

FUTUREWORLD PT.18 2-8-15
ETERNAL GLORY pt.3

(I Corinthians 2) Of late we have looked at the critical subjects of hell and heaven; eternal punishment and eternal glory. Today we will wrap up this part of our future studies as we meditate again on the glorious future which God has promised to His people. Specifically, we are addressing what is the eternal destiny of redeemed people. By *eternal destiny* I think of the place where we will spend forever. Hell and then glory are the assignments of individuals after judgment, after the return of Jesus. For most people there will be some kind of intermediate after-life condition between the time of death and the time of Christ's return but that is not what I am speaking about today. We will get to the intermediate state next week. For today we take our final look at eternal glory. I Corinthians 2:9 *just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him."* The glories of the life to come will exceed our ability to grasp, but even what we do know about it sounds very good. We have seen in our previous studies that we will be made perfect of spirit and of body; we will be fitted thus to live on a redeemed earth that is no longer under the curse of God but under the blessing of His presence. We have seen that we will both reign over the earth and rest from the conflicts of this earthly life. All of this God has prepared for those who love him -and more. Let's get to the more right now.

The next thing I want you to understand about our eternal inheritance is that in it the servants of God are going to be rewarded. This is just another angle on the idea set forth last week under the terminology of *glory*. The theme of rewards is quite prevalent in the word of God, but we will just look at a few Scriptures to make the point. In Matthew 5 Jesus pronounces blessing on those who endure persecution for the sake of righteousness and in Matthew 5:12 *Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great.* In Matthew 6:20 he speaks not of rewards in heaven but of treasure. Matthew 6:20 *store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.* Whether it is treasure or reward the basic idea is still the same. Now look at the words of Paul in I Corinthians 3 and we will read several verses to get the context for this one. I Corinthians 3:11-13 *no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself*

will test the quality of each man's work. Here he speaks of a day of testing, a day of judgment, which will prove the quality of a man's life. Now see the next verse **14** *If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.* Then Paul says in II Timothy 4:**7-8** *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.* In Paul's day a winner in an athletic contest did not get a trophy or a medal, but instead was awarded a wreath, a crown, usually one made of leaves and flowers. That was his reward and Paul indicates that such is ahead for all the true servants of Jesus.

But will all the servants of Jesus receive the same reward? Or will there be degrees of blessing in glory as we saw there would be degrees of punishment in hell? Well, I think the texts we read already give the matter away. Those who have eternal life have it as a gift of God's grace on the merits of the work of Jesus, but the reward and the glory that awaits each of us will differ according to the quality of our lives. In the verses we have read that is plainly implied. Paul said that godliness holds promise for the life to come and the assumption would be that the more godliness the better the reward. In I Corinthians 3 this teaching is quite explicit. Verse 11 there notes that the only foundation is Jesus Christ. Everyone in glory will be there because of him, but there is another issue on line when we stand for judgment. We will be judged according to our works. God will put his holy fire to our lives and see what is in it that was really pure. **14** *If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.* And again we see that the reward is according the quality of our lives. Back to Matthew 6 where Jesus spoke of laying up treasure in heaven. And Jesus refers here to what one should do with his money. Now you have all heard the saying that you can't take it with you right? When Andrew Carnegie died how much did he leave behind? Do you know? What's the answer? All of it. He left all of it. But did you hear the one about the fella who decided to take some money with him after he died? What he did was gather together three preachers whom he figured he could trust. There was a Catholic and a Baptist and a Presbyterian. And this very wealthy man gave to each of these preachers \$100,000 in cash and asked them when they came to his funeral to slip that cash inside his coffin. So, the day came when the man died and was buried. The three preachers attended the funeral and each of them walked by the casket and placed something inside. Afterwards they were talking and the Catholic fella was feeling so guilty he had to confess to the other two. He said, "I've got to confess to you men

