

A Spiritual Reward

Jeremy Richards

25 August 2024

It says, he who receives you receives me. He who receives me receives him who sent me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.

Then if we skip over to Philippians chapter one, verse seven, Philippians one seven, it says, just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you are all partakers with me of grace, for God is my witness. How greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and in all discernment, and you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. So let's pray. Oh, Father.

Lord, we do just lift up this time looking at this scripture, Lord. And I do pray, Lord, that as you are moving not only here and around the world, Lord, that you would give us encouragement, Lord, to partner with those who are sharing the gospel, Lord, that we might spiritually receive, Lord, that what you have for us, Lord, so we just ask your blessing on this time. On this scripture, we ask in Jesus name. Amen. So we see in Matthew that there is a reward with those who partner with those individuals who are

ShepherdsStream.com

sharing the gospel in some way, that those who received Jesus also received the Father and partnered in that reward.

Those who received a prophet, those who received a righteous man, shared in the reward of these individuals. And it even went so little that even an individual who shared a cup of cold water would receive a spiritual reward if given in the way which furthered the ministry of those sharing the gospel. And so I think at some point, I have never completely, I still don't completely, but never fully understood how that worked. How is it that we were able to participate in the reward of these individuals? How did it come about?

And now, I think in Philippians chapter one, we see a picture of how that reward is passed on from a minister of the gospel in any kind of way to the individuals around him or her. In verse seven, it says, just as it is right for me back in Philippians, just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you were all partakers with me. Grace. So there is a work that God is doing in Paul as he's ministering the gospel in here in the city of Philippi. And it says that as these individuals were partnering with Paul, they became recipients of this grace.

Along with Paul, we see that grace is the spiritual means by which God passes on his blessings to people. There is a blessing that Paul was enjoying in jail. In Philippi. There was a spiritual reward that he was able to participate in by being in jail in Philippi. It is not necessarily a physical reward he was enjoying at that moment.

He was not necessarily comfortable. Isaiah has been working in the jail, and one of the big complaints that people have is, it's just too comfortable in jail. Right? I remember one guy, and he got arrested for stealing from a store, and he became before the judge, and he says, yeah, I was stealing. Like, what you gonna do?

I live in a leaky van. I don't have enough to eat. It's cold. I'm hungry. You're going to send me to jail?

Okay, let's go. Right. It was not necessarily that way in Philippi. He didn't go to jail to be comfortable. He went there.

What he was going to receive his benefit by walking with Christ in obedience and sharing the gospel was a spiritual reward. These individuals were taking part in his ministry by ministering to his needs physically in jail or around the time he was in Philippi. We have to understand that Paul was not there ministering to get something from the believers, either. He wasn't there to reap the harvest of the philippian believers. He was there to do something spiritually, and they came alongside of him.

His goal in meeting with these Philippians was not to receive from them, but to give to them. We have so many people, unfortunately, that make their calling the gospel, that seem to have a desire to receive something back from individuals. Paul's heart here is not to receive, but he is welcoming their contribution to the sharing of the gospel as an opportunity to give back part of the grace that he is receiving into their life. There is a grace that he is receiving as an apostle that he is now able to share with individuals who might not otherwise have had that ability. It is extraordinarily important for you and I, individuals, to come alongside people who are working with the gospel.

Because we have the opportunity at that moment to receive something spiritually that we would not have had the ability to receive otherwise.

Whatever kind of thing that you're involved in, whatever kind of work you do, there's already been a labor that has been done in that field before you got there, right? You can't reinvent everything and come to the same point of life as you would if you took, if you didn't take the information other people have already learned and put it in your life. Right? If you want to make a car and start a car and build yourself a car, the best place isn't to start is mining iron somewhere and trying to smelt it and forge it into parts and learning the physics and this and that. No, it's to take the information that has already been learned and improve upon it.

Paul is willing and desirous in saying there is a method by which individuals can participate in grace of an individual sharing the gospel. First of all, let's look at it in

verse one, verse seven. It says, I have you in my heart. Inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense of defense and confirmation of the gospel, you were all partakers with me of grace. That which he is going to share is grace.

