! Their cattle herd's were so great, they couldn't keep track of whose cattle belonged to whom.

Finally, Abraham told Lot to choose whichever piece of property he wanted. He chose the vast, well-watered plains which faced Sodom and Gomorrah, and that's where his trouble was. Abraham took the other piece of property. In one instance Lot and his family were captured and Abraham delivered him out of the hands of the wicked king, slaughtered the king, slaughtered the enemy, and God allowed Abraham keep everything of that city. He took a whole city of possessions back with him. That's when Abraham gave ten percent of everything over to Melchizedek. Because of the goodness of the Lord, Abraham was wealthy. This man could not only buy a house, he could have bought a whole addition. He build a Taj Mahal in the middle of the Promised Land if he wanted. He could have had swimming pools, fifteen bedroom homes, and servants everywhere.

Think about Sarah for a moment. Abraham could have bought her a massive home and yet, she is living in a tent. Abraham and Sarah were probably piling all the gold over into one corner and the silver into another corner! Week after week Abraham is putting up a tent, tearing down a tent, putting up the tent, tearing down the tent. And Sarah is walking around pregnant!

She's probably complaining, "We don't even have a bedroom for the kid. Abraham, build us a house!"

He says, "No, we're living in a tent. We're not only going to live in a tent, but that boy you will bring into the earth is going to live in a tent. His kids are going to live in a tent."

"Why are we living in a tent? Isn't it all right for us to build houses?"

Lest you fear you should sell your house and buy a tent, look at Deuteronomy 8. God doesn't care if you have a house. If you need a house, put your faith out for a house. God will provide one. In Deuteronomy 8, the Lord is speaking through Moses to the second generation. Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers are God's Word to the first generation, which died off. Now as the second generation is getting ready to possess the Promised Land in the Book of Joshua, Moses is preparing them and telling them the same law that was told to the first generation.

*For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills.  
Deuteronomy 8:7*

This is the Promised Land, the same one promised to Abraham. These descendents of Abraham are ready to go in and possess the land for the whole nation.

*A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;  
A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. Deuteronomy 8:8-9*

Notice God wants to provide plenty for you. The Hebrew word for *brass* is *copper*.

*When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.*

*Deuteronomy 8:10*

God doesn't care if you eat until you're full. He doesn't want you to eat half of your meal and then think about the starving masses around the world and not eat the rest of it. He wants you to eat until you are full.

*Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day.*

*Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses; and dwelt therein.*

*Deuteronomy 8:11-12*

The prosperity is not wrong. It is not wrong to have possessions as long as possessions do not have you. We are to keep the Word first in our lives. Verse 12 doesn't talk about goodly tents; it refers to *goodly houses*. God didn't care if they had houses. He didn't care if Abraham had a house. He didn't care if Isaac had a house. But Abraham chose not to have a house and said that his next two generations, Isaac and Jacob, would not live in houses.

There is nothing wrong with having possessions as long as possessions don't have you. Jesus said, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33.)*

You say, "What are *things*?"

Things are houses. Things are cars. Things are things, but they're just *things*. I don't care if you drive a five hundred dollar thing or a fifty thousand dollar thing. It's still a thing, and I want you to understand that when you're gone off this earth, someone else will drive your thing. You may live in a one-bedroom thing or a ten-bedroom thing. It's still a thing, and after you're gone from this earth, someone else will move into your thing. You may swim in a thing in the backyard. It's still a thing. You may sleep on a king-size thing or a little thing. It's still a thing.

There is nothing wrong with things as long as you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. In other words, keep a loose hold on things, understanding you're not going to have them forever anyway. Naked I came into this world, and naked I will leave. (See *Job 1:21*.) I'll get to use a few things while I'm here. If I amass a few things while I'm here, fine; but once I'm gone, it will all somewhere else anyway. We'd like to save things for our kids, but those kids might squander it and let it all go. God forbid that they would, but it has happened before. Somebody spent their whole lifetime amassing things, turned it all over to their kids, they died, and the kids spend it all.