that I didn't put in the entire \$100,000. I took out 10% for the church." The Baptist fella said, "Well, yea, now that you mention it, I did too, except I took out half the money." Well, the Presbyterian was indignant, he said, "Shame on you men. I can't believe you would do that." Why the very day I was given the money I put all of it in the bank and today as I passed the coffin I slipped in a check for the entire amount." But what's the problem with that? You can't cash out of state checks in heaven. You can't take it with you - but what Jesus wants us to know is that we can send it on ahead by investing it in His kingdom. That is how you lay up treasure in heaven, where it is totally safe and where the interest rate is out of this world. But think with me, treasure is a relative things isn't it? There are small treasures and big treasure and if we can lay up treasure in heaven surely different people will have waiting for them different amounts in glory, right? All this is to show that there will be degrees of blessing in heaven. We will all be doing great, but some will be more blessed than other. *Matthew 5:19* *Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* You read that kind of thing frequently in the teaching of Jesus. Jesus seeks to motivate his disciples by promising them eternal rewards. But again, I find a lot of people don't like the whole idea of rewards. They say, "Well, we shouldn't be interested in rewards; we should serve Jesus because we love Him." And that sounds very nice and spiritual but I get uneasy when we get more spiritual than Jesus. I agree that if the reward is your only motive you have serious heart problems; but, my friend, Jesus Himself is the one who exhorts us to be the greatest in his kingdom and to lay up treasure for ourselves and to pursue glory and honor and peace by doing what is good. Jesus is the One who offers me this additional motive for godliness, that it offers great gain in this life and the one to come. You see, Christians are not people unconcerned with their own happiness. We are as committed as anybody to our own happiness, it is just that we have learned to seek it in the Lord's way and in the Lord's time. Jonathan Edwards, one of the greatest men of God who ever lived, used to keep a list of personal resolutions. I think he ended up with around 200 in his lifetime. One of them went like this: "Resolved: To endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness in the other world as I possibly can, with all the power, might, vigor and vehemence, yea violence, I am capable of, or can bring myself to exert, in any way that can be thought of." ® And how does one do that? Through a life of obedience and service to God.

Now again, let me clarify - it is not our good deeds that make us right with God and allow us into His presence. Our righteous deeds do not earn us anything with God. The Lord never becomes our debtor in that respect, and if we have a reward at all we have it because of God's grace. But God Himself has said that our judgment, and thus our rewards, will be according to works. Charles Hodge in his commentary on Romans writes: (pg50) "*The wicked will be punished on account of their works, and according to their works; the righteous will be rewarded, not on account of, but according to their works.*" Now, how this reward is meted out I cannot say exactly. It seems to me that everyone in glory will be perfectly happy. There will be no mixture of sadness in our joy; the cup of joy will be full for all of us but some will likely be granted a greater capacity for happiness, a larger cup we may say. This may come in the form of more glorious bodies, of greater proximity to the Lord, or a greater scope of dominion in the new earth. The specifics are not important. But do realize that rewards await us, that they will come to us according to our deeds and that if we are wise we will spend our present lives like Edwards, securing for ourselves treasures forever.

Briefly now I want to look at a couple of the more peripheral blessings of glory. The first is greater knowledge ☺. One of the frustrating things about this life is the doubt and ignorance that engulfs us. I get very tired of having to tell people that I don't know. I don't know what career you should pursue; I don't know what some Bible verses mean; I don't know why God let that calamity happen to you. I'm tired of saying that and in glory I won't need to anymore. I Corinthians 13:**12** *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.* Isn't that a great thought? I don't know how its going to happen. Maybe we will spend the first 1000 years in glory attending classes that answer all our questions. Maybe our mental capacities will be perfected along with our bodies. Maybe all truth will dawn upon us in a flash. Maybe we will see the Lord in glory and all our questions will be melted into praise. But the day of nagging doubts and ignorance – which really annoy me -- will be no more.

