

“GREAT REWARD”¹
Selected Texts

Someone once asked “if George always keeps his nose to the grindstone, what does he get?” The quick reply was “a sharper nose”. Every once in awhile it is good to look up from the daily grind and look around. This helps us keep our perspective about life. By looking around you can see where you have been, what is going on around you now, and what is coming. If you look a little further, you can see where you are going and what lies at the end of your journey. This morning I want us to ‘look a little further’ and see what awaits the faithful believer at the end of the journey.

Listen to these selected Scripture texts that speak to this point:

To the Father of the faithful, God said "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your **reward shall be very great.**" (Genesis 15:1, NASB95)

The generous Boaz prays "'May the Lord **reward your work**, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.'" (Ruth 2:12, NASB95)

The Psalmist sings to us: "In keeping [God’s Word] there is **great reward.**" (Psalm 19:11, NASB95)

The wisest of men tells us "... he who sows righteousness gets a **true reward.**" (Proverbs 11:18, NASB95)

The great historian prods us "'But you, be strong and do not lose courage, for there is **reward for your work.**"' (2 Chronicles 15:7, NASB95)

The great prophet Isaiah predicts "Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth, Say to the daughter of Zion, “Lo, your salvation comes; Behold **His reward** is with Him, and His recompense before Him.”" (Isaiah 62:11, NASB95)

Our Lord Jesus says to us "'Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. “Rejoice and be glad, for your **reward in heaven is great;....**" (Matthew 5:11-12, NASB95)

Dr. Luke repeats Jesus’ words "'Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. “Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your **reward is great in heaven.**" (Luke 6:22-23, NASB95)

The Apostle Paul tells us "If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a **reward.**" (1 Corinthians 3:14, NASB95) **And again,** "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive **the reward** of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve." (Colossians 3:23-24, NASB95)

The encourager of the Hebrews writes "Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a **great reward.**" (Hebrews 10:35, NASB95)

Jesus’ final promise to us [cf. Isa. 62:11] "'Behold, I am coming quickly, and **My reward is with Me**, to render to every man according to what he has done." (Revelation 22:12, NASB95)

These texts are all members of the same family. They are kindred by one common thought—the idea of reward. The word of God, from one end to the other, makes it clear that at the end of a faithful and victorious life is great reward. Did you notice how often the word “Great” was used to describe the reward? Once the describing adjective was “true”. Indeed, our future looks very bright.

When we talk about reward, the difference between salvation and reward needs to be clearly understood. Salvation is the result of God’s work for us; reward is the remuneration or pay for our work for Him. Salvation is a gift; reward is earned. Salvation is spelled D O N E by Jesus; reward is spelled D O by us.

¹ The message taken from Dr. Dean Weaver’s *Little Words about Great Things*, chapter by this name.

I. OURS IS A GREAT REWARD BECAUSE OF

Who gives it. It comes from the great hand and great heart of our great God and according to His great riches in glory through our great Savior, Jesus.

Whose it is. It is given to great sinners who have been saved by great grace.

Where it is. It is reserved in heaven for us and is guarded by the great power of God.

What it is. It is the consummation of all possible privileges, the culmination of all Divine promises and the completion of all God's purposes.

How much it is. God makes sure that no one is a loser who serves Him. Paul confidently reminds us: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58) And Jesus told Peter: "'And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.'" (Matthew 19:29, NASB95). Someone has calculated that to be 10,000 times as much as you invested in serving. Now I would call that a great ROI [Return on Investment]!

Ours is a GREAT REWARD when compared to what the world has to offer. Here's a short list.

II. OURS IS A GREAT REWARD WHEN COMPARED TO A LIST OF MAN'S LITTLE TREASURES.

"'For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? 'For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?'" (Mark 8:36-37, NASB95)

The titles and trophies that men count as treasures are no more than trinkets and toys. Greed has made us so gullible to the glitter, glamour, and getting of this time-frame that we forget the future. Many have sacrificed real and lasting values on the altar of the tangible and temporary.

If a man is measured by what he has and what he is, and earth's scales are the only standard of measurement, then, in the sight of God, he has nothing, is nothing, and in need of everything. When you weigh the things of the world in light of eternity, the list is small and short. The Apostle John reminds us "Do not love the world nor the things in the world...." (1 John 2:15, NASB95)

"The world and everything that people want in it are passing away... (1 John 2:17, NCV)

At the recent Joni & Friends Camp one of the staff said to us she realized "the joy, satisfaction, and value of serving at a camp for the disabled is so far beyond comparison with all the trophies I had won in high school that when I recently came across the box-full of them, I threw them all away. They had lost their glitter. And as an added bonus, I have more room in my garage."

