

# Sacred Obsession

## I. Introduction:

### A. There's the story of a man who wanted to investigate the

**Christian Faith:** So he decided to visit various different churches--  
Starting off in the west coast→ **& then** working his way across the  
 country... At the first church he went to in San Francisco (there in the atrium)→  
 He noticed a **Golden Phone**... & Beneath the phone was a little plaque →  
 (that said) "\$10,000/ minute... (& So he asked the minister) "What is that phone?"...  
 (& the minister said) "That's a direct line to Heaven....(& he went on to say) I think  
 that you'll find a phone like this→ **In** most of the foyers of the churches you  
 visit"... **& Sure Enough:** In stop after stop (moving his way east through the  
 country)→ **He** would find a phone like this out in the foyer--  
& All of them charging the exorbitant price of \$10,000/ minute... **While in**  
**route, he made one of his stops at a church in Alabama:** & As he had  
 come to anticipate by this time→ **He found** that same golden phone in the  
 foyer... But on the plaque next to it→ (it said) "35 cents/minute"... **& So, he**  
**goes and finds the preacher:** (& says) "I don't get it....I've seen this exact  
 phone in churches all across the nation→ **&** they all charge \$10,000/  
 minute....But yours only cost 35cents/minute??"... (At that the old preacher put his  
 arms around the man's shoulders smiled at him & said) "Son, you're in Alabama now→  
 It's a Local call"...

**Well, maybe Heaven is closer than you think:** You See, the NT  
 writers didn't view Heaven as a "Pie-in-the-Sky-by-&-by"-- (i.e.) Heaven  
 wasn't a distant reality to them... Instead, the earliest Christians saw Heaven  
 as so Real & Relevant→ **That** their current situations couldn't help but be  
 impacted... You See, Heaven wasn't just a doctrine to be affirmed→ **But** as  
 a Truth to be Lived... **Dwight L. Moody** was going to speak at a church  
**service accompanied by a friend:** (& his friend asked him on the way) "What  
 will you preach about tonight?"... (& Moody said) "My sermon will be on

Heaven”... **& When he said that**→ He noticed a frown came across the face of his friend... (& Moody asked) “**Why** do you react so?”... (& his friend said) “**Well**, I was just hoping tonight→ **That** you would preach on something Practical”... **& That statement reveals an underlying assumption (that many Christians possess):** (& i.e.) **That** Heaven is a nice doctrine that some day (way out there in the sweet by-&-by)→ **It** will matter... **But** for right now→ **We** need something Relevant-- **Otherwise**, it might draw attention away→ **From** really important & pressing matters of contemporary concerns... **But as C.S. Lewis observed:** *“If you read history, you find that the Christians who did the most for the present world→ Were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire / The great men who built up the Middle Ages / The English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade→ All left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world→ That they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’ / Aim at earth and you will get neither”...* **& So, where I want to take you this morning is this:** **If your view** of Heaven isn’t Practically Helpful→ **Then** it’s probably not Doctrinally Faithful... **In other words**, talking about Heaven is more than just a matter of tidying up our beliefs→ **About** what will happen at the very end / **In other words**, **How we’ll live WITH God Then→ Should affect how we live FOR God Now**... **& That’s** why throughout the NT→ **We’re** encouraged to develop a Sacred Obsession (the discipline of Heavenly Mindedness)-- **Where not only** does Heaven need to be perceived as Real→ **But** it also needs to be Relevant... **& you find this** reflected in what Paul says to the church in Colossae (**Col.3:1-2**)

**Since you have been raised to new life with Christ→ Set your sights on the realities of heaven-- Where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven→ Not the things of earth.**

**I think it's fair to say that b/c life is hard→ We all have our Fixations:**

(i.e.) **We all** have places we turn to→ **To help** us navigate the harsh realities of this life→ (So the question is) “**What** is your fix?”... **& God tells us** that if we'll make Heaven our Fixation→ **It** will Fix a lot of other things we're facing in life... **It will Help us→ Just like it Helped Jesus:** **If** you pay attention in the Gospels→ **You'll** find that Jesus was always conscious of Heaven & Yearned for it-- **& That's** precisely what Defined (& Energize) what He did while on Earth... **In other words**, that's why he cared for the Poor / Sick / Lonely / Hungry / Homeless / Despairing... **Like in Hebrews 12** where the writer tells us: **How Jesus** was willing to die an appalling & shameful Death→ **B/C** of the Joy he knew would be His afterwards... **You See**, Jesus allowed a Future Hope→ **To** be His Present Help... **& I'm hoping that what emerges as we go through this series:** **Is a** growing awareness that **Heaven is not an invitation to Escape this world→ But rather a call to Partner with God to Redeem this World...** **& So**, one of the primary ways Heaven helps us right now→ **Is that** Heaven gives us a fix so we'll stay focused on our task of bringing the Kingdom of God to Earth...

