

The Habit of Heavenly Mindedness

1. What matters to us eternally is not simply *life after death*; but even more than that *life after life after death*

2. Richard Baxter

a. His discovery: the power of regular meditation on heaven

b. His book: **The Saint's Everlasting Rest**

c. His words: *If you would have light and heat, why are you not more in the sunshine? For want of this recourse to heaven, your soul is as a lamp not lighted, and your duty as a sacrifice without fire. Fetch one coal daily from this altar, and see if your offering will not burn Keep close to this reviving fire, and see if your affections will not be warm*

3. We are citizens of another age (Col. 3:1-4; Phil. 3:19-21)

4. We must repudiate the notion that pondering the greatness of the age to come makes a person less useful for this age. I think exactly the opposite is the case

BIBLICAL TEACHING ON THE BENEFITS OF HEAVENLY MINDEDNESS

1. Heavenly mindedness liberates us to live lives of radical, sacrificial love

a. Jesus' practice of heavenly mindedness empowered his life of radical, sacrificial love (Heb. 12:2)

b. The Colossian believers were empowered to love by their hope of heaven (Col. 1:4-5)

c. The hope of heaven does two things:

i. *For the believer*: this hope liberates them to love in radical, risk-taking ways

ii. *For the world* around the believer: this hope causes the world to notice and wonder why the believer's life is so hope-filled and love-empowered (1 Pet. 3:15)

d. The habit of heavenly mindedness will empower you to be light in the darkness, hope in the midst of despair, and love in the face of hate

2. Heavenly mindedness makes us overcomers (2 Cor. 4:17; 2 Pet. 3:13)

a. Maintaining an eternal perspective gives us the strength we need to withstand the punches that the world often throws at us during this brief, "vapor-like" life (Rom. 8:18)

b. In light of the brevity of this life and the immensity of eternal life, God's word encourages us not only to endure but to overcome (Rev. 2:26-27)

3. Heavenly mindedness delivers us from boredom and adds zest and adventure to life

a. J. I. Packer: *"The lack of long, strong thinking about our promised hope of glory is a major cause of our plodding, lack-luster lifestyle....It is the heavenly Christian that is the lively Christian"*

b. Puritans: *"We run so slowly, and strive so lazily, because we so little mind the prize....So let Christians animate themselves daily to run the race set before them by practicing heavenly meditation"*

c. The Puritans saw themselves as:

i. God's pilgrims

ii. God's warriors

iii. God's servants

d. Resource for meditation on heaven: ***50 Days of Heaven*** by Randy Alcorn

4. Heavenly mindedness brings us sanity in an upside-down world (Col. 3:1-2)

a. Meditation on eternity renews our minds. This renewing allows us to see all of life from a top-down perspective

b. Heavenly mindedness, as a way of life, saves us from the madness of this world with its upside-down values, its selfish practices, and its self-centered living

c. The practice of heavenly mindedness does not eliminate pain, but it does lessen it and put it in perspective (2 Cor. 4:17-18)

d. Heavenly mindedness serves to establish in us eternal bearings in a temporary world (Matt. 6:31-33)

5. Heavenly mindedness aids us in our pursuit of holiness (1 John 3:2-3)

a. **1 John 3:2-3** *Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure*

b. The fact that we are so often encouraged to set our hearts and fix our minds on heavenly things ought to wake us up to the reality that heavenly mindedness is not something that will happen on its own

c. Richard Baxter: *"A heavenly mind is a joyful mind; it is the nearest and truest way to live a life of comfort.... A heart in heaven will be a most excellent preservative against temptations, a powerful means to kill thy corruptions"*

