



Do Christians Receive Rewards in Heaven for their Works on Earth?

by Tony Warren

The Works/Grace Connection

There are basically two major schools of thought on the issue of '*Do Christians receive rewards in Heaven for their works on earth.*' One is the growing belief that "*varying degrees of rewards are going to be handed out for good works, according to our obedience as Christians on earth.*" The other school of thought is that '*the only reward that believers will receive is the inheritance of eternal life.*'

Of course there are many different flavors of the '*rewards for works*' theory, but basically they usually all agree that first there will be a judgment of faith for believers, and then a judgment of works for believers and unbelievers. Some distinguish between these two as the "*White Throne Judgment*," and the "*bema seat judgment*." It is at this judgment of works that they allege that believers shall receive rewards or crowns for their good deeds on earth. There are no real scriptures that they point to that explicitly declares these things, but they insist that the scriptures 'imply' them. That being said, the proponents of these works doctrines seem totally oblivious to pertinent explicit scriptures and established truths, which are incompatible with such ideas. For example, scriptures that state that "there is one judgment where all must stand before God." These type passages appear to be ignored as they target obscure isolated passages, and claim that these imply two separate judgments. Nevertheless, once examined, these doctrines are contradictory to the doctrines of Grace, Spirit led motivation and justification by faith. Because our works and grace are intimately and inextricably tied together in Christ Jesus.

The reason that these reward doctrines are so popular in our day varies, but one is unquestionably because many ministers are not properly schooled in the true understanding of the doctrines of grace. This leads them to fear that any teaching of works all emanating from the faith of Christ and God's Sovereign Grace Alone, will give people an excuse to be disobedient to God's Word. The thinking being, if Christians know their destination is secure, they will not worry about being faithful. Of course, for any true Christian, nothing could be further from the truth. Such reasoning by Christians would show them decidedly unchristian, and is in no way typical of true Christianity.

Romans 6:1-2

- "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

- God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

Here we see that God anticipates the objection, and provides the answer. Those who are dead to sin in Christ will no longer live therein. The Holy Spirit is not idle and so if it does not motivate Christians to obedience, then they need to 'seriously' question whether they are really true believers or not. Further, we cannot faithfully serve our God by being motivated by a fear of non-work, or by a desire for extra rewards, or by coveting a top position in the Kingdom of Heaven. The Christian's motivation is love, and that comes directly from the Spirit of God dwelling with us. It is not from the lusts of our own heart unto rewards.

1st John 4:19

- "We love him, **because** he first loved us."

Our love for God is borne out of God's love for us, and so what reward do we merit when God moves us to work? Those who believe man merits reward, don't really understand the true 'will of man,' nor the real guiding (*moving*) Spiritual force that moves the Christian's will to be in agreement with the will of God. We do not need artificial or worldly motivation of crowns unto obedience, we have been raised up to new life through the Spirit of God that we are a new creation in Christ. That is why our once carnal desire is now to do the will of God. It is not because we've turned into good people who of ourselves now merit reward. It is because of that Spirit that now dwells within brings with it His virtue unto good works. This is the new nature of the person who is in Christ. He has a great gratitude and love for God, which manifests itself in him wanting to please Him. As opposed to our forbearing sinning in order to obtain reward, which is the mindset of the unregenerate, not the regenerated.

Others are quick to repeat the cliché that "*a worker is someone who works.*" But this is your typical "Straw Man" argument. It implies that Christians who don't believe in the doctrine of rewards for works are teaching a work-less Christianity. Again, nothing could be further from the truth. We all say that Christians do good works. That is not at issue, nor is that even the question. The question is, does every man receive rewards in varying degrees depending upon how much/long/hard he worked, or do all receive reward according to the promise of the inheritance of sons? Are we rewarded by Grace through the finished work of Christ, or are we rewarded by how we ourselves do good works? That is the question at hand.

Many Authors and Theologians try splitting hairs, so as to make an artificial distinction between "Eternal Salvation" and "Eternal Rewards." They do this because they fail to recognize that justification by faith, and judgment according to our works, are not two separate acts, but one in Christ Jesus. Whether consciously or unconsciously, when they claim that we receive rewards for faith or good works, they are insisting that our faith and good works are something apart from the faith and work in us of Christ. If not, then logically how could we possibly merit anything when Christ accomplished it in us? The truth is, our faith and good works are the result of the faith and work of Christ. Many haven't yet grasped the truth that saving faith (*as compared to human faith*) is in fact a work. Not of man, but a work of Christ within us. Without that work, we have no works of faith.

Hebrews 11:1

- "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

The reason faith is "substantive" is because of the work of Christ in us giving it

essence. Without that essential part, our faith is without works (*this life of Christ in us*) and is therefore dead faith, being alone. In other words, Christ is what makes our works, works of faith (*as opposed to any man's own works*). We should understand that our works can be called 'good works' only because they stem from the virtue of Christ, not our own. With this truth in mind, how then do we merit a reward for our own work? We don't, we merit a reward according to the work of Christ in us. He did the work and sent the Holy Spirit to insure we would bring forth its fruits. Let no man say faith is not a work, because it is. It is either of the dead works of men, or living works in Christ. But either way, faith is a work.

1st Thessalonians 1:3

- "Remembering without ceasing your **work of faith**, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;"

2nd Thessalonians 1:11

- "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and **the work of faith** with power:"

The only way our labor or 'Work of faith' has power is by the blood of Christ. Otherwise all our good works are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6) before a Righteous and perfect God. It won't matter how much faith we have without Christ, because it's not saving faith, it's dead faith. The faith without works (of Christ) wherein men delude themselves, thinking they themselves merit rewards. This is the kind of faith that fanatical men have when they drive a car loaded with bombs into a building full of people, fully believing that in death they'll go to their god in glory. Indeed, that is a work of faith, but it is dead faith. The faith without works that is of no benefit. "*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? -James 2:14*" That is a rhetorical question illustrating that it is only faith in the work of Christ that can save a man. That faith that moves mountains or kingdoms, and that will move us to both will and do (Philippians 2:13) of God's good pleasure. Man's faith is the kind of faith that a kamikaze pilot had in World war II when he put his plane into a dive into a ship, thinking that when he dies in battle he'd go on to glory. These are all examples of works of faith. But it is faith without the 'work' of Christ, which is the only work that **can** bring favorable reward.

James 2:17

- "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

This oft quoted verse is at the heart of the controversy about works. The reason faith without works is alone, is because it your own work, without the 'work' of Christ. The proof of this is in the examples I just stated where there was faith, and works, but not the faith and work of Christ. This passage, when taken in the context of the entire Bible, is illustrating that if we profess to be of Christ, and yet do not the 'will of God,' then our faith is without foundation in Christ. It is without the true 'work' of Christ in which the true power resides. It is not the faith that would move us to good work. i.e., our good works are an evidence that we have saving faith, not the reason for it or our reward. Without the work of Christ, you 'cannot' be a tree that brings forth good fruit (works). Therefore, how can one merit rewards for good works other than Christ's work? It is the ongoing unanswerable question that these who hold this view cannot answer Biblically.

Matthew 7:16-18

- "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"
- Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.
- A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."

The reason a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, is because it has root in Christ and is fed by that root. Does the tree bear the root, or the root the tree? Therefore, again, what reward do we merit for bringing forth good fruit, when we only bring it forth because of Christ, not ourselves?

As I alluded before, there are some who feel that justification is by faith, apart from works. That's why they try and separate their faith from their works. Many even claiming faith is not a work (despite all the contradicting scriptures). But all these verses clearly show that they are wrong. Real faith and works are inseparable, else it is dead and alone.

Likewise, those who feel that justification is by faith 'and' our own works, have also misunderstood the passages. For no man is justified in any way by his own works. To be sure he 'is' justified by work, but it is the 'work' of Christ. Faith, without 'this' work is unjustified faith. The work of Christians on this earth are merely an physical evidence of the work of Christ within them.

