

Heavenly Rewards – Philippians 3:12-14

I. Introduction:

- A. I mentioned a couple weeks ago that the Judgment Seat of Christ has come up twice in my personal reading.
1. Since then, I have been thinking quite a bit about the Lord's judgment of the Christian.
 2. For example, things I have taught and other books and lessons on the subject have come to mind.
 3. It seems to me that **most** of them have had the **purpose of motivating** God's saints to greater service.
 4. Sometimes subtly, but at other times very bluntly, I have been reminded that my life is going to be exposed.
 5. Not only will the Saviour and His angels reveal their knowledge of my life,
 - a. but this will take place in the presence of all the rest of God's saints, including you,
 - b. and everyone is going to know what a weak and poor servant I have been.
 6. Some of those messages have contained the proverbial carrot on the stick.
 - a. *"Look at all these great rewards available to you. Don't you want some of them?"*
 - b. *You certainly don't want to be an embarrassment to your Saviour, do you?*
 - c. *You don't want to live in heavenly poverty, do you?*
 - d. *Well then, get to work, for we must all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ."*
- B. I was correctly told early in my Christian life that this judgment will have nothing to do with my salvation.
1. Only God's saints will be there; everyone present will have already passed through the blood of Christ.
 2. We all will possess unrevokable, eternal life.
 3. This judgment will only scrutinize, our lives, worship and service for the Lord – not our position in Christ.
 4. What we have done with our twenty years or fifty years of Christian opportunity will be examined.
 5. And those who have suffered for Christ, or who lost their lives serving the Lord, will shake their heads as they hear what little you and I have done for the glory of the Lord.
 6. Their countenances will fall when they hear that we have *"not... resisted unto blood striving against sin."*
- C. We have all have heard about the various rewards which will be given to the saved at that judgment.
1. We have been told that some saints honored throughout eternity more than others because of what they did, or how they suffered.
 2. Different books and preachers, with differing agendas, have emphasized different criteria for those honors.
 3. Some preachers talk about soul-winning, saying that the great evangelists shall sit in higher seats than the man who has never lead a soul to Christ. *"Don't you want a higher rank? Then win souls."*
 4. Others who were writing about holy living, or faith, or prayer, tried to shame their readers into becoming more like them in these areas.
- D. And I confess to having joined them in general statements that there will be saints in heaven with nothing more than bare salvation, while others will be greatly rewarded for their self-sacrificing service to God.
1. I came close to saying that just a couple weeks ago in a message on the relationship of faith to rewards.
 2. While not stepping back and suggesting that I have been wrong, tonight I'd like to clarify things by taking one step forward – beyond Christ's Judgment Seat.

II. There are many scriptures which speak about future rewards.

- A. Some of them are obviously general in nature – given to all of God's children.
1. *"In my father's house are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also."*
 2. *"Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body..."*
 3. Some of God's promises of future blessings and rewards apply to all of the saints equally.
- B. But then there are other scriptures which declare that there special rewards for special service.
1. **Matthew 5:11-12** and **Luke 6** – *"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.”

- a. It appears that persecuted Christians will be especially honored by the Lord – people like those Virginia Baptists who were arrested for preaching Christ, and the martyrs of the Middle Ages.
- b. What a shameful thing it will be if we have deliberately hidden our faith to avoid a little ridicule.

2. *Philippians 3:14* – *“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

- a. Was Paul saying that he was actively striving to earn a higher, more valuable prize than a cheaper one?
- b. Was he working for a gold crown rather than a silver one?

3. *Matthew 16:27* – *“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.”*

- a. The word *“works”* suggests labor – deliberate effort, perhaps something out of the ordinary.
- b. The Lord will not reward people for those things which the Holy Spirit does in us while we sit inertly still.
- c. This verse speaks of rewards for service – work.

C. Then the Lord Jesus gave us several **parables** which suggest He will reward His servants. Look them up.

1. Does ***II Corinthians 9:6*** speak about today or is a reference to a future judgment day? *“This I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; & he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.”*
2. Peter says in ***I Peter 5:4***, You faithful pastors, *“when the chief Shepard (Christ Jesus) shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”*
3. ***II Timothy 4:8*** – *“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”*
4. I quoted ***Revelation 22:12*** recently, where Christ Jesus said, *“Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give very man according as his work shall be.”*

D. I think that the Bible is quite clear: those Christians who put themselves out there in their service for the Lord will be rewarded.

1. And those who do nothing but sit on their hands & shut their lips will have less reward at the Judgment Seat
2. It isn't that their salvation depends on their service for Christ, but some will only be saved *“yet so as by fire”*

III. So I agree with those scholars who say there will be a special judgment for God's saints.

A. And twice the Bible speaks specifically about the *“judgment seat of Christ.”*

1. In ***II Corinthians 5:10*** Paul says, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”*
2. Paul was writing **TO** Christians **ABOUT** Christians.
 - a. This is not the judgment where the sheep are separated from the goats.
 - b. It is not from here that the lost are cast into the Lake of Fire. This judgment is for Christians only.
3. Paul uses the pronoun *“we,”* because he includes himself.
4. And the specifics of that judgment are the things we have done in our bodies, with our lives, since our salvation.
5. Piled in front of each of us will be a heap of worthless trash beside a small mound of valuables.
6. And in those things, we will all be recognized and honored, according to what we have done for the Lord.

B. In ***I Corinthians 3:11-14*** Paul writes *“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.”*

1. Using this scripture to illustrate the other, the piles before each of us will be either combustible or eternal.
2. Some will be worthless, except as firewood, while some it will be of great value, according to the Lord's own assay office.
3. And depending on what safely passes through God's fire will be the source of rewards for each servant.

