

## Salvation and Reward

by H. A. Ironside

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There are two lines of truth very clearly distinguished in Scripture which are often confounded by those who do not read discriminatingly and who are not given to "rightly dividing the Word of Truth." I refer to the subjects, "Salvation by Grace" and "Reward for Service." To the casual reader of the New Testament it sometimes seems as though there is apparent contradiction, when in one place we are distinctly told that we are saved by grace alone, apart from works, whereas, in another, we are just as clearly told that we are to be rewarded according to our works. It is only as we learn the mind of the Spirit in regard to these two very different lines of teaching that the soul is set free from self-occupation and given to know the blessedness of peace with God, on the ground of pure grace, thus leaving one free to serve in the happy knowledge that the sin question is forever settled, but that service is the outflow of a grateful heart to the One who has redeemed us, and yet that He, in His wondrous loving-kindness, takes note of everything we do for Him, and will reward accordingly.

At the very outset it may be well to link together a number of scriptures which present these various phases of truth. In Romans 4:3-5 we read:

"For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Here we learn that, just as Abraham was accounted righteous before God on the ground of faith alone, so to-day we who believe are justified from all our ungodliness the moment we trust in Christ. Were it otherwise, were it necessary that we should prove ourselves worthy in order to be saved, our salvation would not be of grace, for we would be putting God in our debt. If salvation is a reward for service, then, clearly, God would owe it to the one who faithfully performed whatever service He

demanded, to save that soul in exchange for the good deeds done. This, of course, would not be grace. How different is the principle on which we are justified! It is "to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly." Nothing can be clearer than this, and yet how many have stumbled over it.

Now let us link with this Ephesians 2:8-10:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Here again we have the precious truth manifested, that salvation is altogether of grace through faith; that is, through believing the testimony that God has given. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Therefore even the faith by which we are saved is in no sense of ourselves; it is God's gift, for it is not until He gives a testimony that we can believe; but when that testimony comes home to us in the power of the Holy Spirit and we put our trust in it, we are saved. This leaves no place whatever for works as a procuring cause of salvation. Were it otherwise, there would be ground for boasting. If I could obtain a place in Heaven because of my devotion to Christ down here, I would have good reason to congratulate myself for all Eternity upon that very devotion which had led to so blessed a result. But no saint in Heaven will ever give himself credit for anything he has ever done. The song of all the redeemed will be, "Unto Him that loveth us and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, be glory and honor, dominion, and power and might forever and ever." And yet, in the tenth verse of our passage, we are just as distinctly told that we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works; that is, we did not enter the new creation through good works, but having been brought into this new creation by faith, it is now incumbent upon us, as obedient children, to walk in righteousness before God, living in good works which God has pre-appointed to characterize those who are saved.

In 1 Corinthians, chapter 3, the apostle tells us of the testing which evidently takes place at the judgment-seat of Christ. Notice verses 11 to 15:

"For other foundation can no man lay than 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."

According to this passage, every believer is a workman building upon the foundation already laid, which is Jesus Christ. His work may be according to the Spirit, likened unto gold, silver and costly stones, or according to the flesh, and likened unto wood, hay, stubble. The day of manifestation will reveal what is of God and what is not. For that work which abides reward will be given, but that which does not abide will disappear in the cleansing fires of judgment, and for the wasted time the believer will suffer loss. His salvation, however, is not in question. He would not appear at this scene of testing if he were not already saved. The destruction of his works does not touch this question. Though everything should be burned up, he, himself, shall be saved, yet so as by fire.

Another helpful passage in this connection is found in Hebrews 10:35,36:

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."

It is to persons already saved that the exhortation comes: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward." This same principle was true in olden times, for we read in chapter 11, of Israel's great leader, that,

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures

in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."

There can be no question but that Moses was already a quickened soul, a child of God, in whom justifying faith dwelt, when he made his great renunciation and gave up a throne for a wilderness tent, for his eye discerned and his heart was set upon the reward in eternal ages, reserved for the one who put the testimony of God before personal comfort and convenience.

A kindred verse is found in Second John, verse 8:

"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

No believer can lose his salvation, for that is not in his keeping. We are told this distinctly in John 10:27-29:

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me:

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.

My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."

But we may lose at least a portion of our reward.

