

THE LAST MILE OF THE JOURNEY

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Open your Bibles to Acts 28. I am generally a fifty-five minute preacher, and I cannot preach fifty-five minutes between now and 12:00 P.M. I can preach, and it will take a miracle of mind to shorten. I will just cut here and there, and we will get out, all right? We at least need to get out in time for the service tonight anyhow. Acts 28:1-15: *And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary. And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days. And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome. And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.*

Dear Father, make us a blessing today to this people. Lift burdens, I pray. Encourage heavy hearts, and give light on dark places, in Jesus name, Amen.

Now, you seem a little tight this morning. Maybe this will help you to laugh a little. It is not a sin to laugh in God's house. If it is, then we are in trouble. This is not part of my message, but I think I ought to read it this morning. I will just take the time to read it. There was a man back in 1917 who took a pair of shoes to a cobbler to be half-soled. The next day, he was introduced into the Army or inducted into the Army, went overseas, won the war, came home, married, raised seven children, survived the Great Depression, served in World War II, weathered inflation and taxes, and in 1963, decided to retire. He sold his house. As he and his wife were cleaning out the attic, he found the suit he wore the day he was drafted for World War I. In the pocket was the ticket for the pair of shoes he had forgotten. The next day, he went to the address on the ticket, and to his surprise, the shop was still there. He went inside and handed the ticket to the girl at the counter. She stared at it and then took it to a shriveled little man in the rear of the shop. He looked at the ticket quizzically and then came to the front of the store. "Is this your ticket?" he asked. The customer nodded. "Are these your shoes?" Another nod. The old man looked at the ticket again. "Okay," he said, "they'll be ready tomorrow." Now, that is what you call procrastination – "They'll be ready tomorrow."

I want to speak this morning on the subject, "The Last Mile of the Journey" or "The Last mile of the Way." In World War II, they showed us films entitled, "Why We Fight." Those films were designed for several purposes. One reason was to make you so mad you would want to fight. They were shown also to show the cruelty of our enemies, and also so that when we went into battle, we would not think we were going on a picnic, but mentally, we would be prepared for combat. Now the Christian life is oftentimes presented in an absolutely and entirely wrong light. Some have the idea that when you get saved it is a life of ease the rest of the way in, and that just does not happen to be so in the Word of God. People who think that are disillusioned when they get saved. I believe in telling folks that to start with that, it will cost you. Paul told his converts, and I do not think you need to slip up on people you know and hide this from them. I think you ought to tell them just as the Scripture tells in Acts 14. Paul won these people to Christ. Acts 14:22:

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. When you get saved, there will be some rough times ahead. There will be trouble; there will be problems; there will be heartaches; there will be sorrows; but God will never leave us or forsake us. He has promised not to desert us on the way to Glory. He said nothing shall ever separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. He does not promise us a comfortable journey, but He does promise us a safe journey. If it is a safe journey, then bless God for that. It would be all right. I do not despise comfort. I like comfort. The way to Glory is not a comfortable ride. It is a safe journey but far from being a comfortable journey.

Now, I want to digress this morning from my normal style of preaching, and I want to use this in way of application of Paul's journey to Rome in the matter of our Christian life. This is a little different, but I think it will work out all right. As we look at these verses in Acts 28, there are several things you can expect as a Christian. Mark them down. You can expect them just as sure as I am sitting here.

