

Heaven is a Wonderful Place Part 2
May 22, 2011
Christ Community Covenant Church
Pastors Curt Vogt and Randy McNeal

Key Scripture Passage: Romans 8

1. What do rewards and success look like in heaven?

The Bible often speaks of rewards to come to us in the next life. We read things about jewels in our crown and Jesus saying “store up treasures in heaven”. What does that look like? Does that mean because Mike Brown prays more his house will be bigger? Is our success in heaven measureable, like with a point system? If so, I may need to start taking up a collection of some of your excess points so I won’t be slumming it.

We don’t have a lot to go on to answer this question. What we know intrinsically is that some sort of reward awaits and it’s different for each person. If we take a look at some of the scriptures regarding this subject the picture begins to clear up. Let’s start with a story:

[Read Luke 19:11-27] The Parable of the Talents

Those trustworthy get more responsibility

This passage speaks to how well we used our gifting. Some have multiple gifts, like the man with 10 talents, others have a few less like the one with 5, and still some have limited resources. Notice that limited resources doesn’t get you off the hook. The “I’m not good enough anyway” excuse doesn’t work with God. We are each responsible to see what we’ve been given to increase God’s Glory and will be rewarded based on those merits.

Clarification: Let me be clear about one thing in this “rewards” talk. It has nothing to do with our salvation. Our salvation is an inheritance that is not based on any merit what-so-ever. We are talking about rewards that come after salvation, and frankly, after we leave this earth. The rewards we speak of do not get us in to heaven nor do they mean success here and now.

So in our heavenly rewards we see that our responsibility is to use what God has given us on we will increase as we live out our lives in heaven.

The Apostle Paul seems in agreement with Jesus, which I’m learning it’s always good to agree with Jesus:

2 Corinthians 9:6 “the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully”

And

1 Corinthians 15:41 “There is on glory of the sun, and another Glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; indeed, star differs from star in glory”

All of these proofs bring up another question: Won't we be jealous of others?

1 Corinthians 12:26 “If one member is honored, all rejoice together with it”

Perfect love is not jealous but causes the success of others to increase our joy. As we look at Mike's large, Victorian style mansion, we will be happier because of his success. On this side of heaven when responding to the success or gift of another our common response is “that's not fair”. Imagine what it will be like in heaven where that changes to “I'm sooo happy for them”

On the other side, those with success abound much more in humility and look to the lesser in a love that considers the lesser actually to be greater. There will be no pride but those with seemingly greater gifts will actually take on what Paul said and consider everyone else as better.

Takeaway: While there may be varying degrees of glory, rewards, and success in heaven. Perfect love will cause us to be united in our joy for each other regardless of position.

2. Will there be things in heaven that we've enjoyed on earth?

Good question. We know that a lot of us are wondering about some of the important things in our lives now. Will we have these things in heaven? Of course we have to understand that we're talking about positive things that are not immoral. Things like the arts, music. These things are a significant part of our lives here.

Fortunately, we know that God is a creative God, as the very first verse in the Bible makes clear (Gen. 1:1). And the Bible is full of references to singing and making music before God (Psalm 104:33).

- What about recreation and sports? Paul uses sports analogies for the Christian life in several places in the NT (1 Corinthians 9:24; 2 Timothy 4:7).
- How about animals and especially pets? So many of us are extremely attached to our pets. Isaiah has a vision of the coming Kingdom that includes all sorts of animals living together in harmony (11:5). And the book of Revelation suggests that every creature in heaven will glorify and honor God (5:13)

And this is not an exhaustive list. Many things accompany our live here on earth. I think the real answer is in Romans 8:19-21. Paul indicates that ALL of creation has been corrupted by the curse of sin. And all of creation is waiting for the day when the curse will be lifted and evil will be stripped away. Then all of these things can be fully enjoyed as God intended, to His glory. So the answer seems to be, “Yeah, there really could be a lot of these fun things from earth in heaven.” And they’ll be even better there.

Take away. Everything God created will be freed from the curse of sin and evil. All things will be experienced to their absolute fullest, without the corruption of evil, as God intended, to His glory.

3.What does it mean to be co-heirs?

Romans 8:16-17 says “It is that very spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ”

We’ve clarified already that our inheritance (salvation) is not earned but given to us by God. In talking about being a co-heir with Christ the first thing that we need to know is we are part of the kingdom. We are saved, forgiven, justified whatever you want to call it. First and foremost, being a co-heir means inheriting eternal life. There are other parts to this inheritance that affect us now.

[Let’s read in Galatians 4:1-7]

We are no longer slaves but through Christ we are adopted and have begun living out our inheritance now.

Part of that inheritance is in finishing the verse in Romans 8. The last part of verse 17 says”

“If in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him”

Part of being a co-heir with Christ, a Christian, means suffering. There are no promises that this life will be easy. In fact, the promise is that it will be hard. The lies of the world, the sinfulness of others that affects us and even our own sin all bring consequences in life to us.

The promise doesn’t end there. Later on in Romans we see Paul saying:

Romans 8:37-39

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers,

nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”

This is a verse to commit to memory. To meditate on. Because though part of our inheritance is to suffer it is even more to be loved and nothing will separate us from that.

And that's now! We don't have to wait for God's love because we have it now. We are living out our inheritance every day that we live in Christ's love.

Takeaway: As co-heirs we are united with Christ in suffering, service, love, help, and ultimately eternal life.

Conclusion

If this inheritance starts with living in Christ's love now, how should this affect how we live?

Next Week 5/29: Curt Vogt will speak to this question in greater depth with a **FWD** (Family Worship Destination) style service.