There are two verses in the Book of Revelation which fit together beautifully in this connection. In chapter 3:11 the Lord announces His near return, saying:

"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

In chapter 22: 12 He says:

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

These two verses make one thing very clear, which forms the basis of a most interesting and helpful study for our encouragement and warning. The reward spoken of in the latter passage is evidently synonymous with the *crown* of the other.

Any one can readily see, by turning to the word "crown" in a critical or analytical Bible Concordance, that there are two words

so translated in the New Testament. One is literally "diadem," and refers to the regal circlet worn by a king or emperor. This is the word used in Rev. 12, 13 and 19. In the first instance the Great Red Dragon, "that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan," is seen wearing seven diadems. He is the prince of this world. Then we see the wild-beast of chapter 13—the coming prince of Dan. 9—wearing ten diadems. This is Satan's Man, who will some day arise and will accept the offer that our blessed Lord indignantly spurned when shown all the kingdoms of earth and promised their rulership if He would worship the Adversary. In chapter 19 the descending Lord Himself comes to take the kingdom, and "upon His head are many diadems." He is to rule as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The other word—"stephanos" from which the name "Stephen" comes—is, literally, a victor's wreath. It refers to the chaplet or laurel or other leaves placed upon the brow of the triumphant athlete in the games of old, or the golden band worn upon the head of the victorious general as he marched in triumph through the city amid the plaudits of the people. Subject kings wore a crown of this character in contrast to the imperial diadem. When the soldiery mocked Jesus they put upon Him a crown—or, *stephanos*—of thorns, the fruit of the curse. Yet He was indeed the Victor, even in the hour of His apparent defeat, and He is now "crowned with glory and honor," as He sits at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

"His be the Victor's Name  
Who fought the fight alone,  
Triumphant saints no honor claim,  
His conquest was their own.

By weakness and defeat  
He won the meed and crown,  
Trod all our foes beneath His feet  
By being trodden down."

And He, the Overcomer whom the Father Himself has crowned, is the Judge of the contests in which His saints are engaged, and will in due time sit upon the *Bema*—the judgment-seat—and give to the overcomers the crowns they have won in the conflict with sin. We have a list of the heroes of faith who have fought and overcome in Heb. 11, and in chapter 12 we read,

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (vers. 1,2).

"Bless, bless the Conqueror slain;  
Slain in His victory;  
He lived, He died, He lives again,  
For thee, His Church, for thee."

We likewise are running a race and for us as for Him there is a crown at the end. It is of this the apostle Paul writes when he speaks of

### **"An Incorruptible Crown,"**

in 1 Cor. 9:24. He has been speaking of service—of his own call to preach the gospel—of the importance of faithfully fulfilling his ministry; and then he uses the striking illustration of these closing verses:

"Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain."

It is not salvation of which he speaks. We do not obtain the gift of God—eternal life—by diligence, or by "running."

"It is not of him that willed, nor of him that runner, but of God that shower mercy" (Rom. 9:16).

But we are, as Christians, running a race—we are contending in the arena—and for the victors there are fairer crowns than ever were bestowed on the winners in the Olympic games or on the battle-fields of earth. Let us then see to it that we so run that we may obtain the reward.

In the next verse he goes on to remind them that "every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." The youth who would win the race is careful to subdue his natural appetites, to "train down" to the proper weight, to hold himself in check lest by self-indulgence on any line he unfit himself for the contest.

"Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible."

In a few hours the laurel wreath will fade or the metallic circle tarnish and corrode. We are striving for an imperishable prize, a crown that is incorruptible.

All believers who die will be raised in the first resurrection to incorruptibility (as 1 Cor. 15 assures us), but the incorruptible crown is the prize for faithfully running the Christian race. It is the Master's "Well Done!" at the end of the course.

With such a reward in view, what an incentive do I have for holy living — for self-denying devotion to Christ. Into this Paul himself fully entered. He says;

"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 into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

This last word is the negative form of the word that means "approved." It means therefore "disapproved," or "rejected."

The apostle covets above all else the Lord's approval. He would receive the victor's incorruptible wreath at the hands of Him who once wore the crown of thorns. With this in view he will not permit the body to be master. He will hold its tendencies in check that he may not by any possibility bring dishonor on his Lord's name through any carnal indulgence, and so miss His approbation at last.

How many a one has preached to others who has been set aside as a servant and—in some instances—proves utterly unworthy even to bear the name of Christian because he has not held his body under but has given way to fleshly lusts and passions which war against the soul.

