

# FAITH IS ACTION



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# HEAVEN ON MY MIND

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ON MY

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# MIND

SHARON HARDY KNOTTS

*“For Abraham looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.... But now they [Abraham & Sarah] desire a better country, that is, a heavenly...”* (Hebrews 11:10, 16).

God had sent this *father of the faith* and his wife out of their homeland to a place that would become the Promised Land of Israel to his natural seed. Yet, in this verse it is clear that their ultimate desire was not for an *earthly* city or country—but a *better*—a *heavenly*. Ever since our human parents, Adam and Eve, were driven out of the garden of Eden, there is a yearning in every heart of their children to get back to that place of perfect beauty and peace. This innate desire for ideal perfection propels us to seek it in many elusive ways.

Six hundred years ago a book was written titled *Utopia*. It described a fictional island of unspoiled beauty and perfection. This Greek word came to represent the ultimate place of bliss, perfection, and idealism. The place every human heart longs to be.

The irony is, *UTOPIA* is two words in Greek: *OU* means *no*, and *TOPOS* means *place*. Thus, *UTOPIA* means *no place!* For Earth’s inhabitants, there is no such place. But for born-again believers, we have the promise of the perfect Utopia of God, the celestial paradise of the New Jerusalem. Our hearts are not rooted in this world. Our spirits long for this homeland where God’s Presence abides, where John said: *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”* There we will *“eat of the Tree of Life that is in the midst of the paradise of God”* (Rev.2:7, 21:4, 22:2).

## OUR HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

*“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence we also look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Phil.3:20). In the original Greek text, the word *conversation* is *POLITEUMA* meaning *citizenship*. It refers to the state and constitution to which a

citizen belongs. As Christians “*born again from above,*” we are citizens of Heaven, and our constitution is the Gospel of Christ. Jesus told Nicodemus, “*You must be born again from above*” (Jn.3:3-6). It is our birthplace. Paul said, “*Jerusalem which is above is the mother of us all*” (Gal.4:26).

We are not citizens of this world trying to make Heaven—we are citizens of Heaven trying to make it through this world. Like Abraham and Sarah, we are not at home in this world: “*For he confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.*” [The Greek meaning: *to see one’s home on the horizon*] “*But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly.*” Notice the verb change from *past tense* to *present tense*: This denotes their continual, habitual yearning for Heaven—a homesickness for Heaven (Heb.11:8-16).

A believer’s whole lifestyle and desires are Heaven-bound; while sinners are consumed with earthly pursuits. They do not aspire to leave their lives on Earth to go to Heaven, which seems far away, vague, and uncertain. They would only choose Heaven over Hell—but not over Earth. Just ask them: “*Would you rather go to Heaven or stay here on earth?*” Most would say, “*I’d rather stay here on earth.*” Then ask: “*Would you rather go to Heaven or to Hell?*” Almost certainly, they will answer “*Heaven—of course!*”

This is the point of reckoning:

You cannot live on earth forever. You will leave it one day, so if you want to go to Heaven, then you must choose and prepare now, because only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s (Jesus) Book of Life will be allowed entrance into Heaven. God allowed Apostle John to visit Heaven so he could tell us about it:

“*And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.... And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither that works abomination, or makes a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.... Blessed are they that do his commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter into the gates into the city*” (Rev.21:2, 27; 22:14).

I am an American citizen. This is my temporal, native land. But since my new birth, my spiritual citizenship and language are “*Heavenese.*” My eternal birthplace is from above, and I have a round trip ticket. I’m homeward bound.

