

# *The Doctrine of Rewards*

By Milburn Cockrell  
Mantachie, Mississippi

**“So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth” (Ps. 58:11).**

While the doctrine of rewards for the righteous is more fully developed in the New Testament, this truth is also taught in the Old Testament as Psalm 58:11 proves. Some brethren completely reject the doctrine of rewards because they fear it takes something away from salvation by free grace. These people confuse salvation with rewards. These people have a host of scriptures in the Old and New Testaments to try to explain away. After their most zealous efforts, the Bible still says: “There is a reward for the righteous.” Salvation and rewards must never be confused. Salvation is by free grace (John 4:10; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5), but rewards are earned by works (Matt. 10:42; Luke 19:17; I Cor. 9:24; II Tim. 4:7-8; Rev. 2:10; 22:12). In the matter of salvation we must look to the Lord Jesus Christ: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Isa. 45:22). In the matter of rewards we must look to ourselves: “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward” (II John 8). To these distinctions may be added still another truth. Salvation is a present possession (Luke 7:50; John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47; Acts 16:31; I John 3:1; 5:1), while rewards are a future attainment, to be given out at the coming of Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:27; Luke 14:14; II Tim. 4:8; I Pet. 5:4; Rev. 22:12). Instead of taking away from the doctrine of salvation by free and sovereign grace, the doctrine of rewards adds luster to it. God saves the soul by free grace so that there is no obligation on the part of a believer for after payments, else it would not be by grace (Rom. 11:6). Therefore, God recognizes an indebtedness on His part to reward a believer for his service to Him (Heb. 6:10). Hence God offers rewards for faithful service which is rendered toward His name. In truth it is those who deny the doctrine of rewards who diminish the doctrine of salvation by free grace.

## **THE MEANING OF THE WORD**

In the Old Testament a number of Hebrew words are rendered “reward” in our KJV. The primary word (mishnos) in the Greek New Testament means “to pay for

service,” or “hire, wages, or reward.” The doctrine of rewards is seen in other terms such as “sheaves” (Ps. 126:6), “treasures in heaven” (Matt. 6:20), “the prize” (Phil. 3:14), “an inheritance” (I Pet. 1:4), and “crowns of gold” (Rev. 4:4). Peter speaks of these as “praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 1:7). In I Corinthians 4:5 Paul speaks of rewards as “praises of God.” What manner of love is this? God so loved us as to give His Son to die for us, and then He rewards us for every little thing done for His glory. This is grace upon grace.

## **THE REWARDER**

The rewarder is called in Scripture “The LORD” and “the LORD God of Israel” (Ruth 2:12). Isaiah 40:10 declares: “Behold, the LORD God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.” Paul called Him “the Lord, the righteous judge” (II Tim. 4:8). The Judgment Seat of Christ is the place rewards are given out by Christ, the righteous Judge. All saints must appear before Jesus Christ to be rewarded or to suffer loss of rewards: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the thing done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (II Cor. 5:10). The word “receive” has the idea of receiving back, which implies that each deed will receive what it deserves. The entire life from conversion to death is viewed as a unit, having one or two characteristics, either “good” or “bad.” Some works will be well-pleasing to the Judge, while others will be worthless and displeasing to Him. The very expression, “the judgment seat of Christ” indicates Jesus Christ will be the One who executes judgment on that day: “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10). This is also seen in other Scriptures. “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22). “And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (John 5:27). “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” (II Tim. 4:1). Rewards are usually given according to the character and ability of the rewarder. So, first, let us think of the greatness of the Rewarder: “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:24). The Lord Jesus Christ is our Judge. He is the eternal Son of God, the Lord from Heaven, the King of glory, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Our rewards will be in proportion to the greatness of our Rewarder. Second, think of the wealth of the Rewarder. The Lord told Abraham: “I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great

