1.

Introduction

1.

Is this passage unfamiliar? I expect the first two verses of this passage are unfamiliar to many of you. They come at the very end of Christ's sermon in Matthew 10 and it would be very easy to read them quickly and forget them. And because they contain some issues that are difficult to unravel, you may well have forgotten these verses. But there is a good reason to dwell on this passage at the end of Christ's teaching about proclaiming the gospel amidst persecution. These verses tell us there are **rewards** in evangelism ; there are **rewards** in persecution ! Did you know that? If not you might give up. Christ says " Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. " You will find a reward.

2.

How are these rewards a motivation? That's a motivation to continue proclaiming the gospel amidst persecution. But how are these rewards a motivation ? As an introduction it will be helpful to untangle this issue first.

1.

Justification. Consider how these rewards relate to justification. The fact God gives rewards for obedience does not mean we earn a righteous standing in God's eyes by our works. " By works of the law no one will be justified. " (**Gal. 2:16**) The ground of our righteous standing before God is not the righteousness of our own good works, but the righteousness of Christ alone. We cannot earn God's favor once we deserve His wrath. Instead we must plead for His mercy. Our first motive for obeying God should not be the reward which He promises in response to our obedience, but rather our obedience must flow from our faith in Christ, and our love for God, and above that, our aim to exalt God's own glory itself. In the end, our greatest reward is God Himself. We should desire God , and

God's glory
, before our own enjoyment, knowing that we enjoy God most when He is most glorified in us.

2.

Intrinsic or extrinsic? But for those whom God has justified, He provides the encouragement that Christ rewards His disciples, and those who receive them. We can dig into how these rewards are a motivation a little further. Are these rewards intrinsic or extrinsic motivations
? Is the reward
in
the obedience, or
for
the obedience?

1.

Both! The answer is they are both! There are intrinsic rewards in keeping God's commands: " The precepts of the Lord are right...in keeping them there is great reward.
" (
Ps. 19:8; 11
) Like bodily exercise, godliness "
holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.
" (
1 Tim. 4:8
) But God also provides extrinsic rewards, rewards that He gives not
through
your obedience as their effect, but
in response to
your obedience because God sees and approves of it. "
Your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
" (
Matt. 6:4, 6, 18
)

2.

Truth in advertising. These rewards must not be your first motivation for following Christ, but they are a supporting
motivation. The reason you follow Jesus is that you love Him. But as a help and encouragement

to you in your weakness, He informs you whether in following Him you will be blessed or cursed. The world may curse you, but Christ will bless you. His is a divine "truth in advertising" campaign. Christ reveals both the
hidden costs
and the
final glorious blessings
of being His disciples, and you need to know the blessings far outweigh the cost of discipleship.

3.

Outline. If you should take anything home from this passage today, you should remember these two points which Christ makes:

1.

God Is Your Greatest Reward v. 40

2.

Your Reward Is Certain vv. 41-42

3.

Body

1.

God Is Your Greatest Reward v. 40. First, God is your greatest reward. V. 40 reads,

1.

Text

1.

Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.

2.

God's Presence. You should be willing to proclaim the gospel amidst persecution—and others will receive you into their house as you do so—because you are not the most important person in the picture. Not only are you present, but Jesus Himself, and God the Father, are present too. Receiving the apostles into one's house could pose risks to the householder. But those who received the apostles into their houses would be blessed, because they received not only the apostles, but Christ who sent them, and through Him they received God the Father as well, because He sent Christ. God is with you when you do His work; Christ is with you in the ministry of His church! God will protect you, and He will be your reward. God told Abram, " Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your exceedingly great reward. " (**Gen. 15:1**)

3.

When you truly understand the gospel you are not enamored with the messenger—the pastor or whoever brought the gospel to you—but with God Himself. God deserves your worship; it is God whom you have offended; it is God who graciously forgives and sanctifies you. Do you believe that God is your greatest reward? If you do, then be encouraged that God will also be the greatest reward of those you meet when you proclaim the gospel. " Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards

those who seek him.
" (
Heb. 11:6
) If you believe in God, believe
He is men's greatest reward
.

4.

Your Reward Is Certain vv. 41-42. Second, your reward is certain. This is the culmination of Christ's teaching in vv. 41-42.