### NOT A EUPHEMISM

I believe most people think this *earth is the land of the living*, but they are mistaken. We here on earth are in *the land of the dying*. Heaven is *the land of the living* where death cannot enter! Heaven is not a euphemism or metaphorical escape that preachers have created to ease the pain of this life and the finality of the sorrow of death. Nor is it just a story to tell children, so they will not be

sad when someone dies. Heaven is a real planet, a celestial city located in the northernmost part of the third heaven, and Jesus said in John 14:1: *“I go to prepare a place for you in my Father’s house.... That where I am, you may be also.”* The moment a child of God crosses the threshold of death their spirit enters Heaven: *“For to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord”* (2Cor.5:8). It is the final barrier we must pass through before breaking into the everlasting light of God’s eternally blessed, peaceful, and joyful presence! It is why death holds no fear for the child of God. As David said in Psalm 23: *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me.”*

There is no *reincarnation* coming back on the *wheel of karma* to try to do better the next time around. There is no *soul sleep*—that when you’re dead, you’re dead. *“For it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that the judgment”* (Heb.9:27). Death is the final gateway into eternity, and every one of us will pass through it. Those who are now with the Lord are actually more alive than we are. They, with those who are alive at the coming of the Lord, will receive new bodies at the resurrection of the righteous. It will not be of terrestrial substance like our earthly bodies, from the dust of the earth—but of celestial substance that is *immortal and incorruptible*—not subject to death, and forever free from corrupting power of sin. Tell

me, who can be sad about that?

*“Then shall be brought to pass that saying, O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? Because death is swallowed up in victory”* (1Cor.15:40-56). Paul said, *“The sting of death is sin.”* For everyone who dies without Christ, death holds a fatal stinger. But for the child of God, death has no stinger, because on the cross, Jesus took the stinger out of death for those who believe in Him for the forgiveness of sin. When He arose on the third day, He promised us: *“Because I live—you shall live also!”* (Jn.14:19).

### MEETING IN THE AIR

*“But I would not have you ignorant concerning them which are asleep [in death] that you sorrow not even as those who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him”* (1Thess.4:13-14).

Do you believe this? I do! And this is how it will happen: *“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, will not go before them which have died in Christ. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort*

*one another with these words*” (vv.15-18).

This is why we can have comfort to experience the death of a loved one without feeling “*the sting of death*”—I did not say, we won’t feel the sadness of the loss. It’s impossible not to feel sadness. These are part of the natural human grieving process. Even Jesus wept at the tomb of His dear friend Lazarus. But Paul said, “*We do not sorrow as those who have no hope.*” And there is a difference! Jesus promised, “*I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am—in Heaven with the Father—there you may be also*” (Jn.14:3). When is He coming back? I don’t know. Jesus said that no man knows the day or the hour, and that He will come like a thief in the night. Perhaps you’re thinking, *I’ve heard this my whole life, ever since I was a kid, and He still hasn’t come!*

Friend, even if Jesus does not return today or tomorrow, or next week, or next year, the Angel of death could come for you. No one has the guarantee that they will be here tomorrow. Scripture asks, “*For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away*” (Js.4:16). “*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,*” less than 1000th of a second, Jesus will come for His Church. If you’re not ready, you won’t have time to get ready. Today is the day of salvation, and now is the acceptable time. If you are ready when the trumpet sounds, and the graves of the righ-

teous are opened, and the dead in Christ rise, then you will meet Jesus and your loved ones in the air. Now this is a promise that brings great comfort!

### **WHEN FAITH BECOMES SIGHT**

*“For we walk by faith and not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord”* (2Cor.5:7-8).

One of the most beloved hymns of the Church, “*It Is Well With My Soul,*” written in 1873, includes this Scripture in its third stanza. The story behind the song is heart-wrenching, but not hopeless. Horatio G. Spafford was an attorney in Chicago who had invested a great deal of money in real estate. He lost much of his fortune in the great Chicago fire of 1871. Around the same time, his only son died of scarlet fever at age 4. In 1873, he decided to take his wife and four daughters on a trip to England. Before their departure, an urgent matter required him to stay behind temporarily. They would sail without him. Feeling an unease in his mind, he changed their rooms closer to the bow of the ship. They said their goodbyes, and he promised to join them soon.

