

Prepare Immediately for Christ's Coming

Revelation 22:6-12

I. The Book of Revelation Comes to a Close (vs. 6)

A. The Vision of Heaven Has Ended; John is Back at Patmos

1. John has just finished the most sublime vision any human being has ever had—the vision of the New Heaven and New Earth, the radiant New Jerusalem...

Revelation 22:1-5 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

2. Now John returns to planet earth... for him, specifically, the rocky island of Patmos where he was living out his exile
3. The sublime words of the future and of heaven now need to be lived out in our actual lives on earth... lived out by faith
4. The Book of Revelation is drawing to a close... Revelation 22:6-21 is the epilog, indeed... it is the final section of the final chapter of the entire Bible
5. John returned to his rocky, barren desert island... we return to our earthly lives of jobs and financial challenges and aging and pain

and earthly concerns—joys and sorrows—and all that life in this world entails

6. But we MUST NOT return UNCHANGED... the words of the Bible MUST make an impact on us and on the world
7. Think of the overwhelming ground we have covered... Twenty-one chapters of unveiling of the future
8. We have come “full circle” in the Book of Revelation
 - a. Clear parallel between the way the Book begins and the way it ends

Revelation 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. God made it known by sending his angel

Revelation 22:6 God sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Revelation 22:7 Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.... (10) for the time is near

Revelation 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God... (17) the First and the Last

Revelation 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Revelation 1:9, 17 I, John...When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

Revelation 22:8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down

It is clear we have now come full circle in this amazing book... we are summing up the lessons and the applications...

HOW SHOULD WE NOW LIVE??

B. Closing Section Sums Up How We Should Respond

1. We are not merely to be astounded, amazed, and overwhelmed... but then return to life as it was before
2. Still less are we to shrug and act as though the words of the Book of Revelation were not significant
3. It's not like John made all this up in his mind; neither is it just a part of some style of apocalyptic writing common to first century Jews that made specific exhortations to "Hold on" over the next short while, and made promises of immediate intervention by God that didn't come true
4. It's not like John had some weird dreams or ate some strange mushrooms that made him hallucinate
5. We must take this book as a REVELATION... an unveiling... of the invisible spiritual world that surrounds us—the world of God enthroned, of angels serving him, of Satan and his demons fighting him—and of the FUTURE... "What must soon take place"
6. Despite the powerfully symbolic nature of the words, as much as possible, we should seek to interpret these words literally and determine what he is saying about the future of planet earth and of the human race and of the people of God
7. And we should seek to UNDERSTAND, BELIEVE, BE, and DO!!

C. Fundamental Issue: the "Words" are TRUSTWORTHY and TRUE

Revelation 22:6 The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

1. This is a book of PREDICTIONS... he is telling us what MUST soon take place
2. Something God alone can do... foretell the future

Isaiah 46:9-10 I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. ¹⁰ I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

3. And the angel told John that the words of this book are TRUSTWORTHY and TRUE
 - a. Trustworthy = if you base your life on these words, you will not find them to fail
 - b. True = in the end, you will see that every prediction made by the Book of Revelation will come true...
 - c. Especially that Jesus is coming back to save and to reign eternally over all who have trusted in him
 - d. Every word in the Book of Revelation is TRUSTWORTHY and TRUE

Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped*... the wicked uncle Ebenezer tries to kill David Balfour by sending him up a spiral staircase in a stone tower in the old castle, knowing that one of the steps has been viciously altered so that it will collapse when his nephew puts his weight on it... the step DID give way and David began to fall to his death, but caught himself on another stair and hung suspended for a while in the dark until he could swing his body over and drop to safety

The word of God is NOT SO... if you put your FULL WEIGHT on the teachings of the Book of Revelation, you will not be disappointed

- e. Actually, the "words" of Revelation are mentioned SEVEN times in these final two chapters... the Lord wanted really to seal up the certainty of this book in our minds, probably because it is so incredible

Revelation 21:5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Revelation 22:6 The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true.

Revelation 22:7 "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

Revelation 22:9 I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book.

Revelation 22:10 Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.