NUMBER ONE, YOU CAN EXPECT SOME DETOURS. Paul got aboard the ship heading toward Rome when they got into a terrible storm. They were shipwrecked, and they wound up on the island of Melita. They were not planning to go there, but their ship was wrecked. They found themselves weather beaten and torn, and the ship destroyed on the island of Melita. You can expect some detours in your Christian experience. When you think about a detour, they happen suddenly and without warning. You are going over a highway, and all of a sudden over the hill, there is a sign that says detour. You are late already, and you are trying to make time. You have to take a detour, and it runs you all down through the woods somewhere. It absolutely catches you off guard when they appear suddenly and without warning. One day down at a good man's house named Job, they were having a good time. He was a family man. He was a wealthy man. He was a godly man. He was a praying man. He was a man that loved God. One day out of the clear blue sky, there were some detours in his life. One thing happened right after another. You know the story of Job and how everything suddenly hit. You may be on a detour today, or you may have a detour that is coming up, and you are not aware of it. One night as I preached in the old building years ago, a lady left our services, went home, and found her husband dead. Now that was a shock – totally unexpected and unprepared for. Detours come across our lives suddenly and without warning. We seldom know the length of a detour. Sometimes, they put that say, "One and a half miles" or "four and a half miles," but sometimes the length is not there. You do not know how long it will be. I think of a young man by the name of Joseph. He had a detour of thirteen years. He went down into Egypt and was sold for a slave. He was lied upon, slandered, and forgotten in a dungeon. Thirteen years later, he surfaces. He seems to be back on the main road, but it was not a detour; it was the main road with God. It may look like a detour to you, but it is a main road with God. Detours are mostly rough and winding and make us slow down. We are going fast, and then we have to slow down. We hate the fifty-five miles per hour speed limit. I do. Do you? The road is here, and all these horses are prancing about, just wanting to be turned lose. The sign says, "55 mph." Slow down. Slow down. We hate to slow down. God sometimes says, "Hey, you are going too fast. I cannot talk to you." He sends us on a detour, and then He sends you on the winding road. We are forced to slow down. There is something good about detours. You see a lot of nature that you would never have seen out on the main road. On the main roads, you see the billboards and traffic. That gets monotonous. On the detours, you see the trees, meadows, fields, and all that God made. You are able to think about God again and to slow down and meditate. God said He wanted to talk to you; so He send you off on a detour. Then when we get back on the main road, we surely remember the good road when we get off of the detour. Something else about detours is our response to them. You can turn around and go back. I read about some poor folks in Pennsylvania – a man, his wife, and her two sisters – who because of ill health committed suicide. "I am not going to go on this detour. I am not going to face the detour." You can turn around and go back. God put the detour in your life, but you can turn your back and go the other way. When you go back the other way, you are in double trouble. "Now, I could do that." or "I can take the detour and grumble all the way." Gripe, Gripe, Gripe – we can gripe and grumble all the way. God puts these detours in our lives. We can gripe and grumble about them the rest of our lives. It does not change anything. We are still on a detour, but it does not accomplish that which God would have in our lives. Or, we can accept the detours as the will of God for our lives, move on, and take Romans 8:28: *And*

