

TWELVE INCHES FROM HEAVEN

“You believe in God. That is good, but the demons believe this and tremble with fear.” - James 2:19

A little boy was crying in the hall of a hospital because his granddaddy had just died. His pastor put his arm on his shoulder and told him he would see his granddaddy in heaven one day. The little boy said, “Preacher, how far is it to heaven?” The Pastor told him to put his hand over his heart and asked him what he felt. When the little boy said, “I feel my heart beating.” The Pastor said, “Heaven is only one heartbeat away.”

We all live one heartbeat from away from heaven and sadly, also, from hell. When I came to Christ at age 22 and got on the right “road” (Matt. 7), I realized I had been living, “Twelve inches from heaven” – the distance between my head and my heart. And I thought I was going there. I knew *about* Jesus but I didn’t know Him personally. He was a ‘far-off’ God I prayed to when I wanted something ‘real bad’ or did something ‘real bad’.

I believed He died for my sins because He died for everybody. Growing up in the South, Christianity was all around me like air. It came through my radio: Quartet music and preachers yelling about Jesus. Added to this; my mother made me go to Sunday School. I learned a lot, not because I listened, but mostly by accident.

I knew about *sin* because of my bad language and rudeness to my mother. I knew about *God* because I knew somebody had to have *made* me and flowers and

frogs. I heard about *Judgment Day, heaven and hell* and I had no reason not to believe it. From Christmas I knew God became a *human being* who died on the cross for me and from Easter I knew He rose from the dead. Here is the real “kicker”; my mother, who didn’t go to church, taught me what kind of life she wanted me to live, and it happens to be, the same life God wanted me to live.

For as long as I can remember, she said, “Bobby, treat people the way you want to be treated”; and she let me know that included the black people living near us.

(Matthew 7:12). That’s what we call the “Golden Rule” Jesus talked about. She also told me to help people no matter who they are. That’s the “Good Samaritan” kind of “love” Jesus talked about. (Luke 10:25-37) The Golden Rule and the Good Samaritan (loving, helpful) way of life, Jesus says, means we are obeying ALL God’s commands. Romans 13:8, says, **“Anyone who loves (helps) his or her fellow man has fulfilled the law (OT).”**

We don’t go to heaven by living by the golden rule because we need God’s forgiveness for the times we have not done it and the times we have hurt people or failed to help them when we could have. And we will not go to heaven if our goal in life is to do it – not because we have to but because the who sacrificed Himself so we can be forgiven wants us to.