

Rewards



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To the infidel much in the Scriptures seems so inconsistent and inharmonious that he charges them with “abounding in contradictions.” That there should be no variableness or shadow of turning with God, yet that He is frequently said to “repent;” that He claims to be omnipotent and invincible, yet complains “ye have set at nought all My counsel” (Prov. 1:25); that He is love, yet abhors the wicked (Psa. 5:6); that He is of tender mercy, yet has appointed an eternity of torment for all those whose names are not written in the book of life—to mention no others—appear to the sceptic as irreconcilable teachings. To the natural man the Christian life appears to be a mass of bewildering paradoxes. That the poor in spirit and those who mourn should be pronounced happy, that we have to be made fools in order to become wise, that it is when we are weak we are strong, that we must lose our life in order to save it (Matt. 16:25), and that we are bidden to “rejoice with trembling” (Psa. 2:11) transcend his comprehension. Yet none of these things present any insuperable difficulty unto those who are taught of God.

In like manner there is not a little in the teaching of Holy Writ which perplexes the theologian. As he studies and ponders its declarations, one doctrine—for a time, at least—seems to clash with another. If God has predestinated whatsoever cometh to pass, then what room is left for the discharge of human responsibility and free agency? If the Fall has deprived man of all spiritual strength, then how can he be held blameworthy for failing to perform spiritual duties? If Christ died for the elect only, then how can He be offered freely to “every creature?” If the believer be Christ’s “freeman,” then why is he required to take upon him His “yoke?” If he has been set at “liberty” (Gal. 5:1) then how can he be “under the Law” (1 Cor. 9:21). If the believer be preserved by God, then how can his own perseverance be necessary in order to the attainment of everlasting bliss? if he be secure, how can he be in danger? If he has been delivered from the power of darkness

and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, why does he so often have occasion to cry "O wretched man that I am?" If sin does not have dominion over him, why do "iniquities prevail against" him (Psa. 65:3)? Real problems are these.

We have commenced this article thus because the subject which is here to engage our attention seems to many to clash with other articles of the Faith. In ordinary speech the word "reward" signifies the recognition and requital of a meritorious performance, the bestowment of something to which a person is justly entitled. But what can the creature merit at the hands of the Creator, to what—save disapprobation and punishment—is a sinful creature entitled from a holy God? If salvation be "by grace" and eternal life is a "free gift" then what place is left for the recompensing of human effort? Yet whatever difficulties may be involved, the fact remains that Scripture has not a little to say about God's rewarding the obedient and crowning the overcomer. The Dispensationalists (among them most of the so-called "Fundamentalists") have realized there is a knot here, but instead of patiently seeking to untie they have summarily cut it, by asserting that rewards have a place only under the Legal Dispensation and are entirely excluded from the Age of Grace; yet the very Epistles which, as they allow, belong to the present Era, contain many passages postulating "rewards." Verily, "the legs of the lame are not equal" (Prov. 26:7).

Our present subject is by no means a simple one, and certainly it is not suited for a novice to take up and descant upon. Not that the teaching of Scripture thereon is at all obscure or hard to be understood, but rather that much wisdom is needed in the *handling of it*, so as to avoid conveying false impressions, weakening the force of other articles of the Faith, and failing to preserve the balance of the Truth. Very little attention was given to the subject of Divine rewards either by the Reformers or the Puritans (less by the latter than the former)—probably they felt that most of their energies needed to be devoted unto counteracting the evil leaven of Romanism, with its strong emphasis upon creature "merits" and salvation by works. Yet in avoiding one error there is always the

danger of going to the opposite, and even where that is avoided, it is usually at the price of depriving God's children of some portion of their needed and Divinely provided Bread. Whatever be the explanation, the fact remains that our present theme is a much-neglected one for comparatively little has been said or written upon it. We are therefore the more cast back upon God for help.

The servant of God must not suffer the fear of man to muzzle him, as he will if he deems it wisest to remain silent on the subject lest he be charged with "leanings towards Romanism:" *their* very perversion of this truth renders it all the more necessary and urgent that *he* should give a plain and positive exposition of the same. On the other hand, the fact that Papists have so grievously wrested it should warn him that great care needs to be exercised in the way he presents it. He needs to make it crystal clear that it is utterly impossible to bring God under obligation to us or make Him in any wise our Debtor. In like manner it must be shown that the creature cannot acquire any merit by the most self-sacrificing or benevolent deeds he performs. By so doing he will preclude the laying of any foundation for pharisaic pride. Nevertheless, he must see to it that he does not so whittle away the passages holding up "rewards" to believers, as to render them meaningless and valueless, for they are among the motives, encouragements, incentives, and consolations which God sets before His people.

