



HEAVENWARD

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*How  
Eternity  
Can Change  
Your Life  
on Earth*

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CAMERON  
COLE

“In this book Cameron Cole provides us with a framework for the spiritual practice of cultivating a heavenly imagination. When we are confronted with weariness and the sting of death, heaven breaks into our present reality. Through pain, we can access a deeper joy even now as we wait for that restoration that we will one day know in full. This is a courageous and vulnerable encouragement and offers us a way of wisdom through difficulty.”

**Sandra McCracken**, singer-songwriter

“*Heavenward* drew me in because of Cameron Cole’s story. Who better to guide us through a studied, biblical understanding of eternity and how it affects our two o’clock on a Monday than one who has lost a child? I’m grateful for these sage words and the story behind them.”

**Sara Hagerty**, author, *Every Bitter Thing Is Sweet* and *Adore*

“Cameron Cole invites readers to the heavenward life, and this book equips them for a journey of eschatological sanctification. He shows how looking upward in Christ helps humanize us and grants us resilient hope for times both good and bad. He writes as a fellow pilgrim of the transforming vision that he’s seen and longs to share.”

**Michael Allen**, John Dyer Trimble Professor of Systematic Theology and Academic Dean, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando

“‘The end defines the story.’ These profound words capture the essence of Cameron Cole’s life-giving wisdom and insight in *Heavenward*. It will help shed the earthly minded scales from your eyes and lift your gaze to see not only the promises of your future heavenly home but also the beautiful reality that heaven has already come to us through our union with Jesus. May it encourage your heart with the truth that the hope of tomorrow directly infuses hope into the realities of today.”

**Sarah Walton**, coauthor, *He Gives More Grace; Hope When It Hurts;* and *Together Through the Storms*



*Heavenward*



# Heavenward

*How Eternity Can Change Your Life on Earth*

Cameron Cole

 **CROSSWAY**<sup>®</sup>  
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

*Heavenward: How Eternity Can Change Your Life on Earth*

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Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street  
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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Cover design: Jordan Singer

Cover Image: ‘Study of Clouds with a Sunset near Rome’, oil painting on paper by Simon Alexandre-Clément Denis, 1786-1801, Getty Museum / Mountainous Landscape at Tivoli by Simon Denis, Metropolitan Museum of Art

First printing 2024

Printed in the United States of America

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Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-9023-8

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-9026-9

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-9024-5

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Cameron, Cole, 1979– author.

Title: Heavenward : how eternity can change your life on earth / Cole Cameron.

Description: Wheaton, Illinois : Crossway, 2024. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023024204 (print) | LCCN 2023024205 (ebook) | ISBN 9781433590238 (trade paperback) | ISBN 9781433590245 (pdf) | ISBN 9781433590269 (epub) Subjects: LCSH: Bible. Epistles of Paul—Theology. | God (Christianity)—Eternity. | Church history. | Heaven—Biblical teaching.

Classification: LCC BS2655.H34 C36 2024 (print) | LCC BS2655.H34 (ebook) | DDC 236/.24—dc23/eng/20231002

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023024204>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023024205>

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Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP            33   32   31   30   29   28   27   26   25   24  
15   14   13   12   11   10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1

*To my spectacular, beautiful, and precious daughter,*

*Mary Matthews*

*You are a special gift from heaven above.*

*You are and always have been a perpetual joy to your  
mother and me and to everyone who knows you.*

*I give God daily thanks for who you are.*





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# Introduction

ON THE DAY MY OLDEST CHILD DIED, I received a message from a friend that simply read, “How long, O Lord? How long?” This message encapsulates so much of the Christian life. We suffer in the fallen world. We wait for the return of Christ. We aim to move fruitfully toward glory.

In the Christian life, all things begin, point to, and end in eternity. For most of my life, I did not live with this awareness, but that changed radically one Veterans Day.

