

Lesson Seven: Rewards

- 1) **There is a vast difference in the doctrine of salvation for the lost, and the doctrine of rewards for the saved.** Salvation is “the gift of God, not of works” (Eph. 2:8, 9). Salvation is received by faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:36). Rewards are according to the works of the believer (Matt. 16:27).

A most revealing Scripture concerning rewards is found in 1 Cor. 3:8 -15.

- a) First, every believer will be rewarded “according to his own labor” (verse 8). We do not labor for salvation.
 - b) Second, “we are God’s fellow workers” (verse 9) – not for salvation, but for rewards.
 - c) Third, the believer is to build on the Lord Jesus Christ, “for no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (verse 11)
 - d) Fourth, the believer has a choice of two kinds of building materials: “gold, silver, precious stones” – this is building with eternal materials; or “wood, hay, straw” – this is building with temporal materials (verse 12) (2 Cor. 4:18)
- 2) **The believer who builds on Christ with eternal materials, “gold, silver, precious stones,” shall receive a reward.** Those who build on Christ with temporal materials, “wood, hay, straw,” will receive no reward. The works of “wood, hay, straw” will be destroyed at the “judgment seat of Christ,” and he believer will suffer loss – not the loss of salvation, but the loss of rewards.

In the first year of my ministry, I set at the bedside of a dying friend. As we talked of his home going, tears filled his eyes. Being young in the Lord, I thought he was afraid to die, and attempted to speak words of encouragement to him. He said, “I am not afraid to die; I am ashamed to die.” He went on to say that Christ was his Savior, but he had lived for self, and now had to meet the Lord Jesus Christ empty handed. His life loomed up before him as “wood, hay, straw.” He was “saved so as by fire.”

Rewards are called “crowns” in the New Testament.

- a) The Crown of Life (James 1:12)
 - b) The Crown Imperishable (1 Cor. 9:24-27)
 - c) The Crown of Rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19,20)
 - d) The Crown of Righteousness (2 Tim. 4:5-8)
 - e) The Crown of Glory (1 Peter 5:2-4)
- 3) **The Crown of Life (James 1:12):** 12) Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.
 - a) **This reward could be called the lover’s crown. Upon examination of the above verse, we discover that the believer finds strength to overcome temptation and endure trials, through the love of God.** Paul said, “We also glory in tribulations.” The question is, do we today glory in tribulations? We can, only if the “love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:2-5). Without the love of God in the heart of the believer, trials can cause him to become bitter and critical and lose the “crown of life.”
 - b) **All believers have eternal life (John 3:15, 16), but not all believers will be rewarded with the “crown of life.”** This crown will be given to those who are “faithful until death” (Rev 2:10). To receive the “crown of life” the believer must love the Lord more than his own life.

“For whoever desires to save his life (live for self) will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s (live for Christ at all cost) will save it” (Mark 8:35). This reward will be given to those who live for Christ, and endure temptations, in the power of the love of God (1 Cor 10:13).

The Crown Imperishable (1 Cor 9:24-27): 24) Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25) And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. 26) Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27) But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Paul makes use of the Greek games to illustrate the spiritual race of the believer. They ran to win a “perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.” No young man could contend in the games unless he was a Greek citizen, born of Greek parents. No unsaved person can participate in the services of the Lord for rewards; only the born of God are eligible (John 3:3)

Just as the athlete must deny himself many gratifications of his body, so the believer must say “I discipline my body and bring it into subjection” or he will become “disqualified.” He will not lose his salvation, but he will lose the “imperishable crown.”

The Greek games had hard and fast rules for all participants. The New Testament contains the rules for believers who would enter the spiritual race to win the “imperishable crown.”

- a) The believer must deny self of anything that would weigh him down and hold him back (Heb. 12:1)
- b) The believer must keep his eyes fixed on Christ, and not look to the right or the left (Heb. 12:2)
- c) The believer must find strength in the Lord (Eph. 6:10-18)
- d) The believer must place his all upon the altar of the Lord (Rom. 12:1, 2)
- e) The believer must, by faith, refuse anything that would impede spiritual progress (Heb. 11:24-29)

Do not be spiritual spectator. Enter the race and run to win the “imperishable crown.”