Disaster struck when their ship collided with another in the middle of the night. As it tilted dangerously, passengers stumbled in the darkness, and some were swept away by the strong ocean currents. When the ship sank two hours later, 226 people had perished, and only 47 survived. One

of those was Spafford's wife, but their four daughters were lost to the sea.

When he received his wife's cable informing him of the tragedy, he immediately booked passage to go to her. One night the captain called him and said, "I believe we are now passing over the place where the ship with your daughters went down." Later in his cabin, Spafford found it hard to sleep, and he said to himself: "*It is well...*" From this experience, he penned the famous three-verse hymn. In verse one, he spoke of "*peace like a river and sorrows like billows.*" This dichotomy can only be understood by those who have put their trust in God through the joys and pain of life. In all situations, we can say, "*It is well with my soul!*"

It's the final verse that reveals the anchor of his hope: "*O Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight; the clouds be rolled back as a scroll; the trumpet shall re-sound, and the Lord shall descend. Even so, it is well with my soul.*" In a short time, he had lost all five of his precious children. There can be no greater human grief than to lose even one child. But in the midst of his indescribable pain, he clung to the promise of the coming of the Lord, and with Him, those that have died in Christ: "*Wherefore, comfort one another with these words*" (1Thes.4:13-18).

### **WE SHALL BE CHANGED!**

*"We shall not all see death, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye....*

*The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality"* (1Cor.15:51-53). Before the body of a Christian enters Heaven, it must be changed: "*...Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body...*" (Phil.3:21). "Vile" in the original Greek is *humiliation*. In other words, our physical bodies have been *humbled* by corruption—subject to sin, and mortality—subject to death. But at the rapture-resurrection, they will be *glorified* like Jesus' body.

Paul related the resurrection of the dead to sowing a seed in the ground. "*It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body"* (1Cor.15:42-44). The body that was sown in the ground is not the body that it will be when it is raised. At physical death, the body goes through a change, back to the original composition of dust that God took out of the ground when He created Adam. The born-again inner man that came from God, returns back to God. "*For to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord"* (2Cor.5:8).

Those who say that the soul sleeps in the grave are wrong. The soul didn't come from the grave—it came from God. The only thing that

sleeps is the thing that came out of the ground—the body. God breathed the soul and spirit into the nostrils of the inanimate clay body of Adam, and he became a living soul (Gen.2:7, Job 33:4). James said, “*The body without the spirit is dead*” (Js.2:26). At physical death, the body is dead, because the soul and spirit return to God, awaiting the redemption of the body. Paul went so far as to say, “*even we who are alive, are groaning within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of the body*” (Rom.8:23). As the body ages, this becomes real.

Many believers will be alive when Jesus comes: “*We shall not all sleep [die] but we shall all be **changed**.*” The Greek word **METAMORPHOSIS** literally means *after-form*. Our bodies—both those who rise from the grave and the living who are caught up from the earth—will undergo a transformation from mortal to immortal—from corruptible to incorruptible. Paul said: “*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hand, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.... That mortality might be swallowed up of life*” (2Cor.5:1-4).

Our glorified bodies are in heaven, and in a twinkling of an eye, we shall be clothed with them! Peter said, “*We have an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven*” (1Pet.1:4).

I’m not just looking for “a new robe and new shoes” when I get to Heaven—I’m like Job: “*If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, until my change come*” (14:14).

### **OUR GLORIFIED BODY**

“*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*” (1John3:2). We are given a glimpse of Jesus’ glorious body in the Gospel accounts of His transfiguration. Right before His crucifixion, Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him into a high mountain. There He was transfigured before them, and His face shone as the sun (Mt.17:2). Even His clothes glistened with light, and “*they saw His glory*” (Lk.9:32). This manifestation was not only for their sakes, but for Jesus’ as well.

