

REWARDS OF CHRISTIANS

1 Corinthians 11:28, *"Let a man examine himself, and so eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."* (verses 31-32) *"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."*

There is a wonderful portion of Scripture, found in 2 Corinthians 5 which I often use during a funeral service. Verses 1 through 11 reads, *"Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ...(**appear without disguise**)...that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience."*

Some Christians have the idea that the Judgment Seat of Christ will be like Christmas morning where we all receive wonderful gifts from the Lord. They have the opinion that God will be like some kind of Santa Claus, handing out these fantastic gifts.

This judgment, which takes place in heaven, will involve every Christians. We will all stand before Jesus Christ and give an account of our lives to Him. This judgment involves the **gaining**, or **loss**, of eternal rewards. The "*Judgment Seat of Christ*" is not concerning our "*salvation*," but, rather it will concern **REWARDS** for what we have done for Christ.

The Greek word which is used here for the judgment is "**Bema**," and is derived from the wreath given to the victorious athlete after a tournament of some kind or other. It is his prize which he receives for winning some contest.

EVERY CHRISTIAN WILL HAVE HIS LIFE JUDGED BY CHRIST ON THE BASIS OF HIS WORKS!

Christians whose life reveal true spiritual gold and silver (that is: the development of the "*Fruit of Spirit*") will receive eternal rewards in Heaven!

1 Corinthians 3:13-15, speaking of Christians states that *"his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."*

Christians who have built their lives on *shoddy material*, likened to grass, hay or straw, will have their "**works**" burned up and will not receive any rewards.

What are the Christians rewards?

To "*rule and reign with Christ*" during the Millennium is part of the Christians rewards. Every believer has an opportunity to qualify for a blessed position of leadership in the world to come by his **obedience** to Christ in this life.

God promises that Jesus Christ would rule as King of kings - literally in this world, and that "*David will rule as Prince in Jerusalem.*" God also promises that the twelve Apostles will rule over the twelve tribes of Israel and that we Christians will be given positions of ruling with Him over various cities throughout the world. God's Word tells us that leadership during the Millennium will be given to those who are found "**faithful.**" Positions will be given as a reward to those whose spiritual life has reflected the Fruit of the Spirit . . . the true **gold and silver** of living.

As far as one's salvation, we are saved by faith in the blood of Christ when we confess our sins and accept Christ as our Savior, however, rewards are given as a right to rule and reign with Christ.

We will appear before Judgment of Christ!

Christ's rule on earth will be a **HIERARCHY OF REWARDS** to His saints. "*Salvation*" is based solely on the atoning work of Jesus Christ, but "**rewards**" are given to the faithful who follow Lord in obedience and holiness to be enjoyed forever.

A pastor was preparing a sermon one late Saturday evening, he fell asleep and had a dream. He dreamt that he was at the Judgment Seat of Christ and the recording angel revealed to him which of his works had been done for Christ - and which one's had not been done for Christ. The angel showed him the following:

11 - parts of his works had been "bigotry" (intolerance of others)
22 - parts of his works had been for personal Ambition
19 - parts of his works had been for the love of praise
15 - parts of his works had been because of pride of denomination
14 - parts of his works had been pride of own talents
<u>12</u> - parts of his works had been his love of authority
93 parts of his works had been, " wood, hay, and stubble "

The purpose of this "bema" judgment, is not punishment, but, rather, it is to reveal the hidden motives of the heart, "*to bring to light the hidden things of the heart.*" Here God will expose all the inner motives of the heart.

We hear of the great works of some individual and we think "*their rewards will be great in heaven.*" We hear of a meeting with an evangelist where hundreds of souls were saved and we think of this evangelist's reward, however, God remembers the mother who prayed, the faithful Sunday School teacher who taught, and everyone else who had any effect upon those who came to God. God knows it all and is keeping a record. And, in that eternal day, God will reward those who have been faithful to Him. Along with reapers are those who sowed . . . those who watered . . . those who labored for God in His vineyard.

Romans 14:10-13 teaches, "*You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' So then, each of us will give an account of him- self to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.*"

We will all give account of our stewardship, our relationships and our actions.

A man who was a millionaire asked his brother, who was a builder, to build a house for him and that he was not to spare any cost but use the best of materials and build the best house he knew how to build. The brother, who was the contractor, thought to himself, "*Now's my chance to make a lot of money, I'll cut corners on this house wherever I can. I'll use cheap, shoddy materials and charge my bother top dollar for expensive materials. He'll never know the difference until it is too late.*" However, when the house was completed the millionaire said to his brother, "*This house is my gift to you. I had you build it so that I could give it to you as a present. I want you to have it.*" The builder could only reply to himself, "*Oh, if I could do it all over again.*"

Down here on earth the truth concerning the material one is building his life out of may not be known, but **up there**, all will be revealed. God speaks of "*the fire that shall try every man's works!*" Scripture tells us that Christ's eyes, "*as flames of fire*" will judge every man. The fire of Christ's eyes will consume all the wood, hay and stubble. All that will stand after the Judgment Seat of Christ will be the gold, silver, and precious stones. Scriptures says, "***he shall suffer loss!***"

We sing songs like, "*No tears, no tears up there,*" "*All will be glory by and by*" and, "*If I can just make it.*" But, that's not the way it will be at all. There will be tears in heaven. There will be some agony up there - Christians agonizing over "*what might have been.*"

There is a story of a couple who built a mansion of their dreams. They had material imported from all over world. But, just as they were ready to move in, it caught fire and it all went up in smoke. One can only imagine the agony they went through. When everything they thought they would enjoy for a lifetime, went up in smoke in a moment's time. That is the kind of agony that many Christians will witness at this "bema" seat of Christ.

Someone says, "*Doesn't the Bible say that God will wipe all tears away?*" **YES!** the Bible does say that in Revelation 21:4, however, we must remember that this verse speaks of a time that is on the other side of the millennium . . . after sinners are cast into lake of fire . . . after the earth has been made new . . . after the former things have passed away and all things become new . . . a time that is at least 1007 years after the rapture of the church.

Of course, there will be no unhappiness in heaven, however, everyone's happiness will be adjusted *according to their capacity*, which is being settled now according to our faithfulness in this life. We cannot build our life any old way we chooses and then expect to not to suffer loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Some Christians seem to have the idea that it is "*humble*," is to say, "*Well, I really don't care if get any rewards or not, just so I get to heaven to be with Jesus.*" But these rewards and not to parade around heaven and say, "*See what I have*," but, rather, they are to be able to place them down before Christ, in order to glorify Him.

Many Christians today live as though they have lost sight of heavenly rewards. We have all heard the saying, "*Someone is so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good.*" That certainly is true sometimes, however, the opposite can also be true, "*One can be so earthly minded that they are of no heavenly good!*"