

The Christian Digest

Presents

Standing at Heaven's Gate!

By Howard Pittman

From an address to Faith Chapel Church, San Diego, California. 1981.

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME to come and share with you my testimony. What I'm going to tell you is the real truth, and I know it because it happened to me. I know the difference between a vision, a dream, or a hallucination, and a real experience. And what I had was a real experience, but I'm not going to try to convince you, that's not my job. The Lord told me to tell it, and that's all I intend to do. If there's any convincing done here, the Holy Spirit will do it. I'm just going to tell it as it actually happened.

The miracle occurred August 3rd, 1979. That day I suffered what appeared to be a physical death, as a result of a massive internal hemorrhage, a rupture of a main body artery, without warning. My spirit was taken from my body and carried first into the second Heaven, and finally before God in the third Heaven, where I saw many different things and received a five-point message, which God sent me back from beyond the grave to tell the world, to give the world this message.

He gave me the call on May 7th, 1980, to go tell it. For nine months I had to wait, and during that nine months as I waited for Him to let me go, we were in His Word day and night. In that nine months, the Holy Spirit taught us more Scripture than I'd learned all my life. Prior to that, for 35 years I'd been what I felt was a Christian. I felt I was doing what God wanted me to do. I thought I was pleasing Him. I had been a preacher and I'd even pastored a church. The Lord blessed me to even be able to attend the seminary, but all of these things really amounted to nothing when I stood before God.

My Childhood in Mississippi

To tell about the miracle, I have to go back and tell about some of my personal history, so you'll understand how great the miracle was and what God really performed. You have to know about my spiritual condition when it occurred.

I was born November 3rd, 1928, in the state of Mississippi. My childhood was during the height of the Great Depression, and I was born the seventh of a family of eight children. We lived on a very small farm in the Red Clay Hills section of the southern part of the state of Mississippi.

Times were real hard. People were extremely poor. It was a struggle just for our parents to put the daily bread on the table, but I suppose I was blessed more than most folks because I was raised in a Christian home.

My father was a deacon in a local Baptist church. He donated the land on which they built the church and he even donated the trees they cut down to build the log church out of. He didn't send us to church, he carried us. When the church doors were open, we all were there all the time. We had a family study hour; we didn't have television or radio back in the heart of the Depression. Some folks had radio, but folks in the country didn't. And the height of our social activity was to be able to go to church on Sunday.

The adults came to worship the Lord, and we heard some good preaching and some good singing, and as a little boy I believed all those things they told me. I believed that Jesus was real and all the great Bible heroes were real, I never doubted any of that.

When I went to school I believed all that school teachers told me about Abraham Lincoln and the other great American heroes that helped found this nation. I believed in them too, I never doubted them. But those folks that had lived a long time in the past were already dead and gone, and as a little boy I had trouble relating to that.

One day when I was 12 years old, an itinerant preacher came to our church and preached a sermon on Hell. When he preached that sermon, it was so real that I could almost feel the heat from those flames that he talked about! Well, I began to listen to what he had to say, because I could relate to that. He was talking about punishment. I knew what that was. My mother, Lord bless her, knew how to hand that out, so I knew what punishment was all about, and I listened.

And on that day, there was one little 12-year-old boy who decided he was going to do everything in his power to make certain that he didn't have to have any part of what that preacher was talking about! I didn't want any part of that Lake of Fire, because he made that thing so real, it really scared me!

From Seminary to the Police Force

When the Korean War came along many years after that, I went off to war, and when I came back I decided

that the Lord had called me to preach.

So I went to the little Baptist College in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and I enrolled in William Carey College in preparation for that ministry. And after two years there, I decided that I'd endured all the sacrifice I could stand, so I left and I made my way to the city of New Orleans. A country boy going to town, you know.

I got down there and I entered a career in law enforcement that lasted for over 26 years. During the 26 years that I was there, the Lord privileged me to continue my education even to the point of being able to attend the seminary while I was a full-time police officer. And I even pastored a church while I was in the seminary there. I practised my Christian faith while I was a police officer, as I believed it. I preached on the street corners. I visited those that were in jail and preached to them. I visited those that were in the hospital, and I testified about Jesus Christ everywhere that I had the opportunity.

I forced myself to practise the golden rule, which is hard to do. I forced myself to love my neighbour, and that's often hard to do, especially when your neighbour doesn't want to be loved! (Laughter) I tried my best, the best I knew how to practise my Christian faith as I believed this Bible taught it.

