

September 10, 2006 by Steve Brandon



Think on the Things Above

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- 1. Heaven is a Place of Grace.**
- 2. Heaven is Pleasure Beyond Measure.**

We will be looking at one verse of Scripture: Col. 3:2. It's a simple and straightforward command, but its implications are immense. Paul writes, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2). This verse is so short that it might be easily repeated a few times and memorized in a few moments.

I don't believe that there is much difficulty in understanding Paul's admonition to us this morning. There is a simple command. This command contains a positive element as well as a negative element. We are told to direct our thoughts and our hearts and our affections heavenward, rather than earthward. We are to think much upon the heavenly realities. We are to dwell of the things that are true beyond this world.

The things of the earth aren't to consume our attention. But rather, it ought to be the things above that drive us and guide us and help us. This is a call to control our thoughts. Our thoughts are an interesting topic. You can be here this morning listening to my message. But, your mind can be a million miles away. Normally, this is not a good thing. However, this morning, it is a good thing. Your mind is supposed to be directed upon the things far away in heaven.

Though the statement is easy to understand, it's not an easy thing to do. We are earthly creatures, who live and breath and dwell and think about earthly things, and we must. We all have earthly responsibilities that consume our time. If you are young, you have school to think about. You need to think about reading. You need to think about writing. You need to think about arithmetic. If you are a bit older, perhaps you have extra-curricular activities to think about. You have soccer practice. You have band practice. You have play practice. If you are employed, you have the worries of the job. You have pressures from your boss to think about. You have the deadlines that you have to make. You are dependent upon other coworkers. If you are married, you have worries to think about. Husbands are thinking about how they can love their wives as Christ loved the church. Wives are thinking about how they can submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ. "The one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided" (1 Cor. 7:33). If you are a mother, you have many things to think about. You have kids to dress. You have dishes to wash. You have dinner to prepare. These types of things are consuming to all of us, because we live upon the earth. Such thoughts and pressures are natural. They are God given. They are necessary. Unfortunately, they can be consuming, so that we don't have time to obey the injunction of verse 2.

I believe that Paul's command here in Colossians 3:2 comes with a reason: Thinking of the things above isn't natural for us. The Bible often instructs us in ways that are not natural for us. We are told not to steal, because stealing is our tendency. We are told to tell the truth, because lying is our tendency. We are told to be compassionate toward others, because our tendency is to be self-centered and uncompassionate. Here, we are told to "think on the things above" because our tendency is to think only upon earthly things.

The things above are the things in heaven, where God dwells. But, I believe that Paul's reference here is verse 2 is a bit bigger than that. Yes, Paul is talking about heaven. Yes, Paul is talking about the dwelling of God. But, I believe that "the things above" are even bigger than this. He's talking about everything that's true in the heavenly realm: the things that are, as well as the things that will be. He's talking about the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" that are hidden in Christ (Col. 2:3). He's talking about the things that are "laid up" for us in heaven (Col. 1:4). He's talking about the inheritance that we will share in someday (Col. 1:12). He's talking about full character of the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13). Our mind is to dwell upon these things. We are commanded to think about the things above. We are commanded to think about heaven. We are commanded to think about Christ Jesus in heaven. We are commanded to think about those things that are laid up for us.

The command of verse 2 is almost exactly what we saw last week in verse 1, where we are instructed, "keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1). I believe that it is repeated for emphasis. We need to hear it twice. I want to preach about it twice. Last week, I preached a topical message entitled, "Seek the Things Above" where I expanded upon verse 1 and described what Jesus was doing at the right hand of God. This morning, my message is entitled, "Think on the Things Above." It's my aim to tell you all about the things above.

There are many times when preaching is future-oriented. I'm helping to prepare you for life. I'm helping to prepare you for the conflict you will have at home. I'm seeking to prepare you for the flooded basement, the witnessing opportunity, the stress at work, the temptations that come, or the sickness that you will face. But, today is different. Today, my message will help you to fulfill this command this morning. I'm going to be telling you about heaven today. As I do, your mind will be thinking about heaven. As your mind is thinking about heaven, you will be doing exactly what Paul is commanding you to do: "set your mind in the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2). My message today is all application. As I describe to you the things above, and as you follow along with your minds, you will be applying the message today.

