



The Gospel Train

(BEST PREACHED AS A CHART SERMON)

Matthew 16:13-18 "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Whom do men say that I, the Son of man am?' And they said, "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets." He saith unto them, 'But whom say ye that I am?' And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'

Tonight we are going to use this chart, the train running along the top track, the Gospel Train, to represent the church that Jesus died to establish.

A TRAIN STORY

I heard a story one time about a fast moving passenger train that was headed for the West Coast. As this train reached the top of one of the ranges of the Rocky Mountains and started down on the other side, it picked up speed and as it began to go faster and faster the coaches swayed from side to side and the passengers could look out the windows and see the jagged rocks hundreds of feet below. And there was one man, a passenger on this train, who became very frightened. He thought that surely the train was going to tip over and that they would be dashed to pieces on the rocks down below. In the midst of his excitement he looked across the aisle and saw this little girl about 6 years of age, sitting there reading a comic book, just as quietly and calmly as could be; she wasn't worried about anything. And the man who was so terribly frightened said, "Little girl! Aren't you afraid?" She looked up from her comic book very nonchalantly at the man and said, "No, are you?" And the man said, "Oh yes! I'm terribly afraid; look out the window! Aren't you afraid that we're going to tip over and be killed on those rocks?" And the little girl smiled and said, "My Daddy is the Engineer of this train." Well, I think that I can understand the faith that a little 6-year old girl would have in her Daddy and why she could say that with such confidence.

Let me ask you tonight, Are you afraid? If you're a Christian; God is your heavenly Father. If Jesus Christ is the head of the church, the Engineer of the Train, then I know that you can go through life unafraid, confident that God, your heavenly Father, who is at the controls is not going to let anything go wrong for you. Now as we look at this Gospel Train moving along the top track toward heaven, using this as a modern-day parable of the church that Jesus died to establish, we would recognize the fact that Christ is the Engineer of the Train. He is the head of the church.

This is what the Bible tells us. Jesus himself said in Matthew Chapter 28, that "all authority has been given unto me both in heaven and on earth." In Ephesians Chapter 5, we read that "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church and he is the Savior of the body. "

But it is amazing how people get to thinking that they are so important in the church. What about the church member that likes to ride out there on the cow catcher; and as the train goes rolling

down the track, they say "Look out everybody, look out! Get out of the way." Oh how they shout and make noise to call attention to themselves because they want everybody to know they are a very important member of the church. And then there's always that church member who likes to get back here and wave the lantern on the caboose and give orders to Jesus. They think they are a very important member and the church couldn't possibly do without them. And then there's always the church member who likes to ring the bell and make a lot of noise. Again, they want to call attention to themselves and say that I am a very important member. But I'll tell you the church member you want to watch out for - the one that likes to keep his hands on the brakes; just as the train gets to rolling good; just as souls are being saved; just as attendance is really increasing; this is the church member who will always say, "Whoa now, it's costing too much money; we'd better put on the brakes and slow down here. "

Oh, I'll tell you I thank God for the church members who are willing to be a little, black chunk of coal in the coal car to be burned up for Jesus. You know, when that coal is laid on the fire, steam is produced, and the train has power to carry the cargo to the destination. And when we as Christians are willing to forget about our own self-importance; when we are willing to just be crucified with Christ; to be like a black chunk of coal; when we are willing to hide behind the cross and just be burned up for Jesus, then the church will have great power to take many souls to heaven.

Now it stands to reason that if we are going to get to heaven, we must be riding on one of these coaches that is hooked on behind the engine of the Gospel Train. And so let's look at the various coaches tonight and I want you to try to figure out where you're riding on this Gospel Train.

I. We see that the first coach is the Coach of Perfection.

Everybody riding on that coach is absolutely sinless. Now who am I talking about? Well, I know that some of you are probably just like my Mother and Father. I grew up in a wonderful Christian home. My parents always loved Jesus and loved the church and they always loved our preacher, no matter who he was; we never had a bad preacher. We would've never thought of having 'roast preacher' for dinner like some people do. Because my parents never criticized the preacher, I grew up thinking that preachers were just about perfect. And I just wonder if some of you kind-hearted souls might think I'm talking about Brother Joe. Now I'm gonna look and see if he's riding here on the Coach of Perfection. [I've got sad news, Brother Joe's not there!] No, I'm not talking about the preacher.