And then one day I died, and I stood before God and God told me my life had been an abomination! I couldn't believe that. I couldn't believe that God was talking to me. I really believed that He had me mixed up with somebody else!

Retirement, But No Rest or Peace

Well, to lead up to what I'm talking about, July 1st, 1978, I retired from the police force. My wife and I purchased a 61-acre farm in Mississippi and we moved there. Now I knew that I had something missing in my life, because I didn't have the peace and joy this Bible said Christians are supposed to have. I knew that was gone. I knew it wasn't in my life, and I was looking for it desperately.

So my wife and I started a ministry all our own. We opened our home to less fortunate children, children that had been abused and misused, and the Lord blessed us in this. I felt that ministering to those children and loving them would bring the peace that I hadn't had before. Well, in three years, most folks consider themselves blessed to raise a small family, but in three years the Lord blessed us with 32 children! That's a whole lot of kids to have in one house, isn't it?--Thirty-two of them! Of course, we didn't have them all there at one time.

But at the same time I was engaged in industrial security; I was training men and dogs that were used in the offshore oil industry to detect and prevent the use of illegal drugs. I was also a salesman for that industry. But even with all of this activity, I still wasn't finding that peace I sought, and every time the church door would open I would be there. I was a Sunday school teacher, training to be a supervisor. I was doing all that I could, but I still wasn't finding what it was that I was missing!

So during the Spring of 1979, some of my neighbours prevailed upon me to enter politics. They wanted a Christian for the sheriff. Since I'd already had experience in law enforcement, I thought that perhaps this is what God had called me to do! Perhaps this was where I could find what it was that I was missing! Maybe there I would find that peace and joy, so I entered politics and I worked as hard as I could all the Spring and Summer of 1979. The election was scheduled for August 7th, and early in the month, after what we would call an unofficial poll, we decided from my samplings that I would probably be one of the two men in the run-off. And if that was so, then I had a problem, because I had already exhausted all of my campaign funds, and I needed some people to help back me.

So I made an appointment with the president of one of the local banks and his board of directors for this day, and I went to bed that night planning the meeting in my mind so I could get up early in the morning and go meet my friend.

An Appointment I Could Not Miss--My Death

Well, I got up early that morning, just like any other day, worrying about the appointment that I had made, anxious to get down there, to be on time. I didn't take into consideration that God had already made an appointment for me that day! And I was going to keep it. I testify to you that that's one appointment you will keep, unless the Lord comes back before then! This Bible says that it is appointed unto man once to die, and when that appointment comes, we will keep it!

That day, without warning, without even a stomachache, I had a massive internal hemorrhage, a rupture of the main body-trunk artery. The great, sudden loss of blood was what killed me.

What happened at this point was so incredible, a lot of people find it hard to believe! I told you when I started that I wasn't going to try and convince you, and I'm not. I'm just going to tell it like God told me to tell it.

Since I'm going to talk about something that a lot of folks don't even believe is real, I want you to know first that if you are a believer in this Bible, everything I'm going to tell you is supported by it. One thing I found out

when I was there is that God has no hidden secrets, He left it all here in this Bible for us. You see, He didn't call me to Heaven and reveal to me some great secret that He had hidden from the ages, and tell me to bring it back to the world. Everything He showed me, everything I saw, everything I heard was supported by this Bible, right here!

The first people I met, or the first beings, are real, individual spirit beings, that are extremely powerful, and before I tell you about them I am just going to give you a few Scriptural references to their existence.

8:29 says that demons are extremely powerful. Mark 5:8-9 says that their number is so great that it's unable to be recorded. Matthew 10:1 says that they are unclean beings. Matthew 12:24-30 points out that they are totally and completely under the authority of Satan himself. And 2 Peter 2:4 points out that some of them are fallen angels.

I wanted to give you these few Bible references, for there, 19 miles from the hospital, with a paramedic riding with me and my wife there in the ambulance, all my life signs ceased! They were giving me blood in one arm and a drip in the other, and they had me hooked up to all the monitor machines, but my heartbeat failed, my respiration failed, my blood pressure dropped, and the paramedic judged me dead. He got on the radio and he radioed ahead. He said, "The patient has died." He requested a physician meet us on the ramp and that all the equipment be in position for an attempt to restore my vital life signs.

When they reached the hospital, the physician was waiting. He took me out of the ambulance and took me into the emergency room, and he cut my chest open and started immediately infusing blood directly into the chest. For 24 hours six physicians worked on me.--Seven hours in the emergency room, seven hours in surgery, and the rest of the time in ICU (the Intensive Care Unit), and they even performed a separate surgery in ICU when my lungs collapsed. So it was a battle, yet these dedicated men were fighting to preserve a human life, and I thank God for them and their dedication.

