

From the Preacher's Pen... A few weeks ago a dear brother and fellow preacher and I were looking at what the Scriptures say about degrees of punishment and reward. It is an interesting study and one that, like everything God teaches us, points us directly to the importance of handling God's word correctly.

There is really no point in giving the false arguments and wishful thinking of those that disagree with God. So, let's look at what Scripture actually says about...

Degrees of Punishment & Reward

To begin with, degrees of reward has virtually no real support. 1 Peter 4:18 is not so much a comment on degrees of reward as it is on the difficulty of salvation, much like Jesus' lesson of the broad vs narrow ways. It is thus fitting that Peter is also the one to remind us (2 Peter 1:11) that, because of our Savior, our entrance into heaven is NEVER just "barely making it into the pearly gates" but rather is an "abundant" entrance.

Yes, there are several times that Jesus refers to varying rewards. "The five talent man received five more but the two talent man 'only' received two more," you say. On the other hand, Jesus plainly provoked the ire of those who believe in degrees of reward with his lesson in Matthew 20:1-15. There He tells of the one working only the last hour of the day as receiving the same reward as the one that worked longer hours.

The balance between teachings that seemingly suggest greater rewards is offset by those teaching equality of reward for all. So we must conclude, as with any other imagined contradiction in scripture, that the idea of greater rewards is our misunderstanding of God's point. John describes many of the eternal blessings of heaven (Revelation 21:1-4). But never does he suggest that anyone in heaven receives only some tears wiped away or only some pain removed or only some eternal life. Like Jesus's example of the talents, the real reward is the gift of God and not to be measured.

Yes, there are plenty of people that see various rewards, some rich and happy in heaven and some miserable, or even temporary punishments to further qualify one for heaven. Since those positions take a lot of work at misunderstanding what God says they rightly belong to the study of denominational doctrines and other false teachings.

Degrees of punishment requires a bit deeper study, but again, we have to be careful about the meaning inserted by false teachers. Matthew 12:41-42; 23:14; Mark 12:40; Luke 11:31-32; 20:47 are all passages in which Jesus speaks of "greater condemnation" for some people. Note that it's not always the same people, so the exact reason for the comparison (hotter seats next to the fires?) is not really stated. We must be careful not to make more than is actually said, since in each case Jesus' point is that it is worse for you (His subjects) than for everyone else in general.

Two further passages make an interesting lesson as they are often seen as in opposition to each other: James 3:1 is used as a "popular excuse" NOT to teach the Gospel. In contrast, Hebrews 5:12 counters that interpretation by saying maturity in Christ requires ALL to be teachers. Is James perhaps using some of the same sarcasm Jesus often used to suggest that those rejecting Him felt that they "needed" less forgiveness than the "common" sinners? Certainly, James knew that failure to actually obey the "Great Commission" as part of our obedience to the whole of Christ's teaching would NOT result in salvation!

2 Peter 2:21 is often used to "prove" a worse punishment for those that once were faithful. While they "could" have one of those "seats closer to the fire," it certainly could also remind us that eternal punishment will certainly be a self-inflicted "worse" for someone knowing for all eternity that they had no excuse of ignorance to fall back on, while that same "ignorance" defense might allow others to feel a bit less tormented.

That last discussion also leads to the oft debated "ignorance" plea. Will God actually condemn those that do not know His word? God never has accepted the "ignorance" plea as Leviticus 26:14, 18, 27; Deuteronomy 28:15; Romans 2:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:8 and 1 Peter 4:17 all show. His standard has always been much like that of a parent, "did you DO what you were told" and unaccepting of the "I didn't hear you" excuse.

Jesus made an interesting observation and gives us a bit more to think about in the explanation of a parable dealing with being prepared for Jesus' return (Luke 12:39-40). When Peter asks about the target of that preparedness parable, Jesus responds with a lesson contrasting faithful servants and unfaithful servants thinking they can get away with something (Luke 12:41-46).

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Opportunities to worship, study & serve:

SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY 10 AM

WORSHIP 11 AM

EVENING WORSHIP 6 PM

WEDNESDAY 7 PM

THURSDAY LADIES' BIBLE CLASS 10 AM

Congregational Potluck 3rd Sunday
each month after morning worship
(except June, July & August)

Welcome to all!
We are glad you are here!

Enter to Worship...
Leave to Serve

Welcome to our visitors today! We hope & pray you'll be blessed by your time with us & will join us again soon!