Now, before we dive into my outline, I want to begin by asking the question, "Why is this command given here?" Why doesn't Paul just jump into verse 5, "Consider the member of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry"? Why doesn't Paul just jump into verse 8, "but now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth"? Why doesn't Paul just jump into the positive admonitions of verse 12, "Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience"? Why does Paul first tell us to "think on the things above?"

I think that the answer is simple: A heavenward gaze gives fuel to overcoming sin in your life. In other words, as your mind is fixated upon heaven, you will be drawn to live for the day that you will be there. A heavenward gaze is the north star in the navigation through the waters of this life. A heavenward gaze is the magnetic north in our walking through the dark forests of life. A heavenward gaze will be a guiding principle to encourage us to press forward in our lives.

John Bunyan illustrated this excellently in his classic work, "Pilgrim's Progress." Perhaps you remember the time in which Christian had just set on his way. Those in the City of Destruction thought that he was crazy to seek the Celestial City. Those in his household thought that he was being foolish in seeking this city that he had never seen. But, off he went. Quickly after leaving, he was joined by a certain, Pliable, who was joining him for the journey. As they started out, Pliable was eager to hear of where he and Christian was headed. He asked Christian, "Tell me now further, what the things are, and how to be enjoyed, whither we are going. The conversation went as follows.

CHRISTIAN. I can better conceive of them with my mind, than speak of them with my tongue; but yet since you are desirous to know, I will read of them in my book.

PLIABLE. And do you think that the words of your book are certainly true?

CHR. Yes, verily, for it was made by Him that cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

PLI. Well said. What things are they?

CHR. There is an endless kingdom to be inhabited, and everlasting life to be given us, that we may inhabit that kingdom forever (Isa. 45:17; John 10:27-29).

PLI. Well said. And what else?

CHR. There are crowns of glory to be given us, and garments that will make us shine like the sun in the firmament of Heaven! (2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 3:4; Matt. 13:43).

PLI. This is very pleasant. And what else?

CHR. There shall be no more crying, nor sorrow; for He that is owner of the place will wipe all tears from our eyes (Isa. 25:8; Rev. 7:17, 17; 21:4).

PLI. And what company shall we have there?

CHR. There we shall be with seraphims, and Cherubims, creatures that will dazzle your eyes to look on them. There, also, you shall meet with thousands and ten thousands that have gone before us to that Place; none of them are hurtful, but loving and holy, everyone walking in the sight of God, and standing in His presence with acceptance forever; in a word, there we shall see the elders with their golden crowns; there we shall see the holy virgins with their golden harps; there we shall see men, that by the world were cut in pieces, burnt in flames, eaten of beasts, drowned in the seas, for the love that they bare to the Lord of the Place; all well, and clothed with immortality as with a garment[11] (Isa. 6:2; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Rev. 7:17; 4:4; 14:1-5; John 12:25; 2 Cor. 5:2-5).

PLI. The hearing of this is enough to ravish one's heart; but are these things to be enjoyed? How shall we get to be sharers thereof?

CHR. The Lord, the Governor of the country, hath recorded, that in this book, the substance of which is, if we be truly willing to have it, He will bestow it upon us freely (Isa. 55:1, 2, 12; John 7:37; 6:37; Psalms 21:6; 22:17).

PLI. Well, my good companion, glad am I to hear of these things; come on, let us mend our pace.

CHR. I cannot go so fast as I would, by reason of this burden that is on my back. [\[1\]](#)

Thinking of the things in heaven, gave Pliable and Christian the encouragement to walk even faster toward that city. Unfortunately, (if you know the story), Pliable would later turn back to the city of destruction when the troubles of this world overcame him. His trouble was that he began to focus his attention upon his trials, rather than upon the glories of the Celestial City, to which he and Christian were headed. Christian was slowed down because of his sin.

It works the same with us. As our minds are fully engaged with the realities of heaven, we will want to walk with haste to reach our destiny. It's the world that works at pulling us away from pursuing our future home as passionately as we know that we ought. This is why we need to set our minds on the things above (Col. 3:2). It will fuel our drive to live holy lives in the here and now.

In Hebrews 11, we read of many of the heroes of the faith, who lived before the time of Christ. Listen closely to what is written about them in verses 13-16.

Hebrews 11:13-16

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

They were seeking a heavenly country. They were seeking the city that God prepared for them. To seek a heavenly country means that their minds were set upon that place. They lived as if they were citizens of another country. Indeed, "they confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth" (verse 13).