The second peripheral blessing I would mention is that of fellowship with other saints. Jonathan Edwards in his memoirs wrote this after departing from dear friends in New York – "*I felt my heart ready to sink with the thoughts of my friends at New York. My support was in contemplations on the heavenly state. It was a comfort to think of that state where there is fullness of joy; where reigns heavenly calm and delightful love, without alloy; where there are continually the dearest expressions of this love, where is the enjoyment of persons loved without*

ever parting, where those persons who appear so lovely in this world will really be inexpressibly more lovely and full of love to us.” Edwards says he is comforted to know he will be with his friends forever in glory. You can relate to that can’t you? For many people, the greatest reason they want to be in glory is to be reunited with some departed loved one. I believe we will find being with Christ the supreme joy, but nevertheless the blessing of reunion is real. And what a comfort it is to know that our relationships in Christ will never end, that we can always look to a time of glorious reunion.

So, knowledge and fellowship with others are two of the less-mentioned blessings of glory. We have one more blessing of glory to look at and I have saved the best for last. Revelation 21:**1-3** *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, That is it!* That is the greatest and the foundational blessing of our eternal glory. God will be with us in the new Jerusalem. **23** *the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.* In the new earth the glory of God will shine among us, and it will be magnificent! And then in 22:**3-4a** *There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face. 4a they will see His face.* The presence of God is the essence of glory, and the sight of God is the bliss of glory. This is what the church has called for years the *beatific vision*, the vision glorious, the ultimate good. We shall see God! That was the age-old hope of the Hebrews. They had a concept that ultimate blessing was found in viewing the face of God. That is why the Aaronic benediction of Numbers 6 says “The Lord make his face to shine upon you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you.” That’s the ultimate you see. When God’s face shone upon you you were blessed and when God hid his face you were in deep woe. You’ll remember too that Moses, who became so intimate with the Lord, asked to be allowed to see God’s glory. And what did God say? He said, “You can see the hind portions, the backside of my glory, but not my face.” And after Moses saw the backside of God’s glory what happened to him? His face began to shine, so awesome was the radiance of God; but in heaven we are going to see God’s glory face to face. I Corinthians 13:12 said we will know God face to face. I John 3:2 says we will see Him as He is. Matthew 5:8 *Blessed are the pure in*

heart, for they shall see God. The hymnody of the church picks up so beautifully on this theme. One says *“When by the gift of His infinite grace I am accorded in heaven a place, just to be there and to look on his face will through the ages by glory for me. Friends will be there I have loved long ago, joy like a river around me will flow, yet just a smile from the Savior I know, will thru the ages be glory for me.* Another one goes like this: *“The Bride eyes not her garments but her dear Bridegroom’s face. I will not gaze at glory but on my king of grace. Not at the crown he giveth but on His pierced hand, the Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel’s land.”* How true that is! The Lamb is all the glory. D.L Moody wrote, *“The light of heaven is the face of Jesus, the joy of heaven is the presence of Jesus, the melody of heaven is the name of Jesus, the harmony of heaven is the praise of Jesus, the theme of heaven is the work of Jesus, the employment of heaven is the service of Jesus, the fullness of heaven is Jesus himself.”*

Alright, with that last truth ringing in our ears we are ready to consider what we will do forever in glory. We have seen that we will be perfected in soul and body, now let’s see what we will be perfected to do. And the first to that is worship. We are going to have a worship service in heaven that will never end. I say that because worship is the natural response of holy people when they see their holy God. I say it also because every time in the Bible that we get a glimpse into heaven what is going on? Worship. In Isaiah 6 the prophet sees the Lord and the seraphim are calling out *Holy, Holy, Holy.* In Revelation 4 and 5 we get a similar look into heaven and again the angels and elders are singing *“Holy, holy holy, Worthy art Thou Our Lord and our God; Worthy is the lamb that was slain.”* Again in Revelation 19 the shout of the redeemed is *“Hallelujah for the Lord God the Almighty reigns.”* Don’t you see that this is the eternal occupation of the Christian? There won’t be any more evangelism in glory. There won’t be any need for mercy ministry but there will be worship. The only church ministry I know of that will continue forever is the choir and we are going to all be in it. Jesus said that the Father was, in Him, seeking out people who would do what? Worship Him in spirit and truth. I Peter 2:9 *you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* And we will be engaged in that task forever. How does that make you feel? Possibly, for some of you that thought is not the least bit attractive. You aren’t interested in praising God. And I might suggest that some of you will be bored in heaven, but I know its not true. What I know is true is that some of you won’t be there at all. If you have no heart to worship God now you have no reason to think that you will be among His worshippers