Revelation 22:18-19 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. ¹⁹ And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Notice how many times he calls it "the words of the prophecy in this book" ... this is PURE PROPHECY... therefore, since it concerns the future, we will only cherish its meaning BY FAITH

D. This Book Must Not Be Disparaged or Ignored

1. Many scholars make light of it
2. Bart Ehrman speaks of it as typical of first century Jewish apocalyptic, a genre of writing that the Jews often did in light of the Roman occupation of their Promised Land... apocalyptic writings called on God to kick out the Romans and give them back their land... such writings made specific predictions of an imminent action of God... obviously, these predictions (says Ehrman) didn't come true
3. Another unbelieving scholar of the Bible said that the Book of Revelation is "a mess"... unfathomable gibberish

4. But Christ gave it to his servants to know what must soon take place... and promises a blessing on all who read it and take it to heart!! He does so both at the beginning and end

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Revelation 22:7 Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

II. Christ Is Coming Soon to End History (vs. 7, 13)

A. The Imminent Second Coming of Christ Asserted Again

Revelation 22:7 Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

1. Christ will SOON return
2. He gave us his Great Commission to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth

Acts 1:7-11 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

3. Here at the end of the Bible, Christ promises he is coming SOON

B. Christ the Alpha and Omega of History

Revelation 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

C. The Sense of Urgency Throughout the New Testament

1. All the early church preaching and teaching assumed an IMMEDIATE RETURN of Jesus Christ

Philippians 3:20 our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 1:7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead-- Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath

2. Jesus told a series of parables about the imminent coming of the Lord and how we must not be lazy or act like he's never coming back

Matthew 24:45-51 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷ I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' ⁴⁹ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. ⁵⁰ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. ⁵¹ He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The Parable of the Ten Wise and Ten Foolish Virgins has the same lesson:

Matthew 25:13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

3. All of these are based on the idea of eternal vigilance for the imminent return of Christ

4. YET we know very well that the Book of Revelation teaches us the future including many events we have not even begun to see happen
5. SO... we Christians have to have a sense of the IMMEDIATE RETURN of Jesus Christ, while at the same time knowing there are some things that have to happen first

D. How to Understand the “Soon”... Was Christ Wrong? Of Course Not!!

1. Agnostic Bart Ehrman says Jesus was an apocalypticist who make a prediction that was WRONG
2. Four times in this chapter, Jesus says he is coming SOON
3. Obviously it has been almost TWENTY CENTURIES since then
4. But no, Jesus was not wrong! And time is different to God than it is to us...

2 Peter 3:8-9 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness.

5. Soon = the next item in God’s eternal plan
6. Eternity awaits, and that is infinite duration of time... these days are like a MIST, a VAPOR that appears for a little while and then vanishes

E. How Then Shall We Live? Its APPLICATION TIME!!

1. This time, the entire sermon is application

F. All of these with a sense of URGENCY!!

1. John MacArthur’s commentary gave me the essential outline...
2. And in every case, he used the word “Immediate”...
3. There is no time to lose, no time to waste!!

III. Immediate Obedience to His Word (vs. 7)

A. The Warning to “Keep” His Word

Revelation 22:7 "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

1. The word “keep” = guard, keep protected or sacred...
2. Simplest translation = OBEY
 - a. The word of God is constantly assaulted by Satan and by the world
 - b. From within our hearts, individually, we must each CHERISH this word, take it in with a NOBLE and GOOD HEART, like the good soil... and bring forth its fruit BY OBEDIENCE

B. The Commands of Christ Must Be Obeyed

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

John 15:10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

C. Revelation Not Filled with Commands... but Completes the Word of God as a Whole

1. This is the last chapter of the last book of the Bible
2. It sums up the entire Word of God to the people of God
3. So... while there are some commands in the Book of Revelation, the general teaching carries with it a powerful moral imperative... the TIME IS SHORT, the Kingdom of God is near,

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

4. Yet in the Book of Revelation, the saints are described as those who obey God’s commands and hold to their testimony of Jesus

Revelation 12:17 Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring-- those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus

Revelation 14:12 the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.