But I had met my appointed time to die, and no matter how hard they worked, they were not going to preserve that life, only God could extend that. And I knew that when I came to myself, that this was it! It wasn't that I guessed, or it wasn't, "Oh, I feel terrible, I'm going to die." It was a revelation that this was my time to die!

And I prayed a most unusual prayer. I prayed that God would grant me the permission to appear before the Throne of all Creation and plead for an extension of my life. Notice that even as I was praying then, it was a selfish prayer. I prayed for my physical life. I asked God to give it back to me. Only God could do that, that was the realisation that came to me.

And then what I heard next, I wish there was some way that I could tell you, that I could let you experience what I did! I wish there was some way you could hear the most beautiful voice that I heard! It was the very first time in my life that I heard a supernatural audible voice, and there's nothing in all of my past, no way that I could explain that voice to you, but it was totally captivating! I was taken in completely, I was totally under the spell of that voice.

At this time I was living on sheer will power, every breath I breathed was a labour of strength, and the pain was so great I knew that the human body could not long endure. I had to have some relief one way or the other. And that voice said to me, "Stop! Quit! Don't breathe! It'll all be over! Peace! Security! All that you ever need, all that you ever want will be yours!" Well, now, I had just prayed to God and here this voice appeared to be God talking to me! The tone implied that it was God, a voice like that could be nothing but God!

He said, "Quit breathing!" so I began to comply. I began to lessen my efforts to breathe, and then all of a sudden it hit me like a bolt of lightning. "No! You're lying! You're not God!" And when I had resisted him, Satan flew off, just like it says in the Book of James. (James 4:7) You see, even in that valley, beyond the veil of tears, Satan lied to me. He told me he was God and I almost believed him! But that's not unusual! I'd believed him so many times for 35 years. Why shouldn't he expect me to believe him again? He came within a heartbeat of being totally victorious, within a heartbeat.

The Second Heaven

I didn't know it, but the Angels were there all the time and they couldn't lift a hand to help me. They couldn't do anything until I had resisted Satan! And when I did, they withdrew my spirit from my body. Now, it would take me too long to go into that, but you must understand that our spirit is separate from our body.

The Angels withdrew my spirit from my body and carried me immediately into the second Heaven. The second Heaven is the air, the heavenlies, the atmosphere all around us. Only we had to pass through a dimension wall, beyond which flesh cannot go. The second Heaven is the place where Satan has his throne set up right now. The Bible calls him the Prince of the power of the air. (Ephesians 2:2) That's where all of his demons are which serve him now, that's their place of abode. It doesn't mean that that's where they are; a great deal of them are over here in this physical world right now. But that is their place of abode, the second Heaven.

The Earth's here below, the second Heaven's up there, and the third Heaven is far beyond the first two. The third Heaven is that which Paul referred to in 2 Corinthians 12:2. That is the place that God and all the Saints and the Angels are. Now there is no way to pass from this world in which we live to the third Heaven without going

through the second Heaven. There's no way to pass from that third Heaven to this world without going through that second Heaven. This is how Jesus was able to materialise and dematerialise, so to speak, in the closed rooms after He arose from the crucifixion. He simply walked back and forth through that dimension wall. They carried me back and forth through that wall several different times on this tour.

So the Angels withdrew my spirit, took me into that second Heaven, and there they took me on an extensive tour. They allowed me to see the demons and their classifications. Demons were revealed to me in forms that indicated their area of expertise.

Satan's plan from the day of Adam in the Garden of Eden was to set his throne up over here. He wants flesh to worship him, himself in the flesh. That's his whole plan, that's what the battle is all about, Satan wants his throne on this side of that dimension wall. One of the reasons God allowed me to see what I did is because that is about to happen! That is what this great spiritual warfare is all about now. That's why it's so intensified, that's why the demonic activity on this side of that spiritual wall is so great now. Satan, their god, their king, is about to be revealed incarnate in the body of a man. They call him the Antichrist, and that's about to take place. This is what all this spiritual warfare is all about.

Over there I got to see these demons working. Over there I discovered a caste system, a social system, a system of discrimination, where the demons up at the top had nothing but contempt for all the ones underneath them. They had a military chain of command structure there that any army on Earth would be proud of! And I discovered that there was no love at all in that world, none! I saw these demons work and carry out their orders with such zeal as they worked, such determination to conquer all flesh, yet they had no love for their master. He does not love them, and they have no love for one another! Because no love exists in that world, I actually felt that; it was a morbid, oppressive feeling when I was there! And I was wondering what it was.