reward" (Gen. 15:1). The cattle upon a thousand hills belong to Him. He owns all the silver and gold in the world. The earth is His and the fullness thereof (Ps. 24:1). He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). Third, think of His goodness. He loved us so much that He died in our room and stead. All spiritual blessings are in Christ, and all rewards come from Him. He is good because He is God. If we, being sinners, know how to give good gifts unto others, how much more so the One who "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38)? Oh, "the riches of his goodness" (Rom. 2:4)! Fourth, think of His faithfulness. Christ is called "Faithful and True" in Revelation 19:11. In Hebrews 2:17 He is denominated as the "faithful High Priest." Hebrews 3:2 tells that He was "faithful to him that appointed him." Even if "we believe not, yet he abideth faithful" (II Tim. 2:13). Jesus Christ "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (I John 1:9), and He will be equally faithful to reward us for our faithfulness (Heb. 6:10).

## THE REWARDED

Not every disciple of Christ shall have their works rewarded. Some will not have done "good," but "bad" (II Cor. 5:10). Some will let others beguile them of their reward (Col. 2:18). Others will lose some crowns (Rev. 3:11). Still others will lose some of the things which they have wrought and not receive a full reward (II John 8). There will be some followers of Christ who can go to the Judgment Seat of Christ with confidence and boldness (I John 4:17), while others shall "be ashamed before him at his coming" (I John 2:28). Some Christians "shall receive a reward" (I Cor. 3:14), but others will have their works burned and "shall suffer loss" (I Cor. 3:15). I want to begin to discuss the type of true believers who are to receive rewards. First, there is the upright dealer: "The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: and according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God" (II Sam. 22:21-22). The special reward in David's case was deliverance from his enemies. The Lord rewarded him according to his comparative moral purity. God spared Noah, a righteous man (Gen. 7:1), and He delivered Lot, a righteous man (II Pet. 2:8). There is laid down a principle here that God rewards a man (here and hereafter) for upright conduct. If we claim to follow the Holy One of God, we must be fair and upright in our dealings with God and man (II Tim. 2:19). Remember, Psalm 58:11 says: "There is a reward for the righteous." Second, there is recompense for the diligent sower: "The wicked worketh deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward" (Prov. 11:18). The reward to the sower in this Scripture is as sure as eternal truth can make it. Righteousness is the seed; happiness is the harvest. Hosea says: "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy" (Hosea 10:12).

Galatians 6:7-8 declares: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Men are sowing seeds in the course of this life which will be harvested in eternity (Ps. 126:5-6). If we plan to reap a bountiful harvest, we must persevere in much sowing now: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). Third, there is proper payment for the humble walker: "The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life" (Prov. 22:4 margin). The godly man walks humbly with his God. Humility arises from an understanding of the greatness of God, especially His spotless purity. Such conduct will produce comfort and long life in this world, and in the world to come honor, praise, and glory (I Pet. 1:7). God's plan is to exalt the humble (Luke 18:14), and the humble shall "inherit the throne of glory" (I Sam. 2:8). Fourth, there is compensation for the pursuer of wisdom: "So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off" (Prov. 24:14). We are told in Proverbs 4:7: "Wisdom is the principle thing." Wisdom is God-given (Jas. 1:5) and very precious (Prov. 8:11). Those who seek it and practice it find it presently to be "full of mercy and good fruits" (Jas. 3:17), and in the life to come the "wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament" (Dan. 12:3). Our hopes of future reward for wisdom is founded upon the Word of God, and we shall never be ashamed. Fifth, there is a reward for the godly sufferer: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5:11-12). Suffering is a part of being a Christian (Phil. 1:29; II Tim. 2:12). The godly sufferer has a home in Heaven, and He will be given special rewards in Heaven (Getting to Heaven is not the reward). John Broadus says on these verses: "The Greek implies a definite reward designed for them, and kept for them in Heaven." To those who suffer the most, the Lord will impart the highest reward. This reward is not on earth, but it shall be given out by Jesus Christ in Heaven. Sixth, there is proper credit given to the liberal soul: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:1-4). Hypocrites have their rewards now; the saints in the future