James 2:20-24

- "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"
- Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?
- Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?
- And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.
- Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

By works was his faith perfected. In other words, by the work of Christ in him, his faith attained its full development whereby it was demonstrated to be genuine. As a tree made good by Christ, brings forth good fruit of Christ. But many reading these verses conclude that we will be judged according to our works, apart from Christ. As one Theologian carelessly put it:

"it is very clear that man cannot save himself through 'works', yet it is also very clear that man will be judged by his 'works'."

However, he has missed the whole point of these verses. We have already been judged for our works, and having been, we are now fully justified in the blood of Christ for them. Every imperfect work that we have done in this world was nailed to the cross with Christ, so how could we be judged for anything but perfect works on earth? Like Abraham, we are justified by works, **but not our own**, the works of faith which was in Christ and is manifested in us through the Spirit. Without saving faith, we have not the spirit of Christ unto good works, and are like a hollow shell or an empty tabernacle. We will have faith, but without works.

James 2:26

- "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

So then, if our faith is of Christ and our work is of Christ, what part is of ourselves that we can expect diverse rewards for them? The only rational answer is, none. To God be all the Glory. Is the doctrine of meriting varying degrees of rewards for our own works tied to justification by works? It indeed must be, because you cannot separate our works on this earth from the power of salvation and Spirit of God within us whereby we work on this earth. In other words, we will not do the good works that merit reward, apart from the faith of Christ working within us. Therefore, to declare that we of ourselves merit reward, is like denying the faith of Christ and substituting our own, declaring we ourselves are the one who wills and does (works), and thus merit payment. This is antithetical to what the scriptures teach. So the question remains, *"if our faith is of Christ, and our work is of Christ, what part is of ourselves that we can expect varying degrees of rewards dependant upon our good works?"* There are none. The good we are, and the good we do, we do by the Grace of God, and it is He who deserves all the Glory for the work in us. The faithful, evidencing true humility, give credit to whom it is warranted.

Philippians 1:6

- "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"

God not only began the work in us, but He will perform it unto the end. So what part of that passage is ambiguous? What part do we have in that? It's not that God isn't clear on this subject, it's that man doesn't like what God says. But to be sure, God is the one who deserves the merit for our works and this is the same truth that is put forth by the Apostle Paul all throughout scripture.

1st Corinthians 15:10

- "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: **yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.**"

Paul understood clearly the concept of true Grace in that his works of faith were not because of any goodness of his own, but because of the work of Christ within Him. If only those disdainful of the truth today could grasp that very humble concept, there would be no more glorying in themselves in these ideas of *"rewards for our works."*

Galatians 2:20

- "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; **yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:** and the life which I now live in the flesh **I live by the faith of the Son of God,** who loved me, and gave himself for me."

So, what might have seemed a contradiction, is really just a matter of reconciling all of scripture as God intends. What indeed would we merit reward for, when Christ did it all. This historical early church humility is what few Christians of our day possess. Faith without works is dead, and yet no one is saved by his own works. It's not an enigma, the answer is that we are saved by the work of Christ. Faith is not passive, it is a work of God. Man either does the dead works of himself, or He is alive in the work of the faith of Christ, which merits reward.

James 2:18

- "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."

When we work, there is seen the work of the faithfulness of Christ, that is with us always. When those who are not of Christ work, there is seen faith without this efficacious work. That is to say, without the 'works' of Christ. Indeed, if any interpretation of a passage requires that eternal salvation be earned or preserved by works of men, then that interpretation must be rejected as heretical. If any interpretation of a passage declares that we earn rewards for our labors, it makes us responsible (in the truest sense) for our own virtue, which also must be rejected as contradictory to God's Word and the doctrines of Grace.

As many of the Old Testament Jewish people had faith, and they had works, but they didn't have the works of Christ. Therefore their faith in their religion was without works. Because their works were not in Christ, they (in part) were left desolate. We cannot work or earn our way into heaven, nor to receive heavenly rewards, because 'all' were already purchased for us by the finished/completed work of Christ.

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."

Faith is a gift from God, it does not come from man's so-called good works. For then man could boast that he has faith because He worked harder, longer, better, etc. Faith to labor in this world is by the work of Christ. As this scripture so unambiguously states, "*We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*" The question is not does it say this, the question is, why does man "work" so hard to deny such obvious truths? When we answer that, we have approached to the fear of God and the beginning of wisdom.

The Parable of Work of the Hired Labourers

A chapter that should put this doctrine to rest is the parable of the laborers in the field. ..it should, but it won't! The reason it won't is because people choose to ignore certain scriptures in order to hold onto spurious beliefs that they have been taught and held for long periods of time. Christ explained the truth of rewards for our works on this earth 'unambiguously' in this parable. The lesson here is that no matter how much we work, no matter how good our works are, no matter how long we work, how hard we work or what burden we bear while working, we will all receive the ***exact same reward for those labors***. It is simply unfathomable how man can choose to rationalize away or trample under foot and ignore something that is so plainly and so unambiguously taught here:

Matthew 20:1-16

- "For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went

- out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.
- And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.
 - And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,
 - And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.
 - Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.
 - And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?
 - They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.
 - So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.
 - And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.
 - But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.
 - And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,
 - Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.
 - But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?
 - Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.
 - Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?
 - So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."

Our reward for our work on this earth shall "clearly" not be based upon the merits or worth of our service, but upon the purpose of his Grace (His work). This chapter is the unmistakable negation and refutation of the basis of the whole faulty premise of varying degrees of rewards in heaven for works on earth (i.e., the theory that all the workers in the world don't receive the same rewards, but receive rewards in differing values, according to their works). God's Word debunks that theory here and without any ambiguity. It is amazing because the whole point Christ is making here is just that. The teaching here is that Christ has sent us all out into the world to work, and that this idea of rewards based upon an individual's time or good or amount of work is bankrupt, for we all will receive the exact same reward for our work or service done in this world. The whole point is that *no one* can complain about God giving all His servants the same reward.

Matthew 20:8

- "So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their **hire**, beginning from the last unto the first."

That word translated hire there is [*misthos*], the exact same word translated '*Reward*.' So here we see the Lord Himself, unambiguously telling us that the people who work in this world in service to Him, will all receive the exact same reward. I didn't say this, Pastor Bob or Preacher Joe didn't say this, God said this, and He said it plainly. Those Theologians who read this, feigning they understand it, and then deny what Christ has

clearly said, do God a great disservice. Their claims that we receive different rewards depending upon our works in this world (the field) are blatantly contradictory to our Lord's Words. For not some, but 'all' the blessings of God were given to all of God's Elect in Christ, before the world began. We are acceptable and have good works which are perfect only because He made us accepted.

Ephesians 1:3-6

- "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with ***all spiritual blessings*** in heavenly places in Christ:
- According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:
- Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,
- To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

He blessed us with 'all' spiritual blessings, which illustrates a 'full' reward, and it is by 'His' Grace that He made our works accepted in Christ. How much clearer can it get? So while so many are expounding upon their own plan for the varying degrees of rewards the saints will receive for working better, harder, longer, or wiser, God has His own plan. Every man shall receive what was agreed upon when the Promise was made. That agreement is in the Covenant of Grace, where the works are in Christ, and the reward thus a full reward because of His full inheritance, and we in Him. We are not called according to our own works, but according to what God wants done. Let's not lose sight of just whose will we are doing and why. Is it because we of ourselves want to, or is it because God had a plan, and he formed us as vessels to be part of that plan, to work out his own purposes and His own will, not our own. He didn't ask us, He called us, empowered us to move, drew us, and directed us. All by His will.

