

The Believer's Reward (Part 1)

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[0:00] We're going to look at what I've just simply entitled the Believer's Reward.

! The Believer's Reward. What does this thing of eternal life lead us to?

We know that we have heaven in store, and that's a glorious thought, glorious thing for us to look at. But there's much more to that than meets the eye.

I think I had mentioned to you at some point before, in the Gospel of John, when Jesus talks about being the good shepherd, there's a statement he makes in there that he says, I'm the good shepherd, and that he's the shepherd of the sheepfold, and that the sheep go in and out of that fold. They go in and out and find pasture. I read that a number of years, I mean a long time ago, when I was first starting in ministry. And that statement, in and out and find pasture, just really spoke to my heart.

[1:28] In fact, I think it was when I was still in college that God spoke to my heart about that, and I came to the conclusion that one of the things that he alludes to there is that there's more to being saved than just being saved, if you know what I mean.

More to being saved than just the idea that our sins are forgiven. Going in and out and finding pasture, something to graze on to nourish us.

And so that just really, through the years, has spoken my heart to look at what some of the things are that we can see in Scripture that relate to being saved, relate to eternal life, if you will.

And so tonight, turn to Colossians chapter 1. We're just going to use the short passage here as a springboard. Lee did an excellent job of teaching us through the book of Colossians not too long ago.

But there's just one thing I want to spring, use as a springboard, as I say, and begin to look at the believer's reward. So in Colossians chapter 1, and, well, we'll go ahead in verse 1, if you will.

[2:47] Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timotheus, our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, which are at Colossae, grace be unto you, peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now verse 3. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which you have to all saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.

The phrase I want us to catch attention to is in verse number 5. For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.

Of course, Paul is commending them. He's beginning to pray for them. God's brought them to his attention because he's heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus that came through the preaching of the gospel.

And as a result of that, the love that they have for the brethren. All of that based on, now the love of the brethren, based on the fact that they have a hope.

[4:03] They have a hope that he says is laid up for them in heaven. Again, that word laid up, well let's back up just a minute, that word hope. When we think of hope, you know, when kids think of hope, you know, I really hope, I really hope I get that tricycle for my birthday or whatever.

But they don't, they're not sure. It's, you know, what they call the balance of probabilities. I may get it, I may not get it. And sometimes it's not even a 50-50 chance.

All right, so you're not really sure. But that's not the usage of the word here. The usage of the word here is an earnest, confident expectation.

It's something we're expecting to happen. And we're confident in the fact that it's going to happen. It's not just a careless confidence.

It's a confidence based upon the word of God, upon what Jesus has done, and what he has shown us in and through his word.

[5 : 15] Now take note here. Paul says there is a hope that they have, a hope that the believers at Colossae have, because there is that hope that is laid up in heaven for you.

Laid up means to be laid away, be reserved, put to one side. The hope that is laid away in time past with present results, that it is reserved for and awaiting you.

I like what one person said, that hope means there's something deposited, reserved, put in store, out of the reach of all enemies and sorrows.

It's nothing can touch it. Yeah? Nothing at all can touch that hope, because it is reserved for us in heaven, and it's there for us.

Nothing can touch it. So, as we progress through this, we want to consider what that hope is. What is that earnest expectation that we have?

[6 : 30] We have really a number of places in the scripture that speak of that hope and it being reserved for us in heaven. We'll look at some of them here in a minute.

But to me, it's not just the idea of having sins forgiven, guilt washed away, and our place in heaven, a place in heaven.

To me, it's that plus everything else that pertains to eternal life, that the scripture reveals in so many different ways, in so many different places.

So, everything that appears or that pertains to eternal life is involved in that hope. 1 Peter 1, verse 4 informs us that we have an inheritance that's incorruptible, undefiled, that fades not away, that is reserved for us in heaven.

Same kind of an idea that the statement made just a moment ago. Then, in Romans 8, if you'd like to turn there, you can. Romans 8, verse 17.

[7 : 46] Romans 8, and verse 17. Let's begin verse 14, just for the sake of putting it in the context.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not yet received, you have not received the spirit of bondage, again, to fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Precious, precious passage there. It said we're not like slaves anymore. Remember, God has, or Jesus has elevated us, if you will, promoted us.