life. A disciple must question the motives behind his charitable acts. Are they being done to please God (I Thess. 2:4), or to please men (Matt. 23:5)? God takes notice of our charitable deeds. He sees secret good done by us. The liberal giver will discover in this life it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35) and that God loves a cheerful giver (II Cor. 9:7). The alms given in secret now will be rewarded openly at the Judgment Seat of Christ before redeemed men and the elect angels. Seventh, there is a dividend for the prayer warrior: "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:5-6). Our Lord takes for granted that all Christians pray. The old Baptists said, "If prayerless, then graceless." Real disciples of Christ pray to God, not men. Prayer is to be a private matter between the believer and his heavenly Father (Matt. 26:39; Mark 1:35; Neh. 2:4). God sees our secret prayers. The Lord told Ananias regarding Saul: "Behold, he prayeth" (Acts 9:11; cf. John 1:48). All prayers are to be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ before men and angels. The prayer warrior will have his reward from the great Intercessor. Eighth, there is a prize for the humane disciple: "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. 10:41-42). All followers of Christ demonstrate hospitality to other believers. It is the same as if they received Christ Himself (Matt. 25:40). It is a great honor to help another believer even in the simple basic necessities of life. Our future rewards will be commensurate with our deeds. We will be rewarded as if we were prophets and righteous men. Ninth, there is a recompense for the careful worker: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (I Cor. 3:11- 15). Some believers build upon gold, silver, and precious stones—imperishable and incombustible things. Others build on wood, hay and stubble—perishable and combustible things. The holiness of the righteous Judge of all the earth will test the foundations on which men have built their

Christian lives. In view of the coming fiery test, we had better take heed how and what we build. "Abide" indicates your works survive the fiery test and gains the approval of the Lord. The words "suffer loss" means loss of rewards. The word "suffer" denotes a painful process. A man's work may be burned up, and yet he may still be saved. He shall escape with his life, as a man is rescued from a burning building. He is saved, although his property is lost and his labor has come to nothing. What a man believes and practices is important. The Judgment Seat of Christ will try every man's work as to "what sort it is," not how much it is. The motive behind our service counts. Tenth, there is a reward for the willing minister or missionary: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me" (I Cor. 9:16-17). Because of the divine call, Paul felt compelled to preach. To him it was not a paid profession, nor a pastime. It was something he had to do. But if he preached by choice, showing his heart entirely concurred, he would obtain a reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. If he preached involuntarily, he could regard him at best as an unprofitable slave, who had merely done his duty. The Lord wants willing service. "Take ye from among you as offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass" (Ex. 35:5, 21-22, 29). It is written in II Corinthians 8:12: "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." The missionary and minister who has willingly preached the gospel shall have the elder's crown. Writing to elders (I Pet. 5:1-3), Peter said: "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Pet. 5:4). The sinners converted under our preaching are our crown of rejoicing: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (I Thess. 2:19-20). Ministers must do their duty willingly and cheerfully, knowing that those who "turn many to righteousness" shall be "as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3). The old Baptist preacher who baptized me was put on the back burner in his latter years. The last time I ever visited with him before his death, we talked about some of these things. On this same afternoon we visited the grave of his wife who had recently passed from this earth. As we stood there, he urged me to keep to the old landmarks of church truth. Tears filled his eyes as he spoke with grief about his wife and how some brethren had treated him. Then he added: "They can keep from doing many things in the association, but they cannot deprive me of my rewards." How true this is of a faithful minister of the gospel. Eleventh, there is remuneration for the temperate child of God: "Know ye not that they which run in a