This is what we are. Paul wrote, in Philippians 3:20 that “our citizenship is in heaven.” Certainly, we are citizens of the United States of America. The Bible would never deny that. We are called to submit to those in authority over us, whether they be kings or governors or elected officials or police officers. But, as followers of Christ, we have another citizenship that ought to govern our current, earthly citizenship. We are to be loyal to our home country in heaven. But, the fact remains, that we have dual-citizenship. As believers in Christ, we have a citizenship in heaven. And our heavenly citizenship is where our true affections ought to be. Our earthly citizenship should feel like we shouldn’t even belong here. This is why Peter can say, “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

I believe that this is the key to Paul’s placing this command right here in his epistle: when we know where our lives are headed, it has a wonderful effect upon the way in which we live upon the earth. It will empower us to conquer fleshly indulgence (Col. 2:23). A heavenward gaze will empower like rules or sheer determination or willpower are unable to do.

It’s important for us to realize how close we are to our heavenly reality. We are only a breath away. We are only a heartbeat away. Our life is like a vapor. Psalm 39:5 says, “Surely every man at his best is a mere breath.” At our best, we are only a breath. We are flowers in the field that bloom and quickly wither. We are nearer to eternity than you might think.

More than 50 years ago, a young woman named Florence Chadwick waded into the water off Catalina Island (in California). She intended to be the first woman to swim the 21 miles from the island to the California coast. Long-distance swimming was not new to her; she had been the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions. The water was numbing cold that day. The fog was so thick she could hardly see the boats in her party. She swam more than 15 hours before she asked to be taken out of the water. Her trainer tried to encourage her to swim on since they were so close to land, but when Florence looked, all she saw was fog. So she quit, less than one-mile from her goal. Later she said, “I’m not excusing myself, but if I could have seen the land I might have made it.” [\[2\]](#)

This is my heart for all of you. I want for you to see the land where we are going. Perhaps then, having seen it clearly, you will make it. The wisdom of Moses comes shining through here. He said, “Teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12). When we know (and fully comprehend) how close we are to our end, we will present to God a heart of wisdom. We will soon be there. It’s a glorious place. I want to describe it to you.

It is difficult to fully comprehend what heaven will be like. None of us have ever been to heaven. None of us have ever experienced heaven. We are like twins in a womb, seeking to describe to one another what the world outside the womb is like. Joseph Bayly writes, ...

“If I were a twin in the womb, I doubt that I could prove the existence of earth to my mate. He would probably object that the idea of an earth beyond the womb was ridiculous, that the womb was the only earth we’d ever know. If I tried to explain that earthlings live in a greatly expanded environment and breathe air, he would only be skeptical. After all, a fetus lives in water; who could imagine its being able to live in a universe of air? To him such a transition would seem impossible. It would take birth to prove the earth’s existence to a fetus. A little pain, a dark tunnel, a gasp of air--and then the world outside! Green grass, laps, lakes, the ocean horses (could a fetus imagine a horse?), rainbows, walking, running, surfing, ice-skating. With enough room that you don’t have to shove, and a universe beyond.” [\[3\]](#)

Any description that we have of heaven, must be received by faith. Any description that we have of heaven, must be revealed to us through the Word of God. This morning, I have two descriptions of heaven that I want to give you.

1. Heaven is a Place of Grace.

Last week, we took note of how Jesus is right now “seated at the right hand of God.” This is a sign of grace! The reason why Jesus is sitting is because His atoning work has been accomplished. He has been the ultimate sacrifice. In Hebrews 10, the point is made about the work of the high priests under the Mosaic law. They never sat down, because their work was never finished. They stood to do their work., because there weren’t any seats in the temple. Their standing was a picture that their work was never done. But, Jesus Christ, on the other hand, is not like any of these priests. He finished His sacrifice. And then, He sat down upon His heavenly throne when His work was complete.

Hebrews 10:11-14

Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

The sacrifice of Jesus was a “once for all” sacrifice. There was no need for Jesus to do anything more. There was no need for Jesus to be sacrificed again. The atonement was accomplished. He accomplished our salvation for us. Jesus upon the throne is a sign of grace, because it’s a reminder of how anyone in heaven gets to heaven!

Throughout eternity, Jesus will be remembered forever as the Lamb who came to earth and was slain for our sins. In Revelation 5:9-10, we hear the praise of heaven. Singing to Jesus, the chorus rings out: “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.” A few verses later, the chant rises to Jesus, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing” (Rev. 5:12). This is unadulterated worship to Jesus Christ, the glorious one, who was slain. In heaven, we will always remember His sacrifice for our sins. Heaven will always reflect back upon the sacrifice of the Lamb, who made it all possible. In fact, it is the very fact that the Lamb was slaughtered that gave reason to glory in Christ

Jesus.