I didn't ask too many questions while I was there, because in the first place I was unhappy with what the Angels were doing. When I got over in that world I don't know how I knew, but I knew where God was! And I already knew that only God, only God could grant my request. So I was anxious to get to God, but instead they took me in a different direction and this agitated me! I was irritated the whole time, but I wouldn't dare tell them that! (Laughter) Because I recognised immediately when I went into that world that I was there under the protection of the Holy Spirit, and those Angels escorted me under the protection of the Holy Spirit too.

It seems strange to say that in Heaven the Angels needed the protection of the Holy Spirit, but I'm talking about the second Heaven, where Satan is, and if you want to see why they need it, read the 10th Chapter of the Book of Daniel and you'll get a picture of why even the Angels need the protection of the Holy Spirit. Nothing can withstand the power of the Lord.

The Demonic Chain of Command

So as we moved about in this world I got to see all the different classifications, shapes and forms of demons, and some of those things were horrible. I saw some that looked like humans, some that looked like half human and half animal, some that looked like animals, and some were in forms so despicable that they would make you nauseated just to look at them! Some of the most hideous and horrible creatures that you could possibly imagine were all spirit beings! They were allowing me to see'm for what they really were.

And they told me about the sovereign will of Man and how the demons worked through deception. You see, they don't work through any power of their own. They all work in Satan's name; he delegates a party and he delegates a power. Does that sound familiar? When you work, who do you work for? Do you work in your power? Do you work in your name and in your strength? If you're a Christian, you work in the power of the Holy Spirit, by the authority of our Lord and Saviour, in His Name. Well, this is what the demons do. All that they do, they do in the name of Satan! All that they do, they do by his authority, and when this Bible refers to Satan and his power, it's talking about his underlings also. When he gives them authority they can exercise all of his power, just like he exercises it.

Well, the Angels showed me how the demons worked and they had, as I told you, a caste system, and I'll just tell you about a few of them. At the very top, Satan has what he calls "princes" that are in charge of areas he calls principalities. A principality is a designated area, that's all it is. It may be this church or it may be a nation, or it may be as small as one individual. Whatever becomes a great threat to Satan's great lie, he will place a prince over it and designate that as a principality, and he will give this prince all the authority that he needs to destroy or negate it, or put out the light of that Christian, so to speak.

If you belong to God, if you've been born again, you're in His hands. Satan can't touch your soul, but he can put your light out. He can't take that soul out of God's hand, because God's got the ability to hold that soul. But Satan can put your light out as a Christian, and that's what he's trying to do. You'd better believe that if you belong to God, Satan's there every day of your life trying to put your light out.

As I went through there and saw all of these demons and saw how they worked, I got to see the cream of Satan's crop. They were revealed to me in the form of human beings, only they were like giants, eight feet tall, and they call them "warring demons." To me they all looked like well-built, handsome, bronze soldiers, and they travelled in cadres or groups wherever they went in that world and in this world. And history books and newspapers are full of testimonials to their ability and power, for every war, every rumour of war, every treaty violation, every despicable act by one nation against another is a direct result of their influence! This is how powerful they are! They're continually spending their time trying to create turmoil amongst the nations.

Then they revealed to me the second most powerful demon, and when I met him, he was revealed to me in the form of a human being! I was astonished, since he turned out to be an old friend! As I look back on it now, I kind of would have felt he would have actually been number one in that demon world. He was introduced to me as the demon of greed. Think he's ever been to your house? Well, his influence is widely felt in this world today. If you don't believe it, read the newspapers and listen to the news; you'll see his power all over.

And we went on down the line until we got down to the bottom, to where those demons were in forms that were so despicable that they made you nauseous just to look at them. And these were the demons that were despised more than anything else by their own companions! Down there were all of the demons who were the more morbid, repulsive type, with expertise in all kinds of degeneration and things of this nature. These demons were at the bottom of the social order, despised by their own fellow demons.

Travelling to the Third Heaven

They brought me back into this world and they allowed me to see a demon actually possessing a human being. They allowed me to see the demons actually working in the physical world, and when they thought I had enough of that, they carried me back through that dimension wall to the second Heaven. And when we got back over there I knew immediately we were going in the right direction. I didn't know how I knew where the right direction was, but I knew it. We didn't communicate with our mouth, we didn't hear with our ears, it was like projecting the question on a thought wave and receiving the answer the same way. And we travelled with the speed of thought. The Angel would tell me where we were going, and when he said it we were there!--Just as soon as he would say it, we were there!