race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it unto subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9:24-27). Using the figure of a runner (v. 24) and a boxer (v. 26), Paul stresses the need of the discipline of self-control. "So run" requires tremendous effort, much dedication and determination, in order to win the prize. There is no place for half-heartedness. We must exercise the mastery over the power of sin in our life (Rom. 6:12). Otherwise, we shall not obtain the incorruptible crown. Let us consider again the inspired exhortation: "So run, that ye may obtain." But what is meant by an intemperate believer being "a castaway" (*adokimos*)? The Greek word can mean "unapproved." This word is taken from bad metals, and it denotes those who will not bear the test that is applied to them. Such metals are worthless and are cast away. It does not mean God will cast away His people (Rom. 11:2). Rather, it means that fellow Christians will cast you away as an unfit servant of Christ. They will not approve of your intemperance. Twelfth, there is payment to the successful runner in the Christian race: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). Paul uses the foot race as a symbol of the Christian life. To him, this was a very common metaphor (Rom. 9:16; I Cor. 9:24, 26; Gal. 2:2; 5:7; Phil. 2:16; Heb. 12:1). The apostle pressed ahead in three ways First, he had learned to forget the past: "Forgetting those things which are behind." This expression does not refer to the Jewish distinctions he had just mentioned (Phil. 2:5-6). He had abandoned these previous to his entering upon the Christian race. Paul means his past experience in the Christian life, his successes and failures, his good works and his sins alike. This past is as nothing to him. He has blotted it out of sight and thought. The "things before" alone concern him. Often older Christians are content with past achievements, to look at the fading laurels which they have gained, as though they never could be equaled or surpassed. But to look back only slows the pace and lessens the speed. We must not let the past overshadow the present. Rather, we must constantly look forward to the work God still has for us. To look back is to be a leeks-and-garlic Christian (Num. 11:5-6). Second, he looked forward to those things before: "Reaching forth unto those things which are before." The words "reaching forth unto" is one word in the Greek (*epekteio*), and it means "to stretch out" and "to strain toward something." This expression brings before our eyes an excited runner, with his head and neck extended toward the goal, his mind

outrunning his lagging feet. The plural ("things") for which he is reaching is not the prize at the finish line, but the many things he is striving to reach along with it. There are new things to be done and new lessons to be learned. This involves a striving for these things—discipline, concentration, and perseverance. Third, he presses on toward the mark of the prize of God's calling: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." In ancient games there was a wreath hung at the goal post. The prize will be bestowed when the goal is reached and the race is over. The believer's life consists of standing fast, but it is never standing still. The prize is not the high calling of God, but it is the reward which the heavenly calling holds forth. The prize looks on to the rewards of the Judgment Seat of Christ (II Tim. 4:8). Thirteenth, there is special recognition for the earnest seeker: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). Here the idea is to seek God out diligently by faith. This includes prayer, Bible reading, meditation, church attendance, and Christian fellowship. The Greek word here means God has laid a charge upon Himself and takes it to be His job to render reward. To have this reward the seeker must be diligent; he must be earnest: "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart: (Jer. 29:13). Fourteenth, one of the greatest of all rewards will go to the dying martyr: ". . .be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). The phrase "unto death" is found only two other places in the New Testament (Acts 22:4; Rev. 12:11). The thought is degree rather than duration. The meaning is to be faithful to the extent you will die for your faith, not merely until you die. The martyr who gives up his natural life for Jesus Christ will be given a crown of life by Jesus Christ. This is not eternal life as some contend, for eternal life is not given for faithfulness (Rom. 6:23). This is as much a real crown as the crown given at Smyrna to the priests of Dionysus at the expiration of their year in office. This is a special crown above eternal life. The physical life lost for Christ is found again; "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:35). They shall reign in life with Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:17). Fifteenth, there is a reward for the toiling laborer: "And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth" (Rev. 11:18). This verse concerns rewards for the tribulation saints. This is not the Judgment Seat of Christ, but it is most likely a judgment for martyred tribulation saints about the time of the Judgment of the Nations. The idea in the Greek is the giving of the well-known and long-promised reward. The verse