2nd Timothy 1:9

- "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,"

The fact is, if indeed we were saved or rewarded depending upon our own works, we would ALL end up in Hell. So we should be humbled and thank God that we are saved and rewarded as those who are perfect before God, according to Him who has washed us from any imperfection in His own blood. Therefore our works are perfect and our reward full.

The objection is sometimes raised, "*how then is this work relating to the 'Great Commission' to evangelize the world?*" But the answer is actually quite simple. It is true that we were commissioned to work. But that commission was given its strength and power by the gift of the Holy Spirit of God. And our reward for evangelizing (which gets back to the parable of the laborer) is exactly what we were promised. The Promise of reward to His children is the inheritance of everlasting life, and the cost or work for it was paid in the finished work of Christ. It is He wherein we find our reward full and our rest justified.

Matthew 11:28

- "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Our works were finished in Christ Jesus, and it is in Him that we find justified rest. We're not working for reward of anything, we are working because we have freely been given everything. Yes, we have a Christian walk, yet it is not in our own strength, but in Christ that dwells within us and gives us the ability to walk and not faint. Yea, even to run and not be weary. What glory should we expect for something that God Himself, through Grace, is responsible for working in us? It is a walking contradiction to Scripture, the doctrines of grace and unmerited favor. For it doesn't take a PhD. to figure out that if we are rewarded according to our work on earth, then we are back to **a merit system**, or a works gospel where our works requires God to grant more reward. Try and separate it if we will, but it's simply logic 101. It brings us to the point where our merited gifts in heaven are not of Grace at all, but is a debt (payment) that God owes us for producing better works than the next guy. That cannot be, as the unadulterated truth is, God owes us nothing. And what we will receive was already purchased.

The exact same error is seen in those who insist that we must work to maintain or to receive salvation. Sure, it goes by a different name, but its foundation is on the exact same merits of man system. Salvation then is based upon a work or merit system that all true Christians must condemn. Likewise, if we are rewarded depending upon what good works we do on this earth, it cannot be a system of God's approval by Grace. It becomes a system based upon works. Whether it is for salvation or for gifts, it is a works system, not of Grace. But if the gifts of God be by Grace, then they're right back to the contradictions of scripture again.

As in the parable of the Kingdom of God and the workers in the field ([Matthew 21:1-16](#)), if you think that you merit more rewards because you toiled longer, or harder, or bore the heat of the day, or had more trials and tribulations, etc., you must examine yourself to see that you are not "ignoring" scripture in order to hold to that church tradition.

Understanding the Reward of our Work

The only difference between the phrases "*saved by works*," and "*rewarded for works*," is one of semantics. Christ made all our works good by paying the wages of sin, which makes all our works perfect. There are only two rewards [*misthos*] or wages given. One is payment for good works, which is the inheritance of eternal life to all in Christ Jesus, and one payment for bad works, which is the judgment of eternal destruction in damnation to all who are not in Christ. There is not one jot or tittle in the entire Bible that speaks of any other reward. As is illustrated in our building of the Temple of God, brick upon brick, laid upon the foundation of Christ and the prophets.

1st Corinthians 3:13-14

- "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***."

We are rewarded [*misthos*], or paid for our good work in building, and likewise, the wicked are also rewarded for their bad work. To say our works are of ourselves is to deny Christ works within us to will and do, and the doctrine of the master builder.

Psalms 127:1

- "...Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

Could any of us be working to build, and the Lord Himself not be doing it? Can we be Elect of God and not work and come under eternal judgment? God forbid, for He performs it that we are rewarded according to His perfection in taking away "ALL" our sins. That would include the sin of not working hard, long or in the heat of the day as we should. We will stand "Perfect" in all our works before God. It is the Unsaved who will be rewarded as not perfect, and thus on merit. Some beaten with many stripes, some with few.

2nd Peter 2:12-13

- But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;
- And shall receive the **reward** of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;"

The wages or reward of unrighteousness is according to man's works, without the propitiation of Christ. By contrast, the reward of righteousness is a full because of the perfect propitiation of Christ. God rewards each man according to his works, which are perfect in Christ or imperfect in the unholy one. Moreover, those who choose to misinterpret passages such as 1st Corinthians 3:13-14, conveniently neglect other scriptures that are clearly contrary to these theories:

1st Corinthians 3:8-10

- "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.
- For ***we are labourers together with God***: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.
- ***According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder***, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."

You see, we can never get away from the Grace of God being the determining factor in why we work, why we build, why we plant. It is according to the Grace of God which is given us, not according to our own free will or better desire to serve. We have the desire to do the will of God 'because of God.' We love Him because He first loved us. We are all one in Christ and laborers together with God because without God, all our labors would be as filthy rags and fruitless. So (again), wherein do we merit rewards? Do we suppose we are helping God out? Not so, God is helping us. For our good works are not of ourselves, but are of the work of Christ, and our faith not of us but the faithfulness of Christ. In the first instance our Reward is God ([Genesis 15:1](#)), because He is our habitation, our riches, and our inheritance. When we receive the reward for our good work on earth, it will be the inheritance in Christ, because we are the righteousness of God in Him.

Hebrews 13:21

- ***"Make you perfect in every good work to do his will***, working in you that which

is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

That is exactly what all of scripture tells us. He made us perfect unto every good work, and thus the reward for that work will be a full reward, for the works are perfect. This is how we receive the reward of the inheritance of eternal life. This is the "biblical" definition of the reward which we will receive.

Colossians 3:24

- "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the **reward of the inheritance**: for ye serve the Lord Christ.
- But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons."

Again, the two different rewards [*antapodosis*] or wages for the two diverse groups. Here God gives us the definition of the reward or wages. One will receive the inheritance of children as his reward, and the other will receive the wages for the wrong he has done. Both with no respect of persons. The same for the Jew as for the Gentile, the same for the black, as for the white, the same for the woman as for the man, according to their works, good or bad. It says there plainly that the reward of inheritance "is for our service" (*work*) on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, this very question of rewards came up when Peter was basically asking Christ what they would receive for leaving all that they had in order to follow Him:

Mark 10:29-30

- "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,
- But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; **and in the world to come eternal life.**"

The Lord is plainly declaring to Peter that Christians would receive rewards in this world which were a hundredfold better than the worldly things that he left, and the reward He would receive after this life, would be everlasting life (the inheritance). Again, the exact same definition of the reward for our service to Christ. Our reward in this world is not physical houses, security, brothers and sisters, but spiritual houses, spiritual security, spiritual brothers and sisters. As Children of God, we are all one family.

Luke 6:35

- "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your **reward** shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil."

As children, brothers in Christ, sons of God, we receive the reward of sons. In this world physically we may be reviled by family, persecuted and hated, maybe even killed, but in the spiritual sense, we have received a hundredfold more, and our reward in heaven is that we have eternal life, and those who are rich in the things of this world and who will not leave all to serve Christ, shall be rewarded with Hades, according to their works. So who has the better Promise or Covenant?

Matthew 5:11-12

- "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:** for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

As it is written, "*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*" -1st John 4:4" Because Christ be in us, we rejoice because great is our reward in heaven. It is the inheritance of everlasting life which Christ secured for us not by our works, but by His.

1st Corinthians 3:7-8

- "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.
- Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own **reward according to his own labour.**"

Here many conclude this means we shall receive rewards "varying" according to our labor. But that's not what it says, that is an assumption. The truth is, when the good receive according to their own labor, they always receive a full reward, since all our works are *perfect* in Christ. God says almost the identical things in other chapters when He said, *I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be* (reward for being good or bad, not a large or small reward). i.e., it only means some are rewarded with everlasting life (for their good work), and some are rewarded everlasting punishment (for their evil work). It is not declaring varying degrees for labor, it is declaring one or the other. According to his work, whether it was good or bad.