- 4) **The Crown of Rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19,20):** 19) For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

Notes: The “crown of rejoicing” is the soul winner’s crown. The greatest work you are privileged to do for the Lord is to bring others to knowledge of Christ as personal Savior. The degree of your joy in heaven will be determined by the souls you have had a part in bringing to Christ. Paul tells the Thessalonian believers that they are his “hope, or joy or crown of rejoicing” now and when Jesus comes.

- a) It is wise to win souls to Christ (Prov. 11:30 OT)
- b) It is a work against sin to win souls to Christ (James 5:20)
- c) It is a cause for joy in heaven to win souls to Christ (Luke 15:20)
- d) Every soul winner will shine as the stars forever (Dan. 12:3 OT)

How can you win souls to Christ:

- a) **Witness with your life;** live that others may see Christ in you (2 Cor. 3:2 and Gal. 2:20)
- b) **Witness with your mouth,** trusting the Holy Spirit to give power to the spoken word (2 Cor. 9:6)
- c) **Witness with tithes and offerings** that others may preach Christ, and you will have “fruit (reward) that abounds to your account” (Phil. 4:15 and 2 Cor. 9:6)

God has promised that your labor will not be in vain in the Lord (1Cor. 15:58). The soul winner will not rejoice alone – all of heaven will rejoice with him when he receives the “crown of rejoicing” (John 4:36)

- 5) **The Crown of Righteousness (2 Tim. 4:5-8):** 5) But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 6) For I am already being poured out as a drink offering and my departure is at hand. 7) I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. 8) Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Notes: The “crown of righteousness” is a reward, and it is not to be confused with the “righteousness of God” which the believer receives when he becomes a Christian; for at that time, the believer is to “become the righteousness of God in Him” 2 Cor. 5:21). This saving righteousness is a gift to be accepted by the lost. The “crown of righteousness” is a reward to be earned by the saved. If the believer looks for, and loves the doctrine of the second coming of Christ, it will affect his whole life. Look at the dynamic impact this truth had on the life of the apostle Paul. He could say:

- a) **“I have fought the good fight”** (verse 7, also 1 Cor. 15:32). He fought a spiritual battle throughout his Christian life, and won. He never surrendered to the enemies of righteousness (Eph 6:12).
 - b) **“I have finished the race.”** He had a race to run. And he did not detour the hard places; neither did he look back (Luke 9:61, 62). He finished his race with his eyes fixed on Christ (Phil. 1:6)
 - c) **“I have kept the faith.”** He preached the “whole counsel of God” – never betraying any of the great doctrines (Acts 20:24-31). The apostle looked ahead to the “judgment seat of Christ” where the “crown of righteousness” will be given to those “who have loved His appearing.” How important it is for the believer to look with a heart of love for the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that he may receive the “crown righteousness” (verse 8).
- 6) **The Crown of Glory (1 Peter 5:2-4):** 4) and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive crown of glory that does not fade away.

Notes: The “crown of glory” is a special reward for the faithful, obedient, God-called pastor. He will receive this reward when the “Chief Shepherd appears.” It is eternal; it “does not fade away.” Every believer may share in the pastor’s “crown of glory.” He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward” (Matt. 10:41). Support your faithful, God-called pastor by praying for him and encouraging him in the work of the Lord. Under gird his ministry with God’s tithes and your offerings (Mal. 3:10 OT) giving freely of your time to the service of the Lord. And God will reward you for supporting His chosen servant by allowing you to share in your pastor’s reward. The pastor will earn this “crown of glory by:

- a) **Feeding the church.** He is to proclaim the Word of God without fear or favor; and, when necessary, he will “convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” 2 Tim. 4:2-5).
- b) **Taking spiritual oversight of the church.** The pastor is responsible to God for the message preached to his people. No pastor should preach to please the people; he is to please this Lord (Gal. 1:10)
- c) **Being an example to the church.** He is not to serve for the reward of money. Yet, the church is responsible to care for his every material need (1 Tim. 5:18). He is the spiritual

leader, and not a dictator. He is to walk with God by faith. “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”