In a brief and incidental statement upon this doctrine Calvin beautifully preserved the balance when in his "Institutes" (book 3, chapter 15) he said: "The Scripture shows *what* all our works are capable of meriting, when it represents them as unable to bear the Divine scrutiny, because they are full of impurity; and in the next place, what would be merited by the perfect observance of the Law, if this could anywhere be found, when it directs us 'when ye have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants' (Luke 17:10), because we shall not have conferred any favour on God, but only have performed the duties incumbent on us, for which no thanks are due. Nevertheless, the good works which the Lord has conferred on us, He denominates our own, and declares that He will not only accept, but also reward

them. It is our duty to be animated by so great a promise, and to stir up our minds that we ‘be not weary in well doing’ (2 Thess. 3:13) and to be truly grateful for so great an instance of Divine goodness.

“It is beyond a doubt, that whatever is laudable in our works proceeds from the grace of God, and that we cannot properly ascribe the least portion of it to ourselves. If we truly and seriously acknowledge this truth, not only all confidence, but likewise all idea of merit, immediately vanishes. We, I say, do not, like the sophists, divide the praise of good works between God and man, but we preserve it to the Lord complete, entire, and uncontaminated. All that we attribute to man is, that those works which were otherwise good are tainted and polluted by impurity. For nothing proceeds from the most perfect man which is wholly immaculate. Therefore let the Lord sit in judgment on the best of human actions, and He will indeed recognize in them His own righteousness, but man’s disgrace and shame. Good works, therefore, are pleasing to God, and not unprofitable to the authors of them; and they will moreover receive the most ample blessings from God as their reward: not because they merit them, but because the Divine goodness has freely appointed them this reward.” Let us attempt to offer some amplification of these excellent remarks.

First, no creature is rewarded by God because he justly deserves what is bestowed upon him, as a hired labourer who has performed his duty is entitled to the wage he receives. For, in this sense, even the angels in heaven are incapable of a reward: according to strict justice, they merit no favour. They are no hirelings, for God has a natural, original, undisputed right in them, as much as He has in the sun, moon and stars; and these, therefore, deserve to be paid for their shining, as much as the angels do for their service. If the angels love God it is no more than He infinitely deserves. Moreover, the angels do not profit God, and so lay Him under no obligation, any more than the birds profit the risen sun by their morning songs or render that luminary under obligation to shine all day upon them. “Can a man be profitable

unto God as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to Him that thou makest thy ways perfect?" (Job 22:2, 3).

It is most essential that this should be insisted upon, more especially in these days, that the Most High may be accorded His due place in our thoughts, His awful majesty, exalted independency and self-sufficiency preserved in their integrity. That the creature may be allotted his proper place: as being not only a creature, but as less than nothing in the sight of Him that gave him being and is pleased to maintain his existence. That the axe may be laid at the very root of self-righteousness. Papists are far from being alone in indulging the flesh-pleasing conceit that even a fallen and sinful creature is capable of performing meritorious deeds, which entitle him to favourable regard by the Lord God. Unless Divine grace has given our pride its death-wound, every one of us secretly cherishes the belief—though we may not be honest enough to openly avow it—that we deserve a reward for our good works; and hence we are apt to think that God would be very hard and severe, if not cruel and unjust, were He to take no notice of our *best* endeavours and damn us because of our sins. "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou seest not?" (Isa. 58:3).

But, second, The fact remains that Scripture abounds in declarations that God has promised to reward the fidelity of His people and compensate them for the sufferings they have endured in His service. "The recompense of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him" (Prov. 12:14). "Whoso despiseth the Word shall be destroyed, but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded" (Prov. 13:13). "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" (Matt. 5:11, 12). "His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many" (Matt. 25:23). "When thou makest a feast call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot

recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just” (Luke 14:13, 14). “Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour” (1 Cor. 3:8). “Whatsoever good things any man doeth the same shall he receive of the Lord” (Eph. 6:8). Now these, and all similar passages, must be allowed their legitimate force and given a due place in our minds and hearts.

