



MT. ROSE REFORMED
ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Promise of Heaven

Reverend Scott Johnson | March 15, 2026 | Exodus 23:20-32

Old Testament Reading

The Old Testament reading is Exodus chapter 23, verses 20 to 32. And this is God's inerrant, his infallible, his inspired word. Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice. Do not rebel against him for he will not pardon your transgression for my name is in him. But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, you shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do, but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces. You shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you. None shall miscarry or be barren in your land. I will fulfill the number of your days. I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites and the Hittites from before you.

I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you. Little by little, I will drive them out from before you until you have increased and possess the land. And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates. For I will give the inhabitants of the land

into your hand, and you shall drive them out from before you. You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.

New Testament Reading

And our New Testament reading is John chapter 14, verses one through seven. Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself and where I am, you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going. Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my father also. From now on, you do know him and have seen him. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

The Importance of the Destination

You have all heard the saying, it's not the destination that matters, but the journey. And sometimes that is true. But that was probably not what the Israelites wanted to hear as they set out on their wilderness journey to the promised land. For the Israelites, it was all about the destination and not about the journey. It was about the destination that God had promised to bring them to. That is, the promised land. He would bring them through the wilderness into a land flowing with milk and honey.

This was the promise that God made to Abraham, that his descendants would inherit this land. This was the promise that God made to Moses when the Lord appeared to him from the burning bush and told him that he would be the one who would lead his people out of Egypt and into the land of promise. And in this passage, the Lord makes this promise again as he speaks to Moses, who will relay these words to the people of Israel. And so for the Israelites, what made their journey meaningful, what made it a journey worth making was the destination. It was the promised land. That was their hope. That was the promise, the gift that the Lord had given to them.

And as a Christian, your hope as well is in the destination that God has prepared for you at the end of your earthly journey. And that is the true promised land, the heavenly promised land, the new heavens, the new earth, that eternal glory that God has in store for you as one whom he has redeemed through his son, Jesus. In our passage in verse 20, the Lord speaks of the place that I have prepared. And we heard from our New Testament reading that when Jesus spoke to his disciples, he also spoke to them of a place that he would prepare.

Jesus says in John 14, in my father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself that where I am, you may be also. So Jesus also promised his disciples that there was a place he was preparing for them. Just as the Lord here prepared the promised land for the Israelites, so Jesus, in his resurrection from the dead, he was, after his resurrection, he was taken up into glory to the right hand of the Father in heaven. And there he is preparing an eternal home for his followers.

Since God's promise to the Israelites that we read in this passage from Exodus is a type of that greater promise that Christ has made to us of our heavenly home, we can read this passage in Exodus and take some lessons from it about the promise that Christ has made to us of heaven.

Lesson One: God Promises Heaven to a People He Has Saved

And the first lesson is this, that God gives his promise of heaven to a people that he has already saved. So let's remember, remind ourselves of when and where the Lord spoke these words to Moses. So the Lord is speaking to Moses. Moses is on Mount Sinai. They're in the wilderness. This is after God has brought his people out from their bondage to Pharaoh, out of the miserable existence that they were living in Egypt.

But even before the Lord had brought them out of Egypt, the Lord had made the Israelites his people, his special people. He entered into a covenant with them. He promised the people of Israel and no other people on earth, but he promised the people of Israel that he would be their God, they would be his people. And so at this point, God has already chosen his people. He's already made them his own. He's already saved them from their plight in Egypt. And so now God is making these promises to a redeemed people, to a people that he has already saved and to whom, or whom he has already called to himself.

Of all the nations in the world, only Israel was bound for the promised land. And that was entirely because of the grace of God, that God loved them. And God loved them not because of how great and mighty a nation they were. God did not love his people Israel because of how righteous and godly they were, but God loved them simply because it was his good pleasure to set his love upon them. It sounds redundant, but God loved his people simply because he loved them.

And the point for us here is this, that God gives the hope and the promise of heaven, the promise of resurrection life and a new creation only to those whom he has delivered from their bondage to sin and death. When we read the book of Exodus, we must always keep in mind that the salvation that the Lord accomplished for the Israelites from Egypt is a picture or a type of the greater salvation that God has accomplished for us in his son, Jesus Christ.