First of all, we have to understand that in order to him, for him to share something with others, it has to belong to him. If I were to say to you, look, we're going to do right now a little trivia, right? And there is going to be a reward for answering the trivia correctly. And I asked you, you know who is the oldest person that ever lived in the Bible? Methuselah.

And I'd say, right. And as your reward, you get to go out into the parking lot and choose whichever car you want.

Chad, you didn't answer. I didn't even hear you.

I can't give away what doesn't belong to me, what I don't possess. I don't have the possibility to pass on to other people. Paul is saying, look, I have been walking and working in the gospel, and as a result, I have participated in the grace of Jesus Christ. And now I have a desire to pass on that grace, to transfer it from me to an individual who only participated in it. They may not have worked and watered in the same way, but because it belongs to me, because I have been trained in it, I can pass on it to you.

One of the things we have to look at when we look at God's gift, including this grace, is that God's gifts don't diminish with use.

When if I gave to you a car or gave someone else's car to you, I would no longer have a car. But when we partner with individuals in the gospel, it doesn't work that way. There is actually a multiplying effect of what we give. Just because Paul had grace, it doesn't mean when he gave it away that he didn't possess it anymore. No, by reason of use.

When we include other people in our ministry, that grace becomes more established in our life. It doesn't run out. It's like Jesus's gift. When he used it, the Pharisees accused him of working on the sabbath, and the idea was, no, it's not a thing of giving

something away of a work. It is something that gains and comes up out of you.

And this is the idea with grace. Also, Paul is wanting to share his grace that he's received from working with Jesus Christ, with others. Okay. His goal is to share what he has with other people, this grace. So what does it look like?

How should we expect that when we partner with others in the gospel? What should we expect back? Unfortunately, I think in this time period we are seeing individuals claiming that if you partner with me in the gospel, there will be a financial reward for you. And I'm not saying that there isn't necessarily a financial reward that comes from walking with Christianity. I'm just not saying that that is what this is talking about.

This is a reward of God's grace, an infusion of his life into us. So what does that grace look like? It's important for us to understand that God's first desire is to place his riches, his spiritual riches, in our hearts through grace, for us not to be disappointed with the gift that we get. If our desire is to receive grace, we won't be disappointed when it comes. But if it's something else, we might be disappointed.

Verse eight. It says, for God is my witness how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. Paul had been ministering in the city of Philippi. He was spitefully treated, he was jailed, he was beaten, he was humbled and chained. And it was at a point of weakness.

But even there he was receiving God's grace. There was a spiritual lesson that he was learning. In the midst of that brutality, there was a spiritual reward that was becoming apparent to him. Spiritually that was better than what he was suffering. I was just reading about Adoniram Judson, one of the first modern American missionary to Burma, and he was arrested.

Had seen very little progress of the gospel in Burma, and instead was arrested and put into a death prison. And there at night they were chained to a bamboo pole about shoulder height, their feet were chained about shoulder height. And so the only thing that touched the ground was his head and his shoulders for 12 hours and they would wake up, or if they did sleep the next morning, they could barely move when they

were unchained. Then he was moved and hopefully improved. But he was put in a bamboo cage in the midst of a mosquito infested swamp.

And there he spent months and years in Burma as a missionary. But it wasn't his comfort that was his benefit. It was the spiritual grace that he was receiving that he was able to pass on to the individuals in Burma. And there still is a christian church in Burma that is directly associated with Adiram Judson's ministry today, that though it took a lot of time that he was able to pass on a spiritual grace to others. And this shows in verse eight, for God is my witness how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

This desire for to pass on grace with other people is demonstrated in the ability of others to receive grace. Let me try this. This isn't just something that immediately snap, happens, right? There is a spiritual process in the way God's grace is passed on from one individual to another. We read the scripture in Matthew, and it says that he who shares with a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward.

And that's true. But there's a way that which happens, and the process that happens is the individual having a great desire to share what they have with others. We see Jesus with the twelve disciples, later apostles, and says, with great desire at the eve of the Passover meal. With great desire, I have desired to share this meal with you. And he shared the meal.