On November 11, 2013, my perspective shifted *heavenward*. On that day, my precious, vibrant, curly-haired, little boy Cam went to live with God in heaven above. On November 10, 2013, my three-year-old Cam professed faith in Christ after asking if we could “get in the car” to go see Jesus. He expressed a desire to visit Christ in heaven above. The next day, my perfectly healthy Cam shockingly and unexpectedly entered God’s eternal glory. He went to sleep in our home; he woke up above in the arms of Jesus.

Amidst the sorrow and grief of my child’s death, something radically new happened in my daily mindset. Heaven became an

almost ever-present part of my perspective. This transformation made sense: this is where my firstborn child now lived.

### **The Eternal Problem**

The primary problem in the spiritual lives of modern Christians is *eschatological* in nature. *Eschatology* is a fancy theological word for matters related to heaven and the end times. This book addresses that problem.

With each passing second, every person's life is moving toward eternity. However, most Christians live with very little awareness of their eternal trajectory. Other Christians, as a product of life circumstances such as suffering, death, or a terminal diagnosis, do have an awareness of heaven. Still, they have very little knowledge or structure to offer them meaningful, life-giving direction as they move toward glory.

Consequently, to put it in sophisticated, academic language, one could describe the spiritual lives of many Christians as blah or meh. Perhaps, you can identify with this feeling. Your relationship with Christ lacks the deep joy and abundant life that Jesus offers. You do not experience the soaring hope and steadfast perseverance described in the New Testament. Your service to Christ feels routine and obligatory and does not contain transcendent inspiration or bold resolve.

Of course, God does not promise constant "highs" in the Christian life, and yet you can reasonably expect more than a nondescript relationship with Jesus. God's grace to us in Jesus contains too much richness for such flatness.

A spiritual perspective quietly pervading the modern church involves what the apostle Paul referred to as "earthly mindedness" (see Phil. 3:19). A present-day term for earthly mindedness is YOLO:

“You only live once.” In other words, modern Christians often live as if this life is it. There’s no heaven beyond. As a result, there’s little to no eternal hope, joy, or purpose in the spirituality of many Christians.

Consequently, people chase fleeting pleasures of this life, which do not satisfy their souls. They freak out when difficulties and trials come their way. They conceive of their purpose and mission for Christ in a manner that elicits little inspiration or boldness.

You may be reading this and thinking, “My heart and mind are anywhere but in this life.” For you, a death, a diagnosis, or a general sense of disenchantment with this world has turned your soul away from the earth. In a general, undirected way, your consciousness has shifted toward eternity. Still, you do not know exactly where to go with these feelings and longings.

Game-changing transformation occurs when we set our hearts and minds “on things above,” as Paul exhorted believers to do (Col. 3:1–2). Life-altering change can happen when we live like citizens of heaven, as Paul characterized believers (see Phil. 3:20). Your Christian life can be turned upside-down when you start to live *heavenward*. Christ calls us there, and the apostle Paul gives us direction.

A *heavenward* life means that heaven serves “as the backdrop of your everyday consciousness. Heaven is a frequent object of your longings and desires. In a *heavenward* life, eternity organically and instinctively informs and drives the everyday matters of your life.

I can tell you from personal experience that you will discover and enjoy great spiritual riches in a *heavenward* life.

### **My Friend, the Apostle Paul**

A heavenward mindset changed my life after my son died. As the sorrow of grief subsided, *heavenwardness* provided richer

fellowship with Jesus. I had more perspective and more hope. I had more comfort and more patience. I had more focus in ministry, prayer, and evangelism. Life set in relation to heaven felt more hopeful, joyful, and purposeful. Though I was suffering deeply from the loss of my son, God was blessing my inner life in a unique way, like I had never before experienced.

However, I do not know if I would have sustained this heavenward life after the season of grief if I had not met a significant companion on the heavenly journey.

During that year after Cam died, I was thinking about heaven so much that I started to feel weird. I would forget to pay a bill and conclude, “That twenty-five-dollar late fee won’t matter in heaven.” I’d miss a college reunion and figure, “I’ll see those friends in glory.” *Surely nobody was thinking in such an abnormal way.*

Meanwhile, I began reading the letters of the apostle Paul in my devotional life. As I read these New Testament books, I noticed heaven popping up all over the place! I used a golden highlighter (like the heavenly streets of gold) to mark every reference to heaven and eternity in Paul’s letters. My Bible was covered with yellow highlights in the Pauline epistles.