And how did God accomplish that salvation for us in his son, Jesus? It was through the incarnation, the eternal son of God, who was very God, who is very God. He himself took on a human nature. He became man in his incarnation. He lived a life as man, a life of perfect obedience to the will of his father. He died the cursed death of the cross as man, as a substitute for you and me as sinners. He was raised to new life from the grave so that all who come to Jesus Christ by faith are delivered from their bondage, not bondage to the physical slavery like the Israelites were under in Egypt, but bondage to the slavery of sin.

And for those who repent of their sin by God's grace, for those who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God promises to bring them into his glorious and gracious presence forever and ever in the life that is to come. This is the promise of heaven. But this promise of heaven belongs to Christians, to those who have been redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ, by the grace of God. It's been said that not everybody who's talking about heaven is going to go to heaven. And we could also say that not everybody who would like to go to heaven is necessarily going to end up in heaven. But only those who have come to Jesus Christ by faith, only those who have submitted to him as their Lord, who have repented of their sin, have this promise and hope of heaven.

Well, how about you? Have you trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you repented of your sin? Have you come to Jesus as the only one who can save you? If so, then know that by God's grace, this promise is for you. This promise of eternal life, life in a new heavens, a new earth, life with Christ forever and ever, that this is yours. This promise is for you. You have a promised

land. It's not the land of Canaan, but one that is infinitely greater. You have the promise of a resurrection body, a resurrection body that will be raised from the grave, immortal, imperishable, free from sickness and the ravages of disease, free from death, decay forever. But this promise of everlasting glory, this promise of eternal life, it is only for those whom God has redeemed through his son, Jesus Christ, whom he has brought to himself.

Lesson Two: God Fulfills His Promise Through His Son

And so God makes his promise of heaven then to a people that he has already saved. And this brings us to the second lesson, which I've already given it away. But the second lesson is this, that God will fulfill his promise through his son. God will fulfill his promise through his son. So in verse 20, the Lord says to Moses, behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and bring you to the place that I have prepared. And so this is a true guardian angel, the angel who would watch over the Israelites, who would protect them, guard them on their way to the promised land, who would drive out the inhabitants before the people of Israel.

This isn't the first time that we've seen the book of Exodus, the angel of the Lord. He also appeared to Moses at the burning bush back in Exodus chapter three, we read this, and the angel of the Lord appeared to him, that is Moses, in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And so we've already seen this angel of the Lord. And just like when the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses at the burning bush, so here too, this angel is identified with the Lord himself.

The Lord says in verse 21 in this passage, our passage in chapter 23, the Lord says, my name is in him. My name is in him. The name of God represents the character of God, the person of God, his power and so on. And so for the Lord to say that my name is in the angel means that he has fully invested the angel with his own divine power and glory. And so what the angel says, the Lord says. What the angel does, the Lord does.

And whereas in verse 20, God speaks of the angel bringing the Israelites into the promised land and fighting for his people, later in the passage in verses 27 and 28, the Lord speaks of himself as driving out the inhabitants of Canaan, leading his people into the promised land. Look at verses 27 and 28. No longer does he speak of the angel, but he says, I, I will send my terror before you, and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will

make all your enemies turn their backs to you. Verse 28, and I will send hornets before you, which will drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you.

Now hold that thought for a minute. You might be thinking, what are these hornets that are spoken of in verse 28? I'm wondering the same thing myself, to be honest. Nobody knows exactly what these hornets are. It could be a literal thing. The Lord perhaps sent actual hornets into the desert armies of the Canaanites to cause them to panic and to flee. They could represent perhaps some kind of even a human army, maybe even an angelic army. We just don't know. It was some kind of assault against the inhabitants of Canaan.

But whatever the hornets were, the larger point is this, that the angel of the Lord is at the same time equated with the Lord himself, and he is somehow distinct from the Lord. And so the Lord speaks of the angel as if he is a different person, but he also so closely identifies himself with the angel that he speaks of what he is doing in the first person. And when we read this in the light of all that the New Testament has revealed to us about God, we are on very safe grounds to say that the angel of the Lord is none other than the Lord himself. It is the second person of the Trinity, the son of God. We have here a revelation of the pre-incarnate Christ and the angel of the Lord.

