

The Full Reward

by J. Wilbur Chapman

Christians can receive a full reward for their service and faithfulness to Christ, which includes various crowns mentioned in the Bible.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:25

Topics: "Heavenly Rewards", "Christian Service"

Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches about the various crowns awaiting Christians in heaven as rewards for different kinds of service, emphasizing the importance of living a life of faith and service for Christ. The sermon delves into the significance of the Crown of Life for enduring temptations and the Crown of Rejoicing for leading souls to Christ. It also explores the Crown of Glory for faithful shepherding, the Incorruptible Crown for leading an aggressive Christian life, and the Crown of Righteousness for eagerly awaiting the return of Jesus.

Transcript

Even after one has accepted Jesus Christ, entered the Palace of Life, and received the Holy Ghost fully, there is still something before him in the way of Christian experience. It comes when one has passed through all the chambers of the king and stands in His presence, whom, having not seen we love. It is written in ii John viii. "Look to yourselves that we receive a full reward;" it is of that I write.

I am not at all surprised to hear Peter, in the 19th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew and the 27th verse, put the question to the Master "Behold we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" because Peter had about him a great deal of human nature. Many times we have found ourselves pondering over the same problem. We have made sacrifices for Christ; we have been in the very thickest of the fight for Him; we have labored zealously in the field when it was white unto the harvest, and we have often said, what shall we have for all this? This is the answer. The Christian ought not to work simply because of the reward before him, nor ought he on the other hand to lose sight of the reward. I have been very much impressed with the subject of crowns presented in the New Testament, I once had an idea that they were all one and the same; that if it was said in one place that I might have the crown of life, and in another place the crown of righteousness, it was simply a different way of stating the same thought. This is as far from the truth as anything could possibly be. They are each different from the other and are given for different reasons, as rewards for different kinds of service; and while every Christian may have one, it is an inspiration to know that every Christian may have them all.

The subject of crowns is in itself interesting. The crown of Ivan the terrible had eight hundred and forty-one diamonds in it; the crown of Peter the great, eight hundred and eighty-seven; the crown of England seventeen hundred; the crown of Imperial Russia, twenty-five hundred; the crown of France five thousand, three hundred and fifty-two. You know how one little gem sparkles in the ring on your finger as it is touched by the sunlight. Can you imagine the overwhelming splendor of the crown of France, studded with diamonds? How glad I am that the crown of the poorest saint of God is infinitely better than this.

It is not a question of our being saved. Faith as a grain of mustard seed might remove mountains and the same amount of faith can save a soul. It is entirely a question of service. I hold up these five crowns as an inspiration.

The Crown Of Life

James 1:12; "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life." This is for those who live a passive Christian life; this is the martyr's crown. I imagine many a one standing before the judgment seat of Christ, not to be judged for their sin for that is all put away at the cross, but to receive the reward, and being obliged to say to the judge: "I did very little for thee, indeed nothing but suffer; I had an aching head, and a weak side and an irritated lung all the way, but I did the best I could. I tried to be peaceful and patient; I could not enter the thickest of the fight; I was very rarely in the meetings; my voice was still where others were heard, and all that I could do was just simply to pray that the work of God might go forward." I imagine there are many like the man who prayed faithfully for his pastor, and, for fourteen years that minister had a constant accession to his church. There never was a communion without people coming to confess Christ. Men wondered at his success. They said it was not in his preaching, for he was not an extraordinary preacher, but still the people came. At the close of his pastorate, when he was saying "good-bye" to his friends, he called upon this bed-ridden saint who had never heard him preach. He took the thin, wasted hand in his, and then heard this confession; "Pastor, I have never heard you preach in all these years, but there has never been a day that I have not prayed that God would give you souls as a result of your preaching," and then the secret was out.

A Russian soldier on picket duty was found by a peasant without an overcoat. The peasant took off his own great coat, gave it to the soldier and hurried home. Chilled through and through by the Russian winter, in a little while he died, but before he died he had a dream in which he seemed to stand in the very presence of Christ. When he opened his eyes he told his friends that he had seen the Master, and the strangest thing he said, "He had near Him the great coat." And when he asked Him what it meant, He simply said -- "I was naked and ye clothed me."

Never a kind word, a cup of cold water, a pleasant smile, an earnest prayer given in the name of the Lord Jesus, but you will meet the reward, and the reward shall be the Crown of Life.

The Incorruptible Crown

I Cor. 9:25. This is exactly the opposite of the other. This is for the man who leads an aggressive Christian life. Paul had this in his mind when he said, he was striving for the crown that is incorruptible. We will get a better meaning of the closing part of the chapter if we translate the word "castaway," as it should be and make it "disapproved." We thus have the picture of the great apostle striving on the race course to reach the goal, which is a picture of what many a Christian should be doing in his life here below. It was the spirit which Paul had when he said, "Now behold I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem;" and again, "This one thing I do;" and again, "Laying aside every weight I press forward;" and again, "I am willing to suffer the

loss of all things."

It is the spirit we should have if we realized the lost condition of men. The church is all wrong in its ideas when it says, "we have opened our doors, the music is good, the pews are free, the preaching is of the very best, the people are welcome, let them come." This is not the spirit of the Master. He said, "Go out after the lost," and if you will read the parable of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, and the prodigal son, you will find how far you are to go and how long you are to seek. It is all summed up in the little word "until." This is the warrant for changing your method if the old method will not work.

It is said that the great conflagration in London could have been easily stopped if the firemen could have proceeded at once against it, but they could not do so until they had received the order from the Lord Mayor, and he could not give the order until he had entered his office, seated himself in his official chair, donned the robes of office, and in the regular way sent forth the message for them to fight the flames. By that time they were beyond control.