When he talks about suffering, he mentions the resurrection of the body or being at home with God. When he considers morality and ethics, the heavenly realities of the kingdom of God appear. When Paul thinks about serving God, seeing Christ on his judgment seat motivates him.

Heaven pervaded the consciousness and life of the apostle Paul. In one sense, he lived as a person whose life was constantly moving toward glory. In another sense, Paul lived as if he were already there.

I had found a friend, someone who had thought about heaven in an even more intense, constant, and peculiar manner than I had.

What I discovered is that my life had been moving heavenward since the day of my conversion as a young person. God used the fact that my child lived in glory to awaken me to the present heavenly realities of my salvation. Paul did have circumstances that probably aided his heavenly awakening. He characterized his life as “*often* near death” (2 Cor. 11:23). In his letter to the Philippians, one gets the impression that Paul was not sure if his imprisonment would end in death or deliverance (Phil. 1:18–26). In 2 Corinthians, he mentions being beaten nearly to death five times and adrift at sea for a full day and a full night after a shipwreck (2 Cor. 11:25).

However, the realities brought about through Jesus’s life, death, resurrection, and ascension (known as the Christ Event) more likely drove and sustained Paul’s heavenward life.

Paul viewed the Christ Event as the arrival of heaven on earth. The Christ Event signified the beginning of the age to come, a new heavenly age, which Jews had anticipated for centuries. Paul’s letters clearly assert that the conversion of believers means that they are instantly transferred into the kingdom of heaven, and they live as citizens of that heavenly realm where Christ reigns in his glory.

As I continued to study heaven, I found other heavenward friends along the way in the writings and music of church history. The early church fathers, Christian mystics, Puritan theologians, British poets, slaves of the American South, and others all became heavenward companions. From these sources, I found other people who were consumed with heaven to various degrees.



In this season, my life changed radically. I want this change for you too.

When you understand the implications of the coming of Christ and the fullness of your salvation, heaven naturally starts to sink deeper and deeper into your heart and mind. You start to realize that, in the spiritual realm, you live with a foot in heaven and a toe on earth. The more eternity sinks into your soul, the more your life, actions, and longings move in a heavenward direction.

When you realize that God has blessed you in Christ with “all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places,” greater joy enters your relationship with Jesus. When you digest how eternally blissful your life in heaven will be, the more you can persevere in the trials and sufferings of this life. When you think about offering your life as a worshipful gift before the judgment seat of Christ, the more inspiring and convicted your purpose in life becomes.

The apostle Paul’s theology of heaven offers promise and hope in these various areas. All of these eternal benefits and blessings are on offer to you right now in the gospel.

### **The Map of the Journey Ahead**

As we depend on God’s grace together, *Heavenward* will be a journey toward a heart, mind, and life more anchored in glory and more filled with joy, hope, and purpose.

Section 1, “The Beginning of the Heavenward Journey,” features a short, basic overview of the components of heaven, largely drawn from Paul’s theology. It also defines what I mean by a “heavenward life.”

Section 2 looks at “Why Paul Was So Heavenward (And You Can Be Too!).” We will look at five different factors in Paul’s life

and theology that influenced his heavenwardness. In the process, we will find that these factors in Paul's life are true of your life and the lives of all Christians.

Finally, in section 3, we will discuss and enjoy "The Fruit of a Heavenward Life." We will explore five benefits and promises that flow out of Paul's heavenward mentality. In doing so, we will see the transformative and hopeful power of living with a heavenward trajectory.

An important note: section 2 contains much information about the present realities and implications of heaven. If you are reading this book primarily because of a curiosity about heaven, you will likely find these chapters fascinating. If you are reading this book during a season of deep grief and sorrow and primarily looking for encouragement, you could get bogged down in the teaching portions. I encourage you to stick with the more informational passages because these portions will help you and ground you as they provide essential foundations for the hope of heaven now and for the rest of your life. I would also say that you will find lots of encouragement at the ends of these chapters in the "Your Heavenward Journey" segments, and then in section 3 which covers the fruit of a heavenward life.