To preach well is but to increase one's condemnation if one does not live well. Like the clean beasts of old, mouth and foot must agree, speech and walk must both be according to godliness, if one would win the crown.

The race may seem long, and the way rough and difficult, but the reward is sure for him who keeps his eye on Christ and follows

on in the footprints He has left on the wilderness road. To save one's life is to lose it. To lose it now for His name's sake is to keep it unto life eternal, and thus to win the incorruptible crown.

### **"The Crown of Rejoicing"**

In 1 Thessalonians the Second Coming of our Lord occupies the prominent place. It may be said to be the theme of the epistle. In some aspect it is referred to in every chapter. In chapter 1 we read of the Thessalonian believers that they had

"Turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven."

Waiting for the Son—and serving while they wait! What blessed and holy occupation was theirs! May it be ours too.

In chapter 3 (for I pass over chapter 2 for the moment) they were exhorted to holiness of life in view of "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

The "blessed hope" is a purifying hope, and an incentive to godly living. "Every man," we are told, "that hath this hope in Him (or, set on Him) purifieth himself even as He is pure."

The rapture—the order of events when the Lord descends to call away His saints—is unfolded most preciously in chapter 4, while in chapter 5 we have perfect sanctification reached at last at "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 23).

But what of chapter 2? In that particular section the apostle is writing of his own service and the ministry of his fellow-laborers in view of this glorious event. He thinks of the Lord's return as the time of manifestation and reward—the time when the servant's works will all be examined and pronounced upon by the Lord Himself. It will be then that the results of his own years of toil and travail will be fully made known. Of this he is assured: the souls he has led to Christ will be a cause for thanksgiving then. So he writes—and to his own converts, be it noted—

"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."

He speaks in a similar strain in Phil. 4:1:



"My brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown."

They too were the fruit of his ministry, and, like the Corinthians, the seal of his apostleship in the Lord.

How sweet and tender the relationship between the minister of the Word and those he has led to Christ! And when I write "minister of the Word," I do not mean one in a clerical office, or some official position, but any believer who ministers the truth of the gospel to another and so leads him to Christ.

Those thus saved through our testimony will be to us a crown of rejoicing in that day. To see them safe in the glory, singing the praises of the Lamb who redeemed them, and then to realize that in some sense they are there because of our testimony in weakness while on earth, what a wreath of joy that will be! We shall indeed be crowned with gladness!

Rutherford knew something of this when, on looking back from his dying bed to the scene of his former labors he gave utterance to the beautiful words which have been embalmed in poetry by Mrs. Cousins:

"Oh, Anwoth by the Solway,  
To me thou still art dear;  
E'en from the verge of heaven  
I drop for thee a tear.

Oh, if *one soul* from Anwoth  
Meet me at God's right hand,  
My heaven will be two heavens  
In Immanuel's land."

Yes, one soul—saved from going down to the pit, plucked as a brand from hell, pulled out of the fire, as Jude puts it—will be for the one used to his deliverance a veritable doubling of the joys of heaven. What will it mean for one like Paul who won thousands to Christ? What for every God-raised-up evangelist who has been the means of the salvation of vast numbers of men and women through the preached Word?

But as intimated above it is not only those divinely called to preach who may win this crown. We are all called to witness for Christ, to seek to win others to know Him "whom to know is life

eternal." And it is written in the Word, "he that winneth souls is wise." Oh, to have the wisdom that will enable us to turn many to righteousness!

Soul-winning is not, in itself, an arbitrary gift. It is something that may be cultivated by exercise and communion with God. He fits us for such blessed and honorable service.

The first requisite is to realize the need of men, their lost condition. Have you ever asked God to give you to feel the appalling need of the unsaved all around you? And has He answered by burdening you for their souls? Then continue to look to Him for the message. He will give holy boldness, tender compassion, wisdom in presenting the truth, and grace to persist in spite of rebuffs. The joy of seeing one poor sinner changed into a saint will amply repay all the toil and exercise here on earth, and at the Lord's return the crown of rejoicing will be your eternal reward.

"Go on, go on, there's all  
Eternity to rest in,  
And far too few are on the  
Active Service List;  
No labor for the Lord is  
Risky to invest in,  
But nothing will make up  
Should His 'Well Done' be missed."

And let us not forget the other side. It is written, "He that withholdeth corn the people shall curse him." The unsaved may not relish being spoken to now. But a day will come when they will blame us if we passed them by without a warning word or a kindly message of grace. We have the food for which they are dying. We knew they are doomed without the gospel. And shall we selfishly and coldly leave them to die without an honest endeavor to awaken them to a sense of their need and make them realize a Saviour's love?