1.

Text

1.

41 The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward.

2.

42 And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

3.

The repetition of the rewards. Notice the repetition of the rewards. In each case the pattern is the same—those who receive God's people will be rewarded. Your reward is certain, because God's justice is certain. "
Surely there is a reward
for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth.
" (
Psalm 58:11
) The rewards' repetition underlines their certainty.

4.

The recipients of the rewards. Notice also the recipients of the rewards. Christ promises here that God will reward those who receive His disciples with the same reward His disciples will receive already. Do you see that? In each case
two
people will be rewarded—
both
the prophet will be rewarded,
and
those who receive him will receive the same reward.

5.

The reason for the rewards. Notice also the reason for the rewards.

1.

The reason the prophet receives his reward is because of his service to God as a prophet. The righteous man is rewarded for serving God as a righteous man. The disciple is rewarded for his service as Christ's disciple.

2.

The reason a prophet receives his particular kind of reward is due to the nature of his service as a prophet, and likewise with a righteous man and a disciple. The reward fits the service. It is "a prophet's reward
," or "
a righteous man's reward
," or a disciple's reward.

3.

The reason those who receive such men are rewarded is for receiving them, which means accepting their ministry and service to the Lord, and helping them in it.

4.

The reason those who receive such men receive the same particular reward as a prophet, righteous man, or disciple, is—more intrinsically—that God ministers His own grace through

each disciple's particular form of Christian service. David said in **2 Sam. 22:25-27**, "25 The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness.... 26 With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; 27 with the purified you deal purely." More extrinsically, the reason is that when you help a fellow Christian in their service to the Lord, He will reward you both for that service in the end. As one of our hymns says, "You can be like faithful Aaron, holding up the prophet's hands."

5.

The nature of the rewards. Last we may consider the nature of the rewards. Christ does not describe the nature of each reward beyond the fact that the one is "a prophet's reward," the other is "a righteous man's reward," and by implication the last is "a disciple's reward." One commentator made much of the issue of which reward was greater—a prophet's, righteous man's, or a disciple's. Though Christ must be distinguishing the nature of one reward from another, I do not believe the size of the reward is His primary concern. The apostles whom Christ sent with these encouraging words were each a prophet, righteous man, and disciple, all in one. Christ calls His disciples "little ones," and that may indicate they deserve little honor, while a prophet certainly deserves great honor because he speaks God's word. Yet some prophets were neither righteous men nor even disciples! Many outwardly righteous men are nevertheless not disciples of Christ, and in this regard only Christ's disciples are guaranteed a reward from the Lord. And we hear a semblance of Christ's words in **Matt. 25:40**, "as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me," and in a context closer still, "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

" (
Matt. 11:11
) A prophet's position is honorable, though his person may not be. A disciple's person is honorable, through his lowly position is not. In God's justice He provides intrinsic rewards to every Christian's service and to those who receive it, and in God's mercy He provides extrinsic rewards beyond that service itself.

1.

A Prophet's Reward. A prophet speaks God's word. On their first evangelistic expedition this would be the apostles' primary task. How would they be received? Christ reassures them—
some
will receive you, and they will be
blessed
! They "
will receive a prophet's reward.
"

-

In this life. In this life, when you and they humbly listen to God's word, "The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is
riches and honor and life
.
" (
Prov. 22:4
) Your message itself brings
reconciliation between God and man
as a reward for your work, as the Lord promised Jeremiah amidst his lamentation. "
15 Thus says the LORD: ‘A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.' 16 Thus says the LORD: ‘Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work
, declares the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. 17 There is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country.'
" (
Jer. 31:15-17
)

-

Your reward is great in heaven. Even if a prophet suffers greatly in this life, his reward is great in heaven. " 10 Blessed are those who are

persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for yo ur reward is great in heaven , for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. " (**Matt. 5:10-12**)

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Do you welcome the ministry of your pastor? Do you lift up the hands of your missionaries? Do you take courage that some parents, and some little hearts, will receive Jesus Christ through our Vacation Bible School? God rewards those who seek Him, and that is a reason to proclaim the gospel to those who need to hear! Those who receive a prophet will receive a prophet's reward.