Our Prayer List: Keep the following in prayer this week as you "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17): Matthew Odom, Heather Ries, Hunter Shirley, Ruth West, Everett Martin, Anna Mae Hardin, the Najera family, Bill Hall, Reta Wallace, Jim Holder, Kristi Martin, Wally Myers, Cindy Turpin, Millie Cunningham and...

Our Missionaries: Jack Farber and Aaron Knotts and families; Cesario Espinosa, Jr. (Philippines); the Jorge Mora family (NM Christian Children's Home)

Previously Announced Family & Friends: Robin & Marc Estabrook (Julie Evan's sister & nephew), David Reffner (Flora Doster's grandson with MS), Art Stoneking & wife (friends of Carl Catozzi, cancer), Jeremiah Haller (Flora Doster's grandson), Annette (Cindy Turpin's sister), Cole Myers (grandson of friend of Myers), Sheila Simpson, Lillian Wilhite (relative of Lynn Shirley), Teresa Acosta, Rosemary Glasier (Crystal Mora-Landroth's mother), John Hoover's relatives with personal difficulties, Shelly Cooper (friend of Carl Catozzi), Lucas Espinoza (Brian Campbell's friend), Kaesha Raffterfer (Gene Pinkston's cousin, cancer), Chuck Keels (friend of Grubbs with cancer), Terri Fillipski (cancer, Julie Evans' cousin).

Special Requests: WBS & WEI Bible study students; Kevin & Nancy Chambers & World Christian Broadcasting; Judy Hagner, son Preston, daughter Angela & son James. Brandi Schroeder (Flora Doster's granddaughter with MS); Dallas Purcella's mother; Paulina's father (Arnold); Julie's father; Laurel's father.



OUR MILITARY PERSONNEL: Nate Panka (Cleo Wise's grandson); Javier Najera; Fernando Najera, Frank Torres (Javier's brother & cousin); Eric Shirley; Trevor Farrow (Allen's son); Scott Hoover (John's son); Ariel Gomez; Ismael Lopez; Robinson Goldman (Cindy Turpin's son-in-law); Nathan Bagley.

New: Jason: Carl Catozzi's son in need of prayers; Michael Lightheart: son-in-law of Flora Doster, health problems; Jimmy Handtegen: friend of David Davis following a stroke; Derwin Jackson & family: with his job; Sean & Vickie: Carl Catozzi's friends with struggles in their lives; Terri Hoover: John's daughter-in-law with serious health issues; Monica Lopez: George Mora's aunt with breast cancer; Jacob Shirley: struggles; Ray Stephenson family: youngest son's cancer has spread; John Mark: in Afghanistan in danger for his faith; Jimmy Davis: friend of Mike Evans with melanoma; Adele Fink: recovering from colon cancer; George Ponter: Brian Campbell's cousin with multiple struggles; Anna Price: via Kimberlee Myers; Chuck Hedrick family: with multiple health problems; Kathy Gonzalez: grandmother of Heavyen & Tatum with cancer; LaVerne Jackson's mother; Sandra Watson, Sue Shepperd & Elzie Shirley: Lynn's family with illnesses; Ray Stephenson; Delbert White's Granddaughter Jessica; Tom Hoover: (John's

brother); Jerry Odom; Barbara Harrison.

Steve McDonald: Jean Grubbs granddaughter's husband, tests.

Donald Helton: on dialysis until he has a kidney transplant.

Kirrin Kerby: (Jean Grubbs grandson).

Bob Harrod: cancer

Carolyn Fisher: multiple health issues (via Cleo Wise).

Dena Lara: complications of Valley Fever.

Ken Price: friend of the Halls with kidney disease.

Rick Richarson: Cheryl Campbell's brother with heart problems.

Carl Catozzi family: especially his unborn great-grandson.

Lonnie Akins: brain cancer.

Don McCaully & his son: friends of Carl Catozzi.

David Davis: recovering from surgery.

Malakye Didelotte: improving with his kidney problems.

Ayanna Rodriguez: friend of Sarah Evans with brain cancer.

Amy Vestal: in treatment and rehab. She sends her thanks to everyone for the prayers!

Ruben Torres family: Javier Najera's cousin's family recovering from auto accident. Evelyn is now out of hospital & in rehab.

Jeannie Lewis' brother-in-law: recovering from lung transplant surgery.

Phyllis Hall's sister: fell and broke some bones.

Lynn Shirley family: at the passing of her sister Myrlene Smith.

Family of Bill Isom: at his passing (friends of Carl Catozzi).

Joe & Amie Whitner family: at the passing of Amie's father.

Also Our New Christians, those travelling and especially those with spiritual struggles.

Help Update Our Prayer List!