The principal difficulty which this subject presents to the thoughtful Christian is, What have I done which is meet for reward? and even though I had, how could reward consist with free grace? The solution to this problem is found in noting the grounds on which God bestows rewards. First, in order to manifest His own excellencies. It is in His office as moral Governor that He exercises this function, in which office He evidences His holiness, goodness and benevolence, as well as His sovereignty and justice. As the Ruler of all it becomes Him to manifest His approbation of righteousness, to put honour upon virtue, and to display the bountifulness of His nature. Though according to strict justice the angels in Heaven deserve nothing at His hands, yet God is pleased to reward their sinless obedience in testimony of His approbation of their persons and service. God rewards them not because they do Him any good, nor because they are entitled to anything from him, but because He delights in that which is amiable and because He would demonstrate to the universe that He is a Friend of all that are morally excellent, He liberally recompenses them. Since they love Him with all their hearts and strength, He deems it fitting that they should be made eternally blessed in the enjoyment of Himself.

Second, in the case of His people who fell in Adam and who have also themselves sinned and come short of the glory of God, they neither merit anything good at His hands, nor is it fitting that their persons and conduct—considered merely as they are in themselves—should be approved; nay, so much corruption still indwells them and so much impurity is attached to all that proceeds from them, that the Divine Law condemns them. Thus it must be on quite a different ground that God considers them suited

to reward. What that is, the Gospel of the grace of God makes known. It is on account of the believer's interest in the righteousness and worthiness of *Christ* that his person and performances are accepted and peculiar favours are shown unto and bestowed upon him. He is "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6), and his consecration (Rom. 12:1), his gifts or benevolences (Phi 4:18) and his worship are "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5); yea, his prayers ascend up before God only because the "much incense" of Christ's merits is added to them (Rev. 8:3, 4).

Third, in showing His approval of the service of His saints God is, at the same time, owning the Spirit's work in them, for it is by His gracious operations and power that they are enabled to perform such service. Thus far all is plain and simple: it is when the good works which God rewards are viewed as the saints' own that many are likely to encounter difficulty. But that difficulty is greatly relieved if it be definitely understood that God's rewarding of our efforts is solely a matter of *bounty* on His part, and not in any wise because we have rendered a *quid pro quo* and have earned the recompense. The reward bestowed upon us is not an acknowledgement that the same was due us by way of debt, but rather is the reward itself given out of pure and free grace. If an earthly parent promises his child the gift of a new Bible when he has correctly memorized the Ten Commandments, that child did not bring his parent under obligation nor did he merit the book: the book is freely given by way of bounty, yet by constituting it a "reward" or "prize" for an effort of memory it became an incentive and inducement to the child to succeed in his task.

Scripture itself makes the distinction between rewards of justice and rewards of bounty, yea it shows how a thing may be, at the same time, *both* a "free gift" and a "reward." "Now to him that worketh [i.e. earns, so that he has ground to be self-complacent, see verse 2] is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt" (Rom. 4:4), which certainly signifies there are two very different kinds of reward, or rather, that they are bestowed on radically different grounds. That a thing may be at the same time

both a free gift and a reward appears by a comparison of Matthew 5:46 and Luke 6:32. In the former Christ asks, “For if ye love them which love you, what *reward* have you?” but in the latter “For if ye love them that love you, what *thank* have you?”—the Greek word (“charis”) here rendered “thank” signifies “favour,” being translated “grace” more than one hundred times. Clearer still is Colossians 3:22-24: “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh...fearing God...knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance”—what can be freer or more unearned than an “inheritance?” yet the eternal inheritance is here styled a “reward” as an incentive to obedience unto God.

The same inheritance which is called a reward in Colossians 3:24 is designated “the purchased possession” in Ephesians 1:14—purchased for the saints by Christ. In like manner, in Romans 6:22 we read “Being now made free from sin and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end [that at which you aim, that which will abundantly compensate your serving of God] everlasting life,” yet in the very next verse that everlasting life is said to be “the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Just as the Saviour exhorted the Jews to “labour—not for the meat which perisheth, but—for that which endureth unto everlasting life,” yet He at once added “which the Son of man shall *give* unto you” (John 6:27). The same apostle who taught that the saints are “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6), hesitated not to say “wherefore we labour [or “endeavour”], whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him” (2 Cor. 5:9); and though he insisted that “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” (Eph. 2:8, 9), he also exhorted his hearers to “labour therefore to enter into” the rest God has promised His people (Heb. 4:11).

