

THE REWARD

By

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It is a mean and unholy doctrine that teaches men that they should work without expectation of reward. Sometimes you may hear a person remark that all he wants is to be saved from hell, that he expects no reward except salvation. There is something suspicious about anyone who claims to be a Christian but whose only desire is to escape punishment, who has no anticipation of the reward Jesus will bring with Him, and who despises the promises of the Lord who said that “He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him” and “great is your reward in heaven.”

ETERNAL LIFE A GIFT

This idea of not expecting a reward may arise from the mistaken notion that all our good deeds and efforts are amply rewarded by the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life. It is a common erroneous idea that salvation is at least partly due to man’s own efforts and is a reward for his courageous struggle to keep his nose clean in the corrupted world. He is earning his way to Heaven, so he thinks.

But eternal life is a gift. “By grace have you been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory” (Eph. 2:8-9). All the good you may ever do will not erase one sin. A sin committed cannot be undone by doing good. It requires death to meet sin’s penalty, and Jesus is the One Who died to do this for every believer. His death was complete: the full payment. His death alone atones for man’s sin, all his sin — every mean act, every evil thought, all the horrible big sins, and the little ones too — Jesus wiped them all out by dying the death for sin.

Therefore, the good works you may do are not tallied and applied to your account as part-payment for sin. They have no bearing on it at all, except to the extent that they demonstrate your love for God and His righteousness.

When Christ comes men will be raised to immortality on the grounds of Christ’s atonement. “He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life.” Men will be saved from sin’s penalty upon this basis only: that the penalty has been met by Jesus in His death. There will be no condemnation to them that are in Christ because He has already received the condemnation on the cross (Rom. 8:1-3). Thus the entire price of salvation is paid by Jesus, and man can add nothing to it. It is a gift. All who are in Christ shall receive eternal life as a gift. “For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he will” (John 5:21).

Furthermore, this gift is the same for all. Eternity is the same for all who attain it. Each Christian will be resurrected, changed by Divine power, and “will put on immortality.” One will be just as immortal as the other, and all shall be like Christ.

Let no one think that he will receive Life Eternal because he is a bit better or a harder worker than another; and you can be sure that no one is going to buy immortality by his good works and sacrifices.

WORKS REWARDED

But all such good works and sacrifices shall not go unrewarded. “Each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor” (1 Cor.3:8). Working for a reward is in harmony with Christ’s teaching. Regarding hardship and persecution, Jesus taught that we should endure it with rejoicing and gladness, “for great is your reward in Heaven” (Matt. 5:12, Luke 6:23, 35). Indeed, the first requirement of faith is to believe that God is “a rewarder of them that seek after Him” (Heb. 11:6).

Our sins are totally cleansed by Christ and our salvation is secured by Him; work Therefore our own works are all credited to our account for a reward. Not one good deed is spent to purchase salvation. Even the smallest act, the giving of a cup of water in the name of Jesus, will be rewarded (Mark 9:41).

We are taught to recognize that “we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10). This only makes the reward greater, for we know that Christ does not owe us anything. If we make sacrifices; it is no more than our duty as His servants, for we owe Him our very lives. And yet, He will reward us! In His parables He taught that at His coming His servants will be rewarded according to their works. It was the slothful servant who expected no reward that was cast out of the King’s household. We may liken him to the modern disciple of socialism who insists that all men are equal, regardless of the inequality of their abilities and their labors. According to this false premise the brilliant and industrious student must not be openly rewarded for his work with better marks and greater privileges, lest the inferior student be made to face the fact that there are actual differences! In like manner the industrious and superior worker is robbed of his reward through taxes in order to reward the slothful and inferior through various doles, grants and special privileges. The socialist concept denies that there are differences, and by force and coercion denies the honest laborer his deserved reward. It denies the teaching of Christ in that it teaches that no man is to be rewarded, but that all are to receive equally. The result of this philosophy is the present corruption and sloth in all strata of society where the honest laborer is deprived of the fruit of labor in order that it may be divided to the lazy and irresponsible.

Scripture teaches that “the laborer is worthy of his hire.” While this is true in this present world, with regard to all men’s dealings with one another, it is true also and in a larger sense in the world to come, where Christ promises to reward his laborers according to their works.

DAY OF REWARD

“In this world,” Jesus said, “you have tribulation” (John 16:33). He continually warned His disciples that following Him would mean persecution, hardship and suffering. In fact, He indicated that the ones who prove most faithful will receive the greater burden and suffer the greatest persecution. To the world, and to the shallow-minded Christian, this doesn’t seem fair. Impatiently, they would have a man receive his reward immediately, in

praise and exaltation. They then assume that the reverse is true; that one who is exalted must indeed be a great servant of God. But not necessarily so; the greatest servant in God's eyes may be the least in the eyes of men.

While all Christians may have peace and joy in their minds, in spite of the world tribulation, the reward that Christ promises will not be given until He comes again. "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is" (Rev.22:12). "And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to thy servants the prophets and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth" (Rev. 11:18). These verses clearly indicate that the saints will be rewarded at the end of time, when the Savior comes to raise the dead. His servants will be rewarded, and the enemies will be destroyed.

Men speak of a person dying and "going to his reward." It is true that once a person has died, the next event for him will be the resurrection and either his reward, or his punishment by death. But neither will occur until the second coming of Christ. Those who die in the Lord are said to "rest from their labors" (Rev. 14:13) At Christ's coming they shall be resurrected in immortal bodies, and then rewarded for their works. "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me ..." The reward is not now, nor at death, but at Christ's coming. For this reason Paul wrote: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God." Concerning this expectation he wrote that we are "waiting for our adoption, to-wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:18-19, 23)

While all Christians will be raised together and given equal immortality, we will be rewarded separately and individually for our works. Such individual recognition is in harmony with the fact that we are created in God's image with individual mental powers, and with the capacity for personal fellowship with Him.

Therefore, "let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal.6:9). Such well-doing often means isolation and grief because of Satan's intense efforts to thwart God's work. The worker may go unnoticed and unappreciated by his associates. Many times his efforts will seem worthless and he may be tempted to give up. He even may be called to suffer for his convictions and efforts, as countless numbers of martyrs have done. But none of his work is in vain in the Lord. Every deed is written indelibly in His memory. What appears as wasted and futile when measured by results will appear as highly successful when measured by Christ's desire. It is He for whom we labor and it is He who will reward our work.

Have you believed in Christ? Have you obeyed the gospel so that eternal life may be yours as His gift? Then be sure that you will be rewarded for your work. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor 15: 58).

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