Regardless, the first part of that verse would contradict the last part of it if we were to take it to mean rewards were handed out by personal merit. Again it shows where all the Glory should go to. Is he that plants worthy of reward? No, It clearly states "*He is Nothing!*" Is he that waters? No, it says "*He is Nothing!*" But to God goes the Glory, without whom, the works would all be in vain and worthless. In other words, it is God who makes our work profitable, not us. So then, again, what are we rewarded for when God did it all? He gave us the water, He gave us the seed, and instructed us in planting, and still nothing would grow, so God gives the increase as well. More than that, we wouldn't even want to plant had not God drawn us by His Spirit to do so. As it is written, no man cometh to the son except the father which sent Him, '*draw*' him. What then are we rewarded for? Would it be for doing what we were drawn/pulled/dragged by God to do? It makes no sense. No, we can but thank God for His mercy upon us to work within us to do of His will, that we be vessels used of the Potter as He sees fit. The wording, '*rewarded according to our labor,*' does not in any way constitute justification of varying degrees of rewards for our works.

Matthew 16:26-27

- "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
- For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

Revelation 22:11-12

- "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy

still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

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

The claim that verses like these mean Christ gives varying degrees of rewards don't take into consideration the context of such verses. It is clear there are two rewards here. Good and bad. Everlasting life, and the second death. When Christ comes quickly, He will reward the wicked according to their works, and the righteous according to their works. One rewarded with life, and the other rewarded with death. The reward of inheritance, and the reward of damnation.

Indeed, this would be illogical knowing the works of the righteous. For the question is not, 'how imperfect are the works of the righteous to merit more or less.' The question is, 'how good are the works of the righteous who receive according to their works?' They are pure, perfect, clean, found to be *without fault* before God, else there is sin involved. And that cannot be.

2nd Timothy 3:17

- "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

< How then could one soul be found less than another when all are without spot before God, furnished unto all good works, and no bad ones which we could be held accountable for? When we stand before God, for which sub-standard or non-perfect work (sin) on this earth do we lose merit for? None, because we are blameless for our works on earth as they were made perfect in Christ. If we didn't work as hard as we should have in preaching the gospel (sin), shall we be judged for that sin? God forbid, we are judged as he who was perfect and our works are as perfect before God. Else Christ died in vain and did not pay for all our efforts (works) laced with sin, and we are judged for some of them and receive lesser rewards for this tainted work. This is not 'Biblically' possible. This is the unbiblical, untenable inextricable enigma which these Christians build for themselves.

Ask yourself this most serious and pertinent question. "*Do you really want God to reward you according to your works you have done on earth?*" Any 'noble' Christian will immediately say, God forbid! For who could stand before Him? What many Christians fail to realize is that it is not because we are good that we have done the good works on earth, but because of Christ who dwells within us. God owes us nothing for our work or walk in this world, we owe it all to Him. For it is only because of Him working within us, that we are not just as desperately wicked as the next guy. If we are truly noble or honest with ourselves, we must say in truth the old adage with regard to the unregenerate:

"There, but by the grace of God, go I" -WiseManSay

If this be true, then what reward do we deserve for doing something the Grace of God is responsible for and which His Spirit has moved us to do?

Philippians 2:13

- "For ***it is God which worketh*** in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

It is this truth which fails to be fully comprehended by many Christians. Unlike Paul, in our day man is so full of himself that he can't see the forest for the trees. In essence he

retorts, "*wrong God, it was I, and I shall get rewards for my well doing.*" This is in stark contrast to the faithful Christians of old who understood, it is not I, but God who is the cause of all my faithful work (1st Corinthians 15:10). Therefore, all Glory and any credit for the labor we do goes to Christ. That is why we all receive the same reward. Because the work in us is of God, not of ourselves. The reward is bought of Christ, of Grace, not of a debt (wages earned) that God owes us for excellent works.

Romans 4:4

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

A reward for our works or fruits upon earth cannot be Grace if it is the wages or a debt God owes to us for working. But the reward is of Grace, because all our bad works were nailed to the cross. God works in us both to will and do, this Greek word *do* Paul used is the same word translated work. We shall receive a full reward because we shall receive reward according to the righteousness of Christ, not our own.

2nd John 1:7-9

- "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.
- Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that **we receive a full reward.**"
- Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."

Without abiding in Christ, we are not righteous and shall not receive full or complete [pleres] reward. This comes only to those who abide in the doctrines of Christ. This is not implying there are degrees of rewards, rather it is saying the reward of the righteous is full, complete, overflowing. i.e., it is lacking nothing, nothing can be added and it is a full or complete reward. God gives us all things by His Sovereign Grace and the context there is antichrist as it tells us to look to ourselves. In other words, do not be deceived, try the spirits, make your calling and election sure, make sure you hold onto the things we have worked for which will give us the 'full reward.' Many have fallen short. Only a true Believer being judged "PERFECT" receives a full reward. Anything less than a full reward is for him who is 'not perfect,' and thus has no Salvation. Make sure you receive a full reward. Make sure you are Saved.

Colossians 2:9-10

- "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.
- And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:"

In Him dwells all the fullness [pleroma] of the Godhead, and we are complete [pleroo] or full in Him. In such we *merit* a full or complete reward. It is this realization that gives us full assurance. That our works are not in ourselves, nor judged of ourselves, but in Christ, and were judged with Him on the cross and made pure works.

Hebrews 6:11

- "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:"

The full assurance because our works are in Christ, and of faith, and not works. Full

assurance knowing imperfect works are works of the reprobate, not the child of God who cannot have bad works (1st John 3:9).

Hebrews 10:22

- "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Not washed with physical water, but with the washing of regeneration wherein we are pure, perfect, thus meriting the full reward, reserved for the righteous. Washed pure means no below standard works, thus we all merit a full reward.

Hebrews 1:2

- "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed *heir of all things*, by whom also he made the worlds;"

Romans 8:32

- "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also *freely* give us all things?"

If Christ is inheritor of all things, and we are joint-heirs with Him, and He *freely* (*not by matter of our works*) gives us all things, what is to debate? We inherit all things and receive a full reward. This is the reward of inheritance. Anyone without a true heart and the full assurance of faith is without the full reward and Christ. Anyone without Christ, is without the righteousness which would merit him the full reward of inheritance in righteousness.

Matthew 10:41

- "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward."

What is a righteous man's reward? It's a full reward because only Christ, and those in Christ, are righteous. Thus they receive a righteous man's reward. Again, proof that the rewards are not variable, because all in Christ are perfect and without fault before God. Pure, dressed in white, and spotless. Not one of us has less than a full reward because we are all without sin! How then could the reward be anything less than full?

Ephesians 5:25-27

- "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;
- That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
- That he might present it to himself a glorious church, *not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*"

How then could one Christian be faulted over another for work, or one be more righteous than another in regards to labor, when all are perfect before God? It makes no sense whatsoever.

If God chooses to reward us, it will be because of His merit (Grace), and not because of our own merit (works), for there is none that does good, there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God (Romans 3:11-12) no not one, we are all gone out of

the way. As a broken record, the question keeps popping up, 'what would we be rewarded for?' Would it be for being desperately wicked and so abstinent that we won't budge without God moving us? Because the truth is, we would be as a den of vipers without God's working in us. We would be unrepentant sinners worthy of death, not rewards. The doctrine of rewards is virtually an subtle attack on 'the doctrines of Grace.'

The Receiving of the Crowns!