we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. The detours of life happen suddenly. Sometimes they manifests themselves in a broken home. One day, a lady who lived right here on this street, came into my office. She was a member of this church. One day, her husband came in and said, "I don't love you any more. Good-bye." That happened suddenly and unexpectedly. It shattered her life and really put her into a detour in direction that she never thought she would have to bear. That is a detour. Sometimes, detours may take the direction of shattered health. You are enjoying good health, and all of a sudden, you are not. There is a dear lady who sits right down here that has been so faithful down through the years. This dear saint of God loves the Lord. Her health went to pieces. She had to stop teaching her class and the activity of soul winning. Many times, she came to me and said, "Preacher, pray that I can get my class back. Pray that I can go out on soul winning." God put her on a detour to teach her something else, to draw her close to himself, and to manifest himself in a new area of life. Detours may bring shattered health. Detours might take the direction of wayward children. I cannot think of anything that so shatters somebody as their children doing wrong. "I couldn't sleep at night." It destroys your sleep, and it destroys your digestive system. You sit down to the table and try to eat. You do not know where your boy or your girl is. Now that would be some detour and very difficult to swallow. There are those who face the detour. It totally rearranges their whole life. Detours might manifests themselves in financial reversal. I have known those who all of a sudden were broke. All of a sudden, they have lost their seniority. All of a sudden, they are without a job and have to start all over again in mid-life. That is some detour. Detours may be disappointment – in others, ourselves, or our plans. There are some lessons on detours. I think of Dr. Lee Roberson. One night, he was in a revival meeting and was summoned to a phone. His wife on the other end said, "Joy just died." That was their baby daughter. I heard Dr. Roberson tell about getting in his car and driving back toward Chattanooga to be with his wife to try to hold her up. His heart was broken. As he drove along desiring earnestly to get to Chattanooga, all of a sudden, there was a sign that said, "Detour." He said, "It smote my heart. I was angry. I spoke to God and said, 'God, why a detour now? I need to get home.'" Dr. Roberson sad the detour was for several reasons: "It allowed me to really get a hold of myself and in touch with the Lord so that when I got home I could be of service to my wife. God had slowed me down so I could think." Not only that, from the detours out of that sorrow and from the detours in his life came Camp Joy. Camp Joy is where boys and girls begin to live. Thousands and thousands of boys and girls have come to know Jesus Christ as personal Savior. I do not know how many hundreds of thousands have attended that camp without charge, summer after summer. God's detours in life have a purpose. God will accomplish His purpose if we just stay still. Several years ago I had a detour. I was going wide open, and I did not have any emotional reservoir. All of a sudden, the carpet was pulled out from under me, and I had emotional exhaustion. I was out of my pulpit for three months. I want to tell you that it came suddenly, swiftly, and unexpectedly. But during those three months, the Lord ministered to my heart and showed me His tenderness and His love and how much He cared for my by how He made my bed in my sickness. It makes a difference. Detours have purpose. They are not accidental. God said: *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God . . .* If you are on a detour today, do not panic. Stay with the Lord. "My Father's way may twist and turn. My heart may throb and ache, but in my soul, I'm glad I know He maketh no mistake. My cherished plans may go astray; my hopes may fade away; but still I'll trust my Lord to lead for He doth know the way. Though night be dark and it may seem that day will never break, I'll pin my faith, my all in him for He maketh no mistake. There's so much now I cannot see; my eyesight is far too dim, but come what may I'll simply trust and leave it all to Him. For by and by, the mist will lift and plain it all He'll make, through all the way, though dark to me, He made not one mistake." I believe when we get to Heaven we will agree with God's plan and say, "Well, God you did right and just the best for me. Glory to God." There are detours in life.

NUMBER TWO, WE CAN EXPECT SOME DISCOMFORT. In the book of Acts, Paul said: . . . *they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.* Now, I like comfort, don't you? I do not think it means you are not spiritual because you like to be comfortable. Many folks went to seed on this matter of self-denial, just to make themselves abuse their body. That is not spirituality. That is abusing the flesh. Colossians tells us that neglecting the body does not honor the Lord. We

