

Are you Enjoying the Benefits of Salvation?

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As Leroy was conversing with a young lady the other day, the topic of exercise came up. Leroy mentioned that through his insurance policy he is entitled to free membership at a local gym but he has yet to take advantage of it. The lady said, “Well, let me tell you what I have done. I joined a gym and paid \$60.00 a month for over six months and didn’t enter the gymnasium once. I finally discontinued my membership because I realized that I was not committed to going to the gym.”

Neither one of them received the benefit that was available to them. To one it was free, and the other paid a premium, but neither took advantage of the offer.

Jesus Christ paid the debt that was due for salvation for mankind. He alone had the qualifications that were required to remove the veil between sinful mankind and a Holy God. His blood was pure and sinless and He offers it to everyone who will accept it and believe in Him. Yet so many people do not enjoy the benefits of the sacrifice that was made on Calvary’s Hill for their redemption.

Today I want to talk about the various benefits that are ours as Christians. These are just a few, but are wonderful and life changing to those who cling to the promises of God.

Let us consider the benefit of joy! Look at 1 Peter 1:3-8. If you read this chapter you find that “Jesus came because of the abundant mercy of the Father who gave us hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that doesn’t fade away reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though for a period of time you have been grieved by trials that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold tested by fire may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Even though you have not seen him, you love him and though you do not see Him, yet believing you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith- the salvation of your souls.”

Next I want to touch on the benefits of hope and faith. Our faith is going to be tested, my friend, and those who love the Lord and are determined to endure to the end, will receive an eternal reward. Don’t allow Satan to steal your crown. He is highly motivated to strip you of your inheritance that God has prepared for those who love him. If he can cause you to esteem the things of this world to a higher degree than the spiritual investments that have eternal value than he has won the battle. If you remember the man, Esau in the Old Testament, you will see a parallel with what every child of God will go through at some point in their Christian journey.

In Genesis 25:29, there is a story of Esau and his brother Jacob. Esau was the eldest so he was entitled to receive a birthright for an inheritance from his father. This was a spiritual

inheritance and had no material value. The eldest son received this gift from his father upon his death, and the blessing was to be the head of the family and had spiritual significance as well.

This day Esau came in from the field weary from his work and very hungry. He smelled the stew that Jacob had cooked and he asked Jacob for a bowl of soup as he felt he was starving. But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day." Esau said, "Look, I am about to die, so what is this birthright to me?" Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils then he ate and drank and arose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright. He didn't esteem it very high for it meant very little to him. He was earth bound and his goals and motivation was for this world, not for eternity.

There are people who sell out their souls for a little earthly pleasure. They want what satisfies the desires of their flesh and the eternal consequences are of little concern to them. The word of God holds no important place in their lives for they want to enjoy life to the fullest and will worry about eternity at a more convenient time. Oh they plan to get it right, but not right now. Someday they will check it out; before they die they will get it right, but now they are too busy enjoying the pleasures of sin. The Bible says that today is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation. See 2 Corinthians 6:2. If you hear his voice, don't ignore it and harden your heart. See Hebrews 3:7-8. In 1 Corinthians 15:19 Paul has given an exhortation on the importance of believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He has debated with those who claimed that there is no resurrection of the dead. Paul had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ after his ascension and the other disciples had witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ as they had visited the empty tomb, they had handled the linen that had been placed around his head as a corpse; they had heard from Mary Magdalene as she told of seeing the risen Savior and given them instructions that He had spoken to her. He had appeared to them while they were huddled together in a locked room fearing the future. Even doubting Thomas had believed after Jesus appeared to him and told him to place his hand in his side and look at the nail prints in his hands for Thomas had made the statement, "Unless I can place my hand in the nail prints in his hands and feet and touch the side where the spear was thrust, I will not believe."

See John 20:19-29. After Jesus revealed himself to Thomas, Thomas said, "My Lord and my God." Jesus told him he was blessed because he believed after he saw, and those who have not seen yet believed are blessed. Faith in God brings blessings and benefits for without faith it is impossible to please God and hope comes through believing the Scriptures. Heaven is being prepared for those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. See John 14:1-6. Jesus told his disciples not to allow their hearts to be troubled. Believe in

God; Believe also in Him. In his Father's house are many mansions and He was going to prepare a place for his children that where He is, we may be also. He gave instructions on how to enter that city. Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven and all other paths lead to disappointment and disillusion for He is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. In John 10:1, Jesus said that anyone who tries to enter the sheepfold by any other means than through the door which is Jesus Christ is the same as a thief and a robber. His sheep know his voice and they will refuse to follow other false shepherds. He is the chief shepherd and we are the sheep of his pasture according to Scripture. King David wrote in the 23 rd. Psalm. The Lord is my Shepherd; I have all I need. That Psalm is one that Christians are familiar with and most can recite it by heart. If you don't know it, memorize it for it brings great comfort in times of trouble.