A few days later, Jesus took His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane where He prayed in anguish to His Father to be saved from death. Ultimately, He won the victory over His own self will and committed Himself to His Father’s will to die on the cross for our sins. John 17 records His poignant prayer to be restored to His former glory after His death: “*And now, O Father, glorify me with your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world was* (v.5). “*Father, I will that they also whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which you have giv-*

en me” (v.24).

I believe it was His transfiguration of the glory that helped Him to surrender to His Father’s will, knowing what was coming. It made an indelible impression on Peter and John who later wrote, “*We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory.... when we were with him in the holy mount*” (2Pet.1:16-18). “*And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*” (Jn.1:14). The image of our glorified bodies should also encourage us in our times of suffering, knowing that we have glorified bodies reserved for us in Heaven: “*When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory*” (Col.3:4).

### **STRETCH OUT!**

“*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil.3:13-14).

Paul wrote this, his most joyful epistle, from a dank, dark, Roman prison-dungeon, awaiting execution. For decades he had faithfully served Jesus Christ, planting churches, installing ministers, writing revelations, and teaching them throughout the Roman Empire. His future was uncertain in terms of how much time he had left—but he

had never been more certain of the goal or the outcome. Paul was fixated on the goal to *apprehend—lay hold* on the prize of Heaven’s call to Paradise, where he had visited once in a vision.

“*This one thing I do...*” actually consisted of 3 things: First, *forgetting those things which are behind*. This meant the good, the bad, the failures, successes, accomplishments, and shortfalls; in order to be able to do the second thing: *reaching forth unto those things which are before*. Only then could he *press toward the goal*. *Reaching forth* can literally be translated from Greek: *stretching out*.

Paul alluded to a foot runner in a race, who is in the homestretch of the final lap, and can clearly see the goal line. He stretches out his whole body, especially his arms and fingers to reach for the winner’s tape. As believers, our whole lifestyle and desires are Heaven-bound. Whereas sinners are consumed with earthly pleasures and do not aspire to leave their lives on earth to go to Heaven, which seems far away, vague, and uncertain. They would only choose Heaven over Hell—but not Heaven over Earth. Our goal is “*the prize of the high calling*”—literally *the calling up on high* or *going home to Heaven*. Paul would not let his ugly past pull him down. No one can go forward while looking backward. If you try to drive a car looking in the rearview mirror, you’re going to crash! Our church choir sings the



song *Stretch Out!* One line says: *The race isn't given to the swift; neither is it given to the strong, but to him that endures to the end... stretch out!*

### **FINISH WITH JOY!**

*"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* Some Christians think this refers to our calling or office in the Body of Christ, but it literally means *the calling up on high—the rapture resurrection*. This is the ultimate goal of every believer. Jesus said, *"Strive to enter in at the strait [narrow and confining] gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able"* (Lk.13:24). In the Greek text, the root word for *strive* is *AGON*, brought into English as *agony*. It originally referred to the *arena* where the Roman gladiator contests took place. It evolved to include the *agony* they experienced in those events. What it says to us: We must strive—sometimes *agonize*—as we *"Fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life"* (1Tim.6:12). *AGON* is translated *fight* in this verse. Paul could have said: *"Agonize the good agony!"*

He knew well what it was to fight, to strive, and even to agonize against the powers of darkness. He suffered greatly for the cause of Christ, bearing in his physical body the marks of his suffering (2Cor.4:10). There were many times when the Lord delivered him from danger or imprisonment, but other times the Lord did not intervene. In those times, He promised Paul: *"My*

*grace is sufficient for you!"* (2Cor.12:9). At times friends warned him not to go to certain places, because it was well known that his enemies were waiting to do him great harm. In one of those instances, Paul said: *"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God"* (Acts 20:24). I have made this my regular humble prayer, because it is my utmost goal to finish the ministry which God has graciously given to me to minister His Precious Word; to be able to say, *"Father, I finished the work You gave me to do"* (Jn.17:4). And to finish my course *with joy!*

Paul wrote: *"That no one should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto"* (2Thess.3:3). Paul's afflictions for the Gospel's sake read like a Hollywood movie script (2Cor.11:23-33). Yet his joy in Christ was not diminished, but rather, increased by God's power on his life and ministry. As the last grains of sand trickled through the hourglass of Paul's life, there was no looking back with useless regrets. With the joy and peace of a life well-lived, Paul penned his final triumph: *"For I am now ready to be offered [executed], and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,*

which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2Tim.4:7-8). This includes me! What about you?