Like those who make artificial distinctions between eternal Salvation and eternal rewards, there are also those who make an artificial distinction between the crowns which the scripture says the believers shall receive. Although it is indeed true that certain aspects of the crown are highlighted in different verses, this does not mean that they are different crowns anymore than different aspects of God means He's a different God. As in, The God of Abraham (Gen. 26:24), the God of Israel (Ex. 34:23), the God of David (2Ch 34:3), The God of Heaven (Ezr 6:10), The God of Hope (Ro 15:13), the God of Peace, (Ro 16:20), etc. It is simply the illustration of different aspects of God and in no way signifies divergent gods. Likewise, the crown 'symbolizes' a reign with Christ. A crown [*stephanos*] in scripture is simply a figure to 'signify' those reigning in a Kingdom. The appendages to the word crown show forth some aspect of 'that reign,' just as the appendages to the word God showed some aspect of Him. There are basically six aspects of this crown or reign in which believers are identified with:

1. The Crown of Incorruption signifying we reign in immortality, that we will receive a non-corruptible bodies and live for ever.
2. The Crown of Righteousness signifying that we reign in righteousness, having no fault before God.
3. The Crown of life signifies our reign in Christ Jesus, who is the tree of life by the waters of life, in which we shall never see death.
4. The Crown of Rejoicing is to signify our reign is in joy and without sorrow or pain.
5. The Crown of Glory is to signify that we reign in Glory with Him.
6. The Crown of Gold is to signify that we reign Holy, set apart, being 'precious' (as Gold) and of great value to God.

These are not different crowns [*stephanos*], they are all signifying that we are joint heirs with Christ and that we 'reign' with Him and have all these things. These different verses are to highlight some particular aspect of that reigning, not to illustrate divergent rewards.

1. The Crown of Incorruption

1st Corinthians 9:24-25

- "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.
- And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a *corruptible crown*; but we an *incorruptible*."

Like the reward of our inheritance (*Col. 3:24*) for those who serve Christ, this is the prize for our running (work) in this world. The reward of a reign with Christ that is incorruptible, an inheritance of immortality.

1st Peter 1:4-5

- "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
- Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

When Christ appears, this mortal must put on immortality, and this is what the incorruptible crown signifies. "*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised **incorruptible**, and we shall be changed.* -1st Cor 15:52" This is the inheritance reserved for those who love him. We obtain that inheritance by Grace (birthright in Christ), not by our works or labors on earth.

Ephesians 1:11-12

- "***In whom*** also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:
- That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."

We don't obtain the inheritance of immortality by laboring, but by being predestinated according to the purpose of God. We are made incorruptible by Christ that we have birthright to receive a full reward. That reign in the incorruption of Christ, is illustrated by the symbolism of 'the incorruptible crown.'

2. The Crown of Righteousness

2nd Timothy 4:8

- "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.**"

When we have fought the good fight, and finished the course in faithful fashion, there is a righteous man's reward waiting for us. That means that we receive a full reward fit for a righteous man. This is not a crown for a select few believers, Paul says it's not just for him, but for all who are in Christ's love. Is that to be cast under foot as untrue? Just as we read before, He gives us 'all' things. This shows a reign by the unmerited favor of God, wherein we are all righteous, and thus all receive this crown.

Romans 5:21

- "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might Grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

This crown is a symbol to signify that we shall reign at Christ's appearing in righteousness, having not the slightest stain of sin. Which again proves there is no varying reward or crowns passed out, because a man without sin has done his work perfectly. God says all who love the Lord, receive this 'Crown of Righteousness.'

3. 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*,' which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

Revelation 2:10

- "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*.'"

The Believers go through trial, and God promises those who endure shall receive the crown of life.

1st Peter 1:7

- "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"

Christ said that all believers must go through tribulation (John 16:33), and those who endure are those with root in Christ, and shall receive this crown of life. Again, we understand eternal life is not merited by works, but by Grace, therefore rewards doctrines fail on all counts once again. Those who endure won't endure by their own strength, but by the strength of Christ, and they shall receive the reward of life.

Matthew 10:22

- "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

The crown of life signifies that we will reign with Him and shall receive eternal life as our reward for enduring. As it is written, "*He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* -1John 5:12" We are joint-inheritors of life, that have root in Christ and endure, and shall reign with Him.

Matthew 19:29

- "And **every one** that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

Again, the only stipulation is that it goes to 'all' them that love him. It doesn't go to those who work harder, longer, or who bore the heat of the day, but to all who are in Christ (*all who love him*). The reason we all love Him, is because He first Loved us (1st John 4:19). What then could we merit? The 'Crown of life' symbolizes we shall receive a reign in the Kingdom rewarded with everlasting life.

4. The Crown of Rejoicing

1st Thessalonians 2:19

- "For 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?"

Here the crown symbolizes our Reign with Christ as it is with joy, and that we will also rejoice when we see Him. At that great day when we receive our reward, God shall wipe all tears from all eyes. Yes, we rejoice now even in the midst of suffering, but when Christ comes, our joy will be full.

1st Peter 4:12-13

- "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:
- But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, ***when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.***"

This crown is a symbol of our reigning with Christ, and our rejoicing both now in sufferings, and when His glory be revealed, we will be filled with Joy everlasting, which will wipe away all tears from our eyes. Our Joy of expectation, though we see Him now only spiritually, we have the hope of His coming when we shall realize unspeakable joy.

1st Peter 1:8

- "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:"

This is our 'Crown of joy,' signifying our reign in rejoicing with Christ Jesus our Lord.

5. The Crown of Glory

1st Peter 5:4

- "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a '*Crown of glory*' that fadeth not away."

This crown is a symbol of our reigning that signifies we will be glorified together with Christ, and so shall we ever be with Him. Our Glory will not fade away for Christ lives forever, and our reign is with Him forever. We have a reign (crown) of Glory in Him which will never fade away, because He is our Glory.

Isaiah 28:5

- "In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a '*Crown of glory*,' and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people,"

The Lord Himself is our Reward, the Lord Himself is our Crown, the Lord Himself is our inheritance. We shall 'all' glory in the Glory of the Lord, together. As also illustrated in:

Romans 8:16-17

- "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:
- And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

This 'Crown of Glory' illustrates that God is our crown, in Him we reign and He is our beauty wherein we reign in Glory.

6. The Crown of Gold

Revelation 4:4

- "And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."

This crown is a symbol of our reigning, and the Gold is signifying that we in Christ are Precious or Holy. Something of great value which is set apart. Just as God says in Revelation 3:18, "I counsel thee to buy of Me Gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich;.." Gold symbolizes the riches or Holiness of God, precious and valuable, which He

gives to us as joint heirs.

Psalms 21:3-4

- "For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a '*Crown of pure gold*' on his head.
- He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever."

The crown symbolizes God's reign as king, and gold symbolizes His Holiness and value. As in the example in the Holy city decked with Gold and precious stones. It signifies something that is of great value or that is Holy or set apart wondrous. The crown for the Priests in the Old Testament had the same symbolism.

Exodus 39:30

- "And they made the plate of the holy '*Crown of pure gold*,' and wrote upon it a writing, like to the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD."

And this symbolism holds true for the crowns of Gold the believers have. This is how we reign with Christ, Holy and Precious (or of great value) unto God.

All these crowns signify some particular aspect of our reigning with Christ in righteousness, in joy, in incorruption, in Glory, in preciousness, and in eternal life. The idea that they are crowns handed out for different rewards or by merit of man is untenable when we understand what they symbolize. Indeed we see the symbolism of our Crown (*reigning*) as the 'figure' of our eternal Salvation, as God tells us to be sure that we don't lose it.

Revelation 3:11

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

To hold fast is an exhortation to not be deceived by false teachers and false prophets that we lose our reign in the Kingdom, as the branches that were broken off of the olive tree did (Romans 11). For to be sure, those who have not made their calling and election sure (not truly saved), can be broken off, just as those of Israel were and can be grafted back in again. Even now there is a remnant of Jewish people being saved. Thus we should make sure that we are truly Children of the Kingdom.

Revelation 4:4

- "And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."