Now I told you I was agitated because I was concerned about this physical body. The spirit was away from it and I knew that this body could not live long without the spirit. The Bible says the body is dead without the spirit, and it was just laying there unconscious. The doctors thought I was all there, they thought I was whole except for the parts they had just cut out of me, but they didn't know the spirit was gone!--That was just a shell, a breathing shell that would never wake up if the spirit didn't come back! And I wanted that body to wake up, because I love this human life! I was agitated and anxious and irritated that the Angels didn't carry me immediately before God. So this time when we went back I knew where we were going.

During that time I found out that the Angels could read my mind, because sometimes they would tell me some of the things that I was thinking. They knew what I was thinking all the time.

On the way back we came to a place that was the most beautiful place I'd ever seen. I'm going to try to explain it to you the best I can with words, but I cannot do justice to anything that I saw there, because there's no way. We don't have words in our vocabulary to explain what I saw and what I experienced, so I'm doing the best that I can.

I told you what a blah, drab, morbid world that second Heaven was, and here I'm telling you that I came to a most beautiful place! It looked like it had an invisible wall around it, and even though the wall was invisible, I was aware that that wall was there. In the middle of this garden walkway or highway or pathway was a tunnel, with the most brilliant light. Oh, it was a brilliant light, and walking in this tunnel were what looked to me like human beings! I asked the Angel escorting me, "Who are those?" And the Angel told me, "Those are the Saints going Home." The ones who had died on Earth, who had left their physical body, were going Home. The Angel brought me to that place, and let me see from the outside the pathway that leads Home. All who die that belong to the Lord will go through that tunnel to get to the third Heaven. That invisible wall was the protection of the Holy Spirit, and every being in all of that second Heaven was aware of that.

I started towards that tunnel and the Angel stopped me, they wouldn't let me go in. No unauthorised spirit beings allowed. No demons could go in that tunnel at all. In that tunnel were only the Saints that were going Home. With each of those Saints was their Guardian Angel, and some of those Saints were accompanied by a whole host of Angels! I wondered about that, since I found out I only had one! (Laughter) I wondered who those important people were that were accompanied by a whole host of Angels!

Well, when I started in that tunnel they stopped me. I said, "I asked to go to the Father!" They answered, "We'll be going, but we have to travel outside." This is one of the times we did not travel at the speed of thought. We

travelled at the same speed as the Saints were travelling going Home. I was outside that tunnel travelling parallel to them, and as the gates of the third Heaven came into view, I noticed a peculiar thing happening all around me in the second Heaven. The demons were falling farther and farther behind.

The Saints Come Marching In

When we arrived outside the gates of the third Heaven, they were literal gates! I looked up and I couldn't see the top! I looked to the side and I couldn't see a corner in any direction. I looked all around, and there were no demons, not even in sight of the gates of the third Heaven.

I was aware of the presence of the Almighty Father, His awesome power just radiated through the gates! I knew what was on the other side of those gates! I was aware of the greatest joy--I wasn't experiencing that joy, but I was aware of it--that was on the other side of those gates. And I wanted to go and present my case right away, but they wouldn't let me! They insisted that I stay there and watch as those Saints were admitted into the gates of Heaven one by one.

I observed a strange thing, that no two Saints were permitted to enter at the same time. They entered one by one. They didn't explain to me why that was, but I've done a lot of praying and a lot of reading and a lot of thinking about that since I've been back, and put it with some of the other things they showed me. I believe it's kind of a salute or tribute to that individual's will, their choice. Every individual that walks through those gates does so by their own choice, by their own will. I believe this is sort of a salute, that all of Heaven stands and watches as you, an individual, walk through the gates of Heaven into your reward. What a great salute that is to the individual!

You know, a husband and wife sometimes live together for so many years they get to thinking alike and acting alike and looking alike. But when it comes to making that decision, they have to do it individually. My wife said we'll never look alike, because I don't have any hair! (Laughter) But the individual makes that decision, and I think that entrance was a tribute to it. So I watched as 50 Saints were admitted into the gates of the third Heaven!

Now I'm going to tell you something that I've told people all over this country in the last year since God has brought me out. We have done what God told us to do, and in one year He has carried us to all fifty states, 20 foreign nations, and given us three million dollars of radio and television time, and it never even cost us a postage stamp! So you may not believe what I have to say, but you've got to acknowledge that God did this, because this little 'ol country boy couldn't do it!