Jesus, he is God in the flesh. God's name is in Jesus just as it was in the angel, and just as it was the son of God who led the Israelites into the promised land, so it is Jesus, it is Christ who leads us into the greater promised land. And one thing that this means for you as a believer in Christ is that your eternal destiny, this promise that God has given to you of glory in the life to come, this depends upon or is in the hands of a sovereign and faithful savior. Just as no human enemy or any kind of enemy could have overcome the Lord in driving out the inhabitants of Canaan, no enemy could have stopped the Lord from bringing his people into the promised land because the angel of the Lord fought for his people.

There is no enemy that will hinder Christ from bringing you into that eternal glory that the Father has prepared for you. And so you can be assured that just as Jesus has led you out of bondage to sin, out of darkness and death, and just as he has already brought you in Christ into the kingdom, so he will most certainly bring you into that final and consummate glory that awaits you. You have that assurance that there is no enemy who can separate you from God's will for you, from the love of Christ that he has for you, or for God's love for you in Christ. Philippians

1:6 says, and I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

And so as a believer, your eternal destiny is assured, it is secure because of the one who fights for you, because of the one who is for you, that is Jesus Christ. And we need to remember this when we go through trials and struggles in this life. We get so easily discouraged, downcast, anxious over the trials and afflictions and the frustrations of this life. And this is not to diminish at all the very real suffering and pain that we experience in this world. But what are the things that afflict us in this life? What are they from the perspective of eternity? Well, they are nothing. They are nothing because they cannot keep us from that inheritance that is ours in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just as for the Israelites, whatever trials and struggles that they would experience in the wilderness, they were nothing compared to the blessedness that God had promised them that awaits them in the promised land. In the same way, the apostle Paul says of us as believers, for this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. Because we have a savior who has promised to bring us into our heavenly home, we can bear up under whatever afflictions, whatever suffering that we have in this life, knowing that this is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory. That what we experience now is not to be compared with that glory that will be ours in heaven one day. And God will fulfill all of this through his son, Jesus Christ.

Lesson Three: The Command for Obedience

The third lesson is this, with his promise, God gives us a command for obedience. So right after the Lord in this passage, after he promises that he will bring them into the promised land, He gives them this command. He says in verses 21 and 22, he says, pay careful attention to him and obey his voice. Do not rebel against him for he will not pardon your transgressions for my name is in him. But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

And so the Lord commands His people that they must obey. And as they obey, He will fulfill His promises to them to bring them into the promised land. Later, He is more specific about what that obedience entails. In verse 24, He tells them that they are not to commit idolatry. Specifically, they are not to bow down or worship the gods of the Canaanites. In fact, they were

to destroy all the objects of the Canaanite worship. In verse 32, likewise, he says that the Israelites were not to make a covenant with the people or with their gods. Why is that? Because friendship with the people of Canaan would inevitably lead to friendship with their gods and worship with their gods. Instead, they were to destroy both the people and their gods.

And the reason, and this is one of the difficult teachings of scripture, that the Lord commanded his people to destroy the Canaanites. Here he speaks of driving them out, but we know from other scripture that what that meant was destroying the people of Canaan. But the reason why God commanded his people to destroy the Canaanites was not because God is somehow some kind of intolerant, murderous dictator. Rather, the people of Canaan were to be destroyed because of the fact that God is holy. He is just. He is righteous. And the people of Canaan were under the righteous condemnation, the righteous judgment of God for their own sin, their own iniquity.

Back in Genesis chapter 15, when God told Abraham that he and his offspring would possess the land of Canaan, he said that they would not inherit the land until the iniquity of the Amorites was complete. In other words, it was the sin of the Canaanites. It was the sin of the Perizzites, the sin of the Hittites, the sin of all the other "ites" who lived in Canaan that brought upon them the destruction at the hands of the Israelites. And so the conquest of the promised land, this was not some instance of genocide or mass murder, but it was God carrying out his just and righteous judgment against a people that brought that upon themselves because of their own sin and iniquity.