like comfort, but we can expect some discomfort. For Paul, it meant shipwreck. It meant being stoned and beaten. It meant pain, hunger, thirsting, and fasting. You are going to be uncomfortable sometimes on the road to Heaven. God did not promise you a comfortable journey. He will allow us discomfort on the way, but you will look back and discover that things are funny now. They were not funny then. I may look back. I did not feel too much like laughing then, but they are funny now. I am glad that I can laugh about them now and have discovered we can rejoice over them later on. There are discomforts on the way to Heaven. I think about when I went to Tennessee Temple Schools. I left Winterhaven and the business world and went off like Abraham did, not knowing whither he went. I did not; I was scriptural. "Lord, here am I. If you want me, here I am." I took off. We rented an upstairs apartment. It had three rooms, a hall, and a bath – not a path but a bath. A single fellow stayed in one room. Some friends of mine, Helen and Cecil Lawrence and their two children lived in one room. My wife and I and our three girls lived in the other room. There were three rooms – five in one room, four in another room, and one in the other room. We ate in the hall. We put our money together and tried to get along. That was some time. Now, it was not the most comfortable time in my life. It is funny now. In that old house that I lived in in Chattanooga Valley is where I began to pastor a little church. They did not have anything, and I did not have anything. Between us, we had nothing. I had no house. Nothing plus nothing equals nothing. In that old house, the rats had the "World Series." I mean the NFL league played a game every night in the attic when we went to bed. I nailed all the holes up so that they could not get into the house and carry us off. They had a real time in the attic. The girls would get scared. The old house did not have any doors on the inside. It was so cold that one night all of us got into the same bed. I mean five of us – how many children were there that night? Let me see – I went to school with two and came out with four, and we had one since then. I have to remember. It was a bed full of kids. We could not lie lengthwise. We had to lie crosswise and tried to have enough cover to keep us all warm. Now, I think about that. It was not comfortable, but it is funny now. I think about the places I have stayed. I like to sleep when I go to bed. I like a good bed. I like a firm bed. If it sags, I do not sleep. I have gone places in meetings, and they have put me up in a motel. I would sit down on the mattress, and the mattress would slap me on both shoulders. "Dear Lord, what am I doing here? I won't be sleeping tonight." I was in Grand Turk, and they put us in the motel there. It was the number one motel in Grand Turk. I had all the shutters or shades – or whatever you call them, anyhow – lifted up, and I said, "Boy, this would be nice at night with the wind coming across there." I forgot that the owners of the hotel were superstitious, and to keep the demons out, they closed those things at night. With all that wonderful air, they closed the windows at night. The mattress came over with Noah. I like firm mattresses, but this was firm and lumpy. It was like it was filled with gravel and rocks. I got on that thing and could not go to sleep. Then, I took my pillow and laid down on top of my pillow to try to smooth it out, and I could not go to sleep. I got on the floor and put two pillows on the floor and kind of got comfortable. They did not have any walls in that hotel, and the only thing that separated you between and the other rooms was a curtain. I heard a fellow get up next door and go to the bathroom about 2:00 in the morning. He decided he would sight see on the way back, pulled open the curtains, and was looking in the rooms. He opened mine, and I said, "Are you looking for something?" It scared him to death. Then, he said, "You're sleeping on the floor?" I said, "I'm trying." I will tell you that on the way to Heaven sometimes it is not going to be very comfortable, and you'll spend some restless nights. The food is not going to be just exactly right. The bed is not going to be just exactly right. That is the way home. Somebody once said, "Who would mind the journey if the road leads home?" I was in the service overseas. We got off a ship in Naples, Italy, in the rain and drove out into the woods. We were in the back of a truck, and it was pouring rain. I said, "Okay, fellows, throw your bags off." I looked out, and the water was starting to get deep. They said, "Where?" I said, "Just anywhere, throw them off." The tent blew down, and there we were in the cold and the rain. If you think that you are going to live in the Holiday Inn every day of your life on the way to Heaven, you are badly mistaken. Somebody has informed you wrong. It is not all that way. Now, sometimes He will let you stay in the Holiday Inn, but He will not let you stay too long. It will spoil you.

NUMBER THREE, WE WILL EXCITE DEVILS. They were building a fire. While they were building a fire, I am trying to watch the clock and not build a fire too hot. It will excite devils. He built a fire and got bit. When you turn on the heat, the devils come out. Did you know that when you start serving the

Lord, the devils come out. That thing was dormant until the heat got to him. When the heat began to rise, that thing became alive and bit him. You get saved, and you go to your job to live for God. You turn on the heat, not trying to be a pharisee but to live a good Godly life, and the devils will get after you. You had better believe that. You go home. There are some folks who live at home, and the devils live at home with them. It may be a mate. I am talking about the mental torment — abuse and ridicule. The devils come out when you stir the heat. You can expect devils. I can think of places where I have ever been except for one. They tried to run me out of town. I do not know why anybody would not love me. Do you? I cannot figure that out. They tried to run me out of town. Folks make faces at me while I preached and wrote notes. They challenged me from the floor. When you start to live for the Lord, the heat gets on and the devils will come out. There is a promise that is just as sure as John 3:16. 2 Timothy 3:12: *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* I am not talking about persecution because we are cranks. I am not talking about that. I am not talking about persecution because we are just hard to get along with. We are asking for that. *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* Mark it down. You do not want to make enemies, and you do not want rub people the wrong way. Simply wanting to do right, you are going to stir up the devil. He will come after you. You can expect troubles along the way. How do you take care of them? Build a fire high. He fell into the fire, and the fire took care of him. Do not put the fire out because devils appear. Do not do that. Just add some more fuel to the fire. If you add enough fuel to the fire, it will take care of the devils.

