

# SEED & BREAD

Otis Q. Sellers, Founder

## Rewards

By Andrew Brown

**“It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him”** (2 Tim. 2:11). If the transaction is complete between the sinner and the Savior, then the promise of life is secured. **“If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He will also deny us”** (2 Tim. 2:12). The believers who faithfully endure are rewarded with the promise of reigning with Christ. The comment about the Lord denying us does not negate everything that was just said! If believers deny Him (endurance, after salvation) then He will deny them (the reward of reigning). **“If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself”** (2 Tim. 2:13). If believers lose their walk of faith, God still remains true to His word regarding their salvation. This passage confirms salvation in Christ and cannot be understood apart from rewards.

When believers receive the Lord Jesus as Savior, they are brought into many glorious blessings. Believers enter into priceless privilege through salvation from sin and death, **“just as it is written, ‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him’”** (1 Cor. 2:9). Until He chooses to reveal it, the totality of God’s blessing is unfathomable to us.

**“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men,”** (Col. 2:8). The lack of awareness of God’s policy of rewarding faithfulness has robbed many and resulted in laziness in seeking the things of God. **“Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize”** (Col. 2:18). Do not seek what the world seeks for. Seek God, for **“His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him”** (Isa. 40:10). Though the specific rewards are unknown today, our God is the perfect Judge. Our response to future blessing should mimic that of David after being given the promise of blessing, **“Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house that You have brought me this far?”** (1 Chron. 17:16). Living a life of love for Him is satisfying in itself; but when the rewards are revealed, we will truly experience the meaning of Luke 17:10, **“We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.”** A faithful, passionate pursuit of Christ through the Living Word of God builds a vital foundation for each person, despite whatever worldly opportunities may have to be renounced in the current system. Let us mimic Paul’s example, **“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”** (Phil. 3:14).

Two of Jesus’ disciples, James and John, tried to secure the highest positions in the Kingdom of God for themselves. They bluntly requested, **“Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory”** (Mark 10:37, NASB 1995 throughout). Jesus did not correct them by saying believers are all equal. Quite the contrary, Jesus mentioned that these positions are **“... for those for whom it has been prepared”** (Mark 10:40). This reward had been assigned but, **“whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all”** (Mark 10:43-44). Other rewards are open for those who pursue glorifying God. Jesus, both generous and just beyond our comprehension, utilizes the art of motivating workers by offering incentives. The **judgments of the Lord are...more desirable than gold...Sweeter also than honey and...In keeping them there is great reward** (Ps. 19:9-11). Jesus desires to greatly bless His followers, and in His abundance has not limited the possibilities to simply salvation. God rewards faithfulness.

Unbelievable blessings await the believer in Christ; however, “all believers are rewarded equally” is a damaging misconception in Christianity. A true believer who has fallen away from the faith has lost rewards, not salvation. Once the Lord Jesus identifies Himself with the sinner, that sinner is saved. Salvation is a gracious gift of God through faith (Eph. 2:8-9) apart from works, but the true believer will start showing works through a fruitful lifestyle. **“We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works”** (Eph. 2:10). Believers are to do good works (not be saved by them). The believer is far from the finish line after salvation, and he can miss further treasures given at God’s payday. Understanding what God has spoken on the subject of rewards for faithful service can be an enormous benefit and joy to Christians. The general misunderstanding that salvation is the only reward has been a reason many have neglected a faithful walk or delayed to stake a claim with Christ, pursuing the world’s immediate rewards instead.

The Bible often repeats the promise of rewards: **“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done”** (Rev. 22:12, also note Matt. 16:27,

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Jer. 17:10, and 2 Cor. 5:10). In Matthew 5, reversal of fortunes is promised as blessing for those who possess certain traits. **“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven [God] is great ...”** (Matt. 5:11-12). Heaven refers to God here since these Israelites were just promised they would inherit the earth. Persecution for Christ NOW secures FUTURE rewards. **“...store up for yourselves treasures in heaven [God], where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal”** (Matt. 6:20). The principle remains the same: store up Godly rewards NOW! Choose obtaining Godly treasure above the temporary worldly ones! You cannot love both God and money (Luke 16:13). Pursuing righteousness and faithfulness is of much greater importance to the Lord.

Moses considered **the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward** (Heb. 11:26). Moses looked beyond his present circumstances to a future reward and was marked out as a special believer who had access to the tent of meeting (not possessed by others). He received wisdom, instruction and relationship with God, including a position that was unmatched by others (Num. 12). God even took some of the power that was upon Moses and distributed it among other righteous men in Israel (Ex. 18:21). Also, King David will again be given the position of king over Israel during the Kingdom of God. Jehovah Jesus declared, **“But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them”** (Jer. 30:9). God will fulfill His promises to David in the resurrection. Additionally, Jesus’ apostles will have exalted Kingdom positions: **“Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel”** (Matt. 19:28). These men are privileged to know their positions beforehand. Moses’ ekklesia, David, the twelve disciples, and God’s other chosen leaders can be understood as examples of God’s future governing system. The governmental system set up by God in Israel presents a hierarchical system where the positions of responsibility and the flow of blessing to others are given as a reward to the faithful. **And men will say, ‘Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely there is a God who judges on earth’** (Ps. 58:11). When God establishes His government, this will be obvious. Do not be deceived, God holds out much more than salvation.

How did the mistaken idea that Christ will not reward the righteous begin? Christ once challenged a rich man to sell everything and follow Him to receive Godly treasure. Afterward, **Peter began to say to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You”** (Mark 10:28). Peter wanted Christ to know they had already met this challenge! Did Jesus correct him and insist that everyone will be

equal? Absolutely not! Jesus calmed Peter’s concerns by declaring to him not only immediate rewards, but also the Kingdom rewards. In that day, the future fortunes will eclipse the benefits of believing now. Many fortunes will be reversed, **“But many who are first will be last, and the last, first”** (Mark 10:31). The parables of the talents in Matthew 25 and the minas in Luke 19 both reveal this same truth; for those who are faithful with much are rewarded with much. The nobleman (Christ) rewarded His faithful servants with a reward equal to their “accomplishments.” (Matthew 20 does not contradict rewards.)

Teaching about rewards continues throughout the Acts period and the epistles. **“Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap, if we do not grow weary”** (Gal. 6:9). Rewards are often delayed, but the enduring believer will reap a future reward. **“For God is not unjust so as to forget your work”** (Heb. 6:10), and **“... He is a rewarder of those who seek Him”** (Heb. 11:6). Paul describes the salvation-reward relationship, **“Now if anyone builds on the foundation [of Christ] with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work”** (1 Cor. 3:12-13). The quality of a believer’s work built on Christ’s foundation will be tested. **“If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire”** (1 Cor. 3:14-15). The work not done in accordance with God’s desired work will be lost even though the believer is saved. Rewards are given for God’s work (not “religious” works or repetitious traditions). Many will take little through this fire (judgment) since they did not live for Christ. John also warns, **“watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward”** (2 John 1:8). Failure to pursue Christ may disqualify one from many blessings.

No alteration in God’s plan for rewards occurs after Acts 28:28. Ephesians 6:8 states, **“knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.”** The Lord will not be any man’s debtor, He will repay regardless of status. Paul speaks about a **“crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing (Gr. *epiphaneia*)”** (2 Tim. 4:8). Those who long for His *epiphaneia* will be presented with rewards. Paul earlier challenged those who are rich in this present world not to trust wealth but to be **“rich in good works... storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future”** (1 Tim. 6:18-19). Paul offers an investment strategy in real treasures! Colossians abounds with rewards guidance: **“Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance”**(Col. 3:24).