John Owen said, “I grant that eternal life may be called the reward of perseverance, in the sense that Scripture uses that word.” After stating it is procured neither as the deserving cause, nor proportioned unto the obedience of them by whom it is attained, but withal the free gift of God and an inheritance

purchased by Jesus Christ, Owen declared it is “a reward by being a gracious encouragement as the end of our obedience.” That the reward is not a proportioned remuneration or return for the duties performed and service rendered is clear from the words of Christ, when He declared that “whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward” (Matt. 10:42). So also when Abraham had made enemies of the kings of Canaan by rescuing Lot out of their hands, and then refused to be enriched by the king of Sodom, what proportion was there between his actions and Jehovah’s response, when He said to him “Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great Reward” (Gen. 15:1)? There was a *connection* between the two things, but *no proportion*.

“Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:7, 8). The sorrows and joys of the future life bear a similar relation to what is wrought in this as the harvest does to the sowing, one being the consequence, the fruit, or reward of the other. There is a definite relation subsisting between sowing to the spirit and reaping everlasting life, between what is done unto Christ in this life and the joys of the life to come. This relation is just as *real* as that between sowing to the flesh and reaping corruption, despising and defying Christ and the torments of Hell, though it is not in all respects the same.

We closed our previous article on this subject by quoting Galatians 6:7, 8, pointing out that the joys and sorrows of the future life bear the same relation to what is wrought in this as the harvest does to the sowing, one being the consequence, the fruit or reward of the other. There is a definite relation subsisting between sowing to the spirit and reaping life everlasting, between what is done unto Christ in this life and the crowning in the life to come. This relation is just as real as that between sowing to the flesh and reaping corruption, despising and defying Christ and the torments of Hell, though it is not in all respects the same. The portion

allotted the wicked is that of due and personal desert, but that bestowed on the righteous is not so, it being entirely of grace, a matter of largess, for it is impossible to lay God under obligation to us or make Him our Debtor. Eternal life is bestowed upon the believer as the reward of Christ's undertaking, because of what He wrought in his stead and on his behalf. Yet that is not the only angle from which the bestowal of eternal life is viewed in Scripture: it is also represented as the end or outcome of our bearing "fruit unto holiness" in the service of God (Rom. 6:22).

Before amplifying the last sentence let us point out the fundamental difference between the "sowing" of the wicked and that of the righteous. All the works of the wicked are essentially their own, having no higher rise than their corrupt nature: issuing from their evil hearts produced of themselves; and as bitter waters can only proceed from a bitter fountain, so their own works are polluted and sinful. But it is quite otherwise with the good works of the righteous: they proceed not from the depraved principle of the flesh, but from the "spirit" or new nature which was communicated to them at regeneration. They are the product of God's working in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and therefore does He aver "from Me is thy fruit" (Hosea 14:8). Even the water of the purest fountain is no longer pure when it flows through an impure channel, and because the flesh in the Christian defiles those good works he performs, but of which God is the Author and Spring, they could not be accepted and rewarded by Him were they not also cleansed by the blood of Christ and perfumed with His merits. Thus we have no ground for boasting or self-gratulation.

Whenever we think or speak of the grace of God we must bear in mind that it reigns "through righteousness" (Rom. 5:21). Grace does not override any of the other attributes of God, but is always exercised in perfect harmony therewith and also in full accord with His governmental ways. Therein we behold the "manifold wisdom of God" by displaying in the same act both His mercy and justice, His bounty and His holiness. Therefore we find the Word expressly affirming "For God is *not unrighteous* to forget your

work and labour of love which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister” (Heb. 6:10). It is indeed an act of infinite condescension upon His part that He should even deign to take notice of our trifling performances: it is equally an act of pure grace that He should be pleased to reward the same, for no matter how self-sacrificing or arduous those performances, they were naught but the bare discharge of our bounden duty: nevertheless it is also an act of righteousness when He approves of our services and richly recompenses the same both in this life and the life to come.

