

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”
(1 Corinthians 15:19)
If In This Life Only

The English Standard Version of the Bible ends with the above verse:

“we are of all people most to be pitied”.

Matthew Henry's commentary on this verse and its meaning:

“Having shown that Christ was risen, the apostle answers those who said there would be no resurrection. There had been no justification, or salvation, if Christ had not risen. And must not faith in Christ be vain, and of no use, if he is still among the dead? The proof of the resurrection of the body is the resurrection of our Lord. Even those who died in the faith, had perished in their sins, if Christ had not risen. All who believe in Christ, have hope in him, as a Redeemer; hope for redemption and salvation by him; but if there is no resurrection, or future recompense, their hope in him can only be as to this life. And they must be in a worse condition than the rest of mankind, especially at the time, and under the circumstances, in which the apostles wrote; for then Christians were hated and persecuted by all men. But it is not so; they, of all men, enjoy solid comforts amidst all their difficulties and trials, even in the times of the sharpest persecution.”

We, of course, know that salvation is a free gift to anyone who receives Jesus for forgiveness of sins. If salvation is free why then do so many Christians go beyond salvation, some to the point of even martyrdom?

1 Corinthians 11:35 tells us one of the major reasons for this:

“that they might obtain a better resurrection”

or as Matthew Henry would say, for a “future recompense”. It is by faith that we now believe. That is why those who do not share our faith in a future resurrected body with Jesus, but believe this world and what it has to offer all look upon Christians as a miserable, deluded group of misguided fools only to be pitied.

But a Christian whose faith like Moses rests in the future can say “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Moses “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”

What did Dr. Livingstone mean when he said, “I never made a sacrifice”. He understood the “recompense of the reward” that he could never out give God. If you like, he knew any “sacrifice” he made was a very wise investment, and that his investment would return a hundred fold dividend.

It is a promise in the book of Matthew, chapter nineteen, from the lips of Jesus Himself that:

“...every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”

Again, the recompense of the reward.

This is why Paul admonished the Colossians to:

“set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth”. And why did Paul admonish the Colossians to set their affection on things above, because “we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Once again, the recompense of the reward.

The apostle John, in his epistle, 1 John, also instructs us to:

“love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.”

The Bible would seem to talk quite a bit about “things”. Earthly things and eternal things and makes it very clear that it is much more sensible to strive for eternal things than earthly things.

At this point in history it would appear a great many people in the world are simply not doing the sensible thing.

“If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” 1 Corinthians 3:14-15

To quote the famous old Gospel song:

“This world is not my home
I'm just a-passing through
My treasures are laid up
Somewhere beyond the blue.”

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

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