And then he strips down and clothes himself out about his waist as a servant, and he begins to serve these twelve disciples. He passed on to them a spiritual grace that enabled them to become apostles themselves. With great desire he passed on something spiritual to individuals who would have not otherwise received it because of their willingness to come alongside him in the ministry. Says, for God is my witness how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. So this longing is going to put something in motion that causes this spiritual grace to be transferred onto the life of other individuals, who all they did was give him a cup of cold water, provide for him the clothing he may have needed in jail, or supported him in the ministry.

They now are going to become recipients with him of this grace. Okay, the first thing in verse nine, he said, and this, I pray that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment. Maybe you have wanted to receive something back from an individual, you've shared with an individual in the gospel, and we're hoping for some sort of reward back. Paul gives us an indication of what that spiritual reward is going to be. He says, I pray that your love may abound in knowledge and discernment.

And back in Ephesians, we're going to see that there's two things that this love has to do with knowledge and discernment. Knowledge. In chapter three of Ephesians, just a few pages back, in verse 18, it says, maybe in verse 17, being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height. To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works within him.

So, first of all, Paul's prayer for individuals is that they would know the true nature of love, that they would know the nature of God's love, which exceeds all height and width and breath. It is this endless ocean that no one could ever fully fathom. The first thing is to know God's love. But the second thing is the discernment. To be able to use that which you know, it's one thing to have something of tremendous power at your disposal.

It's entirely different to know how to use it. There are individuals who may think they are loving, but really have no discernment on how to love. There are lots of individuals who think they are loving, but are actually not even loving Jesus. As we look at his life, we are the ones who can gain an understanding of what it means to really love. I think you would all agree with that, that Jesus was an individual who loved, and yet in his lifetime, he was always misunderstood.

His acts of love were always condemned. It seems like they were always in the wrong spot to the wrong people, misunderstood on the wrong day, in the wrong place, and he was always misunderstood. That tremendously powerful nature of love was coupled with the discernment of how to use it, made his ministry effective. I would just like to

say that the forces that were on Jesus Christ that were pressuring him to love in a different way are still on you and I today, that we might be aware of the love of Christ. But the discernment on how to use that love is not always available.

I been interestingly keeping as much tabs on Gabe as I can through Zec, and they had a bus they were working on, and I guess they've been working on the bus for like three weeks, right? So they wanted to go. This is it makes me laugh, because I've been in friendships. They want to take a bus, but first they got to get the bus running, but the mice ate all the wiring in the bus. So we got to work on the bus in order to go where we want to go.

And so there's three weeks trying to get the bus going. The power is there, but what was not is how to get it fixed, to get it moving. I'd like to say that the discernment and how to love is opposite of what our carnal nature thinks love is. It is not in line with our society. It is against the social norms today, just as it is when it was the life of Jesus.

Being, learning, having the power to love takes discernment. Jesus gives us an example of that. He says, when you create a feast, don't invite your friends. Don't invite those who are next to you who can repay you. But go out, show your love by inviting those who cannot repay you.

We see using the biblical definition of love takes discernment because our natural instinct is to show love to those who will show love to us. When you do good, do not do good to those who do good to you. It says, bless those who hate you, do good to those who spitefully use you and persecute you. If you want to use discernment to put in practice this immense ocean of love, you're going to have to do it in the way Christ distinguishes. Otherwise, you're just trying to draw from something that is not there.

It says to look for the opportunities to show love to those who hate you. Ultimately, I think that an indication to use discernment, if I could spell it out super simply, would be when you feel like loving the least. That's the key. When you don't want to love, when they're repulsive, when they're dirty and ugly, when they don't deserve it. When it is the time the world is saying you should not know love, that is an indication that is

probably or should be considered along the line of some discernment that Christ is calling you to love.

We have this ocean of love, and Paul is asking for discernment to be able to put that tremendous power into practice. In verse ten. The second thing, that he is praying for these people, that they might experience a grace associated with his ministry that they would maybe not participated in otherwise had they not physically come alongside Paul. In verse ten, it says that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ. Approve the things excellent.

What we have to know about the christian message, it is primarily a forward moving message. It is not about wrong things. It is more about right things. It is less about not doing stuff and more about doing. Everyone knows that the bike that's easiest to fall off of is the one that is standing still.

