

Hope and Rewards

September 18, 2022

Every Christian needs hope if he is to live in a godly and God-glorifying way, if he is to be successful and fruitful for the Lord. Can you imagine what it would be like if you had no hope, no future, nothing to look forward to? Life would be very difficult. And the truth of the gospel, the message of salvation, is that through Christ's death and resurrection, you have defeated sin and death, you have eternal life, and you will be raised again, and be given a most glorious and wonderful future, being in heaven with God and Jesus and all the believers and in a brand-new immortal body.

As Christians we need to have something to live for, to look forward to, and then we can think positively about the future. Otherwise, we'll be discouraged and want to give up, want to quit. And if we don't have hope, if we're not hopeful, then we'll be hopeless. Now when we talk about hope, we're not talking about what we think might happen, we're talking about what God is going to do, what we're convinced is going to happen. And we're talking about something permanent, something we'll begin to experience after our life on earth, in heaven and in the ages to come, and for all eternity.

1 Peter 1:4-5 says that God *"has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."* As soon as you become a Christian, you have hope, and it's guaranteed, for God doesn't go back on His word, He will make sure you receive what He has promised you. It says this hope is a *"living hope."* The word *"hope"* is speaking about what you'll see and experience in the future. The word *"living"* means it's true and transformative, for it changes you and dramatically affects how you live in the present. Knowing that God has the most wonderful future for you affects how you live for Him during your time here on earth.

And so you need hope, for it helps you to keep living for God, to keep running the race God has given you, especially when you're physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually tired. It helps you to keep going for God even when you have trials, even when you have a difficult trial, even when you're sick, even when you're sad about something. Rom. 8:18

Hope means you know the Son, the S-O-N, is shining, even though it may be a spiritually cloudy day. It means you know it's worth it to live the Christian life because you know God will greatly bless you in the future for how you lived for Him in the present. It means you know the difficulties and trials you're going through will come to an end. It means you see the light at the end of the tunnel. It means you know the best is yet to come. It's like running a race, for when you run a race, you know it will end, that there's a finish line. But not only is there an end, but there are prizes for those who run and finish the race. And by God's grace, each of you will finish the race. Heb. 12:1-2, 1 Cor. 1:8-9

Hope motivates you to be steadfast, to endure, to keep living for God no matter what happens on earth. It helps you to not give up, but to persevere to the end of your race. To successfully go through the days, months, and years of life, you must have hope, you must know that the eternal weight of glory you will receive is infinitely better than the temporary and microscopically small trials you're going through now. 2 Cor 4:17-18

Let me summarize the principle, the primary aspects of this hope:

- 1st, you'll be with Jesus Christ, your Lord, Savior, and King, the One who loves you far more than anyone else, the One who can't wait to see you and be with you. 1 Th. 5:17
- 2nd, you'll be given a brand-new body, a perfect body, a powerful body, an immortal body, a glorious body, a spiritual body. 1 John 3:2
- 3rd, you'll be in heaven, and it will be the heavenly Jerusalem, a holy, magnificent, and awesome place, a place that Christ has already prepared for you. Jn. 14:1-3, Rev. 21
- 4th, you'll be with all the believers, and specifically with loved ones and friends you knew on earth. That is, you'll see and be with each other in heaven and for all eternity.

5th, you'll have a wonderful purpose, an important and eternal reason for living, for you'll be perfectly and eternally loving and serving God and others. Matt. 25:21, Psalm 145

- 6th, you'll receive an inheritance. 1 Pet. 1:3-5, Rom. 8:16-17. This is a most important truth, that you're an heir of God, that you'll receive an incredible inheritance in the future. And in fact, you will inherit the earth. You'll be joint heirs with Christ, and this earth will be yours. Matt. 5:5; Psalm 37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34; Rev. 5:10

Now there are other words and phrases that describe your future, words that you need to think about, for you will be encouraged and more filled with hope as you do.

- Psalm 136. Every day of your future, and forever and ever, you'll know and experience the great love of God, and like never before, you'll be filled up with the love of God.
- Psalm 16:11. You'll be blessed with pleasures, with positive and joyful experiences.
- Psalm 31:19. You will know and experience the goodness of God forever and ever. God will show you His goodness, His kindness to you in amazing ways, in all kinds of ways.
- John 17:24 says that you'll see the glory of Christ, the incredible perfections of Christ, His holiness, righteousness, power, wisdom, love, sovereignty, and His beauty. And you will forever be learning the truth about God and His glory, and about this universe.