Now some people might think I'm talking about the Elders. It is a very wonderful thing for a congregation to have confidence in a man and to elect him an Elder, a shepherd, a bishop, an overseer of the congregation. That's a very great honor and it's also a very demanding work, but I'm not talking about the Elders, either. I didn't notice any Elders riding on that Coach of Perfection. I don't know any that are perfect, do you?

And I'm not talking about the Deacons, and neither am I talking about the Sunday School Teachers, nor any church member, because we have all sinned and fallen from the glory of God. Well, who, then, is perfect? I'm talking about the little babies, who have not yet reached the age of accountability. They are the only ones who are perfect in God's sight. Now Jesus taught us this quite clearly in Matthew Chapter 18, and Luke Chapter 18. Let me read from Matthew Chapter 18, the first three verses:

"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" And Jesus called a little child unto Him and set him in the midst of them and said: 'Verily I say unto you, except you be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.'"

Every little baby is born perfect, innocent, free from all sin. If babies die in state of infancy they will certainly go straight to heaven. Now in view of the fact that the Bible teaches this, I want to ask you a question. Why is it that some denominations will take babies and sprinkle them? And

why will some denominations baptize babies? Some denominations christen babies. What good does that do? The babies are innocent. They're already perfect in God's sight. Baptism is for the forgiveness of sins and babies don't have any sins. And we read nothing in the Bible about christening, or dedicating babies, or sprinkling babies. And so the whole thing is pointless.

Now let me further illustrate this tonight. Suppose that I looked out over this audience and found a young man and a young woman who were obviously in love, because they were sitting there holding hands, thinking nobody knew about it. And suppose tomorrow that Brother Joe and I were downtown and we passed the local furniture store. We looked inside and saw this young man asleep on a couch, and I would say, 'Brother Joe, is that the young man that I saw in church last night making goo-goo eyes at that girl?' And Brother Joe would answer, "Yes, that's the boy; that's him all right." And just about then we looked and saw this girl coming along the sidewalk. So I would rush over and say, "Hey, come here, come here, I want to show you something." So, the girl comes into the furniture store and I point to her boyfriend, asleep on the couch and I say, "Is this your boyfriend?" And she says, "Yes, that's him. What do you know? Asleep on the job!" And suppose I'd say, "Well, tell me something: Are you in love with him?" And she would probably look and say, "Is he sleeping? Is this some kind of a trick, or what?" And I'd say, "Yes, he's sound asleep; not tell me, are you in love with him?" And the girl would say, "Yes, I am." Suppose I would say, "Well how would you like to get married?" And she would probably say, "Well, if he would ask me, well I would." And suppose I would say, "Well now that's not necessary - you see, he's sound asleep; he doesn't know anything; he can't make his own decision. So let's just have a nice surprise for him. You just stand here and I'll perform your wedding, and when he wakes up it will all be done." And this girl would say, "Well, now wait just a minute! That wouldn't be right!" And suppose I would say, "Well, what do you mean, it's not right? Aren't I a preacher of the gospel? And cannot preachers marry people? Now if I say it's OK, it's OK." She'd probably look at me and say, "Well, if you say it's OK, well OK." So, suppose that girl comes over and stands by this boy sound asleep and I say, "Young lady, will you take this young man to be your lawfully wedded husband, and do you promise to be his true and faithful wife until death separates you?" And she says, "I do." So, I turn to the young man, sound asleep, "Young man, do you promise to take this young lady to be your wife; do you promise to be her true and faithful husband until death separates you?" He goes: "[snoring sounds]" And I say, "Brother Joe, we have a problem. What are we going to do? This young man won't answer." Suppose Brother Joe says, "That's all right; I'll be his Godfather and I'll vouch for him. It's OK, you go right ahead." So I say, "All right, then because Brother Joe vouches for him, I pronounce you husband and wife." Now would I do something like that? I hope not. Not unless I lost my mind. And if I ever did do something like that, I sure wouldn't want to be there when that fellow woke up! Because there'd be lots of trouble.

We don't go around making up other people's minds for them. We don't go around performing wedding ceremonies when someone can't think for themselves; when they can't make their own decisions. It would be wrong. And it's just as wrong to take a baby, who can't think for itself, a baby that doesn't know anything, a baby that can't believe, a baby that's never committed any sin, and say, "Now, we'll make this baby a member of the church; we'll take this baby and dedicate it; we'll baptize this baby so that it will be sure to go to heaven." Well, the baby's going to go to heaven; it's already innocent and perfect. So we need not worry about the little babies; God will take care of them.