### **For Whom This Book Is Written**

This book is written for two groups of people. First, it is written for the person who is aware that his or her life is moving heavenward. If you see yourself here, perhaps you have lost a loved one and, as a result, heaven is filling your heart and mind. You are thinking constantly about your loved one and his or her life above. Or maybe you're becoming more aware of your mortality

## INTRODUCTION

as a result of a terminal diagnosis or natural aging. It could be that you've grown weary of this broken world and find yourself saying, "Come, Lord Jesus," as if it's the refrain of your life. Regardless of the reason, if your life is moving heavenward, this book will help you channel that heavenly trajectory in a manner that yields redemption, hope, joy, and meaning.

Second, this book is for the person who is not fully aware that his or her life is moving heavenward. If that's you, your spiritual life has become stale and flat, and you're longing for something more in your faith. However, you have not identified that God is shifting your heart, mind, and actions toward eternity. The heavenly trajectory on which the Lord is sending you promises to rekindle a richness and joy that you have not tasted in a long time or ever. Paul and other heavenward friends can serve as your guide in the same way they were for me in my inspiring journey.

Regardless of your situation, this is an invitation to join the "upward call" to which Paul directs believers (Phil. 3:14). This is an invitation to a *heavenward* life.

SECTION 1

---

THE BEGINNING OF  
THE HEAVENWARD  
JOURNEY



## Paul and Heaven

THE AIM OF THIS BOOK is to see the Lord transform people's lives by gaining a heavenward mindset. The first step in this journey involves learning or reviewing some of the basic structures and components related to heaven, particularly those found in Paul's letters and theology. After all, it is pretty challenging to meditate on and long for heaven if you are not clear on what eternity entails.

People often have bits and pieces of knowledge about heaven but are not necessarily sure how they all fit together. This chapter, "Paul and Heaven," will help connect the dots for you by presenting a progression that will underlie the entire book: heaven, heavenly mindedness, and heavenward.

*Heaven* involves the details and knowledge about God's plans for eternity and about the believer's life with Jesus after death. (We will divide heaven into two sections: future heaven and present heaven.)

*Heavenly mindedness* refers to an intentional spiritual discipline whereby we deliberately meditate on heaven and the glory of God there.

*Heavenward* describes a work of God in your life in which heaven becomes an organic part of your daily perspective and the object of your life's direction. A *heavenward* life flows out of a knowledge of heaven, heavenly minded prayer and meditation, and the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart.

With that being said, let's start the journey with these rich, heavenly truths from Paul's theology. This chapter will be a little more on the educational side compared to the others, but it provides important foundations for the adventure ahead.

### **Future Heaven**

When people think about heaven, usually they conceive first of what happens to us after we die. They often think about the realities that flow from Christ's second coming. You may know many of the aspects of *future heaven* but are not quite sure how they all fit together. I have divided future heaven into three intervals.

#### *The Intermediate State*

You may never have heard the term *intermediate state*, but it's probably what you are thinking about when you hear the word *heaven*. When people die in Christ before the second coming of Christ, they enter the intermediate state. Your deceased loved ones in the Lord currently dwell in the intermediate state.

In the intermediate state, believers are delivered from pain, sin, and evil (Rom. 8:18–23; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rev. 21:1–4). They will never suffer, sin, or experience the effects of the fall again. Believers gain a vision of God in his full glory and enjoy perfect union with Christ. They live in perpetual joy.

Paul tells us that, after death, we are away from our perishable, earthly bodies but do not yet have our glorified bodies, which we gain at the second coming of Christ (2 Cor. 5:8). Therefore, we are not certain about the bodily state in which we exist in the intermediate state. Nevertheless, we are perfectly happy and experience no suffering ever again.