**II. & So, it's my guess is that there are a lot of people here today who could use some help→ B/C life is hard→ : & B/C**

it's hard→ **We** tend to lose sight of why we're here... **There's a Legend** about Satan holding a **Garage Sale:** **& There** on a table he placed some of his most effective tools used torment lives on Earth... **There** was a big price for Lust / **But** not nearly as much as Gossip cost / **& of course**, Pride was through the roof... **But there was one item** Unembellished (Worn / & seemingly Unimpressive)→ **That** nonetheless carried the highest price tag... **& Satan** was asked about this→ (& he said) “**Oh**, this is my most effective tool...**When** things like greed (envy, lust) can't make a dent in a human's life...**This** one almost always works”... (& with peeked interest he was asked) “**Well**, what is it?!”... (& he said) “Discouragement”... **Well, allow me to talk more specifically of how Heaven is supposed to help us now...**

**A. #1 Heaven helps us Stand Out:** You See, if your world view accurately includes the next world→ **Then** your lifestyle will be impacted in this world... **In I Peter 2:11**, we're called to live in this world as **"Aliens & Strangers in this world"** (i.e. Somehow we're to relate to this life as Outsiders / Foreigners / Exiles / Temporary Residents / Nomads)... **Now**, that doesn't mean that we're to go through life→ **Isolating** ourselves from non-believers (That we're not interested in Making Friends)... **Where Peter points us to is this: If** our Fix is on Heaven-- **Then** we'll naturally have values & priorities→ **That** will set us apart from non-believers... **For Example**, if our **obsession is Heaven**→ **We'll have a Surprising (Unexpected / even a Bewildering) attitude about Wealth:** If my Fix is to be Rich in the next life→ **Then** I will instinctively be more Giving in this Life... **& When** we "get" this→ **We'll** suddenly begin to see the difference between Treasures & Trinkets (Between what is Durable & Disposable)... **Not only that, but we'll have a strange attitude about People:** We'll start realizing that Investing in People→ **Is** the best way to spend our life now... **B/C** People are the most important commodity→ **Transitioning** into the next life... (As Paul told the Corinthians) **We no longer** look at people the way the world does (What they have / How they look)-- **B/C** when people looked at Jesus that way→ **They Missed God!**... **& Maybe the most surprising value of all**→ **Is our attitude about Happiness:** Esau thought his happiness would be realized→ **If** he traded his immense Inheritance for a hot meal / David thought his happiness would be enhanced→ **Through** a sexual encounter with another man's wife... **& it's no different** than when we pull out our Credit Card only to go further in debt / **Or our** readiness to abuse the Natural Resources on Earth→ **Leaving** our children to worry about it / **Or the person** who finds his escape through Lust, Alcohol, or Drugs... **But if our belief in Heaven is sharp:** Our time-framework shifts... **& To our Surprise--** We end up finding Joy in Hope→ **Not** in what the world peddles as a quick fix... **In other words**, we won't reduce our lives to a here-&-now purpose... **It's like the story that Jesus tells in Luke 12:** Where a wealthy & successful man→ Tears

down his 10-car garage→ **So** he can build his 20-car garage... **But** when facing the next life→ **God** called him a fool... **& He** wasn't a fool so much for his Materialism→ **As** for his Temporalism-- (i.e.) **He** knew he was going to die→ **Yet** he didn't live ready for it... **You See**, Heaven helps us declare our loyalty to a larger version of life...

**B. #2 Heaven helps us Lighten Up:** **What** I'm getting at here is that Heaven helps us sift through & see→ **That** some things Matter & some things Don't... **You Know**, I believe that I've been to around a dozen **Airports** around the United States: **& Quite honestly**, I can't recall what a single one looks like... **& I** certainly couldn't tell you how one of them is decorated-- **It's** just not important... **& You know why?: B/C** I just don't get too worked up→ **About** places that I'm at Temporarily... **I don't** stay in Airports-- **That's** just happens to be where I am→ **As** I make my way home... **Paul tells the Corinthians (II Cor.4:17f)**

**Our troubles are small. They last only for a short time. But they are earning for us a glory that will last forever. It is greater than all our troubles. So we don't spend all our time looking at what we can see. Instead, we look at what we can't see. What can be seen lasts only a short time. But what can't be seen will last forever.**