forever. The face of God will be seen by all who love his appearing and only these. God saves His people to be His worshippers. With that in mind, have you been saved? If you have then take this to heart. See how important, how central worship is for the Christian. See that it is your eternal occupation. See that it is when you are lost in wonder, love and praise that you are closest to heaven. And when God comes among us and sweetens our praises by the honey of His presence let me tell you folks, nothing is better than that. That is a foretaste of glory to come where and when we will worship with perfect voices, unhindered by sin and enthralled by the beauty of the Lord. I, for one, can't wait. It's gonna be awesome.

So, I am sure we will worship. Is that all we will do? Not that I can tell. There are other things. One other thing the Scripture indicates we will do is party. Tony Campolo has written a book entitled "The Kingdom of God is a Party." I haven't read it but the title hits on a truth. We are going to have a great big party. The Bible pictures it as a feast. Revelation 19:9, *'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'* And those marriage suppers are swanky affairs. Some of the parables of Jesus depict the kingdom in that very same way, as a wedding feast. In speaking of glory to come He says Matthew 8:11 *I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.* Luke 22:29-30a *just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom.* We are going to have a big, happy party. The food is going to be unbeatable. You won't put on weight and we won't need liquor to make the party swing. We will be filled with the Master's joy. To what extent these things are images or literal no one can know and it really doesn't matter. What counts is what we know. It is going to be great and you don't want to miss it.

Now, last week I noted that one application of these great truths of the glory to come is that you should purify yourself now. That includes becoming more of a worshipper. That is something that takes and deserves effort. Today however, I want to exhort you, in light of what we have seen, to meditate more on the glory to come, to contemplate more the riches of the glory of our inheritance in Christ. Colossians 3:2 *Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.* Set your minds on what awaits you in Jesus, let the truth of God's promise fill your soul. Contemplate glory. Christian psychologist Larry Crabb believes that our lack of meditation on glory is at the root of much depression among believers. Seriously, a heart filled with thoughts of glory is much more likely to be a heart of joy. Again, I mention that quote from Edwards when he was mourning his departure from so many dear friends. He said,

“My support was in contemplations on the heavenly state.” But, someone may object to all this thinking about a life to come. *What about the here and now?* you say. *You gotta have your head on earth not in the clouds.* And then you say very knowingly, “*Don’t forget preacher, that you can be so heavenly minded you are of no earthly good.*” Is that true? I don’t know but I’m sure I haven’t yet met anyone with this problem. I have however met 1000s who are so earthly minded they are of no heavenly good. C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* writes (p.118) “Hope is one of the theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The apostles themselves who set on foot the conversion of the Roman empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English evangelists, who abolished the slave trade all left their mark on earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one.” I am persuaded that contemplation on glory to come is of enormous practical benefit. It will help you in almost every way. Find some Scriptures to memorize and some songs to sing that will aid you in that contemplation.

