

Homesick for Heaven.

No. one

The peak of America's premier healing evangelist Oral Roberts' career came with the opening in 1981 of the \$ 250 million City of Faith Medical and Research Center, consisting of a thirty-story hospital, sixty-story medical center, and a twenty-story research center. But the complex did not become a success story. The hospital failed to fill many of its beds; the dental school had to close. Seeking \$ 4.5 million for medical school scholars, Roberts begged TV viewers to post \$ 100 apiece in quick money lest God take him hostage and doom him to heaven. Some media stations rejected the money-begging broadcast as unacceptable. At the end of a substitute program, Roberts's on Richard urged viewers to send gifts to spare his father from being taken to heaven. The deadline of Roberts' departure from earth was first 1987, which was later postponed to March 1988. Roberts' appeal for immediate cash lest he is taken to heaven was a disgrace. And to place the prospect of going to heaven as a calamity was even worse - a horrible distortion of the Christian hope.

Roberts lost the classic Christian emphasis upon the transitoriness of life. Someone wrote that the Christian life is "a gymnasium and dressing room where we are prepared for heaven." To Christians trapped in pain, in economic chaos, in political upheaval - to these, heaven offers a promise of peace, health, well being and enjoyment in the presence of God.

A Christian lives under the canopy of hope. He is homeward bound. In faith he journeys to a better country, a heavenly one (Hebr 11:16). He knows that when his earthly tent is destroyed, he will be entering "an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands" (2 Cor. 5:1). His deepest desire is to be with God and His Christ. Home is where the heart is. A Christian confesses with the apostle Paul that he prefers "to be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5: 8).

I wonder why we don't talk more about our heavenly hope. Have we become so corseted by the comforts of modern appliances, social security, modern medicine and a cozy lifestyle that we no longer focus on heaven as our true comfort? Have we forgotten the admonition of the apostle Paul? "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things"(Col.3: 2). Heaven is the end of the Christian's journey, the long awaited home coming. Heaven is no calamity. I am longing for home. I am longing to see God.