It is no more erroneous or inconsistent to affirm that the *future* reward will be bestowed upon the Christian both for Christ’s sake (primarily and meritoriously) and because of his own obedience (according to the terms of the new covenant and the governmental principles of God), than it is to say that our *present* peace and joy flow directly from the mediation of Christ, and subordinately yet truly so from our own obedience and fidelity. “Great peace have they which love Thy Law” (Psa. 119:165 and Isa. 58:13, 14). Those who deny themselves for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s are assured of a rich recompense: “a hundredfold now in this time” as well as “in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:30). “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). Though our obedience be not meritorious, yet God deems it (as the fruit of His Spirit) virtuous and amiable and meet for His approbation, and as a Being of perfect rectitude and benevolence it becomes Him to cordially own the same. If *future* rewards clashed either with Divine grace or the merits of Christ then *present* ones must do the same, for a difference in place or time can make no difference as to the nature of things themselves.

In a recent article on the Perseverance of the Saints we pointed out that the subject of rewards needs to be given its due place in connection with that doctrine. And this for a twofold reason. First, to arouse the careless and expose the formalist. This is one of the many safeguards by which God has hedged about the precious truth of the everlasting bliss of His people. That bliss is not

awaiting triflers and sluggards. If there be no sowing to the spirit in this life, there will be no reaping of the spirit in the life to come. This requires to be pressed upon all who claim to be Christians—never more so than in this day of vain pretensions, when hollow professors abound on every side. A faith which produces no good works is a worthless one. A branch in the Vine that bears not fruit is doomed to be burned (John 15:6). The man who hides his talent, instead of improving the same, is cast into “outer darkness” (Matt. 25:24-30). If the cross be avoided there will be no crown. “If we suffer [for Christ’s sake] we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us” (2 Tim. 2:12).

Second, this subject of rewards should be set before God’s people as an incentive to perseverance, as an encouragement to fidelity. How often have we heard one and another say, The more I try to do that which is right, the worse things seem to become; the harder I endeavour to please God, the more circumstances appear to combine against me. Ah, that may be for the testing of your faith. But whether it be for that end or no, seek grace to lay hold of that word “And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall *reap*, if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9). Here is the very application which the apostle made of what he had said in the previous verses upon sowing and reaping, as the opening “And” shows. Here is part of that Bread which God has provided for His children when they are dejected and enervated by the difficulties and discouragements of the way. God has provided a bountiful recompense for our labours and this should stimulate us in the performance of duty.

Not only is the promise of reward set before the saints as an incentive to activity, but also as consolation in sorrow, to enable them to endure the oppositions encountered. “Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 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” (Matt. 5:10-12). This is the manner in which Christ proffers comfort to His sorely-pressed servants: by assuring them

of the grand compensation awaiting them on High. Then let us not pretend to a wisdom superior to His, and withhold from His children this part of their Bread because, forsooth, we imagine that to act thus is to impugn the grace of God. As Matthew Henry rightly says upon Matthew 5:12 “Heaven, at last, will be an abundant recompense for all the difficulties we meet with in our way. This is that which hath borne up the suffering saints in all ages.”

“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance” (Heb. 10:34). Here is a pertinent example of the powerful and beneficial influence which a believing view of the promised recompense exerts upon sorely-pressed Christians. These Hebrews had been cruelly despoiled of their earthly possession, and most remarkable had been their deportment under such a trial. So far from giving way to bitter lamentations and revilings, which is the ordinary thing with worldlings on such occasions, or even enduring their loss fatalistically and stoically, they took it cheerfully and gladly. And why? how was such victory over the flesh made possible? Because their faith and hope were in lively exercise; they viewed the promised reward, their inheritance on High; with their bodily eyes they beheld their temporal affliction, but with the eyes of their souls the eternal glory prepared for them. That recompense is here called an “enduring substance” as elsewhere “weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17), in contrast from everything down here which is but a shadow, a mirage which vanishes away.

This was the motive which inspired Abraham: “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tents [not erecting a castle or palace] with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. *For* he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God” (Heb. 11:9, 10). *That* was the grand inducement which made him keep on conducting himself as a stranger and pilgrim in this transient scene. That was what braced him to endure all the hardships of the way: his heart was occupied not with Canaan but with Heaven—

he looked beyond the toilsome sowing to the blissful reaping. In like manner this was the motive which actuated Moses; “when he was come to years [he] 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.” And why? “for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb. 11:24-26). His great renunciation in the present was prompted by faith’s laying hold of the grand remuneration in the future.

