

Longing For Home

Have you ever heard the phrase “That person is so heavenly minded that they're of no earthly use”? I'm sure we've all heard some variation of it at some point in our lives. The warning is clear: if you focus too much on heavenly things then you'll become useless, so it's best to keep at least one foot firmly planted on Earth. However, I have to ask: is that really a Biblical sentiment? Does the Bible really warn us against becoming too “heavenly minded”?

This may come as a surprise, but it actually does not! In fact, it says quite the opposite: the Scriptures urge Christians to be even *more* heavenly minded. This is a constant refrain throughout the Bible.

For example, take a look at Matthew 6. Here we see Jesus commanding people to not lay up treasures on Earth. Instead, He wants people to lay up treasures in Heaven. Why? Jesus explains:

Matthew 6:19: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”**

Do you see verse 21? Jesus wants us to lay up treasures in Heaven *so that our heart will be focused on Heaven*. You don't see Jesus saying “Now, whatever you do, don't think too much about Heaven!” He *wants* our heart to be set on it.

Paul expands upon this idea in Hebrew 11, which is often called the Hall of Fame for people of faith. The chapter lists person after person that exhibited extraordinary faith and holds them up as shining examples to follow. At the end of this list he explains the reason why these people had the courage to act as they did:

Hebrews 11:13: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

16 But now **they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly:** wherefore **God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”**

Do you see what these verses are saying? The reason Abraham, Noah, and the rest were able to act with such great faith was because they desired a “better country” – a *heavenly* one. Their mind was so firmly fixed on Heaven that they were willing to make tremendous sacrifices. They saw themselves as “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” – and *because* of that they were able to serve God with incredible effectiveness. Since they were not tied down to this world, they were willing to give up the things of this world. Their heart was somewhere else.

I have heard people say that it is selfish to long for Heaven, but the Bible tells us that being “heavenly minded” *pleases* God tremendously. Verse 16 tells us that *because* these people had their hearts set on Heaven, God was “not ashamed to be called their God.” In fact, it goes further to say that God *prepared for them a city*. Since these people longed for a better country, the Lord was going to give it to them. Since these people sacrificed earthly things, the Lord was going to give them heavenly

things in return. God was *honored*, not appalled, at their passionate longing for Heaven!

The apostle Paul was definitely heavenly minded. He longed to go Home:

Philippians 1:21: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.”

If you'll notice, Paul does not say “Longing for Heaven is bad! Keep your mind here on earth. It's selfish to want to go and be with Jesus.” Instead Paul makes it clear that dying is *gain*. He says that it is “far better” to depart and be with Christ than it is to stay here. Although Paul recognized the fact that the churches needed him, he clearly had a passionate desire to “depart, and to be with Christ.” That was what he really wanted – and that desire is never condemned anywhere in the Bible.

The reason Paul was longing for Heaven was *not* because he was mired in defeat and had no hope for the future. Instead Paul realized what many of us fail to understand: our life doesn't end when the Lord calls us to Heaven! Instead it actually gets *much better*. For Christians, dying does not end life; instead it starts a whole new chapter that is so glorious and amazing that the Bible says it “cannot be compared” to even the greatest trials and struggles of our life here. Paul knew that he would *improve* his life by changing his address – and the same can be said for the “Hall of Faith” people who are listed in Hebrews 11.

After the Last Supper, when Judas had departed to betray Christ, the Lord took His disciples out for a walk. In those precious last moments before His crucifixion the Lord told them this:

John 14:1: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Jesus said that the time of His departure was at hand, but they were not to “be troubled” about it. The reason He was going away was so He could prepare a place for them, and one day He would come back and get them so they could be with Him forever. In other words, the Bridegroom was leaving to prepare a home for His Bride, and one day He would come back and get her so they could be together for eternity.

Do you honestly think that the Lord wants His Bride to be *indifferent* at the prospect of finally going home and being with Him? Do you think it pleases Him when she puts the thoughts of her future with Him out of her mind and instead focuses on the things of this world (which are rapidly passing away)? The first and greatest commandment is to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. How can we passionately love God and *not* want to go Home so that we might be with Him? Isn't that part of loving God?

It is true that we have work to do here on Earth, but as Paul pointed out in Hebrews, the thing that enabled the great people of faith to do what they did was *a longing for Heaven*. Because their heart was not set on Earth, they were able to make great sacrifices and accomplish great things. A true longing for Heaven doesn't make a person ineffective; instead it frees him from the “cares of this world” that distract from God and enables him to see the Lord's will and pursue it with less hesitation.

I am greatly concerned that many Christians are so earthly minded that they are of no heavenly

good. That is something that Christ *did* warn us about:

Mark 4:18: “And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.”

That is the real question. Have we become so distracted by the “cares of this world” that we can no longer see straight? What is *really* distracting us from the Lord: is it Heaven, or is it actually the world in which we live?

I do not think we are in any danger of being so Heavenly minded that we are of no Earthly use. That is simply not possible. However, it is quite possible that we may be so Earthly minded that we are of no Heavenly use – and I think many people fall into that category.