### **MY RAPTURE DREAM**

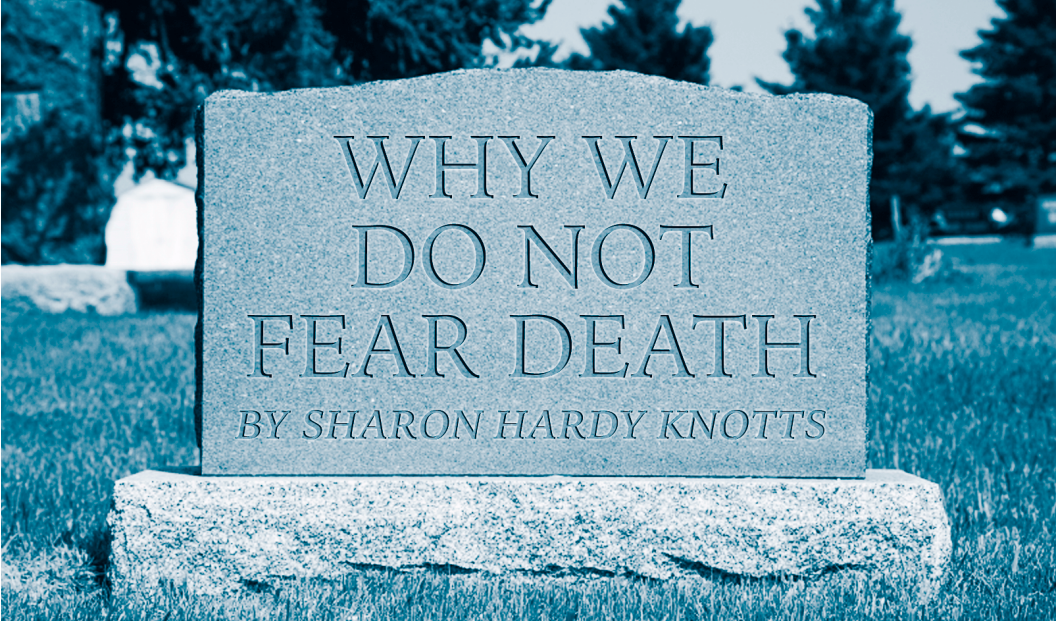
Once I had a marvelous dream, short, but extremely powerful, and its meaning was not obscure. I was standing on a very high ledge. I'm not sure if it was a mountain, a cliff, or a high building, but the view from where I stood was open sky. Suddenly, I became aware of something whizzing by me on both sides. One after another, things flew by me faster than flashes of lightning. Then I realized they were people, and their body posture was so sleek they looked like arrowheads, as their shoulders were erect, with their arms and hands tight against the sides of their bodies. Their legs were tight together with their feet pointed down, and their stream-lined bodies were covered with wing-like feathers. While I pondered this amazing sight, the thought suddenly came into my mind, and I said it out loud: *This must be the rapture!*" I was trembling with excitement, and once again I exclaimed: *"It's really true! It's the rapture!"*

Then, in the twinkling of an eye, I felt myself launch off the ledge, and I too was hurtling through the air. My body was in the same tight arrowhead shape, and I could feel it piercing through the atmosphere. The joy I felt is indescribable as I shouted to myself: *"It's really happening! This is the rapture!"* That was how the

dream ended.

There were split seconds when I saw others shooting through the skies before I took off. I never thought that I was *not going*, but I wondered why there was a delay. Later as I was relating my dream to others, someone remarked: *"Just like the Bible says: 'The dead in Christ shall rise first.'"* Spoken with such simplicity and true faith, it made me smile.