### *The Second Coming of Christ*

The second coming of Christ designates the end of the “present evil age” (Gal. 1:4), the time period from the fall to the second coming where sin has broken and damaged this world. A number of significant end-times events occur during or right around the time of the second coming. The order of them is not perfectly clear, so think of these more as events connected to the second coming and worry less about the sequence in which they occur.

At the second coming, Christ appears to all people. Around the time of his appearing, a *rapture* occurs, where believers on earth rise up into heaven to be with Christ and the saints for Christ’s return (1 Thess. 4:16–17). People debate how soon before Christ’s return believers rise into the heavens and for how long they dwell there before coming to the earth. Regardless, Paul does suggest a rising of believers into the heavens with Christ in some form (1 Thess. 4:16–17).

The *resurrection of the dead* occurs at the second coming. This event involves all people—believers and nonbelievers—gaining a new body (Acts 24:15). Believers gain a perfected, imperishable body that will never experience sickness, wounds, breaks, or pain ever again (1 Cor. 15:35–54). Think about how incredible it will be never to feel physical pain again!



After the rapture and the resurrection of the body, a *final judgment* of all humanity will occur. I believe that a separate judgment occurs for believers and nonbelievers. Christ will judge eternally those who have rejected the gospel and tried to justify themselves through works (Rom. 2:16; 2 Thess. 1:8–10). Nonbelievers are judged according to their works, rather than according to the righteousness of Jesus, which comes by grace for those who have received his salvation. They will spend eternity apart from God.

A judgment also occurs for believers before the *judgment seat of Christ*. This judgment does not determine final salvation; after all, believers have already entered heaven and dwelled there prior to sitting before the judgment seat of Christ. Here, believers give an account of their lives before Jesus and receive rewards for works of faithfulness done for the glory of Christ (Rom. 14:10–12). We do not know the nature of the rewards. We do not believe any punishment is involved, since Christ received punishment for our sins on the cross. At the same time, Paul does suggest that a loss of rewards (or better said, missed opportunity to gain them) occurs if we do not invest our lives for the glory of God (1 Cor. 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 5:10).

### *The New Heavens and the New Earth*

After Christ returns, heaven and earth will merge. Through the final judgment, God will banish all evil from the earth and fully restore creation (Rom. 8:19–23). The Lord will dwell with his people on the earth. In the new heavens and new earth, believers will enjoy a physical existence, including food, drink, affection, sounds, and sights. The new heavens and new earth will literally be heaven on earth!

## Present Heaven

Perhaps the most significant factor in Paul's heavenward mindset involves the current presence of heaven on earth as a result of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Let me say that again because it sounds confusing and fantastic: heaven has partially come to earth as a product of the Christ Event.<sup>2</sup>

In a topic that we will explore more in chapter 3, the end-times event that Jews longed for was called "the day of the Lord." In the same way that Christians wait for the second coming of Christ, Jews anticipated the day. On the day of the Lord, God himself would come to the earth in his full glory. Upon his coming he would judge the world and pour out his Holy Spirit. In addition, they expected a resurrection of the dead to occur. Best of all, after the events of the day of the Lord, a restoration of the world would occur and heaven would dwell on earth. They referred to this merging of heaven and earth as "the age to come."

When Paul saw Jesus on the road to Damascus and realized that Christ was, in fact, divine, he began to connect the dots. Christ being God meant that the Lord had come to the earth via the incarnation. When Jesus rose from the dead, Paul interpreted that as a resurrection of the dead, as was expected on the day. When Pentecost occurred, Paul viewed the event as the anticipated pouring out of the Holy Spirit. When God poured out his wrath on Jesus on the cross, a divine judgment occurred. With all of these dots connecting to the signs of the day of the Lord, Paul made

- 1 This spiritual reality constitutes one of the most important truths to know in the heavenward journey, so an entire chapter (chap. 3) is dedicated to it later. Consequently, I will speak briefly here.
- 2 Again, "Christ Event" refers to the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus.

the declaration, “Now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2 ).

Eureka! The day of the Lord is here—in a partial sense. As a result of the day having occurred, the age to come is now upon us. Heaven has come to the earth. We live in the new heavenly age.