We sometimes find this spirit in the church of to-day. There is such a thing as a church being dead because of dignity and conservatism, and it is an inspiration to know that there is a crown awaiting the man whose spirit is exactly the opposite.

The Crown Of Rejoicing

I Thess. 2:19. If there is one more to be desired than another, it is this one. The Thessalonians were Paul's crown of rejoicing, because he had led them to Christ. This is the crown that Wesley is wearing. Baxter has found it. Whitefield and Edwards received it. It is awaiting Moody. Spurgeon has already had it placed upon his brow, for we are told that he was able during his ministry to lead thirteen thousand by profession into his own church, and this was but the beginning of the multitudes that were won to Christ throughout the world under his influence. It is the crown long to wear. This is the soul winners' crown. Oh, that we all might receive it You know nothing of real joy without you have been the instrument in God's hands of leading a soul to Christ.

The Crown Of Glory

I Peter v:4. "But when the chief Shepherd shall appear ye shall receive the Crown of Glory." In Ephesians we are told that "He gave some apostles" and that office has ceased. "He gave some prophets" and that has ceased. "He gave some evangelists" and to my mind that is the highest office in the church; and "He gave some pastors." It would be just as correct to call them shepherds. There is no Christian in the world but has received a commission from the Master, to do as He would if He were in this world, and what he said to Peter, he says to us all, "Feed my sheep." It will be a glad day when the church has more pastors than the one who has been called to stand in the sacred desk and preach. I had sixteen elders in my own church, and I counted them as shepherds of the flock, and God looks upon them in the same way and will hold them responsible. There are many Christians in the church who can do the same work. Not a Sunday school teacher but unto him God has committed the same service. It will be a day of rejoicing when the members of the church feel their responsibility to use all their influence in holding up those who have given themselves to Christ. The cry in these days is for the minister that will draw; the greater cry should be for people that are able to hold those who are drawn to the church of Christ. I am sure the Holy Spirit had this in mind when he held out this fourth crown as a reward. I know people who are afraid of the results of revivals. It all depends upon the condition of the church. If we let the people come in and then allow them to drift out, the last state of the man is apt to be worse than the first; but if, when they come in, we throw

round about them the arms of our sympathy, and our prayers, we will soon find that they will be able to take their place in all the services of the church. If the church is spiritual, the new members will be spiritual. If it is worldly, they will take upon themselves the same character. The rule is, that the new members will always average up to the old ones. I can remember when my own little girl was just beginning to walk, we were obliged to hold our arms about her as she took her first steps, but now we never think of doing it, she can run the whole day and not be weary. The spirit of the church is often times to hold back until it can be determined if the new converts will hold out. Christ's way would be to take a new member by the hand at once, and help him where he is weakest. This is the best service of the church, and he who is faithful in this respect, shall receive the Crown of Glory when the chief Shepherd shall appear.

The Crown Of Righteousness

I Timothy 4:8. To me, this stands side by side with the crown of rejoicing. Sometimes I am almost persuaded to place it first.

It may be at morn, when the day is awaking,

When sunlight thro' darkness and shadow is breaking,

That Jesus will come in the fullness of glory,

To receive from the world "'His own."

O joy! O delight! should we go without dying,

No sickness, no sadness, no dread and no crying,

Caught up thro' the clouds with our Lord into glory,

When Jesus receives "'His own.'

Are you ready? For those who go with uplifted face, crying, "O Lord Jesus, how long?" He will come, and His reward will be with Him -- It will be the Crown of Righteousness.

But there is something better still, and that is the full reward in Revelation 4:4. This is a picture of the glorified church. We are told that the four and twenty elders came in with crowns upon their heads, clothed with white raiment, seated about the throne. In the 10th verse, suddenly the King of Kings appears. At once the four and twenty elders fall down before Him, and taking off their crowns, cast them before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory, and Honor, and Power," so that the best reward of all is to be with Him.

That was a glad day in 1855, when the soldiers came back from the Crimean War, and the Queen gave them medals, called Crimean medals. Galleries were constructed for the two Houses of Parliament and the royal family to witness the presentation. Her majesty herself came in to give the soldiers their rewards. Here comes a colonel who lost both his feet at Inkerman; he was wheeled in on a chair. Here is a man whose arms are gone -- and so they came, maimed and halt. Then the Queen, in the name of the English people, gave the medals, and the thousands of people with streaming eyes sang, "God save the Queen." But I can think of something that would have made the scene more wonderful. If these men had taken off the medals which the Queen had placed upon them, and cast them back at her feet saying: "No, your majesty, we cannot keep them, we give back the medals. To see thee is the greatest reward." That shall

we do in heaven.

I have a friend who was in the Crimean war; he told me that he had received a medal with Inkerman upon it -- for that was his battle; but he said the most touching part of it all was the experience of a friend of his who fought by his side. A cannon ball took off one of his legs, but the brave fellow sprang up immediately and taking hold of a tree, drew his sword, and was ready to fight even to death. Immediately another cannon ball came crashing past and took off the other leg. They carried him, wounded, bleeding, and as they supposed dying, to the hospital. Strangely enough he came back to life again, and when the day came for the awarding of medals they carried him upon his stretcher before Her Majesty, the Queen. To the other soldiers she had simply given the medals by the hands of her secretary, but when she saw this man carried in on a stretcher, his face so thin and pale, she rose from her throne stooped down by his side and pinned with her own hands the medal upon his breast, while the tears fell like rain upon the face of the brave soldier.

Thus I trust it will be with many of us. We shall come into His presence, stand face to face with Him, and He will rise from His throne coming forward to receive us, and as we look up into His face, thrones will vanish away and crowns will be as nothing, for to see Him with all his beauty will be the full reward.

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