*"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be **changed**."* In Greek, **METAMORPHOS** means *transformed, transfigured*. We will be transformed from *corruptible* [subject to sin] to *incorruptible* and from *mortal* [subject to death] to *incorruptible* (1Cor.15:51-59). When a righteous person dies, his soul and spirit go immediately into the presence of the Lord in Heaven: *"For to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord"* (2Cor.5:8). But the dead in Christ do not get their new glorified bodies until we (if we're still living) get ours! They will hear the shofar of God first, and the DNA of their decomposed bodies will come together, just like the dry bones in the prophet Ezekiel's vision (37:1-14). They may get a head start, but we will catch up with them *"to meet our Lord in the air!"*



WHY WE  
DO NOT  
FEAR DEATH  
BY SHARON HARDY KNOTTS

Somebody once said, “Everybody wants to go to Heaven, but no one wants to die to get there.” Death is the adventure no one wants to sign up for; yet the mortality rate for humans is 100%. The Bible states, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after that the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). This refutes reincarnation on one end and annihilation on the other. There *is* something after death, and it’s not to be recycled into some other person or animal. *It’s to stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account for the deeds done in the body whether good or bad* (2Cor.5:10). Even Jesus had to die as a human, and this fact actually holds the key to facing death without fear for every child of God:

*“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself partook of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil: And deliver them who*

*through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”* (Heb.2:14-15). Jesus did not face death like some “super hero.” He did not face death in His nature of deity, but *just like you and me* and every human who has a fear of death. The Scripture further states that “*He did not take on the nature of angels, but was made like unto us. For in that he himself both suffered temptation, he is able to succour them that are tempted”* (vv.16-18).

He faced the fear of death—not because He did not believe His Father would raise Him up—but so that He could empathize with us in our human weaknesses, and the fear of death for humans is universal. He knew He would “*rise on the third day,*” and had told His disciples over and over, as well as the Scribes, Pharisees, and anyone who came to hear Him. A short time earlier He took Peter, James, and John up on the mountain where “*He was transfig-*

ured before them, and His face shone like the sun.” Then Elijah and Moses appeared unto Him, and they discussed His coming “*decease*”—a less emotional term for *death* (Lk.9:31).

I believe that God allowed this supernatural manifestation of His glory for two reasons: First, for *His disciples*, so that they would remember this in the dark days after His death. Secondly, for *Him*, that He would keep this image of the glory in His mind in His dark hour of Gethsemane. John 17 records the prayer He prayed in Gethsemane while in great agony. Three times Jesus asked the Father that *He would glorify Him with the glory He had with Him before the world was* (vv.1,5,24).

Luke tells us that the emotional suffering Jesus experienced in the Garden was so intense that *His sweat came as great drops of blood, falling down to the ground* (Lk.22:44). This is a medical condition known as **HEMATRIDOSIS** which is caused by severe anguish, releasing a chemical that breaks down the small capillaries in the sweat glands, resulting in bleeding, and His sweat was tinged with blood. Jesus cried out, “*My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*” (Matt.26:38). So great was His suffering that the Father sent an angel to strengthen Him (Lk.22:43). His prayers for *the glory to be restored to Him* tell me that it was the earlier experience of the Transfiguration that helped Him to get through that horrific hour of

suffering, as well as the beatings and crucifixion that followed.

## **TO BE SAVED OUT OF DEATH**

We are given further details of Jesus’ sufferings in Gethsemane in Hebrews 5:8: “*Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him Who was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.*” Again, Jesus’ humanity is stressed: “*in the days of his flesh.*” This is why we can look to Him as our mediator and faithful High Priest, because He has faced every type of trial and temptation that we face—including death. We are told just how desperate His trauma was by the four kinds of prayer He prayed:

**1. Prayers- DEESIS:** Prayers for *specific requests* as John 17 records: For *Himself* to have the glory restored, for *His disciples* to be kept from the evil of the world, and for *those who would come to believe on Him through their words*, including *you and me*.