In the very last chapter of the Bible (Revelation 22), we read of how the bond-servants of God will serve Him who sits upon the throne. The throne upon which God sits is called, "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:3). Obviously, this is a reference to the Trinity. Father and Son, both sitting on the same throne. But, the Son isn't called, "The Son." He's called, "The Lamb," which brings to mind His sacrifice upon the cross for all to see and marvel at for eternity.

Why the focus upon Jesus? Because it was His sacrifice that opened the doorway to heaven. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). In fact, Jesus is the only door to heaven. Peter said the same thing, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Nobody ever gets to heaven through their own works. Nobody ever gets to heaven through their own religion. Nobody ever gets to heaven on account of their own merits.

The only way to heaven is through the finished work of Jesus Christ. It's not His work plus your works. It's not His work plus your efforts. It's only because of His work on our behalf. It's all of grace. Heaven is a place of grace. We will be reminded of this forever, as we look to the Lamb upon the throne. We will also be reminded of this forever, as we look to ourselves, who are in heaven.

When we get to heaven, we will fully see the wretchedness of our sin. When Isaiah saw the Lord upon the throne, he was undone because of his sin (Isaiah 6:5). In fact, we will come to understand our sins to be much worse than we understand them now to be, because we will see them clearly for what they are: cosmic treason against the Lord. But with such knowledge about the awfulness of our sin will come even more clearly the glory of Jesus in removing the sin from us.

I love the way that Jonathan Edwards put it. He wrote, "Though the saints in heaven will see their exceeding folly and vileness in much of their behavior here in this world, we will see a thousand times as much of the evil and folly of sin as they do now; yet they will not experience any proper sorrow or grief for it, for this reason, because they will see at the same time how that it is turned to the best to the glory of God, or at least will so perfectly know that it is so; and particularly they will have so much the more admiring and joyful sense of God's grace in pardoning them, that the remembrance of their sins will rather be an indirect occasion of joy." ^[4] Every time we happen to look at Jesus, we will be reminded of how great was our sin, but how much greater was the grace of God in Christ Jesus! Heaven is a place of grace!

Please turn in your Bibles to Ephesians, chapter 2. For many of you, I trust that these words are familiar words for you. They put forth in as clear of terms as any through the Bible that our salvation is all of grace. Let's consider the following verses: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Our salvation is by grace. Grace is the gift of God to give us what we don't deserve. God has so saved us in this way that we might not boast (verse 9). When we get to heaven, there will be no patting ourselves upon the back in recognition of how good we were. None of us will say how much we deserved heaven. None of us will be able to say, "I'm sure glad that I was smart enough to find the way to glory." In fact, it's just the opposite. There will be no boasting in heaven. We see in verse 9 that the manner in which we are saved from our sins is such that there is no room to boast at all. You can't even boast of your faith. Verse 8 is clear: your faith is a gift to you from God. The reason you have faith is because God gave you faith. Nobody getting to heaven has any reason to boast in anything, but the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. If there is something that you think that you earned before God, then something is wrong in your thinking. And it may just be that your hope is in the wrong place. And it may just be that you aren't on the way to heaven. Heaven is a place of grace. Boasting is excluded in heaven.

Let's recall how it is that we are saved in the first place. Beginning in verse 1, we read all about our salvation: "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest" (Ephesians 2:1-3). These verses speak of our natural state before God. We are "dead" in our sins. We are "by nature children of wrath." It's a hopeless state.

There's no possibility that we could ever enter heaven apart from another coming to rescue us. This is what we see beginning in verse 4, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-6). This is the work of God on our behalf. It's a work of giving life! Look at verse 5. The main thought of what God did for us in saving us was to make us alive. "[He] made us alive together with Christ." This is how you ought to think of salvation. It's God raising us from the dead. It's God giving us life. How? Through His grace.

But, as our focus this morning is upon heaven, I want to take you to my favorite verse in all of the Bible: Ephesians 2:7. God saved us like He did, "so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

In the ages to come, all who are in heaven will be object lessons for all to see of His great grace. The fact that any of us are in heaven is because Jesus gave Himself for our sins. When we look at you in heaven, our thoughts going to be, "God's grace is abundant!" When you look at me in heaven, your thought is going to be, "God's grace is super abundant!" The mere fact of our existence in heaven will scream to all who see us and interact with us that God's grace is truly amazing. That at the cross of Christ, He would accomplish so much.

