

## THE BIBLE VIEW

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Theme: Heaven Or Hell?

### Where Are They Now?

*Bill Brinkworth*

Recently, a friend lost her child. The death of her son grieved her terribly, as most could imagine.

Looking for a way to find something positive in the tragedy, I asked if the young man was saved. She looked at me, confused, even more saddened, and said, "Bill, I don't know. When he was young, he made a profession of faith, but I honestly have not seen any change or proof."

Spiritually, the man went downhill as most observed. There was no sign of his living for the Lord or obedience to God's commandments. One could see in her grieved eyes that she desperately hoped he was in Heaven, but there was a great doubt because of how he lived.

I have seen the doubtful thought peering through the grieved eyes of many who lost their loved ones. At many funerals, I have heard "I hope she was saved, but..." Too many wondered about the eternal destination of their loved one. They all searched very hard for hope that the person was not beginning their eternal agony in a vengeful Hell.

My own father's death had me wondering also. I had witnessed to him many times, but never got a convincing answer whether he was born-again.

The only hope I ever got about his eternal whereabouts was from his pastor, a very liberal and often unbiblical man, who, at dad's funeral, told me privately that he thought he was saved because dad often asked him about the spiritual subjects I spoke to my father about. That convinced him that he was saved, but I still wonder.

What would others ponder after hearing of your demise? Would they scratch their heads searching for tangible proof of where you are spending eternity?

Or, without question and hesitation, would people quickly respond about your salvation, "Absolutely, he is in Heaven. When he got saved, there were tremendous changes in him. He constantly read his Bible and lived what God showed him to do. His interest in the souls of others was prevalent. His hand went up almost every time to volunteer for any need the pastor had around the church. He was truly saved and lovingly serving."

If you are saved, there should be great changes in your life. Surely, for your own eternal benefit, you should be much different from what you were. One's attitude and behaviour towards our Creator should greatly show spiritual and lifestyle alterations and new interests in the things of God.

It should be apparent to yourself and others that you are not the person you were before salvation. No one, including yourself, should doubt that you are a new creature in Christ!

*“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” II Corinthians 5:17*

*“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Romans 8:9*

**“Learn to hold loosely all that is not eternal.”** — Royden

## I Hope So

*Bill Brinkworth*

Although it was a solemn event, there were whispering conversations throughout the chapel. One exchange in the far back was very concerned about the reason for the gathering. Worrying and weeping soon whipped the group into an uncontrollable frenzy.

Aunt Jane tried to soothe those distraught by simply stating, “Well, my brother was a very good person. I believe he is looking down on us right now. He is in a better place and certainly deserves it with all he has put up with in this life.”

Several in the group remained silent but showed they agreed or hoped their aunt was right. A few just quietly sobbed at the loss of their friend and brother.

Closer to the front, another party shared their opinions about the deceased friend. One in the group tried to assure other mourners that there was no reason to be sad, as they were sure the dead friend was in Heaven.

Although a listener to the conversation knew it was inappropriate to voice a question, he wondered. He doubted whether the man was really in Heaven. He reasoned, “He never went to church and showed no signs of being a Christian. How are these people so sure he is in a ‘better place’?”

While waiting for the funeral service to begin, another concerned relative sat next to the preacher, who would give the message. He turned to the pastor and sought some assurance.

“Preacher, my uncle was a nice man. He always got me to laugh and was just good to me. All these other folks are convinced he’s in Heaven, but I wonder. He never went to church that I know of. I can’t recall anything he ever did that would indicate he was a Christian. On Sundays, he usually went fishing, and I don’t think he has ever even gone to church since I have known him. Is he really in Heaven? Can anyone really know that another has gone there?”

The preacher knew he would have to start the service soon, so he carefully weighed what he was going to say. “Son, our opinions and beliefs, if they are not in accordance with what God’s Word says, don’t really matter. Only what God says matters, and He says the only way to have assurance of going to Heaven is His way.

“According to the Bible, one has to be born again to go there. One must be saved from Hell by trusting that there is nothing anyone can do to earn Heaven. The only way is to believe that God’s only son, Jesus, who never sinned, paid the price for our salvation with His blood. Good works won’t get anyone higher than the coffin lid.”

*“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3*

Then the preacher stopped the conversation, as it was time for the service. As he approached the pulpit, he remembered that this might be the last time those gathered might realize that they will one day be in the same position as the deceased.

The pastor knew it would not be what all the mourners would want to hear. Still, it was his responsibility to tell the biblical truth about what the Bible says about our eternity.

He planned to make sure all who gathered would hear God’s way to spend eternity with Him. Just like the inquiring young man wanted to know, he was sure others did as well. If he did not tell them God’s way of getting to Heaven, there might never be another opportunity for them to hear the truth.

Perhaps to comfort relatives at funerals or even themselves, most want to believe the deceased is in a “better place.” Imagining a departed friend or relative agonizing in the tormenting Hell is not a thought anyone would want to consider, even if it is true.

So, to keep from “ruining” the funeral and examining their own eternal, future destination, most services dwell more on the good thoughts rather than taking the time to make sure all listeners know of the only way to Heaven. However, eternal futures may be at stake.

Many preachers at funerals will not take the opportunity, while hearts are sensitive to their own eternity, to tell listeners about God’s way to Heaven. It is not biblical to suppose that all are in Heaven. The Bible even says that not all who die go there.

*“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Matthew 7:13-14*

Good deeds, marvelous works, and religious routines and rituals are not the way to Heaven. Too many believe they are and will one day sadly learn the truth when they do not open their eyes in Heaven.

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9*

When one is genuinely saved and trusts Christ’s payment for their sins as the only way for an eternity with our Lord, one’s life will change. The changes will be from the inside out, and most may see that a Christian’s life is different.

*“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” II Corinthians 5:17*

So, when it is your time to be remembered in the funeral home, leave a memory that all will know where you are spending eternity. Hopefully, those honoring your death will not suppose you are with Jesus. They will know!

People should not have to search desperately for some clues that you may be in Heaven. It should be clear where you have gone because you lived a Christian life and had a godly testimony.

***“Your soul is your eternal possession. Do not gamble or guess where it will spend eternity!” — Brinkworth***