The Holy Spirit told me, as those 50 Saints walked through the gates of Heaven, the exact same time they died on Earth, that 1,950 other human beings died and they didn't make it! You know what I'm telling you? Only 50 out of 2,000 made it to Heaven! Wow! That's 2-1/2 percent! If that's representative of the population of this world, 97.5 percent of the population of this world wouldn't make it tonight if He came!

What do you think General Motors, Ford or Chrysler would do with a publicity man that couldn't get more than 2-1/2 percent of the business in 2,000 years? What about us preachers? Two thousand years we've been evangelising the world, and today we've got 2-1/2 percent of the people ready? There's something wrong somewhere!

Standing Boldly Before Heaven's Gates

Well, anyway, I started in the gate, but the Angel stopped me and told me I couldn't enter yet. So I protested! I said, "If I can't talk to God, my body will die, and that's what I'm doing here. That's my whole purpose, I've come to plead for my life!" The Angel said, "Well, stand by the gate, plead your case. He'll hear and answer." And I did. I didn't do it because I wanted to come back and serve God, that wasn't my motive. My motive even at that point was selfish. I wanted my life.

So I stepped up there to talk to God. Hadn't I been a good 'ol boy, preacher, teacher? Hadn't I done all these wonderful works in the Name of the Lord? It would be a simple thing for me to get an extension of my life, so I began by telling Him what a great sacrificial life I had lived, how much I loved Him, all the good deeds I had performed in His Name, and now I was in trouble--all I needed was a little favour, an extension of my life. Boldly I came there to receive what God had for me.

When I was through, I heard the voice of God. Now that voice was not that sweet voice that I'd heard in the valley. Oh, it wasn't even related to it in any way! You take the noise of all the storms and volcanoes and tornadoes and you put them together, and in no way could they mimic what I heard! When the voice of God rolled down on me from over those walls, before the words hit me, just the tone of His wrath had knocked me flat on my face.

God proceeded to tell me the true story of my life. He told me what I really was. He told me the life that I had really lived! He told me about the false god that I had in my life! And He told me that my works were in vain, that my faith was dead, and that it was an abomination to offer to Him that kind of life and call it a life of worship!

I had no strength when His wrath hit me, immediately I was like a limp rag! I couldn't protest out loud, but

I was protesting within myself. I could not believe it was me He was talking about! "No, no, no! This cannot be me! He has me mixed up with somebody else!" I could tell Him the times I'd preached! I could tell Him the times I'd taught and testified about the Lord! I could tell Him about the times I'd shared what I had with others. All of those things, I could tell Him about it! I knew when they happened! I knew they were real! He couldn't be talking about me!! But He was talking about my works, not my Salvation.

You see, my works had all burned up, all of them. Just like this Bible said, not one stood the test of the fire! I was standing before Him as naked, with nothing. I knew what that man felt like who said, "Lord, Lord, have we not done many wonderful, marvellous works in Your Name? In Your Name have we not cast out devils?" I know what he felt like when the Lord said, "Depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity!" I often wondered what that was in the Bible for. I now know.

Back to My Body, and My Return to Heaven

When He got through with me, the Angels came and carried me away like a limp rag, through that second Heaven, back into that hospital room, through the dimension wall, right there where my body was on that bed, and it was not until I reached my body that I gained my composure! "No, no, no! God did not answer me!" Even at that point I was still blind and couldn't see! "God did not say yes or no, and I have to know! Take me back!" Since God is the God of all, and all of this was planned from the very beginning, and here my great Father was dealing with me in gentleness and mercy and love, they carried me back.

On the way I was trying to figure, "What am I going to plead on now? What am I going to use to offer to God as justification for giving me another chance? No works, He's already told me. My life is bare, I stood before Him naked, what can I say now? How can I plead my case?"

You see, the false god I'd had in my life had been self, Everything I'd done I did for me first, and I preached to satisfy my own conscience! I served because it soothed my conscience! I testified about Jesus because I knew I ought to do that! Because the Bible said it! So I was doing it for myself, because I didn't know what Matthew 6:33 was all about. I had it in reverse. Matthew 6:33 is the command that you ought to have indelibly printed on your brain. It says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these other things shall be added unto you."

I had that reversed. I was seeking those other things first, and then when I had time I wanted to give it to God! He wouldn't take it! He told me He wouldn't accept it in the days of the Pharisees, and He's not about to accept it in this Laodicean church age. My friend, I found out that Jesus Christ must be first, first in your heart, because He won't take second place! You waste your time trying to serve flesh and then offer what you have left to God. That's an abomination!--And He doesn't want it, He won't have it! He told me in person He wouldn't have it! And I believe Him.

