

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Will the reward be there?

(Jerry Fite)

Jesus reminded those persecuted for His sake that they have a “*great reward*” awaiting them “*in heaven*” (*Matthew 5:12*). Because their great reward is ahead, and faithful prophets from the past likewise suffered for righteousness sake, they can be called “blessed” by our Lord as they endure various forms of persecution. Jesus’ words should silence those who say we should not serve Jesus for a reward. Jesus surely did not feel this way. A reward is a God-given incentive for the walk of faith. “...for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (*Hebrews 11:6*).

How can the Christian know for certain that the reward of heaven will be there when he or she comes to the end of this life?

The reward will be there because God promised it. Faith and knowledge of the Christian are connected with “...the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago” (*Titus 1:2*). Notice the character of God strengthens the promise of the reward of eternal life: God “cannot lie.” The reward is there! I, who cannot lie, promised it. The promise of eternal life has

been with Me before times eternal! Neither the process of time, nor the possibility of a lie can keep the reward of eternal life in heaven from being there for us in the end.

If the truthfulness of the eternal God gives us confidence that the reward will be given, what about the means through which we can have this hope? The answer: Jesus was raised from the dead. We have been “*born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*” (*1 Peter 1:3*). If Jesus merely promised a reward, and then died, we would not have the reward of heaven awaiting us. Paul offers the inspired argument, “...if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain...and you are still in your sins...then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (*1 Corinthians 15:14, 17-18*). If Jesus Christ has not been raised from the dead, regardless of how strong we believe in the reward of heaven, we are “*men most to be pitied*” (*1 Corinthians 15:19*).

God’s absolute truthfulness, and His peerless power in raising Jesus from the dead, gives us a certain foundation that the reward will be there for us in the end.

But the question for us is how diligent will we be in our walk of faith toward the reward? The Hebrew writer addresses Christians who in the past had ministered to fellow saints in the work of the Lord. He reminds them that God had not forgotten such work of love, but he feels the need to exhort them to remain diligent. “*And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end*” (*Hebrews 6:11*). God has the reward reserved for us, but we must be diligent to continue to obey until the end. Bolstered by God’s promise, “*we have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised*” (*Hebrews 10:36*).

The reward of eternal life in heaven continues to be reserved for the faithful. God, who cannot lie, has promised it. Christ, who was raised from the dead, has secured it. So, we can know for certain the reward is ours, if we, with diligence, endure unto the end. When our bodies can go no further than the hospital bed or hospice bed at home, our inward man can exclaim joyfully that we have never been better. Why? We have never been closer to the reward that lies just ahead. We know it with certainty!