II SATAN'S TRAIN

But if we live, and we are no longer in that state of innocence and perfection, and that of course includes everybody that's listening to me tonight; all of you who are understanding what I'm saying; you know that you're not on that coach. Now what happened to you? Well when you grew up, and you reached the age when you knew right from wrong, what did you do? You listened to the devil, didn't you? And you committed sin, willfully. And so, you slipped from this Coach of Perfection down to the Devil's Train and you started toward hell. And that's what the Bible means when it says in Romans 3:23

We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

You know that's true; your own conscience tells you that you've sinned. Now some people don't like to hear that, and they say: "Well, I don't know why you call me a sinner because I'm not a bad person. I don't go around getting drunk." Or, "I've never murdered anybody." Now let's just see what the Bible does call sin. In Galatians 5, beginning with verse 19:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness; lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Now you who brag and say, "Why I'm not a sinner because I've never committed adultery." Did you ever notice that right beside adultery it mentions "uncleanness". Can you honestly say you have never thought a bad thought in your whole life? Now you see we tend to classify sins: big sins - little sins. Adultery - great big sin - I've never done that. Few evil thoughts? Well, yes, but that's not so bad. In God's sight, it is. Sin is sin. Now you may say, "Well, there's one thing I've never done - I've never committed idolatry; I'm not like those people over there in India who bow down to those gods of gold and silver and all of that." Well, I wonder - right along beside idolatry it mentions hatred. Can you say that you never have hated anybody in your entire life? You say, "Idolatry, Oh that's a very wicked sin. Hatred - well, not so bad." God says equally bad. Now you may say, "Now I've never murdered anybody; that's one thing I've never done." But right beside murder, it mentions envy. You mean you've never, ever been envious in your whole life? Oh, you say, murder is very bad, but envy, that's just a little sin. God says, "sin". So all of us have sinned. All of us have been on this devil's train headed for hell.

III GET ON BOARD THE COASH OF OBEDIENCE

Now there's only one way to get off that devil's train. That's why Jesus came and died on the cross and established the church. If we want to get off the devil's train and be saved, the only way is to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. In John 14:15, Jesus said: "If you love Me, keep My commandments. "

Just what does Jesus require in the way of obedience? Well, for one thing in Luke 13:3, we find that Jesus requires that we repent of our sins. Unless you repent you will perish. We know what our sins are. You know what you have to repent of and I know what I have to repent of. I'll never get to heaven if I don't repent of my sins and neither will you. Another thing that the Lord Jesus requires in the way of obedience is confession of His name. In Matthew 10:32, Jesus said,

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him also will I confess before my Father which is in heaven.

And another thing that Jesus Christ requires in the way of obedience is Christian baptism. In Mark 16:16, Jesus says,

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Now if we are willing to come to Christ in obedience, Jesus Christ will wash away our sins and give us his Holy Spirit and we can begin a new life in Him. This is sometimes referred to as the "new birth" because it was Jesus himself who taught the new birth. In the third chapter of John, "Ye must be born again," and in the 5th verse, Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

But I want to point out that the new birth is not the end; the new birth is the beginning.

IV THE COACH OF CONSECRATION

After we accept Jesus and are baptized for the forgiveness of sins, we have begun a new life, a Christian life, and that means a life of consecration to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to start growing. When a baby is born in your home, you don't want that baby to stay 20 inches long and to remain a 7 pounds weight for the rest of his or her life. You want that baby to start growing and developing. You want the baby to progress from milk to solid food. You want the baby to progress from crawling to walking. You want the baby to grow up and become an adult so that that baby can someday earn his or her own living. And so the Lord expects us to grow in the Christian life; to become strong spiritually. And so, we must study God's Word. We must pray; we must attend church and listen to the preaching. We must gather around the Lord's Table to partake of the Lord's Supper. We must practice Christian stewardship and we must practice personal evangelism, witnessing and sharing our faith with others. All of these Christian acts will help us in our Christian growth. I believe that a very good description of Christianity, Christian living, consecrated Christian life, is found in Romans 12: 1-2:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

But it really is sad as I look through the windows of that Coach of Consecration, I see that the seats are half empty, and the empty seats are dusty, showing that it has been a long time since anybody sat

there. What happens to all of the church members who come and accept Jesus and are baptized? Why aren't they growing? And there are very few of them that are growing. Just very few church members are really loyal to Jesus. Very few church members come every Sunday and worship the Lord. Very few church members are really faithful in their stewardship. Very few church members are faithful around the Lord's Table every Lord's Day. Very few are faithful in daily Bible study and prayer. What happens to all these church members? Well, we have one more coach to illustrate where these church members have gone. That's right, they've gone to sleep.