Revelation 4:10

- "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,"

The "four and twenty elders" represent the whole body of the congregation in heaven. These are the chosen who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb out of every tribe and language and nation, and they all have crowns. These verses give a symbolic

picture or illustration of the 24 elders or leaders (12 tribes and 12 apostles), a figure of the congregation who live and reign as joint heirs with Christ in Heaven.

Their casting their crowns before Him signifies that their reign is subservient to Christ's reign and rule. They understand that it is He, not them, who deserves the Kingship, for He is King of these kings. They worship at his feet and give all glory to him. This is the symbolism of the different aspects of the crowns in scripture. These are word pictures of our reigning with Christ, and the diverse aspects of that reign. Not diverse rewards for our works.

Other often quoted and difficult texts

The story of a certain poor widow, who threw in two mites. A mite is a small coin of small value. This widow cast this into the treasury, and it was all that she owned. It is often used as a defense of rewards for works.

Luke 21:1-4

- "And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.
- And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.
- And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:
- For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had."

Proponents of rewards for works insist that this shows that the poor woman did more work than the rich who cast in much money. But again, that is not at issue, and it is not the pertinent question. We all agree she cast in more than the rich. The question is, will she receive more good reward than they, or will she receive one reward for good works, while they receive another reward for works that were not good? Moreover, it may very well be that the designation of 'the rich' is used to signify those who are unsaved, or not Christians. Particularly as it contrasts this woman casting in all she has. For it is only believers who give up all for Christ. In any case, there is nothing here that even implies that she shall receive more because she cast in more. Only that she cast in all. Everything else is an assumption and mere speculation, not based on sound hermeneutics.

The woman who was said to have cast in all, did so because she had a heart that was right with God. It has nothing to do with a reward, it has to do with a humble heart and *why* she gave *all* she had to Christ. She could have just as easily put in more than the others had, and Christ would have still said she put in more because her heart was right. So they've missed the whole point of this story by inserting rewards in heaven into it. It's not who works more (not even in view here) it's the condition of the heart. Are we right with God to confess our sins in humility and turn all over to His care, or are we arrogant, prideful and self righteous as to think we know everything, and can keep credit for ourselves for our good deeds? Jesus made mention of it again and again. Pride verses meekness or humbleness before the Word. It is evidence of the condition of our hearts. Therefore did this woman put in more than they all, because she surrendered all to Christ ***trusting in Him***, and they didn't. That is the lesson here.

The most basic of fundamental principles of sound hermeneutics, is that two verses of scripture "Cannot" contradict each other making one of them null and void. Just as I can't use any scripture to make the scripture someone else has borne witness to null and void, neither can anyone else say a scripture they give makes the one I quote null and void. They are 'both' 100 percent true and trustworthy, and what that means is that the truth lies between the confines of these two verses, and not outside of either of them. So then, there cannot be any verse which says that we by works merit rewards, contradicting other verses which say each man working gets the same reward no matter how long or hard he has worked. Such ideas also contradict scriptures which "clearly" say all our works are made perfect before God. Perfect means that we did all things well, but only in Christ. For we must never forget that the scriptures declare that all 'our own' righteousness is as filthy rags without Christ. Likewise, in Christ, all our works are as works of righteousness, wherein there can be no condemnation.

Another verse that is often quoted is where God speaks of the least in the Kingdom. John the Baptist was assigned the title of greater than any alive in his day, but Christ said that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than He. Why?

Matthew 11:11

- "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

Quite obviously if there has not been one born of woman in the entire history of the world 'greater than he,' and yet those in heaven are greater, God is telling us that 'all' those in heaven are greater than all those on earth. Because unlike John the baptist on earth, these souls were all PERFECT, having no stain of the sin in the 'flesh,' because John was still in the body. When John died and went into heaven, he cast off the corruptible flesh and then would be made equal with all the others in the Kingdom. But as long as John was still in the flesh, even as good a man as he was (from our perspective), he would be less than the foulest man who lived on earth and died to become part of those souls living and reigning with Christ. A murderer, rapist, or a thief who found Grace in God's sight, and had put off the flesh, will be better than John because his works are perfect and he has no sin of the flesh. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom.

So this is not teaching that there are degrees of reward, but that all those in the Kingdom are greater than any man in the flesh on earth, because as Paul so honestly said:

Romans 7:19-21

- "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.
- Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.
- I find then a law, that, when I would do good, ***evil is present with me.***"

This is why John the Baptist was lesser than any in the Kingdom of Heaven. Because as Paul says, evil is present with man on earth, but not in the Kingdom of Heaven. This is why the Apostle desired to put off the flesh. This is why flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom. It is because it is corruptible. This also has nothing to do with varying degrees of glory in the Kingdom, nor rewards, nor of crowns. It has to do with nothing which is offensive coming into the Kingdom of Heaven, therefore all those in the flesh are sinful, while those who enter the Kingdom are without any blemish at all. Man on

earth, no matter how righteous he is (as John the Baptist), is less than anyone who enters the paradise of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Another chapter that is often cited is Matthew 25, of the parable of talents. A man travelling into a far country, called his servants and gave them talents (*simply, the weight of money*), and then took his journey. Here we have the master who is has gone away, and his servants are waiting for His return. Clearly this is a parable addressed to the church who is waiting for the return of Jesus Christ. The parable is intended to instruct us during the time between His first advent, and His second. Many say that because these servants all get varying degrees of treasure (representing gifts of the Spirit), all are saved, and thus those who did little, will receive little. However, this is a false premise as all these who receive talents are no more true Christians than all the virgins were in the parable of the ten virgin in this same chapter. The parable of the virgins and talents are word pictures of the corporate church, and for us to learn from. The parable of the virgins stresses the need for the church to be 'ready,' and the parable of the talents stresses the church's need to be 'laborers' and use the gifts God gives us. In the virgins we have God illustrating that we should 'watch,' and in the talents that we should 'work,' for the Lord.

Giving the servants talents merely represents all those professed Christians and their varying abilities, as they are called to go forth with the gospel. Some are true Christians, and some (those who hide this treasure under a bushel and do not make use of it to convert others), are not true Christians. The gifts God gave them were not used, and thus they never knew Christ. This is made clear by their destination afterward.

Matthew 25:27-30

- "Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.
- Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.
- For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.
- And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

These are obviously not those who are Saved, but those who failed to do the work of an evangelist (2nd Timothy 4:5), and are thus cast into Hell. This servant was 'unprofitable' or made no effort to increase the Kingdom, which is the task of every believer. He, looking to serve only himself, did not care to be bothered by the task that the master had assigned to him, nor faithfully use the gifts given him.

Matthew 25:24

- "Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not straved:"

This is the ramblings of an arrogant man who is 'accusing' the master (in so many words) of stealing what he has not worked for, and exploiting the labor of others for His own gain. Moreover, he tried to excuse his dereliction of duty saying he was afraid (verse 25) to make a mistake with it, so simply held it. The master did not accept these excuses, but (knowing his heart) declared this man wicked and lazy (slothful). God knows the truth of man's doings. He knows the mind-set of him who is not really saved, and who has no clue where the real work "truly" comes from. It is as simple as the man

who looks out for himself, and the man of God who works for Christ's sake. For where a man's heart is, there will his treasure be also.

This parable teaches that we must become profitable by adding to that which has been given us of God. Spiritual success in life is using the abilities, gifts, and opportunities that God has given us to bring others into the Kingdom of God. It is our duty to be a witness, and do the 'work' of an evangelist.

Many wonder about the talents that were taken from these unprofitable servants and given to him who hath ten. By asking this, they defeat the whole purpose of their argument, as clearly the 'talents' represent the varying degrees of ability given by God to man to use in preaching the gospel. That was the whole point God showed in this wicked man hiding it in the earth, and not using it to convert others. These people forget that this is a 'parable,' and not an actual story. The taking it from the wicked symbolizes God rejects them as worthy of gifts His servants possess, and the giving it to Him that hath ten, symbolizes all gifts are given fully to those who are full. The number 10 symbolizes the fullness of whatever is in view (see *the numbers study*). Because those who have more, are those who have Christ, and more shall be given so that they have all.

