

WHY WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO FOCUS ON HEAVEN

There is a book entitled The Saint's Everlasting Rest, which was written by Richard Baxter (1615-1691). Baxter was a Puritan evangelist from Kidderminster in the English midlands, and, in the book, he wrote, "Why are not our hearts continually set on heaven? Why dwell we not there in constant contemplation?...Bend thy soul to study eternity, busy thyself about the life to come, habituate thyself to such contemplations, and let not those thoughts be seldom and cursory, but bathe thyself in heaven's delights." While we may not agree with many of the doctrines of the Puritans, we still encourage each one of the flock to meditate on Baxter's question – why aren't our hearts continually set on heaven?

Even though the advice Baxter has given us is over 300 years old, it is still sound today. Instead of spending all of our time thinking about where we are, we, as Christians, also need to think about where we are going to be. Jesus tells us in John 14:2-3 that we may go to a place He has prepared especially for us, "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. 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." Psalm 16:11 tells us that we can be with God and enjoy pleasure without end, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Jesus teaches us by way of parable in Matthew 13:44 that heaven is the place of greatest value to us, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Paul tells us in Colossians 3:2, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." In 1Peter 1:4, Peter says we will have, "... an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," So, back to Baxter, if Heaven is a place worth more to us than any other; if it is a place that should hold our affections over anything in this world; if we have an incorruptible, undefiled inheritance reserved for us there; then why would we not continually focus on that place (Heaven)?

Brethren, if we keep our focus on Heaven, then it will not be on the temptations of the world. If we keep our focus on Heaven, then it will provide purpose and motivation in living the Christian life. If we keep our focus on Heaven, it will provide a balm for our afflictions, cheering our spirits and comforting our suffering. If each one of us keeps our focus on Heaven, it will encourage our fellow brothers and sisters to do the same. Let us remember the words of Paul in Philippians 3:13-14, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Let us go and do likewise.

- The Elders