This assertion may sound confusing or unbelievable to you, given the pain, darkness, and brokenness in the world. Paul does not say that the present evil age has ended. He does declare, though, that the new heavenly age has arrived through the Christ Event. It just happens to overlap with the present evil age until the second coming of Christ.

Paul uses different terminology to describe the presence of heaven on earth, such as the new creation, the kingdom of God, the Spirit, and the light. Though each image emphasizes different aspects of the age to come, they all fundamentally refer to the current presence of heaven on earth.

As you move heavenward, you must expand your conceptualization of heaven. Heaven does not just have future implications; heaven has past and present implications as well. God certainly moves your life toward glory. At the same time, heaven came—past tense—to the earth when Christ entered this realm. As a result, heaven is here and now for Christians.

As we will explore in chapter 4, heaven is the place you presently dwell. In your conversion, Christ transferred you there. Very few spiritual truths will lead you heavenward more than this one. This glorious reality changes everything.

### **Heavenly Mindedness**

Once we understand the nature of heaven, both present and future, we are ready for the next movement in the journey. The

next step involves heavenly mindedness, an intentional practice whereby we deliberately meditate on and long for heaven.

When my son died, I naturally began to think about heaven constantly. My beloved child, whom I long to be with, now lived there. My mind and heart understandably moved in an upward direction. Heavenly mindedness naturally occurred in my life. You may be able to relate to this experience in your own life. This mindset started out of my own personal experience, but Paul calls for heavenly mindedness in all believers.

Heavenly mindedness is, in fact, an exhortation of Scripture. In Colossians, Paul encourages heavenly mindedness as a practice in the Christian life:

If then you have been raised with Christ, *seek the things that are above*, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. *Set your minds on things that are above*, not on things that are on earth. (Col. 3:1–2)

Without getting too academic, there are two grammatical features to notice in those verses. First, Paul calls us to set our hearts and minds on “things above” in the *imperative voice* and the *present tense*. Here’s why this is important. First, the imperative voice in the Bible reflects a command of God to believers. To set our hearts and minds on heaven is less of a suggestion and more of a directive. While relying on the Holy Spirit, the Lord directs us to meditate on and long for the realities of heaven. Second, the present tense in Greek represents continuous action, not a one-time event. The Lord commands us to think about eternity as a daily habit. Heavenly mindedness serves as a deliberate, ongoing spiritual practice.

In Colossians 3, Paul also portrays heavenly mindedness as both an intellectual and an emotional exercise. In Colossians 3:2 Paul writes, “Set your minds on things that are above,” emphasizing the intellectual aspect of heavenly mindedness. He reinforces this intellectual practice in 2 Corinthians, when he writes, “We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18). We turn our minds toward eternal truths and realities.

For me, this meditation began with my thinking about what my son’s life looked like in eternity. I can specifically remember considering how the luminescence of Christ’s glory may glow off of Cam’s white locks. I would envision him sitting in Christ’s lap and engulfed by Jesus’s embrace.

As time went on, and as I received guidance in Paul’s letters, I started to base my thinking about heaven on the images of Scripture, particularly those provided in Revelation. I would consider Christ seated on his throne with heavenly creatures glorifying him. I would think about the city of God with its streets of gold and dazzling gems adorning it. I would envision the beauty and majesty of the restored earth. *What may the waters and mountains and grassy fields of the new earth look like?*

Howard Thurman wrote that the heavenly mindedness of American slaves (as seen in slave spirituals) contained both an objective and a personal quality. He wrote, “Heaven was specific! An orderly series of events was thought to take place. . . . A crown, a personal crown is given. . . . There are mansions. . . . There are slippers.”<sup>3</sup> As referenced in the Bible, they thought

3 Howard Thurman, *The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1975), 53.

about the crown and the home of heaven. But it wasn't just *a* crown or *a* home; it was *their* crown and *their* home. Scriptural truths provided the grounds of their heavenly mindedness, but the personal relevance of these realities fueled their heavenly mindset.