teaches there are rewards for His servants, the saints, and those who fear the name of God. I Timothy 5:18 says: "The labourer is worthy of his reward." Sixteenth, there is a reward for the active church member: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7). The aorist tense "made herself ready" shows that the process of preparation is complete. The righteous deeds in the life of the saints on earth have become the glorious bridal attire of Christ's virgin bride. "Granted" is another aorist, referring back to the Judgment Seat of Christ where the words of church members have been divinely evaluated. Each local New Testament Baptist church is presently the bride-elect of Jesus Christ (John 3:29; II Cor. 11:2). To be in the bride you must have scriptural baptism and be an active member of the church. If you are an unfaithful church member, you will be excluded from the church and be out of the bride, seeing the bride is the local church. When an excluded member is restored to the full fellowship of the church, he is restored to the bride. Hence being in the bride is a reward for being an active church member, and rewards are according to works. Arminians reverse Acts 13:48. The verse actually says: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." But when they get through mutilating it they have it saying: "As many as believed are ordained to eternal life." But some sovereign gracers reverse Revelation 19:7. The verse actually says: "His wife hath made herself ready." But when they get through mutilating it they have it saying: "Christ has made her ready for Himself." This is a complete reversal of what the verse really says. There are a number of things wrong with reversing Revelation 19:7. First, this is a very poor handling of holy Scripture. Second, it has Christ dressing His own bride. I have never known any bridegroom to dress his own bride. Have you? Third, the Greek word is not *dikaiosune*, but *dikaioma*, a righteous act. The meaning is clearly to the righteous acts of the saints themselves. Fourth, if those in the bride are there by the imputed righteousness of Christ, then all the saved are in the bride. Hence the brethren who hold that Christ dresses His own bride in truth believe in a universal, invisible bride. Fifth, it must be shown from holy Scripture in other places in the Bible that "righteousness of saints" means the imputed righteousness of Christ. Where is the verse? Sixth, if election and imputed righteousness puts one in the bride, then all the elect are in the bride or church. Then there is no such thing as a local church bride. Seventh, if all the saved are in the bride, then why be an active Baptist church member? Would it not be just as well to be a Protestant or Roman Catholic so as to escape the odium of being a "hardnosed" Baptist? Verily if there is no reward for being an active Baptist church member, then why be one? Let the universal bride brethren give the answer. I also have a problem when I hear people say that the Lord adds some to His church or bride, and that once you are added,

you are eternally secure in the church. This confuses salvation and church membership. Salvation cannot be lost, but church membership can be lost. You can be excluded from the church (I Cor. 5:1- 13). If some church members are elected to bridal status and other church members are not, then we have an invisible bride known only to God, and the local, visible church is not the bride. I heard some one say, "Well what about a church who does not exclude disorderly members? Will they be in the bride? Answer: such a church has ceased to be the virgin bride of Christ and none of its members will be in the bride. Brethren, I believe in a local church bride now, and that the aggregate of all true churches make up the bride in Heaven. My bride is always local and visible; it is never universal and invisible. To say that the bride is all the saved, and then teach the word "church" is always local in the New Testament, is to fail to see the church is the bride. I believe it does make a difference if you are an active church member, for inactive excluded members are not in the bride. Being in the bride is a reward for being baptized and for being an active church member. I do not preach that baby sprinklers will be in the bride. I do not care for a universal, invisible church, nor do I care for a universal, invisible bride. I believe the Lord Jesus Christ will reward a person for being a faithful church member.

## THE REWARDS

First, the rewards to be given out by Christ are great: "After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1). God is not only the Rewarder, but the Reward. To have God as our God is an exceeding great reward indeed. As an old writer said: "If He is thine, all is thine." What a reward it is to be able to enjoy God forever. Rewards must be great, if they are given out by our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Paul declared: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9). In the earthly life I doubt if we can comprehend the greatness of our rewards. We read in Psalm 19:11: "Moreover by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is GREAT reward." The wages which the Lord pays are great. They are given to those who have a carefulness to know and observe the Bible. Our Lord taught: "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be GREAT, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke 6:35). Here Christ pronounced the reward of the righteous everlasting great. Second, the rewards to be given out by Christ are sure: "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:24). If these rewards are to be given out by Christ Himself, what could be