V. THE SLEEPER COACH OF INDIFFERENCE

And you know, there's one thing wrong with my chart. The chart's not big enough. If I had a big enough chart to accommodate all of the dead, backslidden, sleeping church members, well, I'd have to have sleeper coaches stretching from here to Los Angeles and back again, and then they would still be sitting on each other's laps. It's a shame and a disgrace, the large number of church members who have backslidden, and they are asleep on the job. I'm gonna ask some of them what's wrong. "Wake up, brother, Wake up! What are you doing back here sleeping when you ought to be working?" He says, "Well, they're not very friendly up there at that church. I went one time about 10 years ago, and nobody spoke to me; nobody shook my hand, and I said, 'well, if they're going to be that snooty, I'll come back here and go to sleep,' so he falls over and starts snoring.

I'm going to wake up a lady. "Wake up, sister, Wake up! What's the matter with you? What are you doing back here asleep?" She yawns and then she starts whining, "Well, you see, I got sick one time and the preacher, he didn't come call on me and it just hurt my feelings so badly, so I said, 'Well, if you don't get called on when you're sick, well I'm going to quit the church.'" And so she falls over, and I said, "Sister, did you telephone the preacher when you became ill; did you ask the preacher to come out and call on you and pray with you?" 'I didn't call him, but he should have been a mind-reader enough to have known it anyhow.' So she falls over and goes to sleep.

I'm going to wake up another church member. "Wake up, brother. Wake up! What are you

doing back here asleep?" Well, he says, "You know, all they're interested in down there at that church is your money. Every time you go they stick that plate in front of your nose. And I said, 'if that's all they want out of me is my money, then I'm going to go to sleep.' So he falls over and starts snoring. Isn't it terrible, these pitiful, flimsy excuses that people give for not serving the Lord? Why is it that people don't give those excuses about anything else?"

ATTENDING A BALL GAME IN ST. LOUIS

Back in 1968, our family was getting ready to go to Africa. We going to leave the day that school was out in May, and we were going to go over and spend 90 days evangelizing in Rhodesia and return just in time to put the kids back in school. Well, that's when we had all five kids at home and my three oldest sons, Terry, Tony and Tracy, came to me and they said, "Dad, if we go to Africa and go to church day and night and sing, and give up our summer vacation to work in your meetings, don't you think that when we get home you could take us to see the World Series? We think the St. Louis Cardinals are going to have a chance this year. Will you take us, Dad?" Well that was in May and looking ahead to October, I said, "Sure, I'll do it." So the whole family went with me and we had a glorious 90 days evangelizing there in Rhodesia. We didn't have one day off; we went to church all day and half the night, every day and every night for 90 days. And the children didn't complain at all; they did their part willingly.

But when we got home, they reminded me of that promise, which I'd forgotten. They checked the newspapers right away and turned the TV on, and said, "Oh, we just know that the St. Louis Cardinals have a chance, Dad. We just know they're going to be playing the World Series in St. Louis, and your promised to take us. Well, then I began to really worry. I checked around and tried to get tickets and you know they had already sold out the tickets, even before it was really determined that they were going to play part of the series in St. Louis. I couldn't get a ticket anywhere. Well, I worried and stewed about that and I didn't know what to do. And I thought, maybe it won't happen, but it did. So, about two weeks ahead of time they came to me and said, "Dad, they're going to be playing in St. Louis on Saturday," and they gave me the date (it was in October); "You've gotta take us; you promised!"

Well, it just so happened that very Saturday, I was going to be driving from our home in Miami, Oklahoma, up to Kiwani, Illinois, for a revival meeting. I'd be going right through St. Louis, so I didn't have any excuse there. But I said, "Boys, I don't have any tickets, and I can't get any tickets." Oh, they threw a fit; "you promised to take us; you've got to take us!" "You take us to St. Louis, we'll get in the ballpark." I said, "You can't get in without tickets; there's no way." They said, "Well, we'll climb up in a building then, and we'll peek over and look down; we'll see it some way. You just take us to St. Louis." I said, "Boys, you just don't understand; if you knew how that Busch Stadium was constructed; there's no way you can peek in." "Well, you promised to take us, Dad." So, you know what happened.