Some say, "It just moves all around. People come, people go, and the wealth just keeps moving all around." It's just things. But there's only one thing you have that you can look forward to that is permanent and that is heaven. You store up treasures while you're here for the good things you do for God, for the works you do for Him, for the feeding and helping people, and following after His Word, and looking to His Word, and standing on His promises, and these are treasures in heaven you'll have forever and you can really call them yours. What you have now you are just borrowing and using while you're here, but when you get to heaven you can claim it forever. The only real thing that exists is heaven.

While Abraham was on this earth, he said, "Yes, that Promised Land belongs to me and my descendents, but I'm only a sojourner here so I'm going to put up a tent as a witness to the whole world. I'm just temporary here and I'm going to set my sights on the only eternal thing there is and that's the city whose builder and maker is God." Don't tell me we're not supposed to have our mind set on heaven! Abraham did his whole life and showed the whole world he was just a sojourner. It may be my piece of property, but I'm going to put up a tent to the whole world and I don't care how much gold and silver I have. The whole world is going to see for the entire time I'm on this earth that I have a better place I'm going to that I can really call mine.

By faith, Abraham sojourned — he acted like a temporary resident in the land of promise, as in a foreign land. He looked for a city which has foundations. My house has a foundation but that foundation can crack and be gone one of these days. I want you to know that you have city you can look forward to that has real foundations that will be there throughout all of eternity, and your home has a foundation up there. Jesus is building you a castle up there. He is building you a mansion up there! He's working on it now, preparing it for you because He loves you, and it's the

only thing you're going to possess throughout all of eternity. When you see that *thing*, you could care less about the *thing* you had down here. That thing is going to be what you will have throughout all of eternity, but there is something even better.

Heaven — as good as it is with all the streets of gold and the mansions and everything else — I could care less about it. I'm going to see Jesus for all of eternity. He's the thing I treasure now; He's the thing I'll treasure then. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Hebrews 11:13 says, *these all died in faith*. I can't think of a better way to die, can you? I would sure hate to die in unbelief or die in fear. It also says, *these all died in faith, not having received the promise*. God gave many promises yet to be fulfilled even on this earth, but they look forward to them. It continues, *they received the promises and having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them*. Do you want something to embrace in life? Embrace the promises of God. Don't embrace your car or your house, embrace the promises of God. Be persuaded of the promises because the promises of God are the only thing you can take right through death and into the eternal life with you.

Hebrews 11:14 says, *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country*. This is a manifestation, outward works, corresponding actions that they seek a country. Every time you embrace a promise, you put the things of life over to the side and say, "Thank God for all the things I have, but they're just things. I'm going to embrace the promises of God."

The Word of God is the most real thing I have. I'm not talking about the book in my hand; it is the Word I have hidden in my heart. That's the most real thing I have, and whatever I've put in my heart I can take with me because my heart's going to go to heaven. Whatever I hold in my hand is going to drop to the ground the moment I die, but the Word that I have hidden in my heart is going with me. It is the most real and precious thing I have, and every time I embrace His promises I'm telling the whole world I seek a country. I'm temporary while I'm here, but I seek a country.

You and everything you see around you are temporary. Thank God for the wonderful buildings we have to meet in for church but when we're gone, the buildings will still be here. It's just a building. God forbid the day we should ever hang on to a building. "Oh, here's our church. Here's our church." You're the church! *People are the church*. The reason we come to church is not to gawk at the walls and look at the ceilings and the color of the carpet. If you do, you've missed God. We come here to understand the Word of God. It's nice to have a comfortable place to hear the Word of God, but if we didn't have it, the Word could be preached out in a field somewhere.

The most real thing we have is the Word of God and the Word of God tells me to look forward to something better. Look afar. If I never see the Rapture in my generation, I'm still going to embrace that promise that I'm going to be with Jesus one of these days and I'll be in that eternal city not made with hands, but whose builder and whose designer and whose architect is God Himself. Hallelujah!

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