

God gives us the gift of a **new character** (heart). He said,

**“I will give you a new heart and cause you to know me / to return to me / to fear me / to walk in and obey my statutes.”**

(Jeremiah 24:7 / 32:38/ Ezekiel 36:26-27)

God never forgives a person He does not change. He never lets us into heaven, until He gets heaven into us. He never gets us out of hell, until He gets the hell out of us.

Matthew Henry said, “If God let an unchanged person into heaven, he would be miserable and would pick the angel’s pockets.

Paul persecuted and, no doubt, had many Christians taken from their home to be imprisoned or executed (Acts 9). But after Jesus forgave him and changed him, he said, “I am a **new creation** in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5). Most of us are sick and tired of our selfishness hurting ourselves and the people we love. It takes us awhile to get rid of all this, but when Jesus changes us, we are on our way.

A factory worker was converted and baptized; and a fellow worker asked him if he really believed Jesus turned water into wine. He said he didn’t know about that; but what he did know was, that in his house God had turned whiskey into milk for his children and new clothes for his wife. Country singer, T. Graham Brown was converted from being an alcoholic and he put his prayer for help in a song:

Tonight I’m as low as any man can go /  
I’m down and I can’t fall much farther. /  
And once upon a time, You turned the water  
into wine. / Now on my knees, I’m turning  
to you Father. / Could you help me turn  
the wine back into water.

God answered his prayer and He will answer yours and mine.

Our third gift is a **home in heaven**. Before Jesus died, He promised His disciples, “In my Father’s house are many rooms. I am going to **prepare a place for you** and I will come and get you, so you can be with Me.” The first one of them He came to get was James; who was beheaded twelve years after this (Acts 12). As the hymn says:

In the darkness I see; He’ll be waiting for me.  
I won’t have to cross Jordan alone.

This hope is unspeakably joyful **for us**; but even more so for the hope of meeting our **loved ones** who have died. In the 1870’s a fine Christian lawyer, Horatio Spafford, and his wife, had a son who had died and a little while later lost precious, personal keepsakes in the Chicago fire. Feeling his family needed a vacation, Spafford sent his wife and four of his daughters to England ahead of him. In route, their ship was hit by a freighter and 126 people lost their lives in a span of twelve minutes. His wife Ana was found floating on a piece of wreckage. She sent Horatio a telegram with two words, “Saved alone”. All four children had drowned. His only remaining daughter said he sailed across the Atlantic to be with his wife; and close to the spot where his children died, he wrote this great hymn:

When peace like a river attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll.  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say  
It is well, it is well with my soul.

And Lord, haste the day when faith shall be  
sight,  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll.  
The trump shall resound and the Lord shall  
descend

Even so, it is well with my soul.