6. Heavenly mindedness embraces our true citizenship (Phil. 3:20-21)

a. Citizenship in a country bestows *benefits* and *responsibilities* upon its citizens. That is why the writer of Hebrews says that we are "strangers and exiles on the earth" (Heb 11:13)

b. Romans 8 tells us that all creation "groans" and that we who have the "first fruits of the Spirit" also "groan." Why? The separation of matter and spirit, the absence of God's dwelling, a world that lacks righteousness, destroys peace, and substitutes temporary pleasures for eternal joy are all serving as signs to us that this world, in its current condition, is not our home (Rom. 14:17)

c. At present we are bereft of many of the benefits of our citizenship. We are living in exile

d. The practice of heavenly mindedness enables us to embrace our role as ambassadors of Christ to this world (2 Cor. 5:20). We have not been

dislodged from our homeland—we have been sent! "*As the Father has sent me, even so send I you*"

e. What does this mean practically for us?

i. Our trials should never be taken to the point of defeat

ii. Our troubles should never bring us to despair

iii. Our tragedies should never overcome us with depression

7. Heavenly mindedness invigorates our hope, fuels our faith, and intensifies our love

a. 1 Peter 1:3-9

b. The language of the Spirit in this passage keeps pushing us toward the future, toward *a heavenly mindset* that invigorates our hope, fuels our faith, and intensifies our love

i. **Verses 3-5** are hope's verses

ii. **Verses 6-7** are faith's verses

iii. **Verses 8-9** are love's verses

c. In each section, for each of the three theological virtues, we see the Spirit urging our hearts and minds to *embrace our future* prepared for us by God through his Son, Jesus

i. **v. 4** our hope is invigorated as we "look forward to possessing..." God's promised blessings

ii. **v. 6** our faith is fueled with a gladness, "be glad about this..." About what? About our salvation that will be revealed at the end of time

iii. **v. 8-9** our love is intensified as we anticipate our future he has secured for us. That future contains: total salvation!

d. Even God's Old Testament people used this practice to invigorate their hope, fuel their faith, and intensify their love

i. Moses: Heb. 11:24-26 "*...because he kept his eyes on the future reward...*" (v. 26)

ii. Moses kept his eyes on eternity and his heart in heaven. His faith was nourished by his hope of future reward

8. Heavenly mindedness conquers our fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15)

a. As we become established in heavenly mindedness, the fear of death is conquered. This passage teaches us that death and the fear of death are tools of the devil

b. But one reason Jesus comes is to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Jesus tells us that he now has the keys of death (Rev. 1:17-18)

c. By the practice of heavenly mindedness we are liberated from the fear of death and all the attendant problems that brings

i. Paul knew this liberty (Phil. 1:20-23)

ii. King David knew this liberty (Ps. 23:4). Part of his freedom from the fear of death came from his heavenly mindedness: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps. 23:6)

d. The New Testament boldly encourages us to view our own death not with fear but with joy at the prospect of going to be with Christ

e. The heavenly mind sees death not as a terminus but as a tunnel leading to an incredibly more wonderful and beautiful world. The death of a believer is a transition, not a permanent condition

f. Your dying breath here will instantaneously give place to deathless life, complete healing, and exquisite joy

9. Hermann Lange was a young German preacher who stood among the Christians who spoke out against Adolf Hitler's repression of the gospel. He was arrested, tried as a criminal, and condemned to die before a firing squad. On the last day of his life, he wrote a farewell letter to his parents:

When this letter comes to your hands, I shall no longer be among the living. The thing that has occupied our thoughts constantly for many months is now about to happen.

If you ask me what state I am in, I can only answer: I am, first, in a joyous mood, and second, filled with great anticipation. As regards the first feeling,

today means the end of all suffering and all earthly sorrow for me--and "God will wipe away every tear" from my eyes. What consolation, what marvelous strength emanates from faith in Christ, who has preceded us in death. In him, I have put my faith, and precisely today I have faith in him more firmly than ever.

And as to the second feeling (of anticipation), this day brings the greatest hour of my life! Everything that till now I have done, struggled for, and accomplished has at bottom been directed to this one goal, whose barrier I shall penetrate today. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Until we meet again above in the presence of the Father of Light,

Your joyful Hermann