

Reward of Faith (Part 2)

(Revelation 22:1-21)

Yearly Theme: “Joy Is...”

Series Title: “Eternal Joy”

December 27th, 2020

Introduction:

And just like that 2020 has come to an end. In this year of “joy” we have been searching for Joy in the Lord and it certainly has not been easy. In the world around us, people are falling into depression, anxiety, fear, and loneliness. If we are honest with ourselves, we can all admit that we have been impacted by these feelings too. Often, we see our emotions as forces that are impacted by our circumstances and are oftentimes out of our control. For example, if our best friend says something mean about us behind our back, we might be inclined to think that the rush of anger and sadness that follows us is “out of our control”, but this is not the case.

Modern psychology often backs up scripture when we talk about human emotions. The Bible frequently encourages people to take their thoughts captive and to choose love, peace, kindness, and joy instead of being consumed by negative thoughts. The truth is, this is very difficult, and we often fail just like the early church did. We are “prone to wander” and we often “desire to return to Egypt”. This is human nature but is not what the people of God are called to do. We are called to choose a different road, a harder road. God realizes that his path is hard, not only does he tell us so, but he sent his Son to die for us and the Holy Spirit to guide us because we could not walk the path perfectly. He gave us promises in scripture to help us keep our eyes firmly fixed on the prize, which should always be a closer relationship with him. Today we are going to close out the year by looking at one of the amazing promises God lays out for his people. Let's take a look at Revelation 22:1-21:

¹ Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, [a] with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations. ³ No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. ⁵ And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever. ⁶ Then the angel said to me, “Everything you have heard and seen is trustworthy and true. The Lord God, who inspires his prophets, [b] has sent his angel to tell his servants what will happen soon. [c]” ⁷ “Look, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the words of prophecy written in this book. [d]” ⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw all these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me. ⁹ But he said, “No, don't worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers the prophets, as well as all who obey what is written in this book. Worship only God!” ¹⁰ Then he instructed me, “Do not seal up the prophetic words in this book, for the time is near. ¹¹ Let the one who is doing harm continue to do harm; let the one who is vile continue to be vile; let the one who is righteous continue to live righteously; let the one who is holy continue to be holy.” ¹² “Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” ¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes. They will be

permitted to enter through the gates of the city and eat the fruit from the tree of life. ¹⁵ Outside the city are the dogs—the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idol worshippers, and all who love to live a lie. ¹⁶ “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne. [e] I am the bright morning star.” ¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” Let anyone who hears this say, “Come.” Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life. ¹⁸ And I solemnly declare to everyone who hears the words of prophecy written in this book: If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book. ¹⁹ And if anyone removes any of the words from this book of prophecy, God will remove that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book. ²⁰ He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon! Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! ²¹ May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's holy people.

Key Point: “The reward of faith is victory over death and the blessing of eternal joy”

1. Joy is acknowledging who God is and our need for him.
2. Joy is acknowledging what God has done and what it means for us.
3. Joy is acknowledging that we have a God who desires and promises the best for us, even if we face hardship in this life.

Something to take home:

If Joy was not a choice, then the authors of scripture would either be cruel or crazy to tell us to “consider it pure joy when we face trials of many kinds”. Because if joy was simply an emotion then that command is not possible. However, Joy is not happiness. If we are honest, Joy does not happen naturally in this life very often. We must choose joy; this choice is part of the essence of Faith. Joy and faith go hand in hand because we are choosing to be content and joy-filled based on the promises, actions, and person of God. To be clear this is not a false joy, a mask we put on to pretend everything is fine, or a show. I am not talking about burying sad or unpleasant emotions, because that is not healthy. However, we are told that how we view and behave in this world should be transformed by Christ. We should strive to see people the way Christ sees them, we should strive to see ourselves as Christ sees us, and we should strive to see this world the same way Christ sees it. At this point, you might be asking yourself “how does God see others, myself, and the world”? Let's take a look at John 3:15-17:

¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. [a] ¹⁶ “For this is how God loved the world: He gave [b] his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

That is why we can choose Joy. We serve an amazing God who loves us all deeply and wants us to live into our created purpose, which is community with him and each other. I know 2020 has been hard, but we can choose Joy because Christ has bought us and paid for us. He promises that if we trust in him and declare Christ as our Lord then we will experience eternal joy and salvation in unity with the God of the Universe. To me, that's something to be joyful about every single day.