

The Professor's Theological Home Page

"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." (Acts 16:31)

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Hope where there is no Hope – Part 3

We now come to the third part of our article on a subject everyone should have an interest in hearing, that on hope. Everyone has a tendency to look for hope in the system of this world, yet true hope only comes from the Lord. It is unfortunate that when we base our hope on people and circumstances, sometimes we come to such hopeless conclusions as ending our lives and those of our alleged loved ones. This article comes from such stories as that of a mother in the Woodlands and a father in Bay City who came to such a conclusion.

Having seen the first two categories of God's hope in part 1 and part 2 of our article, we will now examine the third category of God's hope. Once we arrive to a point of having an absolute reality of our eternal security, future resurrection, and blessings in time, we then move to achieving that same absolute reality about our rewards for the eternal state. The question now begs, what are those rewards for the eternal state? They are simply those privileges and decorations that God has in store for those who mature in the capacity to receive them. The apostle Paul certainly had an absolute certainty that he would receive his rewards for the eternal state when he would leave this world to be with the Lord (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, and I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (KJV 2 Tim. 4:6-8)

The first thing to note about the crown of righteousness that Paul is referring to in verse 8 is that it is not the Greek word used for the crown for a king. The Greek word translated "crown" in verse 8 is the Greek noun *stephanos* referring to the crown of victory in the ancient athletic games and the military, a crown identified with rewards. This crown will be a decoration for the attainment, perpetuation, and the activity of spiritual maturity. The crown will carry with it an incredible amount of extra privileges, blessings, as well as opportunities in the eternal state. This crown of righteousness is given to the mature believer who consistently fulfilled the royal family honor code by exhibiting virtue, honor and integrity, as well as passing those tests dealing with people and circumstances, which hinder our spiritual progress. In spiritual maturity, this is the believer who uses God's perfect happiness to pass such testing. It is the believer who wears this invisible uniform of honor who will receive this crown of righteousness. In addition, another reward for the spiritually mature believer will be the crown of life (Rev. 2:10; James 1:12).

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. (KJV Rev. 2:10)

The crown of life is given to the spiritually mature Church Age believer who passes the evidence testing that Satan administers to that believer. The believer who is given this crown is the one who learned and put to use the problem-solving methods of God's power system for the Church Age. The believer who overcomes is the mature believer who executes God's protocol plan for the Church Age. Such a believer is the one who perpetuated his spiritual maturity even through Satan's testing. As a result, part of his reward will include having authority to rule nations as joint-heirs with the Lord (Rom. 8:17).

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. (KJV Rom. 8:17)

There is also a third crown that is available to the mature believer, yet it is only available to those believers who have the gift of pastor/teacher. This crown is given to the pastor/teacher who is faithful in learning and teaching accurately the Word of God, and as a result, brings believers to maturity (1 Pet. 5:2-4).

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. (KJV 1 Pet. 5:2-4)

There is a certain happiness that every pastor/teacher has when a believer under their ministry takes the big step to spiritual self-esteem and continues unto the victory step of maturity. The pastor/teacher's happiness is one that comes from the positive response of those who are faithful to the teaching of the Word of God and who receive evidence testing. These believers are those who glorify God to the maximum.

The mature believer who receives the above crowns not only has considerable estates in the eternal state, yet will also receive the ultimate decoration known as the order of the Morning Star. This decoration is taken from and named after our Lord's third royal patent, "King of kings, Lord of lords, the Bright Morning Star," (Rev. 22:16; 2 Pet. 1:19).

The order of the Morning Star is a decoration that is part of a mature believer's blessings for the eternal state in Revelation 2:26-28.

And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. (KJV Rev. 2:26-28)

In light of the fact that believers will rule, not only over nations, but over angels as well, is reason to take our spiritual growth very seriously. The apostle Paul had concern because the Corinthian believers did not understand this important truth (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that

we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life? (KJV 1 Cor. 6:2-3)

In view of our eternal future and potential rewards as rulers, it is our reasonable service to reach the high ground of maturity. Our life for all eternity is now in the making during our present life here on earth. Our daily attitude and priorities will determine what rewards each believer will receive at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Remember that it takes only one decision to become a born-again child of God, yet it takes countless good decisions to receive the magnificent decorations, honors, and rewards that the Lord has to give to those who reach the peak of maturity.

Please return for part 4 of my article as I will conclude my examination of the last category of God's hope. It will be an analysis of the privileges that accompany the order of the Morning Star, which again, is the ultimate decoration of the victorious believer.