Will not the remembrance of such unfaithfulness make us "ashamed before Him at His coming?"

"Must I go and empty-handed,  
Thus my dear Redeemer meet?  
Not one sheaf with which to greet Him,

Lay no trophy at His feet?"

It need not be. Each one may in his measure be a winner of souls, and thus gain a crown of rejoicing in that day of all days so soon to dawn. What is needed is willingness to be used. Someone has said, "God has wonderful things to display if He could only get the show-cases." Paul was such a "show-case;" "that in me," he says, "Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering." Oh, may we too—you and I, my reader— be used to display the grace of Christ to a lost world and to attract men to Himself. Such will be our joy and crown when He returns to reckon with His servants.

### **"The Crown of Righteousness"**

2 Timothy 4 is a marvelous chapter to have been penned by a worn old man in a Roman death-cell, just waiting for the summons to the last act of a martyrdom that had already lasted half of an ordinary life-time. It was probably written from an underground dungeon in the Mamertine Prison. After a few years' liberty following his first imprisonment, Paul had been re-arrested and sentenced to death for the fearful crime of preaching "another King, one Jesus!" His had been a life of almost incredible hardships for the gospel's sake and now his sun seemed to be setting in a night of darkness and unrelieved gloom.

But the aged apostle did not so consider it. Whatever the then-present sufferings he saw the glory beyond. And his valedictory letter to his companion in many journeys and conflicts ends with a note of triumph such as this world has seldom heard.

"I am now ready to be offered," he exclaims—thinking of himself as a victim about to be placed on the altar of sacrifice—"and the time of my departure is at hand." The word for "departure" is "exodus," the same word used by Peter in his second epistle (1:15), where it is translated "decease." For these men of God death was not a lapsing into unconsciousness, but a "going-out" of the body in order to be "present with the Lord."

Looking back over his long record, Paul can say without affectation:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have

kept the faith."

It was not merely that he had fought well. Undoubtedly he had. But he would leave the Lord to say that. What he says is that the fight in which he had been engaged was the good cause—in opposition to the evil. The definite article brings this out more clearly than the indefinite as in the Authorized Version.

And now what of the future? Ah, he sees all bright ahead!

"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 that love His appearing!"

May we not say that this last expression gives us the secret of Paul's devotion to the cause of righteousness. He loved—loved passionately—the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ; therefore he could count all else but dross that he might win Christ's approval in that day of manifestation.

All believers are "made the righteousness of God in Christ." To every one who has trusted Him He is Jehovah Tsidkenu, "The Lord our Righteousness."

But the crown of righteousness is the reward—as distinguished from "the gift of righteousness"—which will adorn the brow of every one who has manifested by a life of practical righteousness and devotion to the Saviour's interests in this world, that he truly loved the appearing of our Lord Jesus.

"Every man that hath this hope in Him [or set on Him, i.e., on the Coming One], purifieth himself even as He is pure."

Nothing is so conducive to a life of integrity before God and uprightness before men as an abiding sense in the soul of the near coming of the Lord. He who truly waits for God's Son from heaven will be found serving the living and true God day by day. To profess to hold the doctrine of the pre-millennial coming of Christ is one thing. To be really held by it is quite another. He whose life is unrighteous, whose spirit is worldly, whose outlook on life is carnal and selfish, has never yet learned to love His appearing. Nor will such ever obtain the crown of righteousness in that day. It is alone for those who, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all earth's boasted treasures, live *now*

in view of *then*, because, like Moses, they "have respect unto the recompense of the reward."

Oh, how small and insignificant will the things that worldlings and carnal Christians live for, seem "in that day!" May we then truly so love His appearing as to gladly follow His steps now.

"Unto Thee, the homeless Stranger,  
Outside the camp,  
Forth we hasten, fear no danger,  
Outside the camp.  
Thy reproach, far richer treasure  
Than all Egypt's boasted pleasure;  
Drawn by love that knows no measure,  
Outside the camp."

Then when He returns, what joy unbounded will it be to receive from His pierced hand the crown of righteousness, the evidence of His approval and the recognition of a righteous life.