It was a time when people of Israel in particular looked at themselves as simply servants when it comes to their relationship with God. But Jesus has taught, especially in the Gospel of John, that he takes us from being servants to friends, literally dear friends, and then Paul shows us, he takes us and makes us sons, all right?

And Paul shows us that here in the book of Romans, chapter 8. So we've not received that spirit of bondage and fear that a slave has to his master.

[9 : 14] But he said you've received the spirit of adoption, or the making of adult sons, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

And if children, then heirs, okay? Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

So be that we suffer with him that we may also be glorified together. Now, interesting thing here.

We are heirs, all right?

We are heirs of God. And joint heirs with Christ. Of course, Christ Jesus, the only begotten Son of God.

And as such, then he is the heir to the full honors and glory of heaven. It's rightfully his, because he is the only begotten Son, the firstborn Son in particular.

[10 : 17] He's the big dog, all right, as far as the heirship is concerned. But you and I, as believers in Christ, are united with him through adoption.

And as such, then, we are destined to partake with him in the glory that is his in heaven.

Now, I don't know about you, but that just kind of boggles my mind. How God, in his mercy and grace and love, extends that that far, so that not only are we saved, free from the penalty and guilt of sin, and given a home in heaven, but he has made us joint heirs with Christ.

Now, then he says we are heirs of God. Now, think about that just a moment.

Let me ask you a question here. You can respond if you have a brilliant answer. Respond if you don't have a brilliant answer, or if your answer is not so brilliant.

[11 : 35] You be the judge. When he says we're heirs of God, what is it he's talking about?

What will we inherit? That's a politician's answer. Give me some specifics. Everything in heaven offers, that God offers through heaven, the glory and all that, we will inherit.

Okay. Any other thought? Eternal life. I mean, that's the same thing, but... Okay. Eternal life is...

Okay. Anything else?

What's he saying here that we're heirs of God? Consider with me. When we step into the portals of heaven, whether by death, or whether by the rapture of the church, what is the greatest thing that we're going to see?

Okay. Jesus on the throne. That's what John in the Revelation sees. Sees the Lamb of God on the throne of God. All right?

[12 : 55] All right? It is God that has done all the work through his sovereign power to take a human life that has the nature of sin, has no righteousness whatsoever, and changed that nature, or not changed that nature, but ingrained in him a new nature that then possesses the righteousness of Christ and changes the heart and soul of a heathen.

God's the one that's done that. And I don't know about you, but in all the creative acts of God and all the things that he's done since, there's nothing more grand and spectacular than that very thing.

So if that's the case, what's going to be the most grand and spectacular inheritance that we have in heaven?

I don't afraid to answer. I want to say our perfect body is part of it because we won't have any suffering or pain, but also our righteous will be in the glory of Christ.

Any other thoughts? Remember, go back with me to Genesis chapter 15, just a minute.

[14 : 49] This is another passage that just kind of rang a bell for me years ago. Remember, remember when Abraham went and delivered his nephew Lot from the kings that had captured him after the issue of Sodom, Gomorrah, and Abraham goes and rescues him.

Abraham is not a warrior, he's not a fighter, but he went and rescued Lot on the way back from that skirmish. He met Melchizedek, remember the king of Jerusalem, and the priest of the Most High God gave ties to him.

And then in chapter 15, chapter 15, God does an amazing thing here because he realizes, you know, Melchizedek, Melchizedek, I think, really caused Abraham here to recognize that it was God that enabled him to deliver Lot because he says he was the servant of the Most High God, the Elion, the Most High, the highest of the high ones, if you will, that that is the one that then enabled him to win that skirmish to deliver Lot.

So, in chapter 15, after these things, the word of the Lord, remember that's the word of Jehovah, the name Jehovah, the self-existent God that reveals himself to man, the word of Jehovah came unto Abram in vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward. Mmm. I'm your shield, but I am your exceeding great reward. Remember, he was going to, when Melchizedek spoke to him, he talked about the goods that he had given him and told Abram keep the goods and he said, no, I will not do that.