-

A Righteous Man's Reward. A righteous man does what is right, and "will receive a righteous man's reward. "

-

Intrinsic in this life. There are intrinsic rewards in this life for those who live a righteous life. Respecting authority, being faithful to your spouse, helping the needy, keeping your promises; these things are the path of blessing in this life. " The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. " (**Prov. 4:18**) This path shines even brighter when shared with other righteous men—mutual fellowship and help among the righteous is a precious thing. " Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! " (**Psalm 133:1**) "
20 Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. 21 Disaster pursues sinners, but the righteous are rewarded with good.

" (
Prov. 13:20-21
) "
9 Two are better than one, because they have a good
reward
for their toil. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! 11 Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? 12 And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him- a threefold cord is not quickly broken.
"
(
Eccl. 4:9-12
)

-

Extrinsic in this life. God provides extrinsic rewards in this life as well. "One who sows righteousness gets a
sure reward
.
" (
Prov. 11:18
)
Ruth devoted herself to the Lord and His people, to Naomi's family, and to the service of righteous Boaz. In return Boaz answered her, "
All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. 12 The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward
be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!
" (
Ruth 2:11-12
) Did you know this is what the Lord does? If you "
share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house.... 8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
" (
Is. 58:7-8
)

-

Extrinsic in the life to come. Even if you do not see the light at the end of the tunnel of this

life, if you serve the Lord faithfully today you can be certain your reward will be great in heaven!
" But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.
" (
Luke 6:35
) "
Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord
you will receive the inheritance as your reward
.
" (
Col. 3:23-24
) Christ said "
Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.
" (
Luke 16:9
) If you don't understand that verse you may understand it better in Ray Bolz's song titled "Thank You:" "One by one they came, far as the eye could see; each one somehow touched by your generosity. Little things that you had done, sacrifices made, unnoticed on the earth, in heaven now proclaimed. Thank you for giving to the Lord. I am a life that was changed."
Righteous men, and those who receive them, "
will receive a righteous man's reward.
"

-

A Disciple's Reward. A disciple learns from and follows Christ, and will receive a disciple's reward. Though a prophet may deserve honor, the lowliest disciple of Jesus Christ receives His special and tender care. Only of the disciple does Christ say He is protective of the "
little ones
;" only of the disciple does Christ say we should provide a cup of cold water when they are in need; only of the disciple does Christ emphatically declare the one who shares Christ's compassion for them "
will by no means lose his reward.
" Christ says "
Truly, I say to you
;" "
Verily
," "
Amen.
"

The very truthfulness of God hangs on this certainty—Christ's disciples, and those who receive them, will receive a reward.

-

Disciples of Christ, if Christ sends you to speak on His behalf in the general office of prophet which every single one of you holds, will you be silent? You need not fear persecution, for your Savior will reward you, and some people will receive the gospel with open hearts. "Let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; [and] they will listen ! " (**Acts 28:28**)

-

Disciples of Christ, if Christ calls you to live a righteous life, to bind up the brokenhearted, heal the sick, help the needy, will you retreat into the comfort zone of your home and your personal pleasure? You need not fear persecution, for your Savior will reward you, and your treasure is in heaven. "If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you." (**Pr ov. 25:21-22**)

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Disciples of Christ, if Christ calls you simply to believe in Him, and follow Him, will you deny Him, or deny yourself? You need not fear persecution, for your Savior will reward you, and those who show you the smallest kindness for His name's sake. "24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward . " (**Heb. 11:24-26**) One day the 24 elders in heaven will be able to say of your God, " The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and

saints
, and those who fear your name, both
small
and
great
.
" (
Rev. 11:18
)

-

Conclusion

1.

Because Christ has promised, your reward "will surely come; it will not delay." (**Hab. 2:3**)
Believe God's promises which by His sovereignty He will keep, and so remember your responsibility of which
Heb. 10:35-36
reminds you as well, "
Do not throw away your confidence, which has a great
reward
. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.
"
"
Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full
reward
.
" (
2 John 1:8
) Christ sends you out as sheep among wolves, and gives you His great and precious promises of a reward so by His grace you will be wise as serpents, and innocent as doves.