So the Israelites were to obey the Lord in all these ways. They were to drive out the people. They were to destroy all their gods. And as they did, as they obeyed the Lord, as they kept his commandments, they would come to possess the entirety of the land of promise. And so we could put it this way. The land was a gift of God's grace. Yes, the land was a gift purely of grace. However, the way for the Israelites to come into full possession of the land was the way of obedience, of faithfulness, of keeping his word. Now, we can also say that insofar as the Israelites were obedient and faithful to keep the word of God, that too was the result of God's grace at work in them. But this is the way that the Lord led his people into their inheritance, only as they were faithful to keep his commandments.

And the same is true for you as a Christian as well. Salvation for you and me as believers in Christ is all of grace. From beginning to end, salvation belongs to the Lord. When we come into

heaven, the only thing that we're going to be able to say then is, I don't belong here, this is all by the grace of God. This is all by the grace of God. There is nothing I contributed, no work that I did, nothing that I merited, that I deserve to be in this glorious place forever and ever. It is all by God's grace and we'll have all eternity to thank and praise God for that grace.

But the way in which God graciously leads us to that promised heaven is the way of obedience, the way of righteousness, the way of keeping God's commandments. Hebrews 12:14 says, strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Ephesians 5:5, for you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure or who is covetous, that is an idolater, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

This truth of the nature of the Christian life is that salvation is a gift of God and yet we inherit that salvation as God graciously brings us along the path of obedience. This is so wonderfully illustrated for us in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. You remember that Christian is saved. Christian is the hero of Pilgrim's Progress. He is saved from the city of destruction. He is on a journey throughout the book to his destination, the celestial city. But there is a long and arduous journey between those two places. A journey in which Christian must persevere through all kinds of challenges and difficulties. He must remain faithful to the one who was called in the book, the Lord of the place, that is the God of the celestial city.

And so Christian, you'll remember, he goes through all of these trials and tribulations. He goes through the Slough of Despond, the Hill Difficulty, the Valley of Humiliation, his hand-to-hand combat with Apollyon. He goes through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. He goes through Vanity Fair, Doubting Castle, and so on. And along the way, Christian's faith, his obedience was tested. And sometimes by faith he was successful, but other times he stumbled and he failed and he temporarily lost his way. But he never completely fell away from the path as others did in the book. God in his grace kept him in the way, but that way was the way of obedience, of keeping God's commandments.

And notice that the obedience that God demands here, that he demands of the people of Israel, that this is not 75% obedience, it's not 95% obedience, but God demands 100% obedience. Look at verse 24. He says, you shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do, but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces. And then he says, look at verses 32 and 33, you shall make no covenant with them and their gods. They shall not dwell

in your land, lest they make you sin against me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.

And so the Lord does not give the Israelites some wiggle room where they can mainly obey the Lord, but also have a little space for dallying with the worship of these Canaanite gods. No, they were to utterly destroy their gods. There was no place for compromise. They had to be destroyed completely. And what this means for you as a believer in Christ is this, that you must put sin to death. You must destroy it. You must not let it live. You must not make room for it in your life.

If the Israelites, think about it, if the Israelites had merely taken all these Canaanite gods and put them into a storage unit for safekeeping, at some point, you know that they inevitably would have taken those gods out and they would have started worshiping them. They would have been a snare to them. That's why they had to destroy them, to put them to death. And in the same way, if you make room in your heart to secretly cherish any hidden sin, rather than putting that sin to death where it begins, in your heart—if you do not put it to death, that sin will grow and grow. It will eventually break out from your heart. It will emerge in your life. If it is unchecked, if it is not put to death, it will eventually overcome you and destroy you.

When it comes to sin, it is the law of the jungle. Kill or be killed. The Puritan John Owen put it this way, be killing sin or sin will be killing you. For the Israelites, the only hope that they had to remain faithful to the Lord was to completely demolish the idols of the land. And the only way for you to remain faithful to Jesus Christ is to destroy sin, to put sin to death, to not let it live. As soon as you identify and see it in your life, put it to death by the Holy Spirit, by the grace of God. Otherwise it continues to grow until it kills you. Romans 8:13 says, for if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

And according to what the Lord says here, the Israelites would be blessed or cursed according to their obedience. If the Israelites went on to be as faithful to the Lord as they should have been to keep his commandments in the promised land, the life in Israel would have been the closest thing that the world has ever seen to heaven on earth. Because God promises here that he would bless them beyond measure in that place if they were faithful. They would not have known hunger or thirst. God would have kept them from sickness. Their women would not have miscarried or been barren. Everyone would have enjoyed a long and healthy life.