The last benefits I want to touch on today are peace and love. I place peace and love together for they are needed together for without love there is no peace. In John 14:27, Jesus told his disciples that He was leaving them but He wasn't going to leave without giving them the things that would enable them to finish the work He had called them to do. He was leaving and giving them peace and not as the world offers but He was giving them true peace without fear. It would be lasting peace that would be with them wherever they went and would never leave them even as they were ushered into the realm of eternity. This peace would cause them to be fearless in the face of mankind in order to obey the Master of their soul. It gave them holy boldness to stand for truth!

In John 15:13, Jesus said that there is no greater love than for one to lay down his life for his friends. Jesus loved unconditionally, unreservedly, and for eternity. He died that we might live forever in a glorious place called heaven. He isn't willing that any should perish but that all should have eternal life. (John 3:16) He commands us to love one another as He has loved us. (1 John 4:11-21) These verses tell us that as God loves us, so we ought to love one another. The love that we have for each other proves that God abides in us and He is perfecting us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He is in us because He has given us his Spirit. It is a testimony that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God have God abiding in them and they in God. God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him.

As you read this chapter, you will discover that there is peace in this love for perfect love casts out all fear. Fear brings torment, but this love is pure and it brings peace to the heart. We love Him because He first loved us. Notice the last couple verses. "If someone says that he loves God and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who doesn't love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? The commandment from God is that those who claim to love God must love his brother also."

1 Corinthians 13 is well known, but when we look at it, check out the definition of love. Do you really love others? The gifts of ministry that God bestows on his children to use within the body of Christ must be motivated and carried along by love. The first thing that is addressed is the tongue. See James 3:8-10. It says that “ every kind of beast and bird, reptile and creature of the sea is tamed and has been tamed by mankind; but no man can tame the tongue, It is an unruly evil full of deadly poison. We bless God and Father and with it we curse men who have been made in the image of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessings and cursing. My brethren, these things should not be so.”

If you don't allow love to control your tongue, even if you speak all languages of men or angels, it is like making a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. Without love the gifts of prophecy, understanding of all mysteries, all knowledge and all faith so that one could remove mountains are useless and the person is nothing without love. If I give all my worldly possessions up so that the poor may be fed and even if I give my body to be burned, without love it profits me nothing.

Love is kind and patient, never jealous, boastful, proud or rude. Love isn't selfish or quick tempered. It doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do. Love rejoices in the truth but not in evil. Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful and trusting. Love never fails. Prophecies will fail and tongues will cease and where there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and prophecy in part but when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. As children, we think like children, but when we become adults, we put away childish things. Now all we can see of God is like a cloudy picture in a mirror. Later we will see him face to face. We don't know everything, but one day we will just as God completely understands us. For now there are faith, hope and love but the greatest of these three is love.

We will never bear the fruit of the Spirit without dying out to the works of the flesh. See Galatians 5:22. It says this (CEV version) God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled. There is no law against behaving in any of these ways. Because we belong to Jesus Christ we have killed our selfish feelings and desires. God's Spirit has given us life and so we should follow the Spirit. But don't be conceited or make others jealous by claiming to be better than they are.

Galatians 6:7 says: “You can't fool God so don't make a fool of yourself. You will harvest what you plant. If you follow your selfish desires, you will harvest destruction, but if you follow the Spirit, you will harvest eternal life. Don't get tired of helping others. You will be rewarded when the time is right, if you don't give up. We should help people whenever we can, especially if they are followers of the Lord.”

We need to recognize and set aside the things that are of the carnal nature that cause us to give in to immoral ways, filthy thoughts, and shameful deeds. Idol worship, practicing

witchcraft, hating others and being hard to get along with are signs that a person is walking in carnality. These people become jealous, angry and selfish. They not only argue and cause trouble, but they are envious. They get drunk, carry on at wild parties, and do other evil things as well. I told you before and I am telling you again; no one who does these things will share in the blessings of God's kingdom. (Galatians chapter 5)

If you are guided by the Spirit, you won't obey your selfish desires for the Holy Spirit and your carnal desires are enemies of each other. The Holy Spirit will guide and direct you.