### **"The Crown of Life"**

The next victor's wreath of which I would speak is the crown of life, concerning which we read in two distinct passages. James 1:12 tells us,

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

And in Rev. 2:10 the Lord comforts the church in Smyrna with the words,

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

It is noteworthy that in each of these passages we have suffering saints in view: children of God exposed to bitter trial, even going to the length of intense, malignant persecution by Satan's emissaries. God could easily hinder these cruel foes; He could quench the fierce flames of affliction; He could turn back these overwhelming floods of sorrow. But He chooses rather to enable His tested ones to overcome in the day of trial than to free them

from trouble. And this not because He takes any delight in the anguish of His distressed people, but because this very tribulation is a means of discipline which results in lasting blessing "to those who are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11). He sits by the fining-pot and watches intently till He sees His own countenance reflected in the melted silver. He walks with His persecuted ones in the furnace, though it be heated seven times more than ordinary. And "He giveth more grace," that they who look to Him may suffer and endure.

Then when the day of manifestation comes He will bestow with His own once-pierced Hand the crown of life, upon all who have fought and overcome.

When afflicted with a thorn in the flesh—"a messenger of Satan" sent to buffet him (lest he should be exalted above measure because of the abundance of the revelation he had received when caught up to the third heaven), Paul tells us he besought the Lord thrice that he might be delivered from the trial. But the answer came, saying in effect: I will not take the thorn out of your flesh, Paul; but I will do something even better for you than that; I will give you grace to bear it, and to glorify Me in it.

"My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness!"

And Paul at once ceases to cry out for deliverance, but exclaims with chastened confidence,

"Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

He was but living out what he elsewhere tells his fellow-saints when he says,

"We glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:3-5).

Our restless hearts would fain cause us to flee from the trial, hoping for better conditions elsewhere, but we are called upon to be strong in the grace of endurance—to suffer in the flesh rather than yield to sin—to be persecuted even to death rather than to

be disobedient to the heavenly vision—to be counted as the offscouring of the earth rather than to court the favor of men by unfaithfulness to Christ.

"Should we to gain the world's applause,  
Or to escape its harmless frown,  
Refuse to countenance Thy cause  
And make Thy people's lot our own,  
What shame would fill us in that day,  
When Thou Thy glory wilt display."

How worth while will it all seem then, to have suffered in patience here, when we shine forth with Him when He comes, wearing the crown of life, the sign of His appreciation and approval! And if regrets are possible in heaven, how will we regret every cowardly effort to escape reproach, or every time that we, in weakness, yielded to temptation, preferring present enjoyment rather than future glory.

But the hope of the crown is not, in itself, incentive enough to keep us from unfaithfulness to Christ in this scene of testing. It is only as He, Himself, is the joy of our hearts and the present portion of our souls that we can resist the siren-lures of this false world, and go on in true devotedness counting all but loss in order that He may be magnified in us. And it is as our hearts are attached to Him *where He is*—up there in the glory of God—that we can spurn this world's empty glory. Some one has truly said, "No one can rightly put this world beneath his feet until he has seen a better world above his head." As we walk in the light of that world we shall indeed be able to sing from the heart,

"We wait for Thee, content to share  
In patience, days of trial;  
So meekly Thou the cross didst bear,  
Our sin, reproach, denial.  
How should not we receive with Thee  
The cup of shame and sorrow  
Until the promised morrow?"

That happy mom draws on apace. The only time we shall ever be permitted "to suffer for His sake," is nearly at an end! Let us then stand fast in the closing hours of the age of grace, assured that He for whom we wait is just at hand, and that the joy will be His as well as ours when we receive, if faithful unto death, the

crown of life. Eternal life is the gift of God, and is ours by faith upon believing. The crown of life is the reward for faithfulness, even though involving physical death.

### **"The Crown of Glory"**

Of another crown we read in 1 Peter 5:1-4. He, who had been specially deputed to feed the lambs and sheep of Christ's flock writes,

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed; feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind, neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Every word in this stirring exhortation is of moment, and may well be carefully weighed.

Note first of all that Peter though one of the chiefest apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one to whom a special revelation and particular mission had been given, claims no authoritative place over other servants of Christ. He is "also an elder." That is, he writes of himself as a "co-presbyter"—one with his fellow-presbyters. *If Peter was the first Pope it is clear that he never knew it.* He does not write as "the Holy Father" to whom others are in duty bound to be subject, but he exhorts his fellow-elders, as being himself one of their company.