My wife and I had an opportunity a few weeks ago to attend a pastor's retreat in Wisconsin. We spent about five days there. The place was truly heavenly. The place where we stayed was a converted Bed and Breakfast with six rooms. The accommodations were very charming. The place was very clean. The building was on 6½ wooded acres, filled with wildlife. Bird feeders were all around the property to attract the birds. At one point, we were driving out of the property and happened to find a deer along the road. We sat there and watched it for several minutes, until it decided to leave and join up with her two young fawns.

The property is on a lake, where we had access to a sail boat, some canoes and a kayak. When we were there, the weather was perfect. The

temperature hovered around the mid 80's while we were there. It wasn't too hot. It wasn't too cold. It wasn't too windy. It was just perfect. Yvonne and I spent each morning between breakfast and lunch out by the lake, reading the Bible and other Christian books to one another. Interspersed throughout our reading, we had opportunity to talk about our marriage and our family and our ministry. It was a very, very, very enjoyable time.

They served us breakfast, lunch, and dinner -- a full spread. The food was very good. Snacks were available for us at all times. There was a never-ending supply of juice and yogurt and pretzels and popcorn and cookies for us to eat. During our afternoons, we filled it with various activities. One day, we canoed all the way around the lake, and even to another lake that was attached to it through a small channel. One day we took a nice walk around the neighborhood. A couple of days, we took some bikes that they had available for us to use. We rode to town one day. We rode all around the lake on another day.

As it was a pastor's retreat, the focus of our time together was very spiritual. One of the reasons we spent our mornings reading these things together was that it was required for us to read and study and think and pray and rest during our time there.

We stayed there with 5 other pastors and their wives. We enjoyed some sweet fellowship with these people. The only other requirement of our time together was that we had to eat one meal with all of these pastors and wives. During our meals, our host family directed our conversation to the things of the Lord. It was as close to heaven on earth that I have ever experienced.

Best of all, it was entirely free. We didn't have to pay even a single penny to stay there. There's no catch. There's no "we'll bill you later." It was absolutely free. We simply had to call and make reservations and arrange our travel. But, once we were there, everything was absolutely free.

Now, before you get your hopes up of going there yourself, realize that you need to be in full-time ministry to attend a retreat at this place. Some very generous people have given much money to make this place a refuge for pastors to be refreshed. The turnover rate of those in full-time ministry is very high, due to the stresses of the job. People have thought that such a week away might help to refresh pastors and their wives, that they might be encouraged to continue on in their ministry. And so, many financial contributions have been made to keep this place open, so as to serve the church at large, by encouraging pastors not to grow weary in their labor for the Lord. It was an unbelievable time for us. It was incredibly refreshing and restful for us. At some point, we look to go back again. [\[5\]](#)

As we were there, one of our frequent conversations to each other went something like this: "Can you believe that wonderful place has been given to us for free? Can you believe that we aren't paying anything to use this place? It's amazing that we can stay here for free! Can you believe it!"

This is what Ephesians 2:7 is talking about. God saved us by His entire grace "so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Throughout eternity, we'll be forever asking ourselves questions like this: "Can you believe that wonderful place has been given to us for free? Can you believe that we aren't paying anything to use this place? It's amazing that we can stay here for free! Can you believe it!" Believe it, because it's true. It's true, because God is gracious.

When Jesus left His disciples, He said, "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." It's true! Jesus has gone from us and has prepared a place for us to go. This place is much better than anything here upon the earth.

As I soon attempt to describe what this place is like, I want for you to do something. I want for you to think this morning about the place that you most love to be, doing the thing that you most love to do. I have just described for you the place where I have found heaven on earth. The place where you are thinking may be a place that you have visited before. It may be a place that you have never been, but only wish that you could go. Use your imagination here. Don't consider any budgetary restrictions.

It may be a cabin by the lake, where you can fish and read and water ski. It may be a cruise in the Bahamas, where you can go snorkeling among a coral reef. It may be a tour of the White House in Washington D. C., where you can have dinner with the president of the United States. It may just be a jet tour around the world with a famous person of your choice. For me, the thought comes pretty easily: it's this pastor's retreat where Yvonne and I were able to go recently. In fact, I remember at one point, while out by the lake telling her, "Yvonne, there is nothing in the world that I would rather do than sit in this lovely environment and read the Bible and other Christian literature out loud to you, that we might think upon these things together."