Early that Saturday morning we got up and I drove those boys all the way to St. Louis. We got there about two hours ahead of time, and oh, my, the traffic was horrible. They were pouring in from every direction, and when we got over there to Busch Stadium and the boys saw how it was situated, their hopes began to fall. And they saw it was true; there was no way to see that ballgame without a ticket. You never saw three boys more forlorn-looking in all your lives. And I knew I had to do something. So, I prepared a great big sign on a piece of cardboard and I attached it to a stick. I got out there and faced all those thousands of people entering the ballpark and I hoisted the stick up in the air, and the sign said, "I Need Tickets". Oh boy, you talk about embarrassing. I was never more humiliated in all my life than I was when I stood there looking like an idiot, saying "I Need Tickets." I suffered all kinds of insulting remarks and abuse from the people who were entering that ballpark. I know that 50% of them passed, looked at me and laughed, and said, "You want box seats? Haw, haw haw" Oh, did I ever feel terrible! But for the sake of my children I endured it and I stood there, and stood there and suffered all these insults, until finally somebody walked up and said, "Don't suppose you'd want a 'standing room only' ticket, would you?" Would I ever? I grabbed it and paid for it, so one boy got in. I hoisted my

sign again and suffered more insults. Finally, someone else came up. "Would you want a standing room ticket?" And I bought another one. Then finally, someone else came and I got all three boys in, and I thought, I'm going to go back to the car and sleep this one out. But, I got to thinking about those three boys in that ballpark all alone, and I thought, Oh, I've got to go in there and watch after them; they're liable to get in trouble. So, I hoisted my sign again, and pretty soon I got a ticket.

Well, I got in there and had to look all over that stadium. It took me at least 30 minutes to find the boys and you'd never guess where they were. They'd found a place right behind home plate!

Best place in the ballpark to watch the game. So I got kind of enthused when I saw where they were. I moved over beside them and there was a great big fellow standing there and yelled, "Get out of my place; what do you mean coming over here?" I saw that he was selling popcorn and I said well you're not going to be standing here; why can't I take your place? "Well, I'm standing here right now; you can't stand here." So I had to move to the side and somebody else growled at me because I was in their way. Finally this guy moved to sell his popcorn, so I got his place. It wasn't five minutes until he came back and he was elbowing me, "Get out; what are you doing here? You've got my place." I had to go get a policeman in order to stand there by my sons.

The game started and I thought I was really going to enjoy it. But there was some people behind us drinking and someone spilled a bottle of beer right down my back. I tell you I didn't enjoy one minute of the game from that minute on, because I just knew some of the good church members would come up and catch me there smelling like beer. And what would I say? What excuse would I possibly give? It was just pure agony. I stood there through all that game, going through all this agony and people kept walking over my feet, shouting, "Popcorn, peanuts, crackerjacks, cushions, programs," - they were selling everything. You talk about people gouging you for money; brother, I've never been gouged for as much money as I was at that ballpark that day. After it was over, [and the St. Louis Cardinals lost, by the way] we started out of the ballpark, people were pushing and shoving like wild Comanche Indians, somebody jerked the sleeve on my coat, somebody tore a button off; they stepped all over my shoes; they were very rude, and I thought, at least when we get to the gate I'll see Red Shandings and get to shake his hand. No doubt he'll thank us for supporting his ball club. When we got to the gate, I didn't see Red Shandings; he was nowhere in sight. Apparently he didn't care whether we supported the Cardinals or not; and as we were walking toward the automobile, do you know what my boys said: "Hey, Dad, they're playing tomorrow; do you think we could stay for tomorrow's game?" Oh boy! Now that's what you call a baseball fan!

I don't hear people complaining when they go to the grocery store and get bawled out, or when they go to the beauty salon and get insulted, or when they go to the barber shop and someone steps on their toes. But if somebody comes to the church and they feel the slightest bit insulted, they get angry and quit for weeks at a time, or maybe stop for good. It seems strange and inconsistent to me. Being angry at the brethren and forsaking the Lord is about as logical as getting mad at the dog and kicking the cat! One time I heard about a preacher who called on a certain backslider. Why haven't you been coming to church?, he asked. "They hurt my feelings down there, so I quit." Fine, why don't you go home and beat your wife?, the preacher asked.