D. Two Basic Commands: Holiness and Gospel Advance

2 Peter 3:11-12 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

Internal and external journeys...

E. All Lesser Commands As Well

1. The letters to the Seven Churches give many commands to the different kinds of churches
2. At the end of each one is this command

Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

- a. So... from the church at Ephesus... let's not FORSAKE our first love
- b. From the church at Smyrna... let's be faithful in our witness to Christ even to the point of death
- c. From the church at Pergamum... let's not tolerate sin, especially sexual sin
- d. From the church at Thyatira... let's not tolerate false teaching
- e. From the church at Sardis... let's not have a reputation of being alive but we are dead
- f. From the church at Philadelphia... let's be willing to walk boldly through open doors that God sets for us for evangelism
- g. From the church at Laodicea... let's be passionate for Christ and not lukewarm

F. Practical Application: Let Revelation Give You a Sense of the Rightness of Continually Perfect Obedience to God... Though You Will Never Attain to It

1. When we read of the future judgments that will come on the earth, let us fear sin and flee more and more to Christ
2. Let us be more and more bold in opposing Satan's grip in the world
3. When we see how passionately and immediately the angels obey Christ, let us do the same...

Matthew 6:10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

4. Let us obey with zeal now as we will when we get to heaven

Revelation 22:3 The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

IV. Immediate Worship to Him Alone (vs. 8-9)

Revelation 22:8-9 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. ⁹ But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

A. John's Second Time Worshiping an Angel

1. It's amazing that John did this twice...

Revelation 19:10 At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!"

2. It's just as amazing that he tells us about it so humbly!!

B. Fundamental Issue: False Worship

1. The central problem of the human race: idolatry

Romans 1:25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-- who is forever praised. Amen.

Satan's basic temptation is to cause us to worship idols... anything other than God... Christ resisted with the basic command from God

Matthew 4:8-10 the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

2. In the end, the worst idolatry in human history is yet to come

Revelation 13:8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast-- all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

Revelation 13:14-15 He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵ He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.

C. Proper Response to Revelation: Genuine Worship to the Triune God

1. No book in the Bible gives us such a clear view of heavenly worship as this Book of Revelation
2. So many of our hymns and modern praise and worship songs derive from images recorded in the Book of Revelation
3. Here we see depicted powerfully the throne of God, with concentric circles of angels and elders and living creatures and the redeemed from every nation on earth all praising God unceasingly for his role in creating all things and in redeeming people from all nations by the blood of the Lamb
4. Not only do we have depicted what worship looks like RIGHT NOW, but what worship will be like in the New Jerusalem

5. So... we have both extremes: the worst of all possible idolatries, and the best of all truly God-centered worship

D. Practical Application: Let Revelation's Visions Feed Daily Worship

1. The more we can arrange our hearts and align them toward the godly worship we should do and will do, the better
2. Attack any idolatry in your heart...
 - a. if the great Apostle John could twice fall on his face to worship a creature, so can we...
 - b. our idols might be money, food, success, comfort, worldly pleasure, a specific person... or even ourselves

1 John 5:21 Dear children, keep yourselves from idols

3. Whenever you see remnants of God's creative power NOW on earth, let your mind praise God for what he HAS DONE and what he WILL DO in nature
 - a. When you see the marvels of spring flowers rising up in the warm morning sunshine, or the Black Mountains near Asheville radiant in fall foliage, think

Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

- b. And let your mind go ahead to a perfect world in which there will be no longer any curse on nature... when the created world will be

Romans 8:21 liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

4. When you think about your own sins, and how God sent his Son to save you by his blood, join in the heavenly worship of Christ the Redeemer

Revelation 5:9 “You, O Christ, are worthy because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

5. Look forward to the heavenly worship we will experience in the New Heaven and New Earth, around the eternal throne of God seeing his face

Revelation 22:3-4 The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

V. Immediate Proclamation of His Warnings and Promises (vs. 10-11)

Revelation 22:10-11 Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. ¹¹ Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy."