**2. Supplications- HIKETERIA:** *To entreat*, to approach with humble, earnest prayer.

**3. Strong Crying- KRAUGE:** An outcry, to cry out *with raised voice*, especially in grief or clamor.

**4. Tears- DAKRY:** The highest form of supplication. Jesus was in the depths of anguish and sorrow as He prayed three times for the cup of suffering to pass from Him, and here we see that He cried out loudly with strong voice and tears *unto Him who*

*was able to save Him from death!* We need to clarify that He was not asking to get out of dying. The usual Greek word for *from* is ΑΠΟ, but in this verse the Greek word translated *from* death is ΕΚ which means *out of*—He was pleading with His Father to save Him *out of death!* He knew the plan was that He would die on the cross, and on the third day be raised up in glory. He had agreed with the plan, because He said, “*No man takes my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. This commandment have I received of my Father*” (Jn.10:17-18). But in His suffering, the human part of Him was crying out to His Father: “*Remember, You promised to raise me up out of death!*”

This is foretold in the Psalms: “*For You wilt not leave my soul in hell (SHEOUL = grave); neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption*” (Ps.16:10). “*But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave*” (Ps.49:15).

It was necessary for Jesus to die, and He was willing to fulfill the plan, but His flesh was crying out to be saved, “*and he was heard in that he feared.*” God heard Him, because *He humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross* (Phil.2:8). He was heard, and on the third day, He was saved *out of death!* Not *from*—but *out of!* And because “*He tasted death for every man,*” we have the assurance that *we also will be saved out of death!* The fear of death brings bondage,

because fear has torment (1Jn.4:18). But we have been delivered from the fear of death because:

1. Jesus tasted death for us and came out on the other side to glory restored (Phil.3:21).

2. Through death He destroyed him who had the power (authority) of death, the devil. (Heb.2:14).

Because He *facéd* it, *tasted* it, and was *raised* out of it, we have the guarantee that we shall be saved out of death: “*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*” (1Cor.15:51-55).

Death has no sting for the child of God! Jesus took the sting out! I read about two young brothers who were playing outside when the older boy was stung by a bee. Their mother tended to his bee sting, but it was the younger boy who was crying hysterically, because he was afraid that the bee would sting him too. “Don’t worry,” his mom soothed, “That bee can’t sting you now, because your big brother has the stinger in him, so

the bee can't sting anymore." And Jesus has taken out the sting of death for us!

On the third day, Jesus robbed the grave of its victory: "*Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be held of it*" (Acts 2:24). His resurrection is the guarantee of the full harvest.

### THE FIRSTFRUITS FROM THE DEAD

*"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept"* (1Cor.15:20). Firstfruits are just that—the first produce (not the tithes which cannot be reckoned until the full harvest comes in, and is 10% of the whole). Perhaps you plant tomato plants in your yard in the Spring. In Maryland, we wait til mid-May when the risk of frost is over. Around the end of July, the first tomatoes are ready to be picked, but they are not the full harvest. More tomatoes keep coming for weeks. The first tomatoes we pick are a guarantee that more tomatoes are coming. In the same way, Jesus' resurrection was the firstfruits of all those who died in faith, and His resurrection guarantees ours!

*"For since by man came death, by man come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming"* (1Cor.15:21-23). Paul did

not say "everyone"—but "*they that are Christ's.*" Jesus was the first, but not the only. He partook of death for us, so that we can partake of His resurrection. And if you believe Christ is risen from the dead (and Rom.10:9 says you must to be saved), then you know that your departed loved ones who have died in Christ shall be raised up (and you shall be raised, if you die in Christ before the rapture). "*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Christ shall God bring with him*" (1Thes.4:14).

*"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death..."* (Hosea 13:14).