The next time I stand there, He'll say to me, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!" I haven't stopped since the day He told me to go, I've been running as hard as I can to do what He said! It's cost me! I closed up my house and left kids, grandkids, cattle, land and everything else, and started living out of a van and a truck, a motel, or wherever! But He's going to say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" the next time, because I know what that command's all about this time.

On the way back, I tried to figure out how in the world I would plead my case, so I thought about old Hezekiah. I remembered when I was at a seminary studying about Hezekiah, now there was a good 'ol boy! He had good intentions in his heart. But you know, sort of like me, he just had trouble bringing them up into everyday living! He sort of couldn't get those good intentions out in everyday living! That's the way I was, too. Oh, my intentions were pure as gold! I'd plead on that!

Pleading with God

So when I got back there I remembered what happened the first time, I wasn't near as bold! But I had to have an answer to my question. So meekly I stepped up this time, looking for that wrath to come over that wall. But it didn't. I never heard His anger anymore. He let me stand, He let me talk, He started out answering me in a tone of pity. He was actually speaking in sorrow. The great God that made it all, the Creator that made every one of us, everything, that awesome, powerful God, He left it all to deal with me. He bartered words with a little, insignificant nothing. Here I was before Him trying to find something in my vocabulary that would justify God giving me another chance. And as I would bring forth a proposition, gently, meekly, He would show me how it had already been tried and it wouldn't work. Desperately I was trying to find the words somewhere or another that would justify Him giving me my life! I had no words, there must be a word somewhere! There must be something that would convince Him to give me my life!

So I tried everything, desperately trying to find something that God could justify to give me my life back! It

was a desperate search. Like a drowning man will cling to straws, I was trying everything! And when there were no other words left, all was gone, there was just one thing. It had never really meant much to me before, but it had worked!

So, in desperation, I tried the last thing I had, my promise! Have you ever been in a storm, and said, "Lord, take my hand, I'll be the best Christian you ever had"? A few days later when the sun's shining, you probably forgot all about that promise. "Well, Father," I said, "if You'll just give me this second chance, I promise You"--shouldn't have said that, but I did--"I promise You that I'll do better the next time!"

He called me by my name. "Howard Pittman," He said, "you've promised before." He didn't have to say any more. There they were, right before me, every promise I'd made to God in 35 years!--Broken! Not a one of'm intact! Somehow I had managed to break every promise I had made to God in 35 years! Every one of'm! I didn't know I'd broken all those promises! My intentions were good and pure! It has aptly been said that the road to Hell is paved with good intentions. Don't you ever dare to go through this life hoping your intentions will get you into Heaven! They won't.

Discovering God as My Father

When it was all over, I had nothing left to say. I fell on my knees brokenhearted and said "amen" to my own condemnation. At that moment the most wonderful thing of all happened to me, the scales fell off my eyes! The glorious light of God's great knowledge filled my soul! On that Throne was no longer that awesome powerful God whose power just radiates all over the place, but there was my real Father, my very best Friend. For the first time in my life I really knew Who God was!--My real Father!

Oh, I had a wonderful earthly father, we had a marvellous experience and a marvellous fellowship. He was more than my father, he was my friend. I could go to him with all my problems, and I could confide in him. This day I found my real Father, and that earthly relationship that I had with my earthly father was magnified a million times!

And then I began to experience pain. All the pain that I suffered in the flesh was nothing compared to what I was experiencing there when I realised that I had hurt my Father. I had hurt my real Father through disobedience, and I began to feel that pain, and when I hurt He began to hurt! I wish there was some way I could show you that pain.

Maybe you parents might have come closer than anybody else to knowing what I'm talking about. You feel it when you have that little one beg to do something and you tell him no because you're afraid they'll get hurt, and they go behind your back and do it anyway, and you hear those screams! Your first reaction is anger, but by the time you reach him and pick him up, you see the hurt in their face and the tears on their cheeks, and suddenly all that anger's gone! Their pain becomes your pain, and what you would give if you could just take that pain away from them and bear it yourself, but you can't do it! Neither could my Father lift my pain.