Are you thinking of something? Perhaps you are thinking of a month-long vacation in a bungalow on a remote island in the south Pacific. Perhaps you are thinking of something much simpler, like a romantic dinner with your spouse. And now, I want for you to realize that heaven is 1,000 more enjoyable than any pleasure that you can ever imagine here upon earth. This is my second point this morning.

2. Heaven is Pleasure Beyond Measure.

I get this from Psalm 16:11, "In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever."

In the presence of the Lord, your joy will be maximized. Think of the happiest that you have ever been. Perhaps it was your wedding day. Perhaps it was your graduation day. Perhaps it was some party that you attended. Now, take the joy you experienced on that occasion and fill it up to the max. That's heaven! Heaven is "fullness of joy."

Think of the earthly pleasures that you most enjoy. Perhaps it's a cup of coffee on the porch. Perhaps it's a thrill ride at the amusement park, or a night of romance with your spouse. Perhaps it's a high action thriller movie. Now, with all earthly pleasures, they will stop. The coffee mug will be empty. The carnival ride will come to an end. The morning will come. My wife and I needed to come home from our pastoral retreat (that was a sad day). But, in heaven, your pleasures will never cease. They will last forever. "In Your right hand there are pleasures

forever."

Your joy will be full! Your pleasures will be forever! It doesn't get much better than that. This is pleasure beyond measure!

Let me tell you a little bit about heaven. In heaven, there will be no more tears (Rev. 21:4). There will be no more death (Rev. 21:4). There will be no mourning (Rev. 21:4). There will be no crying (Rev. 21:4). There will be no pain (Rev. 21:4). The things that cause great hurt and disappointment here upon the earth, simply won't exist in heaven. There won't be any more funerals or funeral homes in heaven, because nobody will die. There won't be any cemeteries or mausoleums. You won't have to deal with the loss of a loved one.

There won't be any hospitals. No more cancer. No more tuberculosis. No more AIDS. There won't be any more surgeries. There won't be any more x-rays or CT's or MRI's. You won't need a Band-Aid in heaven, because there won't be any more cuts or scrapes. Crutches and wheelchairs and prosthetic devices won't be needed in heaven. You won't sprain your ankle. You won't ever have a stomach ache. You won't have a headache. There will be no need to go to the dentist, because your teeth will never ache. There will be no need to go to the ophthalmologist, because your vision will always be clear. No more cataracts. No more stigmatism. LASIK surgery will be a thing of the past. No more aches and pains of old age.

The reason is simple: there is no longer any curse in heaven (Rev. 22:3). When our parents, Adam and Eve, sinned in the garden, they brought the entire universe into slavery to corruption (Rom. 8:21). Today, "the whole creation groans" (Rom. 8:22). But, in heaven, such groaning will no longer take place. There won't be any hurricanes in heaven. There won't be any tornadoes in heaven. There won't be any floods in heaven. No more water in the basement. There won't be any heat waves. There won't be any droughts.

Everywhere you go, righteousness will reign. In heaven, there will be no sin (Rev. 21:27). For all who practice abomination and lying are not permitted in the city (Rev. 21:27). Outside the city are the "sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters" and liars (Rev. 22:15). They can't come in. Only "those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" will be in the city (Rev. 21:27), because they have repented of their sin. Those who have their names written in this book are those who believe in Jesus Christ today. They are those who are trusting in Him in this life. And those who believe in Jesus Christ will be given new, spiritual bodies (1 Cor. 15:44), that will no longer be able to sin. We will be like angels (Matt. 22:30) -- perfect in every way.

There will be no more arguments with your brothers or sisters. No more disagreements with your wife. No more relational difficulties. No more marriage conflicts. You will no longer be lazy. You won't be tired. You won't battle the lust of the flesh. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech (Col. 3:8) will all be sins in the past. You will love completely. Kindness will be on your lips. Humility will govern your actions. You will always place others as more important than yourself (Phil. 2:3). Heaven will be completely unified. There will be one political party, all serving the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).

