

WALKING IN THE BLESSINGS OF HEAVENLY PLACES

WHAT IS MEANT BY HEAVENLY PLACES?

Basically, heavenly places refers to the unseen spiritual realm, but the actual meaning may vary according to the context of the reading. E.g.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Eph 6:12.

Here ‘heavenly places’ refers to the earthly atmosphere, domain of Satan’s spirit beings, now that Satan has been cast out of heaven.

“...to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places...” Eph 3:10.

These are the same principalities and powers mentioned above. The church makes known the wisdom of God when she exercises the power of the name of Jesus in casting down Satan’s strongholds.

“...which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named...” Eph 1:20-21.

Here ‘heavenly places’ refers to the spiritual location or position of God’s throne in heaven.

WHAT ARE OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN HEAVENLY PLACES?

The next two readings tell us that we as Christians have spiritual blessings in heavenly palaces waiting for us to claim them by faith, and receive them as a part of our living experience.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Eph 2:4-6.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...” Eph 1:3-4.

Here heavenly places is not a physical position that can be seen, but an unseen spiritual realm, where Christ as our High Priest, dispenses to us all of the blessings he acquired for us by His sacrificial death, when we accept and receive them by faith, as we live our physical lives here on earth.

Paul wrote in the Fourth Chapter of 2 Corinthians, **“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light**

affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Cor 4:16-18.

Here Paul presents two types of truth. The first is related to the things that are seen in our earthly existence, where our behaviour is always changing. We sin, pray for forgiveness, and put off our carnal nature that it might be put to death by the Spirit. In our perceived behaviour, we are very much a work in progress, being gradually changed by God into the likeness of Christ.

The second is the unseen or spiritual truth, which is declared to be eternally true. The spiritual truth that is eternal, is the truth about the blessings acquired for us by the cross of Jesus.

The fact is that although the physical truth and the spiritual truth may appear absolutely contradictory, they are both true in their own realm. For instance, regarding the physical truth, the Scriptures say that we continually sin and fall short, but the spiritual truth declares that by His cross, Christ is able to **"present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight..."** Col 1:21-22.

Physical truth is easily seen in our earthly circumstances, but spiritual truth is unseen, and received by faith in what Jesus has procured for us, and is laid up in heaven for us to appropriate by faith.

The next readings reveal some of our spiritual blessings that we have in Jesus Christ that He has procured for us by the virtue of His sacrificed body and shed blood. For instance:

- We are redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and all of our sins are forgiven. **"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."** Eph 1:7.
- We are indwelt by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who enable us to minister to others in the power of their abiding presence in us.

"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." John 14:23-24.

"Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father." 1 John 2:24-25.

"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." 1 John 4:15-16.

"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." John 6:56.

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” John 17:20-21

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” John 15:5-6.

- Spiritually, we are united with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, seated with Him in heavenly places where we are partakers of all the blessings He procured for us. To understand how we can claim this, we should ask ourselves, ‘who did Jesus Christ represent on the cross.’ It wasn’t He who was being judged by God because He was completely sinless and obedient. He represented mankind who He had created, but more significantly, He became the sin of mankind, that it might be judged and put to death. **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”** 2 Cor 5:21.

Now if Jesus was mankind on the cross, then we can claim unity with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. So if our ‘old man’ with its carnal corrupt sin nature was crucified with Christ, we may claim it as a spiritually accomplished fact. That is why Paul could say, **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”** Gal 2:20-21. The importance of such a confession is that, firstly it breaks the spine of the power of our carnal nature, and secondly it allows the Holy Spirit to make it a reality. This does not happen instantly, but once the inherent power of our carnal nature is broken, there is a gradual steady growth in holiness, as the Holy Spirit works in putting to death the deeds of the flesh.

- It has often been asked, “How can God justly require Jesus to be our substitute on the cross”? In replying very briefly, we must first point out that from a worldly point of view, Abraham, due to his seed Jesus Christ, was the father of Christendom. Now notice what the angel of God said to Abraham when he showed his willingness to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering:

“Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son — blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed [Jesus Christ] all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” Gen 22:15-18 Putting it another way, God was saying, “Because you, as the father of Christendom, was prepared to offer your son as a burnt offering, I can now justly [before Satan and mankind] offer My son as a sacrificial offering to all who will believe in His name.”

- We are children of God. **“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”** John 1:12-13.
- We are eternally saved, our names are written in the ‘Book of life’ in heaven. **“Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”** Luke 10:20,
- We have become the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”** 2 Cor 5:21.

- We are holy and blameless in the sight of God. **“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight...”** Col 1:21-22.
- The punishment Jesus bore for us in His body on the cross meant the law of sin and death was fulfilled, and our bodies were released from its consequences. They are now subject to the higher law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. **“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”** Rom 8:2-3. Satan’s legal right to inflict our bodies with sickness was removed when **“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”** Isa 53:5.

IN WHAT REALM DOES THE LORD WISH US TO LIVE?

Man may be consumed with self-condemnation when confronted with some Old Testament verses that present a poetic exaggeration of man’s lowly state before God. E.g.

“How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman? If even the moon does not shine, and the stars are not pure in His sight, how much less man, who is a maggot, and a son of man, who is a worm?” Job 25:4-6.

The alternative is to abide in the spiritual realm of the blessings that we have now received in Christ Jesus, where **“He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight...”** Col 1:21-22.

Paul reveals God’s will in where we are to abide spiritually in this quotation from Colossians.

“If then you were raised with Christ [to our spiritual blessings in heavenly places], seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth [on earthly reality]. For you died, [spiritually you are crucified with Christ] and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Col 3:1-4.

“where Christ is in heaven,” is where our blessings are laid up for us to be dispensed to us by Jesus our High priest, as we claim them by faith. There is no doubt that God desires us to abide and walk in our righteousness and all the blessings we have through Christ Jesus.

WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE FOR OUR CREATION?

I believe that the vast majority of Christians believe that Jesus provided us with a pattern to live by, and so our highest Christian aim is to live out our lives as He did in moral purity and righteousness.

Others believe that we were created for good works that God has preordained for us.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Eph 2:10.

As well pleasing to God as are these aims, I believe there is another purpose for us that is closer to His heart. We were created to be vessels in whom the Lord can dwell in, and manifest the fullness of His blessings through us to His brethren, until ultimately He can reign in us without the interference of our fleshly natures.