Now, when we hear these promises as Christians today, we cannot directly apply them to us, to the church. God does not give us the promise that if we are faithful to Christ, that he will bless us with good health, a long and prosperous life, with freedom from disease or barrenness and all of that. These were promises specifically for the Israelites at this time, but they do point to a greater truth, and that is this, that there is blessing in obedience. When we genuinely seek the Lord from the heart, we will find blessing in this.

Of course, to seek the Lord is the work of God's grace, but when by grace we seek Him, there is blessing in this, but the blessings are spiritual. They are blessings enjoyed in the hearts. They are the blessings that include, among other things, the assurance of the love of God, the peace that surpasses understanding, a true joy, true contentment in the Holy Spirit. These are the kind of blessings that God gives us as we seek Him by faith; He blesses that obedience. In Psalm 19, in speaking of God's commandments, David says, in keeping them, there is great reward.

The other side of the coin is that the Lord also warned the Israelites here that if they failed to keep God's commandments, if they were disobedient to his word, that they would experience not blessing, but cursing. And in other places of the Old Testament, the Lord spells out in much, much more detail exactly what those curses would look like if the Israelites were not faithful in the promised land. But here he alludes to them. He says in verse 21, do not rebel against him for he will not pardon your transgression. Verse 33, for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.

But notice here that the greatest threat facing the Israelites at this time, when it came to the Canaanites, the people that inhabited the land, the greatest threat was not their military might, was not their power. God would take care of that. But the greatest threat that the Israelites faced was the spiritual influence that the Canaanites would have upon them if they did not destroy them and their idols. And in the same way, the greatest dangers that we face, they're not usually the things that we fear the most.

What do we fear the most in this life? We fear a personal tragedy or a tragedy in the family. We fear a disease. We fear sudden financial hardship, poverty. We fear being the victim of a crime. We fear all these things, but these are not the greatest threats to our well-being. These are not the greatest threats to our soul. But the greatest threats that face us are sin, temptation, hardness of heart, unbelief. These are the things that we should fear and be on guard against

and protect ourselves from. Just like the Israelites, their greatest threat was the spiritual influence that the Canaanites might have against them.

The Rest of the Story: God's Faithfulness Despite Israel's Failure

Now, as we hear what God said to the people of Israel on the cusp—well, actually, we haven't read it yet, but it's going to be 40 years of wilderness wanderings before they can go into the promised land. But here, they seem to be on the cusp of entering the promised land. But as Paul Harvey would say—if you don't know who Paul Harvey is, ask somebody in their 50s and they'll fill you in—but Paul Harvey would say, and now for the rest of the story.

God did bring his people into the land of Israel or the land of Canaan, as he promised. However, the people of Israel were not faithful. They were not obedient. They did exactly what they were not supposed to do. They did not destroy all the gods of the Canaanites. Instead, they started to worship the gods of the Canaanites. And that worship was wicked, it was evil, not only because in itself it was idolatrous, but also because it involved other evils, such as child sacrifice.

In Psalm 106, the psalmist describes the rest of the story. What happened when Israel came into the promised land. It is not a pretty picture. Let me read Psalm 106. They did not destroy the peoples as the Lord commanded them, but they mixed with the nations and learned to do as they did. They served their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons. They poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan. And the land was polluted with blood. Thus they became unclean by their acts and played the whore in their deeds.

And so the Lord ultimately would cast his people out of the land of Canaan because of their disobedience, their faithlessness. But the good news for you and me as Christians is this, that when God brings you and me into that heavenly glory that he has promised us, when he brings us into the promised land that he is preparing for us, that is heaven, he will at the same time so transform and change you and me that there will no longer be any possibility for us to sin against God.