I'd always preached that Jesus died to save the world, but at that moment I found out what it was all about, what He really died for! He didn't just die to save the world, He died to save you!--You are the one who is so precious to Him! Salvation is a personal thing! He loves you, and had you been the only one, He would have still died on that cross! It was not the nails that held Him there, it was His Love for you. This is how important you are! This is how precious you are! And I had to find it out that way. I realised that my life was no longer important any more, God was real and that's what was important. And when my life was no longer important, He gave it back to me.--Only when it was not important any more. The Prodigal Son had come home. Finally He could talk to me.

The Message God Gave Me

I would like to give you these five points of the message that He had for me to deliver to this world. The message I give to you, God gave to me before the Throne of all Creation. First, addressed to those who claim to be Christians in this world today: Read the last letter to the churches in the Book of Revelation, Chapter 3, verses 14-22, the "Letter to the Laodicean church." That letter, I testify to you, from God Himself, is written to this generation. This is the Laodicean church age in which we live! That is your letter, read it and read it well, for it describes the overwhelming majority of so-called Christians today who go to church on Sunday to play church, and during the rest of the week they live like the Devil. They have an intellectual, surface type of religion and don't know the awful condition they're in. That letter is to this age, because this is the Laodicean church age or the close of church history in which we live.

Point number two: Satan is a personal god, a personal Devil, as far as you're concerned. He's a god to the demons and he's a god to the lost people. But he is a personal Devil and he deals with you on a personal basis just as the Lord deals with you! He's a great liar, a great deceiver, and a worthy adversary. Peter says he goes about daily like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Take note, don't think that you can beat him. But take heart, if you belong to the Lord, the power you have is greater than that which Satan has. And you may command Satan and his

demons if you belong to the Lord! Know what you're doing!

Point number three: Those who profess to be working Christians and leaders cannot have any power in their life at all unless they're living Christians.--In deed, not in word only, but in deed. Believing the Word is only the start of it, you must live it seven days a week! You must live it 24 hours a day! You must live it in the confines of your home, out in your community, in your job. Whatever it is you do, do it for God's glory, the Kingdom first, for all your priorities are changed! Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "Old things are passed away, all things have become new," and serving Christ should be the goal of your life. You're not even a citizen in this world any more! Your citizenship is in the Kingdom and there rests all of your priorities!

Point number four: To the world, this is Noah's second day in which we live! As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Coming of the Son of Man! Commerce, working and planning goes on every day without any thought of the storm clouds that are gathering on the horizon! The world does not look, the world does not hear! In seeing they do not see, in hearing they do not hear. For all the signs of the Coming of the Lord are presently gathering on the horizon. He's about to come back.

Point number five: This is the greatest news since the Day of Pentecost, and every born-again child of God should leap with great joy within themselves when they receive this news! God's recruiting an army, right now! He's going to shake this world one more time with that army! That is the purpose of it. He's going to deliver into their hands the spirit of Elijah! By those manifesting God's great power, He's literally going to shake this world one more time! My friend, blessed are you if you're amongst that army, for you're going to bring the spirit of Elijah into this world for the purpose of making straight the paths of the Coming of the Lord! For He is about to come again!

There are some of the army here in this building tonight! I hope all of you are, because this is going to be a wonderful and marvellous blessing! Can you imagine what it looked like when Peter and John walked by the Beautiful Gate and reached down and healed the lame man? "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" I'm telling you soldiers now, that greater things than this ye will do in the Name of Jesus Christ, to the point of calling fire down from Heaven, even calling the dead out of the grave!

This is about to happen, you're going to see greater power than what was delivered on the Day of Pentecost! You will see it, and the world will deny it. I could go on and tell you the rest, but my friend, the one thing that I do want to tell you now is that you can have no part in all of this great news unless first you are born again!--Unless first your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

My friends, all the works of my hands burned up one time. I know for a fact you can work and build a fine home, do anything else you want to do in this world, spend all your time engaged in materialistic pursuit, but it won't stand the test of the fire. Don't go out and do what you want to do for yourself first, and then when you've got time, a little left, give it to God. And if you're playing church, you're better off robbing banks. Don't come here to play church, because God won't have that either, that's an abomination to Him. I'll tell you now, I've been there! I'm testifying what I saw.

The Lord told me that many would listen, and millions have already heard me, but He said only a few would hear. Are you one of those that will hear? Are you lost tonight? God doesn't want your last dollar, friend! He wants your first one! Then when He gets through, if you've got any left, you can have it. But don't give Him the last one! He won't take it. He wants first of everything, and that includes your time. He wants you most of all. Oh, how precious you really are!--So precious that He died for you! So don't leave without meeting Him, and don't meet Him without serving Him! And when you do go out, look up, for your redemption draweth nigh!