

## Rewards Of A Closer Walk With God

In the last article (see above) we talked of the cost of a closer walk with God and ended by saying, “Is it worth the cost? Absolutely!” The cost pales in light of the great rewards that belong to the disciple of Christ. Consider and rejoice in the promise of these blessings.

There are the future blessings that will come to the faithful Christian. “Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life” (Rom. 5:9,10 English Standard Version). The return of the Lord Jesus to judge the world does not need to be feared by the Christian since his sins have been forgiven and he has been reconciled to God. While many may be calling out for the rocks and mountains to fall on them, the Christian will be saying, “welcome Lord Jesus” since he is returning as Saviour, friend, and elder brother.

The ultimate future blessing will be living with God and all the faithful in that place Jesus has gone to prepare. There will be no feelings of sorrow, pain, or loss as eternity is enjoyed with all those who have loved and served the Lord during life. There is much to rejoice about when reading the words of John’s revelation, “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away’ ” (Revelation 21:2-4 ESV).

One comes to appreciate the promise of this place of eternal peace the longer he lives in this sinful place. As the days come and go the difficulties associated with living in the sinful world become more apparent. Pain, sorrow, suffering, and death are a continual trial in this life. The Christian rejoices that God, in his grace, has provided a release from the guilt and consequences of sin so he can look forward to being with God in Heaven. This is a truly wonderful blessing that he looks forward to enjoying.

Besides the future blessings the Christian also enjoys many blessings here and now. Of course, there may be times when the Christian will have problems with family and/or friends but these troubles are small when weighed against the blessings. As the Christian matures in his Christian walk he will come to understand the truth of that statement more clearly. For the new Christian these problems with family and/or friends can be very disheartening. Understand that God has never expected his people to face problems alone. In the Christian age the Holy Spirit has been given to the Christian to help him survive even in the face of opposition from family or friends. The best encouragement at these times may be the words of James, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4).

Jesus assures his disciples a peace of heart that will give support through troublesome times. Like a bird that finds shelter and peace in a crevice in the rock during a storm, the disciple finds

that peace in the indwelling strength provided by the Lord. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:27). This peace comes as a result of the trust that the disciple has in the promises given by and through Christ Jesus.

Consider promises like "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" Romans 8:28, or "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" I Corinthians 10:13. There is great reason for peace in knowing that the Christian is never left to fight the battle alone. On a daily basis, God is providing the strength to walk in his way when one submits.

Further, Jesus promises that the Christian will be a continual recipient of the love of Jesus. Every person needs to feel loved. Many suffer various emotional illnesses because they do not feel loved. There is great joy for the Christian who understands that Jesus loves him. Understand that this love comes as a result of the Christian obeying the commands of Christ. The grace of God overcomes (forgives) the occasional failures as the Christian repents of sins. "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:10,11). In a world that is often filled with depression and hopelessness, what a wonderful blessing this love is.

A third blessing in walking with God is the provision that has been made in the Church family. This Church family can, if need be, replace the physical family on earth. Leaving traditional family beliefs to become a New Testament Christian can often result in broken family ties. Jesus understood the potential for this result and spoke of it in a conversation with Peter resulting from the events surrounding Jesus' discussion with the rich young man in Mark 10. "Peter began to say to him, 'See, we have left everything and followed you.' Jesus said, 'Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life' " (10:28-30). The blessing of the fellowship, support, and encouragement found in the Church will sustain the Christian in the face of opposition.

There are other blessings and rewards that could be noted, however, hopefully these will serve to demonstrate that while walking with God may be costly in some ways the rewards far outweigh the cost.