[17 : 25] God turns around and said, you don't need that stuff, Abram, you know that. I am your exceeding great reward. Not just reward, but exceeding great.

that tells me that the greatest inheritance that the believer is going to have when we step into the portals of glory and claim that inheritance is bestowed upon us is that it is God himself that is our inheritance.

It's him. It's God. Now, it's not that we don't have him now. we're in that personal relationship, but recognize with me the difference there's going to be when we step into glory.

We're adult sons of God right now, part of the bride of Christ, beautiful picture, but when we get to be with him as the redeemed, he will be our inheritance.

What grander thing could there be than that? He is our exceeding great reward.

[18 : 52] Now, that kind of sets the picture for something else that we'll not get to tonight, but we'll address that the next time.

Now, in Matthew chapter 6, verses 19 through 21, scripture tells us there are treasures in heaven that are earned by the saints while on earth.

All right, it says, lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, where thieves do not break through nor steal for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

I'll never forget, remember years ago when that tornado hit west part of Bartlesville? Yeah. Yeah, yeah, and all that area there and Frank Phillips Boulevard, the west part there, never forget, I forget the name of the guy, well-known guy at the time, I think he had a transmission shop or something, he had some old relic restored cars in a, in a shop there, and that tornado came right through and just tore that up, destroyed everything.

And when I saw that, my heart sunk. I didn't know the guy personally, I don't know what kind of car, but I knew, they took some pictures, I knew there were some beautiful antique cars in there that just got destroyed.

[20:39] And I thought, oh, what a shame. you know, and this is no judgment against his personality or whatever, but the thought that men lay things like that up as treasures.

All right? I mean, not just antique vehicles, but numerous things. People lay in store for whatever use, but rust corrupts it, thieves break in and steal.

Tornadoes destroy them. So he says, don't lay up treasures for yourselves on earth. Whatever treasure you lay up, lay them up in heaven.

All right? Lay those up because nothing there can touch that. Then he says, where your heart is, or where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Whatever we determine is the most important aspect of our life, the most important thing. That's the thing that our heart's going to be placed upon as the most important thing, as the focus of our life, and the focus of our living.

[21:54] He says here, make sure what that is, are heavenly things, spiritual things, lay them up in store.

Now, how do we lay those things up in store? The means of laying those up are numerous, but the scripture teaches us that that which leads to the greatest rewards, what do you suppose it is?

What's going to determine the greatest rewards other than God himself that we have and that we can lay in store? Okay, it's our works.

It's our works. Yeah, yeah, trying to think of the passage of scripture that. Well, I'm not even going to try.

Yeah, look at Revelation 22, verse 12. Revelation 22, verse 12.

[23:08] It says, And behold, I come quickly. This is Jesus, of course, at the end of the revelation. Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

Interesting passage, and we'll consider more about that here in a minute. But Jesus says, My reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.

The rewards of Jesus, he'll distribute. The word to give literally means to put away by giving, to give up, or to give over.

Something that you have. Reward, dues paid for work, wages, higher. And then the phrase according as his work shall be.

It's literally the idea to repay and render to each one just what his own actions and his work merit.

Jeremiah chapter 17 verse 10 says, I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doing.

[24:31] So there are rewards given as to the work we perform in the direction of the Spirit of God. You know, Scripture says that every, talking about believers, said every one of us will give an account of the things done in our body.

I literally believe what he's saying there is, you know, whatever, whatever God or Jesus determines to reward us with in heaven, will be in accordance to how faithfully we have fulfilled what the, what the Spirit of God has instructed us to do.

In other words, you know, what are we allowing? are we allowing the Spirit of God to use us to the degree he wants to use us?

And whatever that, whatever that degree is that we're doing that, then that's the degree of reward that we will get. You know, it always kind of haunts me.

You know, it's as, it's as illustration after illustration has been given. of the limitlessness of the work of God within us.

[26:00] Look at Ephesians chapter 1 here. Tremendous passage for us. Paul has a desire that he prays for when he thinks of the church in Ephesus.

in verse 15. Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and loved unto all saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.

And here's what he prays. that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of the glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

What is, and look at this, what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand.

Now, go over to chapter 3, just a moment. Ephesians 3. Again, he tells the Ephesian believers what he prays for, as far as they're concerned.