- C. The Lord Jesus said in **Matthew 10:41** – *“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 of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto he shall in no wise lose his reward.”*
1. There will be honor given to you who prepare meals for others, and when you ladies fix a dish for our pot lucks, anticipating some visitors to stay and dine with us.
 2. There will be rewards for people like Mary, but there will be other rewards for Marthas, assuming that their service was rendered to the Lord in faith.
 3. There will be rewards for those who fervently pray for the manifestation of the Spirit.
 4. The Lord takes note of every kind of service, large and small, and no one shall lose his reward.
- D. And at least some of those rewards will be in the form of **crowns**.
1. The Bible speaks of crowns of **righteousness**, crowns of **glory**, unfading **crowns**, and a crown of **life**.
 2. Some preachers wax eloquent on the meaning and glories of each of those crowns and other rewards.
 3. I have read comments that crowns represent authority, so they must refer to ruling over others during the Millennium. But to that I remind people, these crowns are not diadem, but victor’s crowns.
- E. All of this is pretty standard doctrine; not disputed by very many people. But nearly all of them stop right there.
1. Preachers may take these scriptures and these doctrines and use them to beat their hearers into obedience and greater Christian service.
 2. And they may not be in great error in doing so.
 3. But I’d like to take this one step farther, to a galaxy where I’ve never read anyone to have gone before.

IV. Please turn to Revelation 4.

- A. Notice that this takes place immediately after the Lord’s letters to the seven churches.
1. Many scholars suggest that between chapters 3 and 4 the saints in those churches are taken to heaven.
 - a. It is believed by many that Christ’s judgment of His saints will take place between these chapters.
 - b. In other words the Judgment Seat of Christ is between chapters 3 and 4.
 - c. It is believed by many, and I agree, that the 24 elders of chapter 4 are saints then in heaven.
 2. *“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.*
 - a. *And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.*
 - b. *And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.*
 - c. *And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.*
 - d. *And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*
 - e. *And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.*
 - f. *And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.*
 3. *And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*
 - a. *And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,*
 - b. *The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,*
 - c. *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for*

thy pleasure they are and were created.”

- B. Now, I'd like to remind you that heaven is not really about you and me.
1. Yes, we will rejoice with great joy in our eternal salvation, & with our new residence, & with our rewards.
 - a. But we have not been saved by the horrific sacrifice of Christ, just so that we might go to heaven.
 - b. Heaven is not about spending time with our saintly grandmother who died when we were three.
 - c. It is not about our glorified bodies, or our rewards.
 2. We have been delivered from the gutter & cesspool of sin in order to glorify God the Father through Christ.
 3. Heaven will not be about us; it will be all about the Saviour.
 4. Every wretched soul whom the Lord has saved will, in that salvation, magnify the Lord Jesus.
 5. Even the rewards Christ will give to His servants, will be for His glory and not ours.
 6. And today, if we are serving Christ in order to earn rewards & crowns, we are going to end up with nothing.
- C. Here in chapter 4, not long after Christ, the judge, will have left his bench, taking up His position on the glorious throne of jasper and sardine stone, everyone of the 24 elders will take their crowns and cast them down at Jesus' feet, never to pick them up again.
1. At that point, it won't matter if one crown was made of more silver than gold.
 2. It won't matter if one was covered with different colored diamonds while another had only rubies and sapphires.
 3. If the 24 elders represent all of God's saints, then I see us all willingly stripping ourselves of all our personal honor in order to honor the Lord who deserves everything.
 4. If Paul casts his massive crown down before Christ along side Stephen with his martyr's crown...
 - a. If King David throws away his royal crown as I thrown down my insignificant little bedazzled hat...
 - b. Don't we all, once again, become equals – simply sinners saved by the grace of God?
 5. If we no longer have crowns to mark one servant's honor above another, aren't we all just sinners saved?

V. Conclusion

- A. I can hear some preacher whining that I have just robbed his ministry of a perfectly good ox goad to drive lazy saints into service.
1. He might say, *“God has told us about these rewards to use that information as incentives to service.”*
 2. First I reply: if the saints must be pushed and prodded into unwilling service, then there will be no rewards for them anyway, and probably none for the preachers who tried pushed them.
 - a. Pastors are supposed to **lead** their flocks, **not drive** them. They are to set examples, not pass edicts.
 - b. These rewards are not even carrots on a stick.
 3. Second, there is still something here to encourage our service. Incentives still remain.
- B. Just as every saint, as an individual, is going to have his works judged, each one of those saints, as individuals, are going to cast their crowns down before the Saviour.
1. What is going to be more embarrassing: our few and feeble rewards, or our weak and feeble worship?
 2. As I imagine our judgment, the Lord, with his wounds yet visible, will be in control of the bonfire which consumes the wood, hay and stubble of our lives.
 - a. We will have to stand there in shame watching fifty years of Christian service go up in flames, because it wasn't offered in faith or it wasn't according to the pattern laid down in the Word of God.
 3. But then a short while later, the Lord will be sitting in glory as we approach Him with what is left of our lives.
 - a. We will be given the opportunity to return to Christ, the rewards He has given to us.
 - b. People around us will be saying, *“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”*
 - c. And then we will step forward, saying, *“Lord, here is my pittance, my widow's mite, my tiny crown.*
 - d. *I am ashamed that I have so little to return to you. I have so little with which to glorify thy name.”*
- C. It appears to me that far more important than **Christ's honor** of **OUR** service, will be the **honour our service** should be **to Christ**.

1. With what will we have to honor the Lord in that day, when others will have so much to give him?
2. We shouldn't make rewards the goal of our service. We should make our goal the glory of the Saviour.