The city in which we will live will be beautiful. It shines like a precious stone (Rev. 21:11). Its streets are of gold so pure that the streets look like transparent glass (Rev. 21:21). Its gates are made of giant pearls, dazzling in their beauty (Rev. 21:21). It's always clean. There is no need for a garbage man, because "nothing unclean" enters into the city (Rev. 21:27). The river that runs through it is as clear as crystal (Rev. 22:1). All who are thirsty can drink from this water without cost (Rev. 22:17). This water is life-giving water (Rev. 22:17).

Right along side this river is a tree, called the tree of life. It bears twelve kinds of fruit, a different fruit each month (Rev. 22:2). Those who taste of it will live forever. Speaking of food, there will be a day in which we all enjoy the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

Recently, my family had the opportunity to attend a wedding. It was a wedding of a long-time friend, who loves Christ, along with his wife. It was a great wedding. The service was honoring to the Lord. The testimonies of those in the wedding party were honoring to the Lord. At one point, I turned to my daughter and said, "I really like weddings. Do you know why? Because everybody is happy! The bride is happy. The groom is happy. Those who attend the wedding are happy." The happiness of weddings are a foretaste of the happiness of heaven. I say, "foretaste," because it's just beginnings of what it will be like in heaven. The happiness of heaven will be far greater than any happiness that we have known on the earth.

Those of you who are married, can you remember the happiness of your wedding day? Did you know that you will be married again? There is coming another wedding day for you. The Scripture says that the church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:32). When Jesus comes again, the church will be married to Christ (Rev. 19:7). Those who come to this wedding will be greatly blessed. In Revelation 19:9, we read, "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." It will be a happy occasion.

When the church is married to Jesus, those in the church will become owners of the universe. In Romans 8:17 says that we will be "fellow heirs with Christ." An heir is one who received the inheritance. Jesus will receive the inheritance of the universe. We also will receive the same inheritance. There won't be private property in heaven. We all will own everything! Certainly, there will be things that we use, but they won't be mine, because they are yours. You are letting me use them for my own enjoyment. You will have some things that are mine. I will let you use them for your own enjoyment as well. Coveting will no longer take place.

My time is done in seeking to describe the pleasures of heaven to you. I feel as if I have only scratched the surface. I do feel like Christian, "I can better conceive of them with my mind, than speak of them with my tongue;" Spurgeon once put it in perspective when he said, "We talk about pearly gates and golden streets, and white robes, and harps of gold, and crowns of amaranth, and all that; but if an angel could speak to us of heaven, he would smile and say, 'All these fine things are but child's talk, and ye are little children, and ye cannot understand the greatness of eternal bliss, and therefore God has given you a child's horn book, and an alphabet, in which you may learn the first rough letters of what heaven is, but what it is ye do not know.'" [\[6\]](#)

All I can say is that heaven will be millions of times more enjoyable to you than your greatest pleasure here upon the earth. Heaven is a place of grace. Heaven is pleasure beyond measure.

If heaven is our goal, why do the difficulties of life come upon us so much? Why do we become angry and upset? Why does sin overcome us so much? Perhaps it's because we have a poor perspective. John Newton shared a great perspective. He wrote, "Suppose a man was going to New York to take possession of a large estate, and his [carriage] should break down a mile before he got to the city, which obliged him to walk the rest of the way; what a fool we should think him, if we saw him ringing his hands, and blubbering out all the remaining mile, "My [carriage] is broken! My [carriage] is broken!" [1]

Do we not do the same thing? Do we not grumble? Do we not complain? Do we not place our hearts and affections upon the things of the earth rather than the things of heaven? We must realize that the troubles that we face are only momentary, light affliction (2 Cor. 4:17). We must realize that the sufferings of the present age are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us (Rom. 8:18). May God give us grace to "set our minds on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 10, 2006 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] John Bunyan, Pilgrim's Progress, p. 6-8.

[2] This illustration was found at http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=1094.

[3] Joseph Bayly, The Last Thing We Talk About, p. 114 as quoted by Kent Hughes, in "Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome" pp. 154-155.

[4] The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 2, p. 621. Notes on heaven #432.

[5] If you are interested in finding out more about this location, here is a link describing the location:
<http://pastorsretreatnetwork.org/Cedarly.asp>.

[6] Charles Spurgeon, Sermon #203, delivered on July 4, 1858 at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

[7] Richard Cecil, Memoirs of the Rev. John Newton, p. 108 as quoted by John Piper in his biographical talk on John Newton (http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Biographies/1485_John_Newton_The_Tough_Roots_of_His_Habitual_Tenderness/).