NUMBER FOUR, WE WILL ENDURE DERISION. In verse 4, they said, “Why he’s a murderer.” Do you know who the greatest enemies of America are? This crowd here. I have two books. They are the most wicked books I have ever seen and the most dishonest. One is called *Holy Terror*, by Flo Conway and Jim Seigelman. They were challenged on television, and they backed off and cut out. Why? They were dishonest. This is a fundamentalist war on America’s freedoms, religions, politics, and our private lives. This book is a new subversive anti-Americanism of the religious rights. If you are a conservative or a fundamentalist, you are the greatest enemy of this country. Well, wait just a minute. That is the crowd that built this nation. When you become right with the Lord and set out to live for God, you can expect derision. There is derision on television. There is this derision about Slaughter House Five. They make you look like a first class idiot, yet they are the censors. They have censored everything right and decent out of the books and called us book burners, yet we have not burned anything. They are the book burners. Derision. If you think that when you become a Christian, nobody is ever going to make fun of you, then you have another thought coming. In fact, it is kind of assured. Listen to this, *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.* He said, “Clap your hands and click your heels.” It is because of Christ. The Spirit of Glory and God resteth upon you. You can expect somebody to make fun of you. When you go to school, you are going to be made fun of. It is sad that in California some judge who has been dishonest with American history and the constitution, because of the ACLU, will not allow prayer in a graduation service. That is an absolute perversity on justice and the constitution in American history. This nation was born by men and women seeking to follow God. *Fret not thyself because of evildoers . . . (Why? Evildoers shall be cared for.) . . . neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.* God is doing something for us. Matthew 10:25: *It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?* If you call the Lord terrible, terrible names, then do not expect — if you are of follower of His — to escape that. On the road to Heaven, we will endure derision, but this is a pathway home. I think about Lester Roloff. I would not be surprised when the roll is called up yonder that Lester Roloff will stand among the top of the men of faith. He was not a sham, a pretense. Lester Roloff was a simple yet a trusting man of God. I do not mean simple in the wrong sense of the word. I mean simple in his living. He believed that God took care of everything. He was a man of prayer and a man of faith. He took a lot of derision, yet he is at home with the Lord. He does not regret a bit of it today. You can expect to endure derision. Some of you members at Calvary Baptist Church are thinking about it. We have folks that have joined this church because everybody told them all that Calvary Baptist Church stood against and they said,

“Well, that is the kind of church I want to join.” It did not hurt us; it helped us. When you take a stand, you are under derision. Folks will misunderstand, malign, and misjudge you.

NUMBER FIVE, WE CAN EXPECT SOME DIVIDENDS. Turn to Acts 28. We can expect some dividends. It is not all bad. It is not all bad, is it? Let us look at the dividends. First, there is somebody who will cuss you, but somebody will honor you. God keeps a balance of that. Paul came to the island. A sick man was healed. Paul blessed the sick man. Acts 28:10: *Who also honoured us with many honours . . .* Christians, there are some folks who are going to cuss you. There are some folks who are going to honor you. If everybody honored us, we would get the big head. If everybody cussed us, we would get discouraged. God keeps us level. I might get a letter that says, “I think you are the greatest preacher in the world” and receive another letter that says, “I wished you would drop dead.” I knocked on a door out here of a Dr. “Somebody.” Somebody had asked if I would go see them, but they said, “Don’t tell them that I sent you.” That is hard. You do not have any way of getting in at all. “Don’t tell them that I sent you.” “Well, how did you get to my door?” “Well, I was just passing by in the neighborhood and knocked on your door.” That is hard. I knocked on this doctor’s door here in Lakeland, and it happened to be his mother who had asked me to go see her son. He came to the door and had a big cigar. I said, “Somebody, a friend of yours or somebody, asked me to come by to see you.” He said, “It surely couldn’t have been a friend.” He said, “I don’t need your services.” I pulled out my card and said, “Now, you may some day. If you do, would you call me?” He said, “You will be the first one I call. Thank you.” Not everybody is going to open the door and say, “Come on in.” There are those who will honor you. They will honor your stand. They will commend you. They will stand with you. On the way to Glory, God will do what is necessary to balance out the matter of our lives. We need to be humbled. We need the encouragement. God will allow it. You will get hit from the side. Paul was a murderer, and the next thing, he was a god. The world is fickle out there. They will cheer you one day and boo you the next day. But on the way to Glory, there are some dividends. You will be honored because of your ministry.

