How Much Does Heaven Mean To Us?

(by Gary Henry)

***“Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory”*** (**1 Peter 1:8**). HEAVEN OUGHT TO BE OUR MOST JOYOUS THOUGHT. We do not see our Lord right now, but we believe that someday we shall see Him and remain in His perfect presence forever. In that hope, we ***“rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.”***

But in practical, everyday terms, does heaven really mean as much to us as we say it does? We are, after all, very busy with the details of living in the here and now, and since we’ve grown accustomed to the idea of going to heaven, many of us may be guilty of taking it for granted. If we’re honest, we may have to admit that the concept of heaven has grown stale and the joy of thinking about it has disappeared. But how can we do that? How can we possibly have a casual attitude about heaven?

The first thing that should be said is that we need to make sure we are indeed going to heaven. Paul wrote, ***“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith”*** (**2 Corinthians 13:5**), and we need to make a practice of doing that on a fairly regular basis.

But second, we need to acquire the habit of thinking about heaven more often. One way to do that is to engage in the old-fashioned discipline of *“counting our blessings,”* consciously & deliberately enumerating to ourselves things that we have to be thankful for. When we “count our blessings,” heaven will always

be at the top of the list. With that list in hand, we are then ready to meditate on this great blessing, to think about it, and, yes, even daydream about it! If we don’t find ourselves daydreaming about heaven, at least now and then, it really should cause us to question whether it means as much to us as we say it does.

But not only should we cherish the thought of heaven; I believe that we should SHOW that we cherish it. It should “come out” in our conversation, our demeanor, our tone of voice, and even our countenance. There is no denying that, as we grow older, our faces come to be a mirror of the contents of our hearts. So what do those who see your face every day know about your enthusiasms, the things that mean more to you than anything else in the world?

***“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.”*** (**Revelation 22:1-4**)

Like a Tree

(by Jesse Flowers)

In three very important areas, the Bible reveals that the Godly individual is "like a tree."

**1)** The man who meditates day & night in God’s law ***"shall be like a tree"*** (**Psalm 1:2-3**). When we consistently spend time studying & reflecting upon the Word of God it makes us stronger in our faith and knowledge (**2 Timothy 2:15**; **2 Peter 3:18**).

Regular meditation in inspired Scripture will cause fruit to be born in our lives (**v. 3**; **Luke 8:15**; **John 15:2**). Reading and applying the Bible will cause our way to prosper (**v. 3**; **James 1:25**). So are

you "like a tree" in this way? Do you have spiritual strength and deep roots of faith because your ***"delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law"*** you meditate "day and night"?

**2)** The man who trusts in the LORD ***"shall be like a tree"*** (**Jeremiah 17:7-8**). God stated in the previous verse that ***"the man who trusts in man...shall be like a shrub in the desert"*** (**vv. 5-6**). What a difference it will make in our lives if we make flesh our strength or the God who created all things! We need to heed the admonition given in the Book of Proverbs, ***"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths"*** (**3:5-6**). Are you "like a tree" or "like a shrub" in the desert? It depends on where you place your trust.

**3)** The man whose hope is in the LORD ***"shall be like a tree"*** (**Jeremiah 17:7-8**). To hope in anyone or anything else in this life is futile. There is only ***"one hope"*** (**Ephesians 4:4**). It is a hope that will not disappoint (**Romans 5:5**). This hope is ***"an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast"*** (**Hebrews 6:19**). This hope that we have in the Lord will help us to maintain purity in our lives (**I John 3:3**). Heaven is the most important goal of all, so let’s ***"lay hold of the hope set before us"*** (**Hebrews 6:18**). Is your hope in the Lord? If it is not, then you are without hope!

May each one of us be "like a tree" in these three vital areas!

Wings like a Dove

(by James W. Adams)

David in despair over the oppression and hate of his enemies once prayed to God, ***“Oh that I had wings like a dove for then would I fly away, and be at rest”*** (**Psalm 55:6**).

Elijah made the same mistake when he fled from the wrath of Jezebel. Supposing that he – and he, alone – stood against the evils of his day, he prayed, ***“O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers”*** (**1 Kings 19:4**).

It is not too difficult to serve God when conditions about us are favorable to such services. The real test of our faith, loyalty, and devotion comes when circumstances are inimical to serving the Lord. Too many of us in the day of trouble like David and Elijah, desire to have “wings like a dove that we might fly away and be at rest.” There has never been a day among the churches of the Lord, in the memories of those now living, when the cause of Christ more desperately needed true soldiers of the cross of Christ than now!

Our problems, many though they may be, cannot be solved if we pine for “wings like the dove that we might fly away and be at rest.”  So long as the cause of Truth has an enemy, the true soldier of the cross of Christ cannot REST. Taking refuge in discouragement, defeatism and isolationism will give no man of conscience rest. The Lord provided no piece of armor for the back of the Christian soldier (see **Ephesians 6:13-20**). He contemplated no situation in which it would be proper or in harmony with His will for soldiers to turn their backs and run. Our only hope for “rest” is to rise in the strength of Israel’s God and “fight the good fight of faith.”