**Understand, that Paul isn't trivializing life→ He's Comparing life:** (You Know) **How often** do we get bent out of shape→ **Over** things that will not pass the eternity test?... (In fact, if we're all honest→ We might ask) **How often** we get bent out of shape over things→ That won't pass the 24 hours later test?... **Randy Harris** (Professor of Theology at ACU) **calls this the Eschatological Viewpoint** (i.e. Learning to live now with the future in mind): **& He** tries to teach this to his students→ **& This** is how he knows they're getting it... **A Student will come to him to argue a grade:** (& the student will say) "**I** want a B"... (& Randy will say) "**Yes**, but you deserve a C"... (& They'll go back and forth a few times→ When finally Randy will say) "**Why** are we doing this?!....**In 10 years**,

what will it matter if you got a B or a C?"... & He will know that the student has the Eschatological Viewpoint-- (when the student will say) "You're right, what does it matter→ So give me the B"... Listen, we live in a world that is totally Stressed Out: As I understand, Among the 10 top Prescriptions that doctors write for Americans→ Are those for Anxiety... We're an uptight (Bent out of shape / Ready to Explode) culture... & This Culture needs a people who bear witness→ To a peace that passes understanding (i.e. When life is hard)

**C. #3 Heaven helps us Keep On:** Sometimes our "light & momentary struggles"→ Don't seem so light or momentary... In August of 1950, San Diego born Florence Chadwick was the first woman to swim the English Channel (between England & France): It took her 13 hours & 20 minutes... A couple years later (in 1952), Florence stepped into the frigid waters of the Pacific Ocean→ To attempt swimming the 26 miles between Catalina Island and the California coastline... She was flanked by small boats that watched for sharks→ & were prepared to help her if she got hurt or grew tired... After about 15 hours a thick fog set in: & Florence began to doubt her ability-- & she told her mother (who was in one of the boats)→ That she didn't think she could make it... But they encouraged her to keep going... & With that she swam for another hour... But finally (Physically & Emotionally exhausted): She stopped swimming & was pulled out... Only to discover that the shore was less than a half mile away... At a press conference the next day: (she said) "I'm not making excuses-- But I really do think that if I could have seen the shore→ I would have made it"...

That's what having a fix on Heaven will do: When life overwhelms-- You don't give up→ B/C you can see the shore... Understand, Heaven doesn't erase all the pain in this life→ But it does give us Leverage over it... You See, Jesus never promised Heaven in it's fullness→ While we live on this cursed Earth: & At times, I think it's here that we present the case for Christianity a bit too offhandedly (& Shallowly)... (We tell people) "Hey, Christ is the answer"... Well, I believe that's true-- (but let me ask you) How is Christ the answer for the Mentally Retarded person? (Or the he Severely Handicapped



person→ Who will never be able to do the things that most of us take for granted? / Or the Terminally Ill person? / Or the Perpetually Oppresses people of this world ? / Or those who are Permanently Poor?)-- **How** is Jesus the answer?... **Well, let me tell you: Jesus** is the answer-- **B/C** His Victory means that their Trials will pass→ **But** their Triumph will last forever... **As Paul tells the Romans (8:18)**

**Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.**

**How can the next world be Rest:** If there's no Weariness in this one?... Which leads us to the final help...

**D. #4 Heaven helps us not Sell Out:** Again, I Peter 2:11 (MSG)...

**Friends, this world is not your home, so don't make yourselves cozy in it.**

**The greatest enemy of the church today is not Persecution:** Go to China & you'll find that the underground church in China→ **Is** being persecuted... **& Yet**, it's growing by vast numbers... **Now go to Western Europe:** Where the Christian faith has almost been threatened by Extinction... **The greatest threat to the Church is not Persecution→ It's Accommodation:** Where the church looks so much like the world→ **There's** nothing to persecute... **& That's** what Heaven does for us-- **It** gives us Moral Stamina→ **So** we don't sell out to chasing what everyone else thinks makes life real... **In Philippians 3:19f**, Paul talks about those who have sold out: (he puts it this way)

**They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth. But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.**

**& So, we need to see Accommodation for what it is:** What I'm saying to you Today is→ **Don't miss Heaven for anything in the world** ®...

**III. Well, let's end with this:** In **Hebrews 11:13-16** we're told this

Each one of these people of faith died not yet having in hand what was promised→ But still believing. How did they do it? They saw it way off in the distance / Waved their greeting / And accepted the fact that they were transients in this world. People who live this way→ Make it plain that they are looking for their true home. If they were homesick for the old country→ They could have gone back any time they wanted. But they were after a far better country than that — heaven country. You can see why (What is the “Why”-- It's the fact that they lived their lives for Heaven... & B/C they lived their lives for Heaven→ That is why...) God is so proud of them, and has a City waiting for them.

**You See what he's saying?:** He's saying that Heaven was the focus of all those who Pleased God... It makes God beam with delight→ **When** His children live in the future tense... **But wouldn't it also true:** That God is Ashamed to be called the God of a people→ **Who** live like this world is all they really want? / To live such Cluttered lives→ **That** we barely give thought to what God has prepared for us... Maybe that's something you need to fix this morning