Acts 28:10: *Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.* Second, you can expect on the way to Glory the necessities. It is good when you have more necessities. That is having food and raiment. We can get along with a whole lot less than we think we can. I discovered that. There are a lot of things that you do not need. They are not necessities. For instance, a car is not a necessity. A television and a radio are not necessities. Two pairs of shoes are not necessary. Two suits are not necessary. Not even two sets of underwear are necessary. You cannot wear but one at a time anyhow. Of course, you have got a problem when you have to wash them sometimes. There are many things on the road to Glory. God does not promise us all the extras, but He does give us the extras all along the way. He promises us the necessities. Matthew 6:33: *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* Food, clothing, shelter – God will take care of His own. He said so.

Look at Acts 28:15: *And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns* (Now that was not the downtown taverns they were talking about. That was a little different than what we are talking about.): *whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.* He was on trial for his life and his faith. These fellows’ names are not even given. Paul the Apostle was caught up to Heaven, and he saw the Lord. “You mean that fellow needs encouragement?” Yes sir, he needs encouragement just like anybody else does. Third, on the way to Heaven, we can expect the fact that God is going to encourage us along the way by sending somebody to us, some hand fulls on purpose. Mark it down. Just when I need Him, Jesus is near. Turn to 2 Timothy 1. I am just about ready to come in on the final approach. Paul is in jail. To me, going to jail is not funny. That is not funny. I do not like them locking that door behind me even when I go there to preach. 2 Timothy 1:15: *This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.* (Here’s a man in jail in Rome and here’s a man said, I’m going to find him. He wasn’t ashamed of the fact that he was in jail.) *The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.* God will send you somebody just when you need it the most — a telephone call, a handshake, a

postcard, somebody drops by, or even a check. I am proud of my folks. This one I am proud of. That does not mean that I am not proud of everybody else, but I am proud of an individual in this church. I do not know who they are, but they are members. One night, I was preaching, and there was a pastor in this church who had a financial need. His back was to the wall. This pastor told me — and I will not call his name — “I was really up against a wall.” One of our members left our services, went to a neighboring pastor, and gave him a hundred dollar check. I am proud of you. I am not jealous when you do something for somebody else. God will send a check. God will send a verse, a scripture, and oh, what a verse of Scripture means sometimes! You can go in the strength of that many days. Sometimes, God gives you a song that lifts your spirits. You can expect encouragement along the way. I think about what songs have done for me. I think about a verse of Scripture that has come to my heart and carried me over the way. I think about a handshake. I think about a check. I think about a pat on the back. I think about a telephone call or a note. I remember those things. You can expect encouragement along the way. God will not leave you orphans. He said that He will come to you. He will encourage us.

