

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

29 January 2023

Christian Rewards

How many rewards have you received?

Awards maybe but we do not think about rewards.

Unless we watch westerns, then we know about rewards.

Does God reward those who are obedient to him?

Can we see Christian Living Benefits as rewards?

There are many benefits to an obedient way of life.

Many are things that we avoid and many are things that come our way due to our life style.

The Ten Commandments are to prevent us from living unpleasant circumstances.

Most people see them as limiting life experiences.

They are intended to prevent us from having to live unpleasant life experiences.

They deal with relationships.

The first ones structure our relationship with God the rest structure our relationship with others.

If followed they prevent a lot of strife and unpleasantness.

“They will each be rewarded according to their own labor. . . . If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward.” *1 Cor. 3:8*

Try on this thought: “Living a supernatural life is a blessing not only now but also in the future.”

Let’s look at the difference between the doctrine of salvation for the lost and the doctrine of rewards for the saved.

As we know salvation is by grace, not by works, but rewards are according to the works of the believer.

Salvation is a gift; rewards are earned.

First Corinthians 3:8-15 reveals several truths about rewards.

Every believer will be rewarded according to their own labor.

We are laborers together with God, not for salvation but for service.

We are to build on Christ as our foundation.

We have a choice of two kinds of building materials: gold, silver, and costly stones or wood, hay and straw.

The first kind represents eternal materials; the second represents temporal materials.

Building with eternal materials results in rewards.

Building with temporal materials results in loss at the judgment seat of Christ.

A minister once sat at the bedside of a dying friend.

As the friend talked of going home, tears filled his eyes.

Knowing the man was young in the Lord, the minister thought he was afraid to die and tried to speak words of encouragement to him.

The friend said, “I’m not afraid; I am just ashamed to die.”

Christ was his Savior, but he had to meet him empty-handed.

His life was like “wood, hay, and straw.”

It doesn’t have to be that way.

Christians can live and die crowned with victory.

Sometimes the Christian’s reward is called a prize, but several times it is called a crown.

Five crowns are mentioned in the New Testament.

The crown of life. *James 1:12*

The crown of life is sometimes called “the lover’s crown.”

We find strength to overcome temptation and endure trials through the love of God.

Without his love in our hearts, trials can cause us to become bitter and critical and we lose the crown of life.

This is also the crown that is received for being "faithful unto death."

All believers have eternal life, but not all believers will be rewarded the crown of life.

To receive it, we must love the Lord more than our lives.

We must live for Christ and endure temptations and trials in the power of the love of God.

The crown of rejoicing *1 Thess. 2:19-20*

The crown of rejoicing is called the soul-winner's crown.

The greatest work we are privileged to do for the Lord is to bring others to a knowledge of Christ as personal Savior.

Why win souls?

It is wise to win the lost.

It is a work against sin.

It is cause for joy in heaven.

Every soul-winner will shine as the stars forever.

How do we win souls?

We can win souls by the example we set.

Others can see Christ in us as we respond properly in life situations.

We can lead others to Christ by what we say.

We need to witness verbally for Christ, trusting the Holy Spirit to give us power and proper words.

We can win souls through our giving.

We should give tithes and offerings to support others who are preaching Christ and so have fruit abound to our account.

There is much rejoicing when the lost are saved.

Heaven rejoices, the new believer rejoices, the sower and the reaper rejoice together; and the whole family of God rejoices.

The crown of righteousness *2 Tim. 4:8*

The crown of righteousness is the crown earned by believers who eagerly anticipate the second coming of Christ.

In light of that, Paul could say, "I have fought a good fight."

In the realm of spiritual warfare, Paul won the battle.

He could also say, "I have finished my course."

In the course of travel, there was no detour around hard places.

There was no looking back.

Instead, Paul kept his eyes on Christ.

Finally, he could say, "I have kept the faith."

He preached to all the counsel of God.

The crown of glory. *1 Peter 5:4*

The crown of glory is a special reward for the faithful, obedient, God-called pastor.

The chief Shepherd himself gives it.

It is eternal; it fades not away.

Yet every believer may share in the pastor's crown of glory.

God will reward those who support his chosen servant through prayer and encouragement and giving freely of self and possessions.

The pastor earns this reward by:

Feeding the church.

Taking the spiritual oversight of the church.

Being an example to the church.

Pastors are to walk with God by faith.

They are to be spiritual leaders.

The incorruptible crown *1 Cor. 9:24-25*

This crown is for victorious living.

In the Greek games, the competitors ran for a corruptible crown; in the Christian race, we run for an incorruptible one.

The key to victory is a disciplined life, whether in the Olympic games or in the Christian life. Athletes deny themselves many things their bodies crave. Likewise, Christians must subdue their bodies or else be disqualified for the prize. The New Testament contains guidelines for us to win the crown of victory. We must deny self of anything that would weigh us down and hinder us. We must keep our eyes fixed on Christ. We must find our strength in the Lord. We must place our all on the altar of the Lord. We must, by faith, refuse anything that would impede spiritual progress. There is no way to win this crown and be a spectator in the Christian life. We must enter the race and run to win. In an old legend, an angel was talking with an aged Christian. Going into a great vault, he brought out a beautiful crown with shining jewels of rare value. He said, "This is the crown I designed for you when you were a youth, but you refused to surrender yourself completely to the Lord; now it is gone." From the vault he brought another crown. It was beautiful but not nearly as beautiful as the first one. He said, "This is the crown I designed for your middle age, but you gave those years to indolent discipleship; now it is gone." The angel brought a third crown from the vault. It was just a plain gold crown with no jewels in it. He said, "Here is the crown of your old age. This is yours for all eternity," Every one of us will receive a reward according to our labor.

What will be your reward?

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." *Matt. 5:11-12*

Be steadfast and true, standing firm in the truth.

Great will be your reward on earth and in heaven.