

Sunday, February 7, 2016—I Corinthians 3:14-15: Pauline Principles Regarding Reward, Part 2

Introduction

- Last week as part of our consideration of verses 14 and 15, I brought a lesson titled Pauline Principles Regarding Reward.
- I Corinthians 3:8—all believers will receive a reward. Some will be rewarded by receiving a reward and some will be rewarded by suffering the loss of reward. This follows from the meaning of the word reward.
 - Verse 14—rewarded by receiving a reward.
 - Verse 15—rewarded by suffering the loss of reward.
- *Principle 1*—there is a difference between inheritance and reward. (Eph. 1:11-14; Rom. 8:17)
- *Principle 2*—a man reaps what he sows. (Gal. 6:7-9)
- *Principle 3*—reward is simply payment or recompense for a man’s labor. (I Cor. 3:8; I Tim. 5:18)
- *Principle 4*—reward is reckoned as a matter of debt. (Rom. 4:4, 11:6)
- *Principle 5*—reward is given for bad works. (II Tim. 4:14)
- *Principle 6*—reward is reckoned on the basis of work/labor. (I Cor. 3:8, 14-15)
- *Principle 7*—a believer’s good works are fruit for which they will receive a reward. (Titus 3:14; Col. 1:10)
- *Principle 8*—positive reward is given for work willingly performed; not for things that we are obligated to do. (I Cor. 9:16-18)

Learning About Loss

- I Corinthians 3:15—suffering loss of reward at the JSC is representative of the negative aspect of reward based upon the definition presented in the previous two studies. Improper workmanship in building upon the foundation laid by Paul (v. 10) is **rewarded** by being denied or losing reward. In other words, suffering the loss of reward at the JSC is the reward for failing to build properly upon Paul’s foundation.
- Depriving a believer of their reward at the JSC for his or her poor workmanship is the only outcome that is consistent with the Pauline message of grace.

- Ephesians 1:7—believers already have forgiveness of sins
- Colossians 1:14—we already have the forgiveness of sins
- Colossians 2:13—God has already forgiven all of our trespasses
- Romans 5:1—justified members of the body of Christ already have peace with God. The offended justice of God against our sin has already been settled when we trusted the finished work of Christ as the only payment for our sin. One does not even appear before the JSC unless they have trusted the gospel of the grace of God. It would be inconsistent with the justice of God to punish believers for sins that He had already forgiven.
- The problem of sin for a believer is not that he must bear its penalty. It is that it is by definition poor workmanship. Always remember that the JSC is about determining the “sort” of the believer’s workmanship in building upon the foundation of Christ.
- I Corinthians 6:12, 10:23—the test is not lawfulness but expediency
 - Lawfulness is a yes/no question
 - Many things are lawful that are still not profitable
 - We need to make decisions based upon whether or not they edify
- Therefore, **rewarding** a believer’s poor workmanship with **no reward** is consistent with the principles of grace. The JSC is similar to judged athletic completion. The athletes participating are judged and reward is handout in the form of medals but there is no condemnation placed upon those failing to medal, they simply fail to receive a reward.

Issues That Can Cause One to Suffer Loss

Departing the Faith

- I Timothy 1:18-20—Hymenaeus and Alexander were believers who had made shipwreck of the faith. According to *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*, the English word “shipwreck” means: 1) The destruction of a ship or vessel by being cast ashore or broken to pieces by beating against rocks and the like. 2) The parts of a shattered ship. 3) Destruction.
 - II Corinthians 11:25—the same word is used by Paul to describe the physical condition of suffering shipwreck
- II Timothy 2:16-18—Hymenaeus, erred concerning the truth by teaching that the resurrection had already passed. Through his profane and vain babblings he and Philetus overthrew the faith of some.

- II Timothy 4:14-15—Alexander the Coppersmith “greatly withstood” Paul’s words and did Paul much evil. In verse 14, Paul turns him over to be rewarded “according to his works.” Once again, this is indicative of the negative aspect of reward not the positive.
- I Timothy 1:20—these are men who were believers, they started in the truth both they put away a good conscience with respect to the truth and made shipwreck of the faith. Paul turns these men over to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme.
- Colossians 2:18-19—undispensational teachers beguile people of their reward because they cause them not to hold the head (i.e. the foundation that Paul laid) and not to increase with the increase of God.
 - Colossians 1:18—who is the head of the body? Christ.
 - I Corinthians 3:10-11—who is our foundation? Christ.
- II Timothy 1:13—following the building imagery one must build upon the foundation using the form of sound words. Any other “sort” of workmanship will not “abide” the trial by fire at the JSC.
- I Corinthians 4:1-2—as members of the body of Christ we have been made “stewards of the mysteries of God.” According to verse 2, it is requirement that stewards “be found faithful.” What is the problem with Hymenaeus, Philetus, and Alexander the Coppersmith? They abandoned their stewardship and made shipwreck concerning the faith and thereby overthrew the faith of some i.e., they are not found to be faithful.
- Consequently, these men stand to suffer loss at the JSC for not remaining faithful stewards of the mysteries of God. Remember positive rewards are not given for things we are “required” to do (be faithful ministers of the mysteries of God), however, negative reward (suffering loss) can be given for failing to do what is required.