Paul's portrayal of heavenly mindedness comprised more than just an intellectual exercise. When he encouraged believers to seek things above, his exhortation included the emotions and desires of the heart. One could characterize this aspect of heavenly mindedness as heavenly longing. In Romans 8:23 Paul writes that "not only the creation, but we ourselves . . . *groan inwardly* as we wait eagerly for the adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." You can almost feel the yearning for glory, the yearning for deliverance, the yearning to see the glory of God emanating from the core of Paul's soul with the words "groan inwardly."

Don't you know this groaning? I know I sure do. I groan to be delivered from the pains of this world. To be delivered from sin and sorrow and fear. To be delivered from heartburn and pulled muscles and a bad back. For the world to be delivered from war and racism and poverty. For my friends to be delivered from lupus and cancer and addiction and diabetes.

And I long to see Jesus in all of his glory! I long to feel the deep, perpetual joy of unfettered union with God. I long to praise and adore him at his very feet, not as a matter of faith but as a natural response to seeing his majesty.

And I long to see my little boy and to hold him again and to run my hands through his soft hair and to kiss his ruddy full cheeks and to play with him, with the light of Christ illuminating all of our interactions.

Now this, my friends, is the fuller picture of heavenly mindedness. In the mind, we imagine and meditate, considering images and realities that come out of Scripture. And with the heart we long and desire in a manner that elevates our whole self onto an eternal plain.

Heavenly mindedness, though, is not something we manufacture by effort. Yes, we certainly use intentionality and discipline, as we do with any spiritual practice. We grow in our biblical knowledge of heaven so that truth is the “material” of our meditations. Simultaneously, we rely on the Holy Spirit to grow us in heavenly mindedness.

The Christian mystic Teresa of Ávila wrote *The Interior Castle*, a book about her spiritual journey into Christ’s heavenly glory through prayer. In an extended metaphor Teresa went room by room in a spiritual castle, closer and closer to Christ. As she portrayed images from her own heavenly mindedness, Teresa offered this admonition: “But we cannot enter by any efforts of our own, His Majesty must put us right into the centre of our soul, and must enter there Himself, in order that He may the better show us His wonders.”<sup>4</sup>

In the following Puritan prayer, the speaker models both the practice of heavenly mindedness and the necessary reliance on Christ for an eternal mindset:

In needful transactions let my affection be in heaven,  
 and my love soar upwards in flames of fire,  
 my gaze fixed on unseen things,  
 my eyes open to the emptiness, fragility,

4 Teresa of Ávila, *The Interior Castle* (New York: Image, 2013), 88.

mockery of earth and its vanities.  
 May I view all things in the mirror of eternity,  
 waiting for the coming of my Lord, listening for the last  
     trumpet call,  
 hastening unto the new heaven and earth.<sup>5</sup>

Like the Puritan, may we ask the Lord to move our affections, love, and gaze toward God in heaven. May we recognize the emptiness of the world. May we listen and look, await and hasten Christ's coming. May we practice heavenly mindedness by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

### **Your Heavenward Journey**

As you can see, your heavenly journey begins in the mind, emotions, and spirit. As we intellectually grow in biblical knowledge about heaven, we meditate on these eternal realities. As we mature spiritually our longings and desires point more and more to their satisfaction in Christ and in his heavenly kingdom. And as we move heavenward, we observe his upward movement in our lives while also trusting in the Spirit to elevate us.

One must start with intellectual knowledge about heaven. Nevertheless, at times people can focus on facts about heaven in a way in which they lose sight of the personal nature of glory. Before my son died I knew a fair amount about heaven. What made heaven so transformative after his death was that it became so deeply personal. The knowledge did far more than fulfill intellectual curiosity; it told me about my son's new home

5 Arthur G. Bennett, *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1986).



and about the place where we will spend eternity together when we reunite.

The heavenward shift involves the transformation of the whole person. As the mind and heart shift toward eternity, so will our feet. So will our lives such that we live as citizens of heaven, beings of the new creation.

Our next chapter will paint a clearer picture of what this heavenward transformation looks like in real life.