If you have someone listed in our *Previously Announced Family & Friends* prayer list & would like them to REMAIN on the list, please fill out one of the *Prayer Request* cards in the foyer & give it to Lester.

A BIG thank you to those that have given updates! It really helps keep us all up-to-date.

Upcoming Events...

Men's Business Meeting: November 11 after evening worship.

Potluck: November 18 — Group #3 [Cheryl Campbell's group] set-up, serve & clean-up

Monthly Singing: November 25 at 2:30 in Eloy

5th Wednesday Prayer & Song Meeting: January 30.

The conclusion Jesus draws is three-fold. First, the slave that willingly fails to obey will “receive many lashes” (Luke 12:47). Second, the slave that did wrong out of “ignorance” will receive “few lashes” (Luke 12:48). Third, the Lord’s final comment on the matter is the reminder that the more we know and are given by God, the more God requires of us (end of Luke 12:48).

Putting all this together brings us to two important lessons:

1) Our reward is based on grace. Our “merit” is that of Jesus who gave His life for us. Thus, the abundance of that inheritance is enjoyed by all because they gave their all. Without giving God our ALL, there is no hope of heaven.

2) Punishment is dealt out to those who do not OBEY the will of Jesus, whatever the excuse. One might well receive a technically lesser punishment for ignorance, but it will never be anything like the reward for obedient service. Spending eternity cheering partial failure is no more a win than any other loss.

There is no second-place finish when it comes to salvation. Either we “fight the good fight... finish the course” and “keep the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7) and receive the same crown prepared for all, or else there is no crown, no win. God’s promises belong to those that faithfully DO His will. What are you doing when it comes to obedience to the Gospel?

— Lester P. Bagley



Monday with the Master

Ages 10 through college meet tomorrow at 6 pm for our **THANKSGIVING DINNER** & Bible study in the Fellowship Hall.

See Lou Bagley THIS MORNING if you don't already know what to bring!

Men's Leading & Serving Class

Begins December 2 at 5 pm...

Men (young & older!) training class for leading prayers, doing talks & devotionals, & song-leading.

Congregational Projects

Project 1: Cottage fund for George & Chantelle @ NM Christian Children's Home. PRAY, plan to be involved!

Project 2: Collecting t-shirts to make into diapers.

Some of our ladies have taken on a project for Healing Hands (International help like Disaster Relief does in the US). They are making diapers & menstruation pads out of discarded tee shirts, and toddler dresses out of discarded pillowcases.

To help, patterns are on the table in the foyer along with brochures about Healing Hands. Beside the foyer table are two plastic bins for donations of tee shirts and pillowcases.

Last Week: 5+ Pew-Packers



Be “in the picture” every week!

✓ Checkup ✓ How are we doing?

Attendance Last Week:

Sunday Morning Bible Class = 65

Sunday Morning Worship = 121

Sunday Evening Worship = 57

Wednesday Evening = 36

Giving

2018 Weekly Budget = \$3,015.00

Contribution Last Week = \$3,537.00

Church of Christ
805 East Racine Place
Casa Grande, AZ 85122

Postage

TO:

Privileged to Serve

Sunday Morning November 4

Adult Bible Class: • *Acts of the Apostles* Lester Bagley
Announcements: Mike Evans
Song Leader:.....Allen Farrow
Prayer:.....Derwin Jackson
Serve Communion:.....Brian Campbell, John Hoover, Curt Odom, Frank Campbell, Max Compton
Sermon: • *Mark 15:27-47* Lester Bagley
Closing Prayer:Bill Hall

Count Contribution: Mike Evans & Bill Hall

Sunday Evening November 4

Song Leader:.....Allen Farrow
Prayer:.....Charlie Stephenson
Sermon: • *Parables of Jesus - 21* Lester Bagley
Serve Communion:..... Curt Odom
Closing Prayer: John Hoover

Wednesday Evening November 7

Song Leader:..... Al Bailey
Prayer:..... Allen Farrow
Devo:.....Lester Bagley
Closing Prayer: Frank Campbell

Anniversaries



November 8: *Charles & Beverly Hedrick*
November 11: *Jeff & Stephanie Davis*
November 14: *David & Christina Polito*
November 21: *Roy & Nelwynn Holland*
November 28: *Allen & Angela Harrison*
December 2: *Mike & Julie Evans*

Birthdays



November 4: *Alma Baum*
November 7: *Chantelle Mora*
November 9: *Samantha Odom*
November 12: *Allen Farrow*
November 15: *Curtis Odom*
November 20: *Carlos Sterling*
November 21: *Pat Cates*
November 22: *Brian Campbell, Jr.*