If this was talking about carrying talents into heaven, then whatever is given out in heaven as a reward (talents), was given out on earth (talents), and logically speaking, it can only be whatever this 'talent' represents. So then either they have a dilemma, or more ability to preach the gospel is given out in heaven (these talents, multiplied). But that's the problem in trying to look at a parable in worldly terms of talents multiplied, translated into rewards multiplied. i.e., the talent wasn't given as a reward on earth (it was a gift), and when given to him that has ten, it was not for his work, it was because the unsaved one who had it, didn't use it. So again, this idea is without merit (no pun intended).

The parable of the talents teaches us that we should use our gifts, according to our several [*idios*], or own unique God given ability (Matthew 25:15) whether mental, physical or material, in service to Christ, and we all will be rewarded the exact same way, as illustrated in verses 21 and 23.

Matthew 25:21

- "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Matthew 25:23

- "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 things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Likewise all those who had been given gifts, from him that was given 2 talents, to him that was given 10 talents, they all were faithful in a few things, and made ruler over many things. This parable illustrates that a Christian gifted less than another, will not be penalized because he has a limited ability, he is made ruler over many things, just as He who had more ability is made ruler over many things, because he was faithful in a few.

James 1:17

- "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

The Lord has given responsibility to increase the gospel to every servant, and it is proportional to the gifts of God which each of us are endowed with. In Christ, even seemingly everyday tasks can be used to the Glory of God, as there are diversity of abilities. Our God given abilities such as a lucid mind, eloquence, apt to teach, having patience, a good memory, to be good with children, able to interpret, slow to anger, writing, apt for missionary work, being a leader, and many other qualities which are placed in us by the Creator. Even our obedience, dress, attitude or Christ-like behavior can be a witness to the Word, and a goad to divine service. Our lifestyle and behavior in the home or in the work place, can be used to his glory. We are different, and have different gifts, but we are all of one body. We all receive one reward because we all move by the power of the Spirit.

1st Corinthians 12:4

- "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."

It's how we use our gifts that count. Do we let the light of Christ shine, or do we hide the candle under a bushel or basket and curse the darkness? Do we build our city upon a hill for all to see, or do we build it underground to avoid being seen or criticized, and thus avoid tribulations?

	1st Servant	2nd Servant	3rd Servant
Servant's Attitude	Serve Master	Serve Master	Serve Servant
Talents Received	5 Talents	2 Talents	1 Talent
Talents Used	5 Talents	2 Talents	0 Talents
Talents Gained	5 Talents	2 Talents	0 Talents
Talents Returned	10 Talents	4 Talents	1 Talent
Talents Lost	0 Talents	0 Talents	0 Talents
Rewarded	Rule & Joy	Rule & Joy	Darkness & Weeping

The fact that God treats the first two servants equally when they return having multiplied the talents, illustrates that we should be evangelists and productive in our work on earth, else we are not profitable servants and of them that are unworthy to be called Christ-ians.

What many 'usually' fail to see in this parable, is the fact that neither of these two good servants increased the talent more than the other. i.e., they both doubled what they were given. They both had **an equal increase**. It's only what was given them to start with that was unequal (according to their ability). Therefore to say that this proves rewards according to works fails miserably. If it was according to their works, they both got the same thing, 'because' they both had an equal increase. If anything, this disproves their theory of rewards according to works. This parable is an exhortation to all Christians to love his neighbor as himself, which means to desire the same Salvation for them, as we have. To go forth with the abilities (treasures) which God has given us, and use them wisely that others may have the same hope and joy that we have in the Lord. This is our loving our neighbor as ourselves. Christians who perceive that they have limited abilities and opportunities must not excuse themselves from Christian service. To those who show themselves to be good stewards of what God had given

them, rule and joy is given. To those who show themselves to be bad stewards of what God had given them, darkness and weeping is their reward.

James 2:20

- "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

Works are the evidence of our faith, and without it, we are just kidding ourselves about knowing and Loving God. For if we love Him, we will serve Him.

Still another often quoted chapter is Luke 19, of the parable of the 10 Minas or pounds. In this we see there were 10 servants who were each given 10 pounds, and told to occupy until Christ comes. The general framework of the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds is the same. Namely, a Master called His servants and delivered unto them that which was to bring an increase. He then departed into a far country to return at a later date for a reckoning. The difference in this parable is that all the servants are given '*the exact same weight of money*' to start off with (one pound). This is because while the parable of the talents were showing the aspect of every man given diverse gifts to bring the gospel according to his own unique ability, this one is illustrating that we 'all' receive the very same gospel spirit, the very same gospel. Both the talents [*talanton*], and the pounds [*mna*], are monetary units of exchange. They reference the weighed sums of precious metals such as gold or silver used in that day as money. In other words, God is illustrating the precious nature or great value of what He has given the church to work with.

Luke 19:16-17

- "Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.
- And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities."

When the master returned, He gave them that had an increase in pounds, cities proportionate to the increase. This is often brought up by the proponents of rewards for works. On the face of it, it may 'seem' to make the contradictory claim that we are rewarded according to our own works. That is until we begin to realize that our authority over cities is by being in Christ who 'Himself' gave the increase. When we are come to the Kingdom of Heaven, we live and reign 'in Him' over ten cities, or over five cities. For the works we did were in Him, and all our increase is by Him, not ourselves that we should merit something for it. We have to understand that these are spiritual pictures, figures of the true, not literal applications. there are no literal cities in heaven.

	1st Servant	2nd Servant	3rd Servant
Servant's Attitude	Serve Master	Serve Master	Serve Servant
Pounds Received	1 Pound	1 Pound	1 Pound
Pounds Used	1 Pound	1 Pound	0 Pounds
Pounds Gained	10 Pounds	5 Pounds	0 Pounds
Pounds Returned	10 Pounds	5 Pounds	1 Pound
Pounds Lost	0 Pounds	0 Pounds	1 Pound
Rewarded	10 Cities	5 Cities	0 Cities

If every believer reigned over 5 or 10 cities, who is left to be reigned over? Everyone is a Reign-er and no one a Reign-ee. There are an innumerable number of believers, if

they all reigned over cities and had authority over these proportional to who they brought in (the increase), then again, who is left to reign over? Since the unsaved are not there, and all believers reign with Christ, who was not given a reign? It's confusion until we realize there is only ONE Holy City we reign over, and we 'all' live and reign and have authority in this city, in Christ. It's the same principle as God saying there are many mansions or rooms in My father's house (John 14:2). Is it a literal house, with an innumerable number of mansions in it for each of us? No, it's spiritual house, a spiritual picture indicating we all are 'at home' and have a place in the Lord. He is our place or abode. Likewise, when it speaks of us building the Temple of God, brick by brick, do we reign over the bricks we have brought in, or is it all part of one House? Is God this Holy Temple? We reign over 5 cities because we are in Christ who "Himself" gave the increase, and reign over 10 cities because we are in Christ who "Himself" gave the increase. These are word pictures, not literal applications of cities and authority. Else we have an innumerable number of cities, and no people in them but us. But you see our Authority is Christ, and we have authority as the body of Christ, living and reigning in Him. Thus we reign over the city of that increase 'Christ has brought' into the fold.

Thus by a little faithfulness (as the mustard seed Christ, to show the increase), we are proved worthy of that which we gained. 10 pounds, 10 cities, 5 pounds, 5 cities, all in Christ, proportionate to that increase Christ worked in us. What increase Christ gave to us, is what we have authority over in Him. i.e., we're not rewarded for planting or watering, but for the increase. and that 'clearly' is by the Work of Christ.

1st Corinthians 3:7

- "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; ***but God that giveth the increase.***"

So much for man insisting He be rewarded for the increase. Clearly, God gives the increase, not us. In this parable of the pounds we (the servants) are rewarded for the increase only because we are in Christ, and He gives the increase, pound for city. Ten pounds, ten cities, five pounds, five cities, illustrating the full measure for each soul gained. We must remember 'what' the increase in pounds represents and we will see the impossibility of the rewards theory. The increase represents souls gained. The conversion of souls is the winning of them; every true convert is clear gain to Jesus Christ. We got our full measure (the original 1 pound) and receive our city, and the five or ten we gained get their city. Each of us merits reign in the City in Christ. All are given a full reward not according to our work, but the increase of God. This isn't literal money, or literal cities, we are dealing with parables here. That is earthly stories with a heavenly meaning. The pound represents the gospel of Christ which He has given us, and which we are to share with others. The pounds gained represent the increase, or the others who become Christian like we are, that they have this same gospel of Christ. Each of them will reign in a city, the city of God. Whether 10 or 5, each soul gained is for a city. each believer has reign over a city because we were used of Christ to make that increase.

Hebrews 11:10

- "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Thinking worldly we can be misled into believing in rewards and authorities in literal cities, when the truth is spiritual. The city for each convert we bring (increase) in Christ is a spiritual city, whose builder and maker is God. This does not mean that we will have

differing rewards for works, which would also contradict other scriptures. It means that we are in Christ who gave this increase, therefore each increase gets a reward. "*He who hath an ear, let him hear.*"

1st Corinthians 15:24

- "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power."

Christ has 'all authority' and rule in the Kingdom of Heaven, we have authority and rule in our city (His city) only in him. If we expect more, then we have our hearts set on earthly things and earthly values, not heavenly things.

Colossians 3:1-4

- "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
- Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
- For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
- When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

We appear with Him, in Glory, and reign with authority over cities, because He (not us) has done it all. He made us kings and provided a reign, made us Priests and provided a Temple, made us rule, and provided us a City, by His work alone. This is what man so often misses in understanding how and why we run and are not weary, and walk and do not faint. Not by our own work, but by the Work which Christ has done in us.

Conclusion

As you read through this article, the truth is, it will not convince anyone either that there are degrees of rewards, or there are not degrees of rewards. No man can do that. Convincing or convicting is the job of the Holy Spirit. It's not something any man can claim credit (reward) for. Surely, some things are hard to be understood, but the seeking of rewards for our works on earth is borne of carnality. It's what kept the Jewish people (in part) from understanding true Grace. To not look at ourselves for what we are, but to think highly of ourselves is not a virtue, but pride. The truth is much more simple than visions of self respect. We deserve no profit, we are responsible for no increase, we merit no crown, God alone deserves the glory, and will receive it. What then would we be rewarded for? Only for what Christ has done 'for' us. This truth delineated in the Words of our Savior:

Luke 17:10

- "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are **unprofitable servants**: we have done that which was our duty to do".

For "this" is the truth. We are unprofitable servants. We have done nothing worthy of

any merit. We have done nothing worthy of the glorious reward that God has in store for us. We have worked nothing which would garner any profit! Indeed we 'are' unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do. We have done what God 'Himself' has moved us to do. This is the humility so present in the Apostles which so many Christians of our day seem to lack. Humility and the certain 'God given' nobility to receive what the scriptures say about the true condition and nature of man. When we take this humble attitude, then are we in fellowship with God, and are assured that we are on the right track. When we start dreaming about our 'own' good works, and what rewards we'll merit, we are in a place where no Christian should be. A prideful, arrogant, vain, unbiblical place. The merit system is antithetical to Christianity except it be in Christ. It is contradictory to all that the Bible declares concerning our works. The Lord God alone should have all the credit, praise, and Glory in heaven for the increase.

Those who claim Christians will receive rewards in heaven for imperfect "good" works are deluding themselves. While they insist the works are necessary to prove the genuineness of professed faith, but are not required for earning heaven, they fail to understand that works are an evidence of genuineness of professed faith, not a proof of it. I'm sorry to say I believe the whole doctrine is contrived and contradictory. As in saying that post-justification works have sin in them, and yet also saying that they still can merit reward because the guilt of sin has been removed. But what they fail to address is that if the guilt of sin is removed, the works are then 'perfect.' So how could one's work merit more than another, when they are both perfect? It is vain and circular reasoning in confusion and contradiction, because it's not true.

We all need to grasp the true concept of the word "Grace." The 'basic' definition of Grace is 'unmerited favor of God' upon us. But indeed that is really far too simplistic. UNMERITED favor of God just doesn't get the whole story across. We should understand that if we merit it, it cannot be Grace, it's a debt. All these scriptures presented are not untrue, nor taken out of context, nor abused. If that is the case, then we cannot merit rewards for God's grace in our works on earth. If rewards are by works, then God says it cannot be Grace. I didn't say that, God said that. So then, let God be true and every man a liar. It cannot be both Grace and Works except our Grace be in the work of Christ.

Romans 11:6

- "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

God says we cannot have it both ways. If we merit it by works, then it's not Grace. If it's by Grace, then we cannot merit it by works. Need He say more? It's not a riddle and it's not ambiguous and it's not written in symbolic language. It's clear and unmistakable. It's confusion to say we are on the merit system for our labors, and then say we are on the Grace system. If we get a reward for working, then it's not Grace, but a debt that God owes us for work. Because "GRACE" is unmerited favor of God because of the work of Christ. So man can talk about our good works and how the merit system works all day long, but God Himself is very clear on the matter. Even though many cannot see it. His truth doesn't depend on man recognizing it, it is still true whether man agrees with it or not.

Do we have such a hope and expectation as the glorious picture God paints of the Kingdom, and our reward there? Do we expect to enter the Kingdom and be crowned with everlasting glory by the Grace of God through the blood of the Lamb? If so, let us cast aside all notions of merited rewards and crowns given out dependant upon labor.

Let us worship God in the doctrines of true Grace and works by motivation of the Holy Spirit, not of crowns of Glory.

Romans 12:3

- "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

Any faith we have more than another is because God dealt that measure to us, and not because of ourselves. Any work we do greater than any other is because God worked within us more than another. We deserve no rewards, no merit, no crowns that we may boast, for it is all of God. Rather than ask 'what rewards we shall get,' we should ask, 'what is God's will for us to do.' When we have done it, we should say, *we are unprofitable servants*. Abandon pride and as the certain poor widow who threw in two mites, surrender 'all' to our Lord. Everlasting life is all the reward we need. As in the parables of the talents and pounds, we have a stewardship to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom. Let us pray that we will stand before our Lord and be rewarded on the basis of Christ's faithful works, that we may also hear our Lord say, *"Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."* In this we can Glory.

As we ponder these things, may the Lord who is gracious above all, give us the wisdom to discern truth, and guide our paths into the truth of His most Holy Word.

Amen!

Peace,

Copyright ©2001 Tony Warren

For other studies free for the Receiving, Visit our web Site

The Mountain Retreat! <http://www.mountainretreatorg.net>

Feel free to duplicate, display or distribute this publication to anyone so long as the above copyright notice remains intact and there are no changes made to the article. This publication can be distributed only in it's original form, unedited, and without cost.

Created 4/30/01 / Last Modified 8/03/14

The Mountain Retreat / twarren10@aol.com

[[Top](#) | [Eschatology](#) | [Bible Studies](#) | [Classics](#) | [Articles](#) | [Other Articles](#) | [Sermons](#) | [Apologetics](#) | [F.A.Q.](#) | [Forum](#)]

The Mountain Retreat