

The Clarity Trumpet

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*For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound,
who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you,
unless you utter by the tongue words easy to
understand, how will it be known what is spoken?*

For you will be speaking into the air.

I Corinthians 14:8-9

With Eternity on Our Minds

I would urge you to carefully read the fourth and fifth chapters of Second Corinthians with the title of this article in view.

The Visible and Invisible Worlds

If ever there was a person who knew the suffering and persecution that goes hand-in-hand with “living godly in Christ Jesus” it was the apostle Paul. Yet, he was able to triumphantly say, *Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.* (4:16-18).

If we who know Christ personally could somehow become fully convinced of this truth we would be the most positively motivated people on planet earth -- as, indeed, we should be. Nothing would stop us from being and doing what we should be and do. We would sacrifice anything and everything to carry out God’s will as revealed in His Word.

Spinning our wheels, building our little Christian kingdoms, trying to impress, fulfilling our fleshly desires, pursuing the fleeting bubbles of life -- all these would vanish from our lives, *IF* we truly lived as if the invisible eternal things are the reality and visible things are the shadows.

Too Heavenly Minded?

I have often heard the warning: *Be careful that you don’t become so heavenly minded that you are of no earthly good.* I have never heard the warning: *Be careful*

that you don’t become so earthly minded that you are of no heavenly good! However, it is this latter truth that runs throughout Scripture.

I know there are “Christian” folks out there who just don’t seem to ever get a handle on the nuts and bolts of life. They are so fanatical in their religious zeal that they can’t hold a job, support a family, make ends meet, or hold responsible positions in the church. We tend to conclude that such well-meaning people are “too heavenly minded.” That is not a fair, nor an accurate, description. It is not that they are too heavenly minded, it is that they are too immature; emotionally and spiritually they are still babies -- they’ve never grown up. Religious zeal is mistakenly equated with spiritual power and fervor, but they are not the same at all; nor should we bring discredit upon those who live genuinely godly lives by describing these unstable souls as “heavenly” in any sense of the word.

God commends and admonishes **true heavenly mindedness**. *If you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth, for you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory* (Colossians 3:1-3). In light of this passage it couldn’t be wrong, dangerous, or something to be shunned, to dwell upon heavenly realities -- things that are *real* right this very minute. As noted earlier, the problem is the opposite of heavenly mindedness; it is that believers in Christ get caught up with this life so much that they are guilty of being too earthly minded.

In the Parable of the Sower there is a perfect description of what too often happens in our lives: *And the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity* (Luke 8:14). The parable describes to a tee what happens when believers allow earthly concerns and interests to push the Word of God to the back burner of their lives. The problem? Being too *earthly* minded.

Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord

The real danger within Christian circles is, and has always been, that we are so attached to this life and the things of this world that we will not let go. We view what God has graciously put in our trust as *belonging* to us and we will not even entertain the possibility that these things are only on *loan* to us, and that everything we have really belongs to Him. We speak of *my* home, *my* family, *my* career. Christian

workers speak of *my* church or *my* ministry -- which may be fine, as long as we are not feeling *ownership* of any of it, for life itself is a loan from God.

Having conducted six funerals for family members -- two in just the last month -- the truth described in Second Corinthians 5:1-8 is increasingly real to me. Verse one states unequivocally that *we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. It's there now. Where? In the heavens. What we presently live in is visible; therefore, temporary. What we *already have* in Heaven is invisible, but it is eternal and belongs to each believer in Christ. Verse two describes this eternal, heavenly house as *our habitation which is from Heaven*.

It is hard to imagine that we who belong to Christ already have this eternal, heavenly home, and yet we can let days and weeks go by and not give it a single *serious* thought! We ought to be *consumed* by it, becoming *more* heavenly minded, not less.

Through Christ mortality is "swallowed up by life" (v. 4). "*Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee*" (v. 5). What is "this very thing" which God has prepared us for? Immortal, eternal life with Him in Heaven. And His Spirit within us is the divine guarantee that it is so.

So, the apostle, rather than being content to hang around in this shell of a body which is temporary and decaying, concludes that he is *confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord* (v. 8). We say it so often: "Death for the believer is a graduation; it is a commencement; it is a promotion." But do our actions, our emotional ties to this world, belie what comes from our lips?

Stop! Slow down! Think it through. If only we would allow ourselves to grasp the stark *reality* of it all. But that's the very problem that we've been discussing, isn't it? We do *not* settle down and soberly think through our lives; we just let things happen. Or worse, we only put the time and attention into the temporary things that are going to vanish anyway. Sometimes we grope our way through each day as if there is no divine plan for our lives, our families, our businesses, our ministries.

Several times in recent weeks I've heard different men give the following illustration and it fits so well here that I pass it on to you: *You've just died and the first words you hear upon entering Heaven are these: "What were you trying to accomplish?"* It would be a good exercise to think through the answer to this question now -- *before* appearing at the Judgment Seat of Christ: **What am I trying to accomplish?** You might want to make a list. Draw a line down the

middle of a page and on the one side list all the things you are trying to accomplish that consists mainly of the *temporary* things, the things you *see*, the things that are primarily *earth centered*. Then, on the opposite side of the line list all of the invisible, eternal things you are trying to accomplish. Be honest or such an exercise will be of little profit. Analyze what you've listed and then sincerely answer this question before your God: *Is my daily life being lived primarily for what will last throughout eternity, or will most of what I am trying to accomplish end when I die -- when I leave this temporary body?*

How Important is the Eternal?

In answer to the above question consider Jesus' words in this passage: *Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul [life]? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul [life]? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works*" (Matthew 16:24-27).

Jesus spoke these words "to His disciples." These are not words to proclaim to a spiritually dead unbeliever. This is not a passage on salvation, but on discipleship. It is not speaking of coming *to* Christ to *receive* eternal life, but of following *after* Him by *giving* Him our entire lives. Notice the progression. If any believer "desires" to follow Christ he must do certain things: deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Christ. But such a believer does not "find his life" by just desiring it. He finds his life only when the desire is translated into action -- when he actually *loses* his life "for My sake."

It doesn't matter how many trips to the altar one makes to dedicate or *rededicate* one's life to the Lord, it is of no real lasting value until the life is *actually being lived* (lost) for the Lord's sake, "and the Gospel's" (see Mark 10:28-30). Wanting to, intending to, desiring to, is all well and good for a starter; but it is the actual surrender of *all* to Him on an ongoing daily basis that brings that eternal reward. And remember, that while our salvation is a gift and is received by grace through faith, and *not* by works, the *reward* for believers will be according to our *works* (what we actually have *done*), not according to our intentions. Let's live each day, therefore, with eternity's values in view. ∞