more sure? Not even a cup of cold water will be overlooked by Him. The passing out of rewards is not a matter of doubtful disputations. We can be sure that we will receive them, for He who cannot lie has promised to do this. In Jeremiah 31:16 it is written: "For thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD." Third, the rewards given out by Christ are varied: "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (I Cor. 3:8). Some believers plant and some water, for all do not have the same abilities and opportunities. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit" (I Cor. 12:4; cf. I Pet. 4:10). At the Judgment Seat of Christ our Lord will make a difference among believers, according to the different services performed (I Cor. 15:41-42). He shall assess each servant and his work. The criterion will be the servant's labor, not his success. The penitent thief cannot expect to receive as much reward as will the laborious Paul. Fourth, the recompenses to be handed out by Christ will be sufficient. "An hundredfold" (Mark 10:30) will be more than sufficient to reward us for our self-sacrificing. It will be enough to know our services have been accepted by Christ: "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him" (II Cor. 5:9; Matt. 25:21). Every one will be satisfied with his own reward. The Scriptures know nothing of some servant complaining of his recompense of reward. Those faithful in a few things are to be given many things. Some of the saints will rule over 10 cities (Luke 19:17 and some over five cities (Luke 19:19). Some overcomers of the church age are to have "power over the nations" (Rev. 2:26). At least a few are to share the throne with Christ: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21). Eastern kings did not occupy a single-seat throne, but a large one where more than one person could sit. Christ is to share His millennial throne and its royalty with a few overcomers. Christ now shares His Father's throne, and Christ is to share His millennial throne with some overcomers. Oh, to sit on His right and left hand in the kingdom (Matt. 20:20-23)! Fifth, the rewards given out by Christ are eternal: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:17- 18). Our afflictions are light and momentary. There awaits us an eternal weight of glory which "far more" exceeds any of our sufferings on earth. No expression could be stronger. Here are laurels which never wither and crowns which perish not with the using. Our afflictions on earth are the procuring cause of eternal glory: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). Sixth, they are to be coveted: "Look to yourselves, that we lose not

those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (II John 8). Consider the words "Look to yourselves." In salvation we look to Christ (Isa.45:22), but when it comes to rewards we are to look to ourselves. We are to be on continuous guard lest we destroy our own accomplishments by yielding to false teachers. Going after deceivers and antichrists will affect our rewards. In Colossians 2:18 I read: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." Again the context is about false teachers. Stay away from them, for they seek to rob you of your reward. They can cost you some palms of victory. In Revelation 3:11 Christ says: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." It is not the start, but the finish which determines the fitness to wear the crown. If you let go of the truth, you will lose your crown. I believe some will lose some honor, praise, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (I Pet. 1:7). In I John 2:28 it is written: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." To abide in Christ calls for a continuous intimate fellowship as a standing duty. Those who do this can appear before Christ at His coming with assurance and candor (I John 4:17-19). To "be ashamed" means "shrink away from Christ in shame." Some believers will regret their feeble attempts at service and the worldliness in their lives. These will suffer loss of rewards (I Cor. 3:13-15). Oh, how awful to be ashamed before Jesus Christ! ashamed before Him who is not ashamed to call us His brethren (Heb. 2:11)!

## THE REWARDING

First, a believer is to be rewarded according to his works: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). Observe that we are to be rewarded according to works, not religious profession. As an employee is paid after his work is done, so the Christian is rewarded when his work is done and he stands at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Those who work the hardest will receive the most rewards. Dionysius caused musicians to play before him, and promised them a great reward. When they came for their reward, he told them they had already had it in their hopes. Christ does not disappoint His servants: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). Opportunities will be considered when it comes to being rewarded according to our works. Mary of Bethany anointed the head of our Lord in token of His coming burial. For this act she was highly commended by Christ: "She hath done what she could: she is come beforehand to anoint my body to the

