

Walking Towards the Beatific Vision

1 Corinthians 13:8-13

This calls us to continually walk before the face of God. We are to walk our entire lives as the author of Hebrews tell us, “*looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith,*” Hebrews 12:4. To look towards Christ, is to look towards God. To walk before the face of God.

The very image, as mentioned last week, that we desire to behold is the image we are called to reflect now..... this ties our ethics and how we ought to live now, to our very end to which we are walking.

So, we walk by faith in Christ, pressing on for this hope, knowing that our faith will be turned to sight, 2 Corinthians 5:7.

John Owen uses the blind man that Jesus heals in the gospel as an example of the spiritual life Mark 8:22-25. The blind man was completely blind; he could not see at all. Christ then comes and touches his eyes once, and he sees trees, but they are blurry, obscured. Then he touches his eyes once again and he can finally see completely. Likewise, Christ has touched our eyes once, when we were blind, we see dimly, and we shall see more later, when he completely transforms our eyes.

We are changed from glory to glory as we behold God in the face of Jesus Christ, by faith now, not simply later. So, our seeking God, meditating on God as he has revealed himself to us in the scriptures, is itself, a means of sanctification.

Christ is the light, through which we see God. Christ is, as he calls himself, the light of the world. But we, the Church, are the light of the world, within the world right now. Jesus says in his sermon on the mount Matthew 5:14-16 “*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill, cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven.*”

We see, contrary to what many think, heavenly mindedness, pursuit of Christ, and focusing, orienting our thoughts on God, above all, does not in fact, run contrary to caring for the people in the world. Heavenly-mindedness does not run contrary to care and love for neighbors. The Sermon on the Mount runs contrary to that.

C.S. Lewis, “A continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did 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.”

When we are focused upon Christ, we see Christ as the one being served in our earthly affairs, Matthew 25, “When did we serve you Lord?” If heavenly mindedness is making us focus on God, but to the detriment to others around us, it is not heavenly mindedness and we are not actually seeking God.

God has given us signs so that we may see him more clearly within the church. David said his desire was to see the beauty of God in his temple, and we come to see God, and lay hold of him by faith within our church lives as well.

The Sabbath points to our eternal Sabbath rest, Hebrews 4. Christ shows us himself in the preached word, John 6:63, and in the sacraments. Walking towards the beatific vision calls us to pray for our Sabbaths, that they may be heaven on earth to us now.

We also ought to retreat in our prayers, to contemplation of God in our everyday lives as well. We must meditate, not simply on the scriptures in general, but more particularly focusing upon God himself in meditation upon the scriptures.

The more we gaze in faith upon God in his beauty, the more we grow in godliness. But when we neglect this, when we do not pursue God by faith, we feel cold, lifeless, and dead. Because Christ, himself, is our life, Gal. 2:20.

Thomas Watson, “You who are real saints, whose hearts are purified by faith, spend much time in musing upon those glorious benefits which you shall have by Christ at death. Thus might you, by a contemplative life, begin the life of angels here, and be in heaven before your time...what should we contemplate but celestial glory, when we shall see God face to face! David was got above the ordinary sort of men; he was in the altitudes when he said, ‘I am ever with thee,’ Psalm 139:18.”

As we contemplate God, desiring to enjoy him more, we must approach him by faith prayerfully asking for his help. This is how this becomes a spiritual exercise and not merely an exercise of the mind by itself, but of the heart as well. We take a passage of scripture, we meditate on what it teaches us concerning God, we pray to God about it, asking him for help to see more of his glory.

Quick look at Anselm’s Proslogion. Anselm’s work, demonstrates a spiritual exercise of seeking God, by faith. Anselm, in his Proslogion, is humbled before the sight of God. He asks God in dependence to show him, more of himself. If only God will give him what is profitable, his soul will be satisfied. This is the kind of attitude we should have before God when we want to contemplate his greatness and focus upon him. We want to pray to him about him.

Let us remember as we walk towards this goal by faith, that because God has made us for this very purpose, and is in fact our helper in walking towards this goal as long as we are sincerely walking with him by faith, we cannot ever ultimately fail at attaining this goal. This is a work ordained by God. He has planned it all out. It is all of grace. He will walk with us to see it to its completion. Take care brothers and sisters, he who began this work in us, will bring it to completion in the day of Christ Jesus, Phil. 1:6.