In the case of the Israelites, they sinned their way out of the promised land, but you and I will never sin our way out of heaven. And the reason for that is because in our resurrection, God will so transform us. He will so constitute us that every thought of our hearts, every inclination of our

minds, every word, every action, all that we do will only be righteousness and holiness and obedience and worship. Just as before you came to know Christ, just as then in your sin, you could not do anything righteous and good and holy because you were in a state of sin, so in the state of glory, the opposite will be the case. You will not be able to do anything that is unrighteous or unholy or sinful against God. You will not be capable of it.

But until then, God calls you and me to pursue with all our hearts a life of righteousness, obedience, and Christ-likeness. And as you do so by his grace, he is preparing you for the heaven that he has in store for you.

Lesson Four: God Fulfills His Promise Little by Little

And that brings us to our fourth lesson, our final lesson. God fulfills his promise little by little. One thing that stands out in this passage, one thing that strikes us when we read it, is that the Lord promises the people of Israel that the conquest would not be all of a sudden, but it would be gradual, little by little. And so in verses 29 and 30, we read, I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you. Little by little, I will drive them out from before you until you have increased and possessed the land.

Now here, comparison—when we use the Israelites as a type of our entering into the promised land of heaven—here the comparison breaks down a little bit because when God brings us into the fullness of that glory of the life to come that he has promised us, it will not be gradual at all. We will be brought into glory and the fullness of that glory forever and ever. However, in this life now, insofar as God is at work in you, insofar as He is making you fit for that glory, the process of sanctification, that is little by little. It is gradual. It is not all at once.

And sometimes that's hard for us to accept. We want to be made perfect now. We want to be brought into glory now. Have you ever wanted to be just like Enoch or Elijah and just have God come down and swoop you up and take you directly to heaven? Kind of like in Star Trek, how Scotty would beam up his friends back to the starship. Salvation is not a "beam me up Scotty" affair. Rather, it is the gradual work of God's spirit as He makes you more and more fit, more and more ready for that place that God is preparing for you, a place of righteousness, holiness, purity, a place where Christ is enthroned and worshiped continually, that place where there are saints—the saints are made perfect in love and holiness.

God is preparing you for that in this life, and He prepares you for that little by little. Before he brings you into heaven, God, by his spirit and grace, little by little, gradually, he's putting a little bit more of heaven into you. And this is where the journey does matter. This is where our lives are meaningful and significant because God is at work in us, preparing us for that greater life that is to come. But even still, it's only important because the destination is so grand and glorious.

When you read in the Pilgrim's Progress, that's wonderful, the last few pages, when Christian is crossing with his friend the river that symbolizes his own death, and on the other side of the river is the celestial city, and he comes to the shores on the other side, and he's welcomed by angels, and he sees the glories of that celestial city, and you read that, and you think, he made it, and it was all worth it. You think back to all that he endured, and you say, it's all worth it. He's made it to his destination.

And in the same way, when you and I are brought into the eternal rest and glory that Christ is preparing for us, we will think it was all worth it. It was more than worth it. All that we endured was worth it because of this glorious place where God has brought us. The struggle against sin, the suffering, the sorrow, the sacrifice and tears, all that you have endured, your toil for the sake of Christ, it will all be worth it and more.

Now, as we read ahead in the Old Testament, we'll see that—or you see as you read on past Exodus—that God brought to fulfillment what he promised the Israelites. Of course, this promise of no disease and no barrenness and all of that, the Israelites, they weren't faithful. They didn't receive that promise, but God brought them into the promised land. It was 400 years later that the boundaries of the promised land looked something like they're described here under the reigns of David and Solomon, that God was faithful to his people.

So many times his people sinned against him. So many times they failed him. So many times they committed idolatry and were disobedient. Nevertheless, God was faithful. He fulfilled his promises. And he will fulfill the promise that he has made to you and his son, Jesus Christ. He will fulfill that promise ultimately on the basis of the obedience of Jesus himself, which is counted as your own. And on that day, on that day of salvation, you and I will know in fullness what we only experience in part here in this life. You and I will know that unspeakable blessedness of joy and peace of being with Jesus Christ and his new creation forever. That is the hope that God has given us in his word. Let's pray.