The startled backslider looked at the preacher and questioned his sanity. He said, "My wife hasn't done anything against me!" The preacher said, "What has Jesus done against you?"

A SINCERE WARNING TO BACKSLIDERS "SLEEPERS"

There is a word of scripture to those who are sleeping. And that word of scripture says, "Awake thou that sleepest; arise from the dead and Christ shall give you life." Do you think that those sleepers are going to make it to heaven? Ah, no, you know what the Bible says? One of these days Jesus, as he pulls that gospel train toward heaven, is going to make a sudden stop. The sleepers won't know anything about it because they are so busy backsliding and snoozing; they'll be sound asleep. And Jesus will get out and disconnect that sleeper coach from the rest of the train. And then the devil will throw his engine into reverse, backing up along this little section of

track and suddenly, with no warning the devil will slam into that little sleeper coach filled with the backslidden church members and he will take all of the backsliders, together with the unforgiving sinners, to hell. There will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus will take the babies, and the brand new church members, and the faithful church members to heaven, where there will be joy everlasting.

When Peter Marshall was Chaplain of the United States Senate, he preached there in Washington, D.C., and there was a member of his congregation who had a boy that had a terminal illness. This boy was about 12 years of age and had been a very active boy in school. His mother really had a problem. Every day she would sit on the bedside and try to read her son stories - Robinson Crusoe and other stories that boys like to hear - anything to keep his mind off his illness. But the mother wasn't as smart as she thought she was. And the boy was a lot smarter than she thought he was. One day when she was sitting there reading to him, he just suddenly pushed the book aside. Then he said, "Mama, I want to know something. Is it going to hurt me very much when I have to die? Big tears came into her eyes. She jumped off the side of the bed and ran out into the kitchen and grabbed a dishcloth to dry her tears. She prayed to the Lord, "What will I say? Lord, you know I'm unprepared for a question like that." But after a time of prayer she went back into the bedroom and she sat down beside her son, smiling. She said, "You've asked me a question, son, and I'm going to answer your question by asking another question. Do you remember when you were strong and well and when you were able to get out in the yard and play like the other kids?" He smiled and said, "Yes, I can remember that." "Do you remember how you would come into the house at night time all tired and worn out after playing all day?, she asked. And he said "Yes." She said, "Do you remember that you used to lie down on Mommie and Daddy's bed and say, "I'm too tired to climb the stairs; could I lie here on your bed awhile and rest? Do you remember that?" He grinned and said, "Yeah, I remember." She said, "Do you remember that you never did make it upstairs to your own room? You'd always go to sleep on Mommie and Daddy's bed." He said, "No, I didn't remember." Then she said, "Well, where did you wake up the next morning?" "Oh," he said, "in my own room." "Well, how did you get there?" He said, "I don't know - I never did think about it." Well, she said, "Son, let me tell you how you got there. Every night that you would do that, after you were asleep, your Daddy would come in and he would pick you up in his strong and loving arms and take you upstairs to your own room, to your own bed, and Mommie would come up and tuck you in and that's where you awakened in the morning. Now, I want to ask you a question, Did it hurt you when you were going from your Mommie and Daddy's bed to your own bed?" And he said, "No, it didn't hurt me; I didn't even know when it happened." She said, "Son, that's the answer to your question; when you die, it's not going to hurt you. You're just going to go to sleep and Jesus is going to come and He is going to pick you up in His strong and loving arms and carry you to heaven, and when you open your eyes you will be with your Heavenly Father in joy and peace, and that's where you'll live forever."

Dear Friends, I believe it - just like that. It's a mother's explanation; but it's certainly true and Biblical. If we are Christians, Jesus is going to come for us and He is going to take us to heaven. I want to go there, and I want you to go there, too. I want everybody to go there; but I know that there is only one way, and that is to obey Jesus. And if you haven't done it, won't you come on board the Gospel Train tonight? Let's bow our heads for prayer.

Our Father, even as Jesus taught so long ago with his parables - little earthly stories with heavenly meanings, we pray that this modern parable of the train has been effective tonight in helping people to understand the spiritual truths that You have taught. We pray that those who have not come on board will do so tonight without any further delay. We pray that if there are those who have backslidden that they will repent and seek forgiveness before it is too late. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen