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CAN GRANDPA SEE ME FROM HEAVEN? Michael B. Beough
John 14:1-3; I Cor 15:42-44; Rev 3:5 February 1, 2009
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One of the greatest treasures in the Bible is the promise of eternal life. Heaven awaits those who die in the Lord.

It might also be one of the most abused biblical doctrines.

According to *Newsweek*, more than 80% of Americans believe they are going to heaven when they die. However, only half believe in the resurrection of the body as an actual event. Fewer than half belong to a church and many who belong to a church seldom darken the doors. All the while believing they are going to heaven.

It makes me think that either the Bible is wrong, or a lot of people are doing a lot of wishful thinking.

The child's question for today is a great one. It gives us an opportunity to see what the biblical promise of eternal life entails. *Can Grandpa see me from heaven?*

Now, the temptation is to say, "Of course, grandpa can see you." We might say that to comfort a child who is concerned about where Grandpa might be. Or we might say it to motivate a child. "Remember, Grandpa can see you." But as parents, grandparents, teachers, and friends, we need to help our children grow in understanding. From a biblical perspective that may not be the best answer if we want our children to know the truth.

Let's start with the nature of heaven itself. If I read the Bible correctly, heaven is the culmination and perfection of those who die in the Lord. Now what does that mean? Does it mean that when we go to heaven we get a perfect body, a perfect mind, a perfect age? St. Augustine, one of the great ancient theologians, believed we would all be about 30 years old with a perfect body, but the Bible doesn't say that. What it does say in I Corinthians 15:42-44 is that what is sown perishable is raised imperishable, raised in glory, raised in power, raised as a spiritual body. In other words, Grandpa ain't what he used to be.

In fact, in John 14, Jesus tells his disciples that he goes to prepare a place for them in his Father's house, so they can be where he is. What we want our children to know is that Grandpa is living in the presence of and face to face with God Almighty. He lives just down the street from Jesus Christ and can finally know the Holy Spirit in all his fullness. If Grandpa is perfect in any way, he is now perfectly attuned to God. Grandpa is now perfect in his worship and service of God. He is having the time of his life

because he is doing that for which he was created. And he is doing it with all the saints and loved ones who have died in the Lord and gone before him.

But there is more. The Bible promises that when we go to heaven, “we will fully know even as we have been fully known.” Do you have a lot of questions for God? All of us do, especially when some tragedy hits. Get ready! I think of heaven as a mind explosion. It is the complete satisfaction of all our desires to know. Heaven will be an eternity of learning and seeing what is never accessible to us in this life.

Grandpa is busy, busy, busy. Maybe that is why there is no evidence in the Bible that our loved ones can see us from heaven. Grandpa’s full attention will be on God and on those who join him in heaven. Grandpa will carry with him all the love he received in this life, but will see it as God’s gift, flowing from the throne of grace and mercy. If Grandpa has any awareness of those he left behind, it will be gratitude to God for those through whom God loved him.

When Grandpa died, he went to be with Jesus and there he lives in eternal joy.

Now let me turn this around. The important question is not can Grandpa see you. It is this, will Grandpa see you? If Grandpa died in the Lord, what he wants more than anything else is to see you in heaven.

80% of Americans believe they are going to heaven. But just believing it doesn’t make it so. Faith does.

This is one of the most important things to teach our children, the difference between belief and faith.

It is possible to believe many things and never do anything about it. We might say we believe in God but never do what God commands us to do. We might believe that heaven exists and yet never do what is necessary to get to heaven. We might say we believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and our Savior, and yet never make any effort to imitate him.

Belief turns into faith when we make a commitment of our lives to the life of Christ, and so orient our lives as to live in obedience to his will by the grace of God.

Faith is a life lived in gratitude for the saving grace poured upon us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It means giving up control of our lives to Christ. It means pursuing the kind of life Jesus lived. *Heaven is the continuation of life for those who have lived by faith in Jesus Christ.*

Notice I did not say heaven is for those who lived good lives, or for those who did good deeds. We cannot earn our way to heaven. Our good

deeds will be noted (see Matthew 25:30-46) because good deeds as practiced by Christ are a sign of our faith in him. It is a sign that Christ living in us has made a difference in our lives. Heaven as the Bible speaks of it is for those who live by faith in Jesus Christ.

Let me put it this way. Faith is like love. So easy to say it, but so hard to live it. Yet what is love if it is not lived and acted upon? What kind of relationship will it be if love is only a word and never an action? So it is with faith. Faith is belief in action, the expression of our love of God, the foundation of a relationship that is redemptive. This faith changes who we are, beginning here on earth. Through faith, God begins the work of our transformation to become new creations in Jesus Christ. That transformation is completed in heaven.

I cannot imagine anyone who doesn't love God in this way and who doesn't abide with God through faith in Jesus Christ – I can't imagine such a person even wanting to go to heaven, since heaven is the place of the perfect worship and service of God Almighty. If you don't like it now, what makes you think you would like it then?

The truth is, not everyone is going to heaven. I wish it were otherwise. It is not my job to say who is and who isn't, but it is my job to say that all who trust in Jesus Christ and live by faith in him can be sure of their salvation. What a tremendous promise in Revelation 3:5. "If you conquer . . . I will not blot your name out of the book of life; I will confess your name before my Father and before his angels." It is not my job to condemn those who reject Christ, but it is my job to invite others to give their lives to Christ. Not only is this the way to heaven, but it is also the way of experiencing heaven on earth.

If Grandpa had time to look down on us, this is what he would like to see. Our hearts turned to Christ. Heaven on earth.