What I've just shared is a general overview of your hope, and it's true for every single believer, every single Christian - it's what every believer will receive. But I need to give you more details about this amazing future that God has for you, and it relates to how God will specifically bless you, how He will personally reward you.

- Now what I've already said about your hope, that you'll be with Jesus and other believers, that you'll be in heaven, that you'll have a new body, that you'll receive an inheritance, is what I call the basic plan – and it's fantastic, it's incredible, it's magnificent. But there's also what I call the deluxe plan, a plan that relates to how God wants to specifically and personally bless you and reward you for how you served Him on earth.

For the rest of this message and again next week, I'll focus on this subject of rewards, and it's a very important subject for every Christian, and there's a lot in the New Testament about it. And I really believe that your understanding of this subject will have a huge impact on your Christian life, and how you live your life for the Lord.

Here are some vss. on rewards. *"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord, rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you'll receive the reward of the inheritance"* (Col. 3:23-24). *"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done"* (2 Cor. 5:10). *"Your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you... store up for yourselves treasures in heaven"* (Matt. 6:18-20). *"Behold, I am coming soon, and I will reward everyone according to what he has done"* (Rev. 20:12). *"He who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor"* (1 Cor. 3:8). *"If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet as through fire."* 1 Cor. 3:15

Now all these verses are about how Christians will be rewarded for their work, but this last vs. says that some Christians won't be rewarded much, will suffer loss, meaning the loss of rewards, the loss of what God wanted to give them - and that's because their work on earth will be burned up, for it was worthless in the eyes of God. And so God rewards faithful Christians, those who lovingly and sincerely serve Him during their time on earth. Yet some Christians who'll be in heaven *"will suffer loss"*, meaning they'll suffer, not the loss of salvation, but the loss of rewards. 2 John 8
- And so all Christians will be blessed in heaven, but some will be blessed more than others, and it depends on how they loved and served God on earth.

But don't be confused, don't mix up these two means of being blessed - being saved by grace, by your faith in the work of Christ, and being rewarded by grace, by your work of faith for Christ. And so let me summarize - there's the *"basic plan"*, which all Christians receive when they are saved, and the *"deluxe plan"*, which is the *"basic plan"* in addition to all the rewards Christians receive for living for the Lord during their life on earth.

I want to now share some more thoughts about rewards:

1. God is generous, God really loves to give to His children, to bless them - and we'll see God's generosity and love with all these rewards, with all these ways that God will bless you in the future - in heaven and on earth. Psalm 31:19

2. Every Christian is unique, and the rewards you will receive from God will be unique, will be specially planned and designed for you. In heaven, we won't be clones - we'll all be wonderfully different - our appearance, our purpose, and the blessings God gives us.

3. God gives rewards to motivate you. People who run a race are motivated because they want to receive a prize. They don't want to just jog along in the race, or go off the course, or take long breaks. They really want to finish the race - and they are not ones who don't care if they win or lose - they really want to win for the Lord. 1 Cor. 9:24-27, Phil. 3:14 - Christians like this are motivated. And they're motivated by winning, and by receiving rewards, for that means they've run hard for God, and that God is pleased with them.

4. This truth about rewards means your whole life is important - God wants to reward everything you do for Him. He wants to reward you for what you do for Him today, tomorrow, and every day of your life. He wants to reward you for how you serve Him and others, how you use your money and time for Him, how you use your gifts for Him. This means your whole life counts and has value, for every single thing you do for God has eternal value, and results in eternal rewards.

5. The rewards you receive have nothing to do with how you are spiritually gifted. Some might say, "*Billy Graham, that great evangelist, he'll be greatly rewarded in heaven.*" But God makes everyone unique, and He doesn't want you to ever compare yourself with others, but to use the gifts, abilities, and time He gives you, knowing that you are accountable to Him alone, and that He'll personally reward you in the future. Matt. 25

6. Everyone who is in heaven will be fully satisfied, fully happy, fully rejoicing. That is, everyone's glass will be completely full. Yes, a person may not have fully lived for God during his time on earth, may have gotten off track, may not have fully used the gifts God gave him. But in heaven, we are completely righteous in God's sight, and all we will know is the love of God, and we will continually experience the goodness, and the blessings and the pleasures of God.

7. What you do in heaven, and your relationships in heaven, and how you're rewarded in heaven, are a result of how you lived your life on earth. There's a direct connection between what you do in this life, and what you do in heaven, and in the ages to come.

8. God will reward you when Jesus Christ comes back. Revelation 22:12 says, "*Behold, I am coming soon, and I will reward everyone according to what he has done*".
- Well, there's much more to say, and next week we'll continue on this important subject.