III. OURS IS A GREAT REWARD WHEN WE LOOK AT MAN'S LIGHT TRIALS.

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." (Romans 8:18, NASB95)

Job said, "For man is born for trouble, As sparks fly upward." (Job 5:7, NASB95)

Remember this is the order for now: grime before glory. Suffering is an ever present reality. No one wants to claim any kinship with it but there can be no doubt that suffering is a member of the human family. Suffering is a big issue casting a long shadow over humanity, but listen to this answer of faith:

"For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison," (2 Corinthians 4:17, NASB95)

Here is what Paul meant by "momentary, light affliction" as he experienced it and carried the credentials of its cruelty in his body: "in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches." (2 Corinthians 11:23-28, NASB95) Then he concludes by saying "this suffering is not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed to us".

IV. OURS IS A GREAT REWARD WHEN WE LEARN OF MAN'S LIMITED THOUGHTS.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9, NASB95)

The Apostle John and the Apostle Paul have both struggled with trying to describe what they had seen in heaven. John wrote a whole book trying to put into earthly terms what he had seen and there is still much debate about what he was trying to describe. Paul, on the other hand, hasn't even tried to describe it. He said the things he had seen and heard in heaven were "inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak." (2 Corinthians 12:4, NASB95) Heavenly things are "out of bounds" to human thought. The apostle felt that mere words couldn't do justice to what he had experienced and he had no right to attempt it. The house that holds man's thoughts is too small for much heavenly furniture. Man's little mind has little room for the thoughts and things of God. When we try to comprehend some of the great truths about God, eternity, salvation, and now reward we wade into water way over our heads!

Someone has said: If you could take the
YELLOW from the light of the sun; the GREEN from the freshness of a spring morning;
the WHITE from a new-fallen snow; the BLUE from a cloudless summer sky;
the RED from ten-thousand flaming sunsets; the PINK from the blush of innocence; the GOLD from the
breath-taking hues of autumn; all these rich, rare, and radiant tones mixed from the fullness of joy, the
wonder of love, the stillness of peace, the splendor of hope, and height of beauty, and paint with the
vision of an artistic genius, it would still fall short of the great reward God has in store for those who love
Him. Our great reward is beyond the ability of the eye to see, the ear to hear, the mind to think, the mouth
to speak, and the hand to paint. We can only comprehend it by faith in the promise of Him who cannot
lie!

We can only understand a little of our GREAT REWARD when we compare it to the list of man's little treasures; when we look at man's light trials; when we learn of man's limited thoughts. Finally,

V. OURS IS A GREAT REWARD WHEN WE LIKEN IT TO A MAN'S LESSER THRILLS.

It was noted that by faith Moses chose "to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward." (Hebrews 11:25-26, NASB95)

Note that sin is pleasurable. But also note that the pleasure is passing. It is temporary, transitory, and troublesome. Because it does not last longer than the moment you are doing it, you have to repeat it or find something to replace it. In doing so, you just keep digging a deeper hole. [Remember, when you find yourself in a hole, stop digging!] When the “pleasure of sin” is over, you are not as you were, you are worse than you were.

Compare the greater riches of Christ: "You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever." (Psalm 16:11, NASB95) And the pleasures of God carry no hidden fees! Jesus told us to look up and ahead when He said "“Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven.”" (Luke 6:23, NASB95) These words are taken from Dr. Luke’s record of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Jesus wanted no mistaken ideas of what it would mean to follow Him. He wanted people to understand what they were getting into if they became His disciple. It would be a costly thing to line up with His cause. It would get you cursed at, beaten, persecuted, or thrown in jail. There could be sadness and suffering on earth, but it would not be without its reward. There would be great gladness and glory in heaven!

Jesus drew back the curtain of eternity and spoke of a reward so great that in that day we would have cause to leap for joy. The word *leap* is used only in this statement and to describe what baby John did in uterus when Mary, pregnant with Jesus, visited his mother Elizabeth. Twice Elizabeth tells us that the baby *leaped* in her womb. John knew and responded to Jesus before either of them was born! *Leap* is used to describe the frolic, skipping, and jumping around of animals at play.

Jesus said to look ahead to that day
When DEATH, DISEASE, DEFORMITY and the DEVIL are not even remembered;
When FAITH is lost in glorious sight as we behold the King in His beauty;
When we are CONFORMED TO HIS IMAGE, clothed in garments of glorious resurrection light;
When we walk down STREETS OF GOLD in ROBES OF SPOTLESS WHITE;
When GOD WIPES AWAY ALL TEARS from our eyes;
When we are WITH LOVED ONES who have gone on before us;
When we hear WELCOME HOME, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT;
When we receive OUR GREAT HEAVENLY REWARD,
Then we shall leap for joy---we shall skip about as playful little animals!

GREAT REWARD, so far beyond our expectations that we will run, jump, and play with sheer joy!
Certainly our reward is great when compared to earth’s lesser thrills. For the faithful, there is so much ahead to come from the hand of loving Lord, who not only redeems, reserves, and represents His people, but also rewards them!

So go ahead, look up, look ahead, and be refreshed for the task at hand. Amen.