

HEAVENLY-MINDED CHRISTIANS

Considering the Mindset Needed to Minister Effectively on Earth

Some Christians are so heavenly minded that they're of no earthly good. While there may be a grain of truth in that statement, I want to argue, quite to the contrary, that much effectiveness on earth depends upon a heavenly mindset; a mindset that lives in light of eternity and heaven. C. S. Lewis observed, "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next."

If God didn't want us to be heavenly minded, He would not have given us so much teaching that intentionally forces our thoughts heavenward. For example, we're commanded (not just encouraged): "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Col. 3:1-2). We're to *seek* the things that are in heaven and *think* about them, and *not* the things that are on earth. And why wouldn't we, since Christ is there reigning at the right hand of God.

Jesus wants our treasures to be sent ahead to heaven, so that our hearts will also be there: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:19-21).

Also, "our citizenship *is* (note the present tense) in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). It's common for foreigners to think about their homeland when they're away from it; our homeland is heaven.

Many passages that encourage a heavenly mindset are found in the context of adversity. It takes a heavenly mindset to put persecution and suffering in their proper perspective. Our Lord said, "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (Matt. 5:11-12). With a heavenly mindset, persecution can become a cause for exuberant celebration.

Paul dealt with suffering by comparing it to the glory of heaven. He concluded that there was no comparison: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18). He also noted, "For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17-18). This comparison can only be made by looking to the things that are unseen and eternal; in other words, the heavenly things.

Consider also, how Jesus taught us to pray: "Our Father who is in heaven." He could have said, "Our Father who is sovereign over all" or, "Our Father who is the Creator of heaven and earth" or, a thousand other possibilities. But He advised us to pray to our Father *in heaven*, which once again causes us to lift our thoughts toward heaven. Could it be that Jesus knows that true prayer must always take into account heaven's vantage point? Even when we continue in prayer, and ask that God's will be done on earth, we qualify it by saying, "as it is in heaven." It seems clear that it is incumbent upon us to understand how God's will is carried out in heaven among the angels, so that we can comprehend how it is supposed to look on earth.

To summarize: Our Savior is reigning in heaven; our treasures are being laid up in heaven; our citizenship is in heaven; our rewards will be great in heaven; our glory will be revealed in heaven; our Father is in heaven. If all of this—and much more—is true of heaven, why would we not be heavenly-minded and yearn to be there? Without a doubt, something is terribly wrong if we are *not* heavenly-minded?

A healthy obsession with heaven will help to set us free from the need to have all our longings and desires fulfilled now on earth. Concerning heaven, Jonathan Edwards said, "If there awaits you and me an eternal inheritance of immeasurable glory, it is senseless to spend so much time and energy and money, sacrificing so much of what God had given us now, to obtain for so brief a time in a corruptible form what we're going to experience eternally in its consummate perfection." Knowing that "immeasurable glory" will be ours in heaven, releases us to serve Christ with a burning zeal on earth. Therefore, we say with Edwards, "Labor to get a sense of the vanity of this world; and labor to be much acquainted with heaven."

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