Our second application: since God has prepared for us a glorious future we have reason to persevere in obedience in this life. We endure precisely because we have hope. It is this hope of glory to come that is the strength behind our obedience. How could Daniel stand up before the lions? How could Stephen preach in the face of stoning? How could John the Baptist boldly rebuke his king? It was because they believed in the life to come. They knew God was not going to disappoint, that nothing, even death could separate them from the love of God. There I quote from Romans 8 where also we read in **18** *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* Here the apostle writes to people in conflict who were experiencing some serious persecution and he encourages them with the thoughts of glory to come. In Hebrews 11 we read of the heroes of faith who obeyed God against all kinds of pressures and the comment is made that they were strengthened to obey because they believed in another country, they looked forward to the city to come whose architect and builder is God and then in Hebrews 12 we read of the example of Jesus who obeyed God all the way to and thru the cross. How could He do it? Listen 12:**1-3** *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside*

every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Look again at verse 2 and the psychological lesson of it. Jesus endured the cross - why? For the joy set before Him ®. While Christ suffered in Gethsemane and at Calvary one thing kept him going - it was the thought of what was ahead, of seeing you and me with Him in glory. That thought enabled Him to persevere and it will do the same for us if we remember as II Timothy 2:12 says that if we endure with Christ we shall also reign with Him. This is why Jesus spoke to suffering saints and said Matthew 5:11-12a *Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great;* This is why he said in Revelation 3:21 *He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.* The ultimate encouragement to persevere in faithfulness is found in our eternal hope of glory. There are several hymns popular in evangelical churches that I don't like. One of them is a missionary hymn that says this in the first verse: *So send I you to labor unrewarded, to serve unpaid, unloved, unsought, unknown, to bear rebuke to suffer scorn and scoffing, so send I you to toil for me alone.* Man is that ever depressing! And man is it ever false! Christ Jesus does not send his servants out to toil for Him alone. He promised to be with us to the end of the age and what's more He never sends us out to labor unrewarded. The call to missionary service is not a call to be miserable for Jesus. The reward is great and the reward will come, but it comes in God's time. I love what AW Tozer says, and I believe this expresses the attitude of the man who really believes what God says about our future reward, (Born After Midnight p.142) *"We can afford to suffer now; we'll have a long eternity to enjoy ourselves."* What is there that enables a man to risk losing his career with the company by making a stand for integrity? What is there that enables a young couple with great promise to leave the comforts of home and family to translate the Bible for some backward tribe in New Guinea? Only one thing I can think of. They are seeking after the city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. They have believed the promises of God and have decided to seek treasure in heaven, to do what God calls them to do and leave the rewarding to Him. And that confidence in glory to come is the strength behind all kinds of obedience. When you try to figure out what is best for

you to do, don't leave God and don't leave eternity out of the equation. An old missionary couple had been working in Africa for years and were returning to New York City to retire. They discovered they were booked on the same ship as Teddy Roosevelt who was returning from a safari. No one paid any attention to them. They watched the fanfare that accompanied the president's entourage, with passengers trying to catch a glimpse of the great man. As the ship moved across the ocean the old missionary said to his wife, "Something is wrong. Why should we have given our lives in faithful service for God in Africa all these many years and have no one care a thing about us? Here this man comes back from a hunting trip and everybody makes a fuss over him." When the ship docked in New York a band was waiting to greet the president. The mayor and other dignitaries were there, but no one noticed the arrival of the missionaries. They slipped off the ship and found a cheap flat on the East side. That night the man's spirit broke. He complained to his wife that God was not treating them fairly. His wife suggested he talk it out with the Lord. He did and his demeanor changed completely. His wife asked, "Dear, what happened?" He said, "The Lord settled it with me. I told him how bitter I was that we got no tremendous welcome like the president and no one came to meet us. And when I finished it seemed as though the Lord put his hand on my shoulder and simply said, "But Son, you're not home yet." But what a party awaits us when we arrive! Brethren, we are going home. Home for the Christian is where Jesus is, and either we are going to Him or He is coming to us and we'll be there soon enough. Let that hope put wind in your sails. Let it quiet the whinings of the flesh and the seductions of the devil. Think of Jesus, and think of what we read of Him in Hebrews 12. "For the joy set before Him" He endured the cross. For the joy set before you, you endure whatever God calls you to and, with the reward in view, be faithful to the end.