

APRIL 2005—*Fix Your Hope*

Every week, believers all over the world recite the Nicene Creed, ending with these resounding words of hope: “We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” Unfortunately, however, few of us are really looking for “the life of the world to come.” Without realizing it, we are becoming increasingly secularized like the rest of our society, and we think little of heaven. Even in the best churches sermons on heaven are rare. We are very much oriented to what is seen, not what is unseen. Thus our minds and hearts are not anchored in the hope of another world but to our rising and falling fortunes in this one.

We can find help on this matter from C.S. Lewis:

Hope is one of the Theological virtues. This means that 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. It seems a strange rule, but something like it can be seen at work in other matters. Health is a great blessing, but the moment you make health one of your main, direct objects you start becoming a crank and imagining there is something wrong with you. You are only likely to get health provided you want other things more—food, games, work, fun, open air. In the same way, we shall never save civilisation as long as civilisation is our main object. We must learn to want something else even more.<sup>1</sup>

The Holy Spirit can give us that “something more.” He can restore our hope through pondering afresh what the Holy Scriptures teach us about heaven and the world to come. The more we prayerfully dwell on the words of Scripture and “hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them,”<sup>2</sup> the more our hearts will be drawn away from the love of things temporal and fixed upon things eternal...and the more we will seek to serve and please the One whom our soul loves by loving and serving our neighbor in this present life.

*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above,  
where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.  
For you have died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*

Colossians 3:1-3 NIV

<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1996), pp. 119-120.

<sup>2</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, Proper 28, p. 185.