But a far greater than Abraham or Moses is presented as our Exemplar in this, as in all things else. Of none less than the Redeemer is it recorded “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” (Heb. 12:2). A variety of motives moved the Saviour to endure the cross—love for His Father (John 14:31), the glory of His Father (John 12:27, 28), love for His Church (Eph. 5:25)—but among them was the prospect of future recompense. In the previous verse we are exhorted to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, and the supreme inducement so to do is, “looking unto Jesus... who for the joy that was set before Him endured.” Whether that “joy” consisted in the answer to His prayer in (John 17:5), the exaltation of Him above all creatures (Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9), or His seeing of the travail of His soul and being satisfied (Isa. 53:11) when He shall present the Church to Himself a glorious Church (Eph. 5:27), or all three, yet the fact remains that *this* was an essential motive or reason which prompted the Lord Jesus to do and suffer—that future “joy” was ever before the eye of the Captain of our salvation as He ran His race and finished His course: the prize was kept steadily in view.

It should be pointed out that promises of reward are not restricted to those engaged in the public service of God but are also made to the rank and file of His people. We call attention to this lest humble saints should allow Satan to deprive them of their

legitimate portion on the ground that they are “not worthy” to appropriate the same—personal worthiness or unworthiness does not at all enter into the question, as the greatest of the apostles has made quite evident (1 Cor. 15:9, 10). It is true there are distinctive promises made unto and rewards reserved for the ministers of the Gospel (1 Peter 5:1-4), nevertheless, there are not a few made unto the whole family of God: Ephesians 6:8 etc. Note how jealously Paul guarded this very point, for after declaring he had fought a good fight, finished his course and kept the faith, he said, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day,” he immediately added, “and not to me only, but unto *all them also* that love His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8).

Said Paul, “Brethren I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13, 14). Here we behold the saint running for the “prize:” that is what inspired his self-discipline and strenuous endeavours, that was the inducement or incentive. But the prize will not be accorded him for the merit of his running, but because of the worthiness of Christ: yet without such pressing onward, the prize would not be secured. It is sovereign grace which has appointed this prize for the runner, yet unless the “mark” or goal be actually reached, it is not obtained. The prize or “reward” or “glory” is set before us in the Word for faith to lay hold of and for hope to enjoy in confident (not doubtful) expectation, as a motive to stir us unto the use of those means leading thereunto and to make us more fervent in those duties without the performance of which it cannot be reached.

We will close by briefly considering two objections. There will probably be those ready to charge us with inculcating creature deserts, that what we have written is nothing else than an adoption of the Romish heresy of human merits. Our reply is that we have advanced nothing but what is clearly taught in Holy Writ itself. If due attention be paid to the *connections* in which the term

“reward” is found this at once rules out of court the Papish conceit. Take its first occurrence: God said to Abraham “I am thy exceeding great Reward” (Gen. 15:1): what had the patriarch done to *entitle* him to such a Portion? Where the question of desert is raised, justice requires a due ratio between the performance and the remuneration, but there is *no* proportion between the works and sufferings of the Christian and the “exceeding and eternal weight of glory” promised him. Mark the use of the term in Matthew 6:8 and then ask, On what ground does God recompense our prayers? Certainly it is not for any worth which is in them. There cannot possibly be any merit in begging at the Throne of Grace!

Again; it is objected that to present rewards as an inducement unto fidelity is to foster a mercenary spirit, to reduce the Christian unto a mere hireling—performing his labours for the sake of gain. This is quite an unwarrantable, conclusion. Sordidness lies not in aiming at a reward in general, but in subordinating piety to self-interests, as they who followed Christ for the loaves and fishes (John 6:26). A mercenary spirit actuates him who performs duty solely for the sake of remuneration, or at least, principally for it. We are to view the reward not as a debt due us, but as that which the grace of God has promised, and which His bounty deems suited unto our obedience. Rewards are presented to us as an incitement to gracious activity, to cheer us under self-denials, to strengthen our hearts when meeting opposition. It is the minister’s task not only to urge believers unto the performance of duty, but also to hold before them the promised recompenses. That eyeing of the reward in nowise signifies a lack of love for God is clear from the case of Christ Himself (Heb. 12:2).