Fourth, you can expect joy unspeakable at the end of the road. Now, this is another sermon in itself. I am just going to pull the bones out of it. What is at the end of the road? God saves the best for last. The devil gives his best at the first, but God saves His best for the last. The devil gives his pleasures of sin, but they are only for a season. The devil starts out wide, but he ends up narrow. God’s way starts out narrow and ends up broad. You can expect joy unspeakable at the end of the way, because of three things. First of all, you can expect joy unspeakable because of a place called Heaven. When I was overseas and when the war was over, sitting in the cockpit of a B-17 and it came over my earphone, it said, “Fellows, the war is over.” I got on the phone, and I called Washington. I said, “No, I want to fight some more.” No, not me. I had had enough of that business. I got into that B-17 and went down to Casablanca and down to Africa and across to Nepal, Brazil, British Ghana, and Puerto Rica. When we touched down in West Palm Beach, I want to tell you that I was home. When we touch down in the new Jerusalem, bless God, there is going to be joy unspeakable and full of glory. We are going to be home. There is not going to be anymore wars, no more sorrow, and no more tears. That is going to be joy. There is going to be joy unspeakable at the end of the way because of the prospects. What a reunion there will be! I think of mamas over there and papas over there and brothers over there. I could begin to name loved ones. I could begin to name preacher friends of mine. The older you get, the more you get over there. You know it is accumulating over there. There are godly deacons who have stood by me. There are folks who have sat in these pews and carried loads of responsibility — young and old. They will all be there. One day when we get home, there is going to be joy unspeakable over the fact that a prospect is in Heaven because of you. We are going to be forever with the Lord and with God’s people, and that is going to be joy. The greatest thing on earth is fellowship with God’s people.

Second, there is going to be joy unspeakable at the end of the way because of the Person. I got my wings and commission in the United States Air Core, June 27, 1944. Three days later, I got them clipped. I got married, July 1. I got married, and then went overseas. I had a big picture in my foot locker. I looked and talked to that picture. I had one in my billfold. I carried it on missions, and when I was not flying, I was looking in that billfold. “I sure would like to go back home. I hope I don’t get shot down, and somebody else winds up marrying her. No, I want to get back home.” I got letters, and I read those letters. I read in between the lines and behind the lines and over the lines and beside the lines. I read those letters. I digested those letters. One day on that flight home, I touched down in West Palm Beach. When I cleared customs, I called a taxicab. It is farther from West Palm to Orlando than it is from Lakeland to Oak City. I did not want to ride a bus. I caught a taxicab from West Palm Beach, Florida, to Orlando, Florida. I said, “Sir, if you don’t mind, I will make you happy, and I will be happy if you will get there just as quick as you can.” He pulled up in front of 400 West Central Avenue, and a young beautiful thing came running down the stairs. She had on a light blue two-piece suit. I remember. When she jumped off of the top step down into my arms, I was home. Man alive, we really had a reunion out on the front steps. That is joy. I have seen pictures of my Lord in this Book. I looked at pictures overseas. 1 Peter 1:8: *Whom having not seen, ye love . . .* I am not talking about a vision, but I am talking about that face that is altogether lovely. I have read His letters. I have read between the lines and on the lines. I have wept and cried as I have read His love letters. My heart has longed to see Him, to be with

Him. I have heard the “National Anthem” of the United States overseas, and there came a lump up in my throat as I heard the “Star Spangled Banner.” I have also oftentimes heard the “National Anthem,” maybe “Amazing Grace,” or some songs of Heaven, and there comes a lump up in my throat. I long to be home. One of these days, at the end of the road, we are going to see Him. When we see Him, there is going to be joy unspeakable and full of glory that will answer every question in life and that will solve every problem in life. We will sing that song, “When We See Christ.” Now you can expect that. That is at the end of the journey. If you are not saved, you cannot expect that. Balaam said: *Let me die the death of the righteous . . .* You cannot live for the devil and then die for the Lord. *Let me die the death of the righteous . . .* I will tell you how to die the death of the righteous. You must admit that you are a sinner and come as a sinner. You must be willing to trust the sinner’s Savior. You cannot trust yourself, but you must be willing to come to Him just as you are and take Him as your personal Savior. He will come into your life, forgive your sins, and save your soul, and all these things I have talked about will be your portion, if you will just trust Christ.