It is true he had been privileged beyond most if not all of them. He had known the Lord, had companied with Him during His earthly ministry and had known Him after His resurrection. He had seen Him die—He was a witness (not a partaker) of His sufferings. He would share in the soon-coming glory.

Remembering the words of the risen Saviour, spoken so long ago that morning by the seaside, "Feed My lambs, shepherd My sheep," he passes on the exhortation to his brethren engaged in the work of ministering to the people of the Lord. Observe he bids them, "Feed the flock of God"—not, "Fleece the flock." Nothing can be more reprehensible than to think of a Christian



church or assembly of believers as owing a living to the preacher or teacher who imparts the Word of life to them. He who thinks of the "ministry" as "one of the learned professions" and a mere means of livelihood, is on low ground indeed. The true minister of Christ is a man with a shepherd's heart who loves the flock and cares for them for the sake of Him who bought them with His blood. That they have responsibility to him is plain, but he looks not to them but to the Lord for his support.

And be it noted, the elders are not set over the flock (though indeed they are "over them in the Lord") but they are told to "feed the flock of God which is among you." It is true they are to lead the sheep, as in Hebrews 13:17, where we read,

"Obey them that have the rule over you (or, literally, that guide you), and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

In the assembly of God, if things are as they should be, there will be neither clerical pretension on the one hand nor anarchy on the other. The Christian company is a brotherhood where each should have in view the best interests of all the rest, and where all the gifts given by the great Head of the Church may be freely exercised for the blessing of the whole Church.

To some is given in a special way the service of oversight, and such are bidden to care for the rest not as by constraint, but willingly; that is, not as being pressed into a position from which a lowly man might well shrink but as gladly serving for Christ's sake, and although those who give their whole time to the ministry of the Word are to subsist upon what grateful saints gladly give (as unto the Lord) they are not to be controlled by covetousness, nor to serve for "filthy lucre."

Neither are they to "lord it over possessions." Notice that the word "God's" is in italics. The warning is really against regarding the saints as their own allotted portion.

Men speak (thoughtlessly often, no doubt) of "my church," or "my congregation," but this is practically to deny and to forget that it is "His church" and "the congregation of the Lord," to which they may be called to minister.

It has been pointed out often that the word for "heritage" is *kieros*, from which we get our word "clergy." And here, paradoxical as it may seem, *the laymen are the clergy!* All God's people are His clergymen, according as it is written, "The Lord's portion is His people."

What a solemn thing then to lord it over such! But how grateful such should be and how responsive to those who feed them as Christ's under-shepherds who are called upon not only to minister the Word but to be examples (or models of behavior) to the flock.

Alas, that oft-times they find this a most thankless service. Their most earnest labors are frequently quite unappreciated and they can say with Paul, "The more abundantly I love you, the less I [am] loved." But the "pay-day" is coming! When the Chief Shepherd shall be manifested a crown of glory awaits every faithful servant who has cared for His lambs and sheep during His absence. The glory of this age passes away but the crown of glory is unfading and eternal.

Often, down here, the faithful servant is called on to bear reproach and shame, to have his good evil-spoken of, and his motives impugned. Men would crown him with thorns, as they cruelly did to the Good Shepherd Himself—but even as He is now "crowned, with glory and honor," so shall they who follow Him be, in that day.

"Go, labor on; spend and be spent;  
Thy joy to do the Master's will,  
It is the way the Saviour went,  
Should not the saved one tread it still?"

Then, when called to His judgment-seat to give an account of the souls committed to his care, how will the true under-shepherd rejoice as he hears the "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" Then shall the unfading glory-crown encircle the head that often ached because of ingratitude and lack of appreciation here on earth, and the unchanging brilliance of the wreath that tells of divine appreciation will cover the brow that once was worn with care.

**Striving Lawfully**

Having noticed the various names given to the crowns of reward, I would now desire to emphasize some exhortations and warnings in regard to them which we find in the New Testament.

We have already touched on the possibility of being disapproved at last if not careful to walk before God in self-judgment, keeping the physical appetites in subjection (1 Cor. 9:27). And we have glanced also at 2 John 8:

"Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

It is self-evident then, that the reward is forfeitable, though eternal life is not. How then may we, perchance, labor in vain and fail of the proffered crown?

Let us notice 2 Tim. 2:5:

"And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully."

...Here is a principle that is both important and far-reaching. The illustration is plain. In the athletic contests of the Greeks and Romans, as amongst us to-day, there were certain recognized demands to which each contestant must conform. A youth might be strong and vigorous, and display great prowess and ability, but if he failed to go by the rules of the game he was disqualified, and could not receive the victor's wreath.