[27:31] He says, verse 14, for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that you being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, the length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now, notice that, he prays that so that the believer knows those things of God and is able to grow in their knowledge personally and experientially of Christ so that we can be filled then with all the fullness of God.

Now, look at verse 20. When that happens, what happens? Now, unto him that is able to do exceeding abundant above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, to him be glory in the church.

Wow. to him that's able, God that can do anything, to do exceeding abundantly, not just abundantly, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

That's what God wants to do in the life of his people. Now, and that's that, you know, and the key to that is our surrender to him daily to allow the spirit of God to do whatever he wants to do, whatever he wants to do it in our lives that day.

[29:39] Yeah. And be obedient to that. we don't have time to look at it now, but, you know, in Revelation, let me just read it to you.

In Revelation 22, 14, blessed are they that do his commandments, that they might have the right to the tree of life, and may enter into the gates of the city.

The original language of that verse expresses it more, says that they may have authority over the tree of life, and authority founded on right, this right founded on obedience to the commandments of God, and that obedience produced by the grace of God working in them.

Now, that's a lot of statement, but it's the idea of the grace of God at work that produces obedience, that obedience gives us authority of the tree of life, and it's God that does it, but it's the picture of God doing it, but responding as if we're the ones that did it.

Amen? Yeah, yeah. Isn't that tremendous that God does that? He's not afraid not to get the credit for it, and we're not, we're not, we're not taking upon ourselves the credit for it all.

[31:16] We know it's God that does it, but as far as heart and mind of God is concerned, He makes it so that He's the one that does it by grace, and we respond in obedience to that grace, and works are performed, but He shows it as if we are the one that performed it because that's the basis of the gifts or the reward that He gives us.

Yeah. It's just as if God is just so tickled to death to give us reward. Amen? You know, have you ever bought your spouse or your kids or somebody you really love a gift for birthday or whatever, and you just couldn't wait to give it to them.

Yeah? Yeah. I remember, oops, don't even watch on it, put it up there. I remember when Calvita and I, when I was going to ask her for her hand in marriage, that's when Jarrett Farms was still open.

I made reservations up there. It was in December, close to Christmas. And I went out and bought a ring and I called her, called her daughter and said, I need to have lunch with you.

I want to show you something. So I wanted to show it to her to see what she thought of it. She thought her mom would like it. So I showed it to her.

[32:55] I said, she said, oh yeah, that's just perfect for her. All right. And so I had made the reservations at Jarrett Farm on this particular night.

And she knew we were going out, but she didn't know why. I mean, we were just going out. But Jarrett Farms was a pretty fancy place just for an ordinary date.

And so, but Calvita is Calvita. She didn't think a whole lot about that. She just thought, well, that's nice. And so we, you know, it was funny on the way, she told me later, she said, we kept passing all these restaurants in town, and I couldn't figure where we were going.

I don't want to go someplace in Tulsa. Then we pulled off the Jarrett Farms. And I just could not wait for the time and the day that I could give that to her, you know.

And that's just the way God is. He just, he's just so anxious to give to us reward for our obedience.

[34:09] Yeah. Yeah, because that's what he, that's what he honors. I think sometimes we miss out on that because we limit him and we think right now so we miss out on the Lord because exactly.

Exactly. We short change him a great deal. Okay. It's two freckles past a hair, as they said.

Yeah. Okay. Well, it's time for us to dismiss so much more here. But, like I say, if we get an opportunity, maybe if Tom and Diane go back to Houston for too long, we can look at some more of this because there's a lot of good stuff in here.

We have. All right, let's pray together. Father, thank you again. For your love and grace, thank you for the time together this evening in your word. And, Lord, we do thank you so much for what you show us in your word about yourself, about your son, about us, about your expectations, and about that great hope, that confident expectation you've given us, that we have an inheritance in heaven and that inheritance is you.

So, Father, we thank you for that. And so, Lord, use that as you will to just continue to encourage us, to strengthen us, to motivate us more and more to accomplish your purposes through obedience to you and your spirit's direction.

[35:43] and we'll thank you for what you do to honor yourself through it. Pray again for Diane and Tom as they travel back, that you will bless them with goodness and grace and protection and provide healing and health for both of them.

And we'll thank you for it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you.