A. “Do Not Seal Up the Words” = Proclaim them Widely

1. The sealing up of the words means that they are inaccessible to people to read and understand... this implies that these words are CLEAR ENOUGH to be understood by the people
2. If John was NOT to seal up the words, it meant he was to proclaim these words as widely as possible
3. Thus preachers do well to preach sermons from this complex book... to drink in the blessing the Lord has pronounced on this book

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

4. However, as I have researched online what other preachers have done with Revelation, I find far too much interest in speculative predictions about the endtimes that are tied to immediate current events, and to complex schemes of eschatology, rather than

seeking to go line by line and interpret the words on their own merit

B. Unlike Daniel

Daniel 12:4 But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.

Daniel 12:8-9 I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" ⁹ He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end.

1. The difference: THE TIME IS NEAR!

C. John Consistently Told to Write It Down

Revelation 1:10-11 On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, ¹¹ which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

Revelation 1:19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.

Revelation 21:5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

1. Revelation 10: Commissioned by the mighty angel
 - a. The angel had a scroll laying open in his hand
 - b. John was forbidden to write what the seven thunders said, but he was commanded to proclaim what was in the scroll

Revelation 10:4 when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

Revelation 10:8-11 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the

angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." ⁹ So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." ¹⁰ I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. ¹¹ Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

Some things are hidden in the secret counsels of God; but those things that are revealed are to be preached openly

Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

D. The Words Are Clear Enough to Be Understood [Contra Medieval RC church who burned Bibles]

1. In the Middle Ages and up through the Reformation, the Roman Catholic church forbade the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the vernacular languages... the common tongues

In 1199, when he heard that a French translation of the Bible was being circulated there, Pope Innocent III wrote to the Bishop of Metz:

The mysteries of the sacraments of faith should not be explained everywhere to everyone, since they cannot be understood everywhere by everyone, but only to those who can conceive of them by their faithful intellect. Because of this the Apostle [St Paul] said to the simpler people: "As unto little ones in Christ I gave you milk to drink, not meat." For "strong meat is for the perfect", as he said to others: "we speak wisdom among the perfect;" (...) Such is the profundity of divine Scripture, that not only simple and illiterate men, but even prudent and learned men do not fully suffice to investigate its wisdom. (...) For it is written: "seek not the things that are too high for thee."

2. The Book of Revelation is the hardest book in the Bible to understand, but it should still be read and preached as widely as

possible, because the issues of heaven and hell and the future judgment of God on the world and the future coming of Christ... these themes are so clear and vital that everyone must read and understand them

E. God's Word Does Not Return Void... But One of Two Outcomes!

1. Isaiah 55

Isaiah 55:10-11 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

2. Question: Do we actually see this to be true?

3. Yes, but only if we realize that sometimes God sends his word to HARDEN people as well as to save them

Romans 9:18 Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

F. Verse 10: Amazing Balance; Two Outcomes

1. What you do... who you are

Revelation 22:11 Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.

2. The one who DOES wrong... the one who IS filthy; the one who DOES righteousness... the one who IS holy

3. The nature of the tree is revealed by the fruit

4. These are words of settled nature... let the one who is evil be confirmed and established forever in his wickedness; let the one who is righteous be confirmed and settled forever in his righteousness

5. There is NO CHANGE from hell to heaven, or from heaven to hell

- G. For the Wicked, the Words Will Harden Them Further
- H. For the Righteous, the Words Will Confirm and Expand their holiness and good deeds
- I. YET... Repentance and Change IS POSSIBLE... but only by the miracle of SOVEREIGN GRACE

Titus 3:3-6 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior

SO... let the words of Revelation call you to repentance and faith in the Savior while there is still time!!!

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

People have to wash their robes because of their SINS... God is so merciful to cleanse us!!

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

The final application of Revelation is HARD WORK for the Savior

VI. Immediate Service to His Kingdom (vs. 12)

Revelation 22:12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

- A. Meditation on the Future World Should Lead to Persevering, Sacrificial Service to Christ (1 Cor. 15:58)

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain

What service? Anything done to help the brothers and sisters, to minister to the poor and needy, to spread the gospel of Christ, to give a cup of cold water to evangelists...with a cheerful heart by faith in Christ... THAT WILL BE REWARDED