At the celebrated revived Olympian games held at Stockholm, Sweden, some years ago, a young Indian, James Thorpe, excelled all others in a number of contests of strength and skill. He won many medals and was the envy of scores of white athletes, who tried in vain to defeat him. When the King of Sweden bestowed the prizes upon him he took him by the hand and exclaimed, "You, sir, are the greatest amateur athlete in the world to-day!" It was a moment to be proud of, and the Indian could be excused if a feeling of gratified elation filled his breast at such a time. But after his return to America certain men began an investigation into his past. Finally they discovered that one summer, while still a student in a Government School, Thorpe had played on a village baseball team for a few dollars a week. This fact disqualified him from entering an amateur contest. When it was put before the King, he had to write to the Indian demanding the

return of his trophies. The poor lad was nearly heart-broken, but he sent all back and wrote a straightforward letter in which he begged His Majesty not to think too hardly of him, reminding the King that he was "an ignorant Indian boy," and did not know he was violating any rule in entering the games after having taken money for sport. But his ignorance of the requirements could not save him from losing his wrongly-bestowed honors. While no kindly person could feel other than sympathetic to Thorpe, yet all had to acknowledge the righteousness of the King's ruling.

And so will it be with those who are seeking after an incorruptible crown. The rewards will only be for those who "strive lawfully," who "have observed the rules" laid down in the Word of God.

There may be great self-denial, intense devotion, and deep earnestness, while after all one's entire program of life and service may be thoroughly unscriptural. Therefore the need of knowing the Bible and "going by the Book." Much that passes for Christian service to-day is merely fleshly activity. Much that is dignified as "Church work" is thoroughly opposed to the divine revelation as to the Church and its responsibilities. Much that is counted as evidence of spirituality is simply natural refinement, and in no sense the result of the inworking of the Spirit of God. Much that is "highly esteemed among men" is an "abomination in the sight of God."

The service which will meet His approval, and which will be rewarded at the judgment-seat of Christ, is that which is of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the Word of God. Nothing else will stand the test.

Men may weary themselves in seeking to "build up the cause," as it is called, and may display most commendable faithfulness to "principles" which they believe to be sound and right, only to find "in that day" that time and labor have gone for nought because they had no "Thus saith the Lord" to warrant the efforts they have put forth. Our thoughts will not change God's Word.

It is of primary importance that the laborer devote much time to the prayerful conscientious study of his Bible, in order that his mind may be directed by the Truth, and that he may thus learn to readily detect what is contrary to sound instruction.

Otherwise he may have to look back with regret on wasted energies and wasted years that might all have been devoted to the glory of Christ, but were devoted to the building up of some unscriptural system instead, and therefore will be consumed when "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

The apostle did not want to "run in vain" nor "labor in vain." Nor should we. Rather let us seek to make every day count for God as we pray: "Order my steps in Thy Word."

"Respect for the Reward"

But shall we work with reward in view? Is not this selfish? Is it not better to ignore this matter altogether and to work alone for Christ? These are questions often asked and not to be lightly turned aside.

Surely we would not have so many exhortations to see to it that we do not lose our reward if the Holy Spirit did not intend that we should have the crowns in view. Of Moses we read that,

"By faith he, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he HAD RESPECT unto the RECOMPENSE of the REWARD" (Heb. 11:24-26).

He weighed what Egypt could offer over against what God by His Word had promised to His people, and all Egypt's glory seemed lighter than air in comparison with the praise of God. Nor was it selfishness that thus led him to have "respect unto the recompense of the reward." He knew that God is glorified, as His people learn to esteem His favors in the right light.

Years ago, after the present writer had been speaking along the lines of truth indicated in these papers, a modest Christian woman came up to him and asked, "Am I to understand that you are working for reward, that you are looking forward to receiving a crown?" "Yes," was the reply; "I should rejoice indeed to be crowned by Him whose servant I am, in that day." "Well," she exclaimed, "I am disappointed in you! I hoped you labored unselfishly out of pure love for Christ, and not with any expectation of reward. For myself, I only desire to please *Him*,

and I am not at all interested in the crowns." "But, Madam," she was asked, "do you recall what we are to do with the crowns if we are so happy as to win them?" Instantly her face changed. "Oh," was the answer, "I had not thought of that! It does say somewhere—doesn't it?—that they cast their crowns at His feet!" "Yes, that is it! And how sad it would be to have no crown in that day. You see we do not—we shall not—take any credit to ourselves for work performed, for service rendered here on earth; for when we have done all, we can but say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do;' but we shall cast our crowns adoringly at His once-pierced feet as we join in the song of praise, 'Tis Thou who art worthy, Lord Jesus. 'Tis Thou!'" Her eyes filled with tears as she softly said, "I should indeed want a crown for that glorious occasion. I have been mistaken. I shall seek to labor for Him in view of the reward." And surely every blood-bought one instructed out of the Word will echo her sentiment.