The one that's moving forward actually gains more and more stability through a process called angular momentum, I believe. Is that right, John? No. I think so. Okay.

And I have. I have a gorilla mentality sometimes regarding little children, and I see them pushing around bikes without pedals. And we've had two people that live in the cottage that have young children, and I know that parents are supposed to teach their kids how to ride bikes. Sorry. And my goal is, you know, he should not be pushing that bike around.

He needs to be using his pedals. And so I take Jeremy around and pushing him around the church, and my goal is, you got to go faster, faster, faster. That's what, if you want to be safe, you have to go faster to get that speed up, and then you have the surety. But there is a desire sometimes, a fear in children, to go faster, even though it's safer, like on a bike, to go faster. And still.

This is the christian message also. What keeps us is nothing, our ability to withstand sin, but the moving forward with the life of Christ. It says in verse ten that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till

the day of Christ.

Second, in Romans, chapter twelve, it says, I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service, and do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. So the second thing that I believe Paul is praying and hoping that these individuals who share with him in the gospel is, is that they would have a forward momentum that would keep them and preserve them without offense until the day of Jesus Christ. The last thing that he is praying for them in a desire to share the grace that he has received while they're in Philippi. In verse eleven, it says, being filled with the fruit of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. He is talking about a desire for them to experience something spiritually.

This fruits of righteousness that are as a result of a work that Jesus Christ does in our lives to the glory of God. I would just like to say that you or I are on a path. We are all pursuing different things. Sometimes it may seem like it's a bit of a rabbit trail or a bit of a sketchy thing, but Jesus is wanting to move us in a certain direction. He wants us to experience in this lifetime the fruits of righteousness, which are a direct result, and only as a result of that work, which Jesus can do in our hearts.

We see back in Ephesians.

I'll show you Galatians, in Galatians, chapter five, this fruit of the spirit in chapter five, verse 22. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control. Against such there is no law, and those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit of Jesus goal, in whatever way is to build in our lives. These things in close I would like to say that these Philippians participated in these spiritual graces because of their physical and emotional and spiritual involvement with an individual who was preaching the gospel.

That created in that individual a heartfelt desire to minister back to these individuals, which I believe created in them ultimately the fruits of righteousness. I would like to say, after walking on this earth for a certain number of years, that those fruits of the spirit are ultimately what is beautiful and lasting in a person's life.

Some people can say with the preacher, you know, I was young, but now I'm old, that our physical stature, beauty, whatever, fades away and is gone, it doesn't satisfy that those. Some people might say that I have been rich and now I'm poor, and those things also have no real lasting value. Some people could say a lot of things about family or friends or popularity, but the fruits of the spirit are a lasting riches that dwell in our hearts. And so my encouragement to all of us, not always to be seeking that work which Jesus is doing directly in our hearts, never ending in our search of the scriptures and participating in the Holy Spirit in that personal relationship we have with them, but also to look for those who are ministering the gospel of Jesus Christ, wherever they may be doing it, and minister with them that you might participate in a measure of grace that you might not have received if you had not joined with them in their ministry. This is a clear spiritual principle in my mind that there is a benefit that comes from partnering with others.

I know that so many people here currently are doing that in some way in some place, and I just want to encourage you that that work is an important spiritual one, but it also has a real value in your life and to encourage you to keep going. If you are not partnering in Jesus work through the lives of other people, there is still opportunity in America to do so, to look and to search out and see what God's doing, what your heart is drawn towards, and then to give yourself in that in whatever way that you have the feasibility to do it. If you have a cup of cold water, if you can minister to a righteous man or to a prophet, then I believe it's to your best benefit spiritually to do so. So let's pray. Father, we do thank you.

I thank you so much for the giving nature of this church and for all the people here. But, Lord, surely it's not to the full potential. O Lord, I pray you would encourage us by your grace. I pray you would encourage us by your goodness to see opportunities and to take them, Lord. And I pray that our spiritual life will show a result.

ShepherdsStream.com

In Jesus name, amen.

ShepherdsStream.com