Failing to Keep One’s Body Under Subjection

- I Corinthians 9:27—Paul was concerned about being a castaway. The Greek word translated “castaway” is *adokimos*. The Greek word *dokimos* without the “a” is translated approved in Rom. 14:18, 16:10; I Cor. 11:19; II Cor. 10:18; and II Tim. 2:15. When the prefix “a” is added it changes the meaning of the word from a positive to a negative, i.e., from approved to disapproved.
- Paul sought to keep his body under subjection so that he would not be a castaway or disapproved.
- II Corinthians 5:10—the believer is judged according to the good and bad that he did in this life. The JSC includes both our good and bad works.

- I Thessalonians 4:3-4—indulging in fornication and failing to possess ones vessel in honor could cause one to suffer loss at the judgment seat.
- Colossians 3:22-23—believers are to do things “heartily as to the Lord and not unto men.” Why?
- Colossians 3:24-25—because we know that of the Lord we shall receive the reward of the inheritance. Doing wrong in verse 25 will result in receiving for the wrong that we have done.
- In this context, the wrong Paul is speaking of is failing to discharge one’s family and work obligations.
 - Colossians 3:18—Wives—submit to your own husbands because it is fit in the Lord.
 - Colossians 3:19—Husbands—love your wives and don’t be bitter against them.
 - Colossians 3:20—Children—obey your parents because its well pleasing unto the Lord.
 - Colossians 3:21—Fathers –provoke not your children to anger least you discourage them.
 - Colossians 3:22—Sevants—obey your fleshly master fearing God.
- The discharging of one’s domestic responsibilities is going tried by fire at the JSC and will factor in the determining of the “sort” of one’s work for good or bad.
- Ephesians 6:8—after presenting a similar list to the one found in Colossians 3, Paul states that the reason believers are to submit one to another in the Fear of God (v. 21) is because “whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive from the Lord. . .” in chapter 6 verse 8.
- Ephesians 5:21-6:8 and Colossians 3:17-25 are clearly parallel passages dealing with the domestic responsibilities of believers. From the standpoint of the JSC it interesting to note how Ephesians concludes this section by focusing the reader’s attention on receiving from the Lord for the good one has done (Eph. 6:8). In contrast, after presenting abbreviated instruction on the same things covered in Ephesians 5-6, in Colossians 3 Paul focuses the believer’s attention of the fact that we will also receive from the Lord for the wrong that we have done.

Preparing for the JSC

- We studied in I Cor. 3:13 that “the fire will try every man’s work of what sort it is.” We further identified those sorts of work for which rewards will be given in verse 12 as: gold, silver, and precious stones.
- Romans 12:1—Paul beseeches the Romans to present their bodies a living sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God.
 - II Corinthians 5:9—Paul instructs the Corinthians to labour in such a way so as to be “accepted of him.”

- Romans 12:2—the Romans are told to be transformed by the renewing of their minds that they might prove “what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” The Greek word translated “prove” in verse 2 is the same Greek work translated “try” in I Corinthians 3:13.
 - Try (I Cor. 3:13)—2) to **prove by a test**; as, to try weights and measures by a standard; to try one's opinions by the divine oracles. (*Webster's 1828 Dictionary*)
 - Prove (Rom. 12:2)—1) **to try**; to ascertain some unknown quality or truth by an experiment, or by a test or standard. Thus we prove the strength of gunpowder by experiment; we prove the strength or solidity of cannon by experiment. (*Webster's 1828 Dictionary*)
- The fire at the JSC tries the “sort” of a man’s work: gold, silver, precious stones. A renewed mind is capable of discerning between the good, acceptable, and perfect. Could it be that there is correlation between these two passages? Could it be that believers are able to determine the “sort” of work that will revealed by the fire at the JSC by choosing to function with a renewed mind now?
 - Gold—the good
 - Silver—the acceptable
 - Precious Stones—the perfect

Conclusion

- Loss at the JSC can be suffered for *Departing the Faith* or by *Failing to Keep One’s Body Under Subjection*. When loss of reward is suffered with respect to either of these categories it can and should be viewed as the negative aspect of reward.
- I Corinthians 3:15—even those who suffer the loss of reward will be saved yet so as by fire.
- I Corinthians 4:5—in the end every believer is going to have praise of God.