It is well to remember how, while on earth, He was in the *habit* of saying (as the tense actually implies), "It is more blessed to give than to receive." So it will add to His joy to be able to bestow upon His victorious saints the rewards which He has prepared beforehand for them. He would have each one to be numbered among those who keep the word of His patience and overcome the world, in order that, having suffered with Him, they may reign with Him in the glory of the coming displayed Kingdom.

When He comes forth to reckon with His servants, and "to see what each one hath gained by trading" with the talents or pounds entrusted to him, it will be His delight to recognize what His grace has wrought in them by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. In honoring them He is really glorifying the Father's name and His own name. Who in that day would be willing to miss His "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" And what satisfaction it will give to the one who has toiled on amid difficulty for Him in the day of His rejection when He says, "Thou hast been faithful in a few things; I will make thee ruler over many."

And yet it is not merely for crowns we labor, but that we may please Him who hath called us to be His soldiers. His approval will make up for all man's misunderstandings and persecutions.

"Therefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be acceptable to Him."

But sometimes we fail to realize how appreciative He is of little things, of hidden devotion, of faithfulness in the daily round. We are too apt to think we must "do some great thing," serve in some public capacity, to earn the victor's wreath. But this is a mistake. He values all that is done out of love for Him whether it be seen of men or not.

I recall a burdened little mother who said to me once, "I cannot win a crown, for I have no opportunity to serve as I would like. In college I had dreams of a life devoted to Christ's work. I was a 'student volunteer' and expected to become a missionary, but about the time I graduated I met Charlie, and soon we were married. That ended my dreams of going out as a herald of the cross. In the years that have past, ill-health, the rearing of six children, and much ill-fortune financially have made it impossible for me to do anything for the Lord, and so I can never win a crown!" But I pointed out that the godly testimony of a devoted wife and mother, the rearing of a family for God, the example of a holy and consistent life—these were in the sight of God of great price, and for these there is sure reward. And so indeed it is. The busiest mother can run the Christian race and thus win the incorruptible crown. The feeblest invalid can help to show someone the way of peace and so obtain the crown of rejoicing. The most poverty-stricken saint can love His appearing and gain the crown of righteousness. The humblest sufferer can be so devoted to Christ as to earn a crown of life. And anyone who in any way ministers to the sheep or lambs of Christ's flock will surely receive the crown of glory when the Chief Shepherd shall appear.

What is needed is heart for Christ. He will use all who are willing to let Him have His way with them. He who has saved by grace will surely reward in that day for the least service done for His own.

And now in closing may I affectionately press upon the Christian reader the Lord's own solemn warning to the Philadelphian church:

"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11).

Observe: *no* one can rob me of my salvation. Of this there is abundant evidence in Scripture. But another may take my crown if I prove faithless to the trust committed to me. Each believer is a servant as well as a son. To each is given some special gift and some particular line of service. It may be of either a public or a private nature. But it is a stewardship committed to him of the Lord, and "it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful." If I do not exercise the ministry allotted to me, in humble dependence on the Holy Spirit that I may fulfil it faithfully, I may be set aside as a servant, and another be called to complete my work. And so I will lose my crown.

We have read of the tract distributor who, becoming discouraged because of apparent lack of appreciation, gave up his lowly service, and learned twenty years after of one saved through a tract given out on the last day in which he did that work, who had taken it up himself as a ministry to needy men and after that long lapse of time met his benefactor and presented him with a tract. As a result a conversation sprang up which showed how the convert had taken the other's place, and the older man exclaimed with regret, "I see: I have let you take my crown!"

Let us remember, God is going to carry on His work in some way and by some instrumentality. May it be ours not to shirk responsibility but to say (and do) with Isaiah,

"Here am I; send me."

—H. A. Ironside

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