burying" (Mark 14:8). She had learned much at the feet of Jesus. Mary of Bethany did not join the other women who brought sweet spices to the tomb of Christ (Mark 16:1). "She did what she could" is the true standard of all service to our Lord. He only expects what we have the ability to perform. Many say, "I'm doing all I can," but they lie like Ananias and Sapphira. Few are really like Mary of Bethany. Our position in this world may be lowly and our opportunities of usefulness few. But let us do what we can. If we do this, the same One that commanded Mary of Bethany will command us at His judgment seat. Second, these rewards will be openly given: "That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly" : (Matt. 6:4). Note the Father "himself" shall reward you. God the Father is to reward us personally, not as servants, but as sons who serve Him. We are to be commended before men and angels (Mark 8:38). Though the works were done in private, the rewards will be given out in public. Third, our compensation for good works will be full: "The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust" (Ruth 2:12). The God of the Bible is a God of rewards. The Hebrew word (shalem) translated "full" means "just or perfect." As Lange comments, the idea is a complete reward. Ruth's heroism and self-denial would receive a complete reward. She would miss nothing but would recover all. God's reward is always a full reward. All earthly rewards for the saints are partial, but in Heaven they will receive a full recompense. When it comes to rewards for things like the kindness Ruth showed to her mother-in-law, we must ascribe these good works to God who works in us. Isaiah 26:12 says: "LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us." It is written in Philippians 2:13: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." After we do all the good works we are required to do, we are still "unprofitable servants" (Luke 17:10). Man by nature is so depraved that he is "unto every good work reprobate" (Tit. 1:16). Our best works are stained and imperfect (Isa. 64:6). There is little proportion between them as the infinite weight of glory wherewith Christ is to reward us. In truth, rewards are not given us so much for our own inherent worth, but because of God's free grace, Who crown His own work in us. Fourth, some rewards are in this present life: "But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:30). Note the words "in this life." Those things left for Christ will bring a hundredfold by new relationships with fellow-believers in this present age (Mark 3:31-35) and at the coming of Christ eternal life. What an encouragement to serve Christ! This truth is seen in other Scriptures. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

"For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (I Tim. 4:8). Daniel's self-denial was rewarded on earth when he was given heavenly wisdom. The same may be said of Joseph. Not all rewards are given out in Heaven at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We receive some rewards on earth in this life. Fifth, these prizes are given out when Christ comes for His saints: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). "My reward" must mean the rewards Christ brings "with Him" at the rapture and which are to come from Him. When He comes He will reward each believer for his services and sufferings. The singular "work" sums up a lifetime of service on earth. Other verses teach this same truth. Our Lord declared: "And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:14). "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also who love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:8). "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Pet. 5:4). Sixth, these rewards are to be enjoyed in the millennial reign of Christ: "He said therefore, A certain nobleman when into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. . . And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities" (Luke 19:12-13, 15-19). The nobleman represents Christ coming to set up His millennial kingdom on earth. The two servants represent the saints to whom rewards are to be given for faithful service. You will note that neither of the two boasted of their skill as businessmen. They claimed none of the pound for themselves—"thy pound." The rewards correspond, not to the one pound, but to those gained, whether ten of five. Observe also different degrees of rewards in the millennium—"ten cities" and "five cities." Those faithful in a few things now shall be given larger responsibilities commensurate with the way they handled their opportunities in this life. The reward of the apostles of Christ is the right to rule over the twelve tribes of restored and regenerated Israel: "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke

22:29-30). All the glorified saints in the first resurrection are to reign with Christ on this earth: “And hath made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:10). “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6). When Christ comes with His saints they will have been rewarded for their labors. Clothed with heavenly bodies, they can enjoy the heavenly kingdom. Seventh, while the saints are to enjoy their rewards especially in the millennial kingdom, they are destined to enjoy them through eternity. We are to possess an “eternal weight of glory” (II Cor. 4:17), and we are to shine “as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:3). Our inheritance is “incorruptible, and undefiled,” and it “fadeth not away” (I Pet. 1:4). At the Lord’s right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Ps. 16:11). The crowns given out at the Judgment Seat of Christ are crowns “that fadeth not away” (I Pet. 5:4).

#### CONCLUSION

1. Like Moses, we ought to have “respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb. 11:26). Like the lawgiver, we must look far beyond the horizons of Egypt and temporary pleasures to the unseen and eternal. Let us press toward the mark for the prize. Let us so run that we may obtain the crowns; otherwise, we shall have nothing to cast at our Redeemer’s feet (Rev. 4:10). 2. There are rewards in Heaven and degrees of punishment in Hell. 3. Just as the saints are rewarded for the good they do, even so the unsaved are rewarded for the evil they do. “. . .the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness” (II Sam. 3:39). “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons” (Col. 3:24-25). “. . .and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward” (Heb. 2:2).