

## Remembering God's Gifts, Promises, And Rewards

**We Have So Much Going for Us!**

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The human mind is indeed a wonderful creation. It takes information, collates it, and it makes it useful. These facts are in turn stored in the mind for the future. The mind is also the control center for all movement and all the bodies other functions.

Sometimes the human mind holds me in absolute wonder and other times it frustrates me beyond my wildest dreams. I can remember things from my childhood as if they were just yesterday, yet I can lay something down on my desk and look for it in five minutes and between that time some invisible creature came from outer space and stole it, and an hour later it reappears again.

I can remember, as if it were yesterday, being about 4-5 years old and trying to stand up under my mother's oak table and hitting my head. In the 1930's, Tarzan was the big thrill then and all the kids were trying to swing like Tarzan on the tree. I can also remember falling out of a tree and landing flat on my back and having the wind knocked out of me.

As a small boy, I can remember my parents, aunts, and uncles telling me all about their childhoods and what they remembered about their parents and so forth, thus giving me a family history of sorts from the memories that I learned from them.

When we read an autobiography, we share in the memories of others. I read *Reminiscences of MacArthur*, the story of General MacArthur. I learned about his father, Arthur MacArthur and how he was a general. So everyone that reads that book also shares in the memories of Douglas MacArthur.

I am sure that all of us have experienced memories that go way back, but yet they seem so fresh in our minds. Some of our memories are very wonderful to keep, but others bring guilty feelings, and we honestly wish we had never

gone through the things that we did to produce those memories in our minds and wish we could erase them.

Even though we know that God has forgiven all of our repented of sins, still the thoughts of those mistakes stay with us. But this is not all bad either, because even in those bad thoughts, bad memories, the strong lessons will hopefully teach us not to repeat the offenses.

What would we be like without long term memories? We would certainly be destined to repeat the same mistakes over and over again. As far as the nations that are in this world, they seem to have a very short memory. We learn from history. We learn that mankind, influenced by Satan, seems to be destined to repeat wars, destruction, abuse of the land, abuse of each other forever.

I am sure that God gave us memories also that we might be able to have a panoramic view of our life, to see both the good and the bad, and to be able to relate the cause to the offense—to be able to learn from how we have lived. But obviously the reason why we have the mind we do, with its reasoning capacity and the ability to remember, is so that we might be taught by God and remember.

God tells us to remember Lot's wife, remember how she turned around and wanted to go back into the world and what happened to her. He tells us to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, yet how many people have forgot to remember?

God wants us to keep all the good memories of our lives, with our parents and our children and the wonderful events that have happened to us, but what He really wants is for our minds to be filled to the brim, so to speak, with remembrance of Him, His laws, His way to live, and His faithfulness. That is what God really wants.

It is a memory filled with these things that will enable us to stand in this end time. These strong remembrances of God, coupled with right actions, will produce what we read about in Ephesians 6, the armor of God. It will produce truth, righteousness, peace, faith, hope of salvation, and protection of God's Word.

Each of us views the events taking place in the world with uncertainty. We would all like to know exactly what will be happening, what our exact role will be, and when all of this will take place. But the problem is that this time we cannot know specifically what is in store for us, as God's church or as individuals. God may choose a place of safety for all; He may select some out for a different course. But brethren, we do know that whatever God does with us, if we are faithful to Him, it will be to His glory and for our perfecting. We can rest in that.

The times coming up will be difficult with Satan pulling out all the stops to discourage us and cause us to slip. Let us look at a few scriptures in Daniel 7.

**Daniel 7:1-8** In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts. Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first [the Babylonian empire] was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it. And suddenly another beast, a second [Medo-Persian empire], like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!'

After this I looked, and there was another [Greece], like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast [the empire that we are dealing with today], dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before

whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.”

**Daniel 7:24-25** ‘The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; he shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings. He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.’

So brethren we know that this is coming upon us.

Now what he is talking about here is the leader that Satan will set up and have in charge at the end of this age who will have complete dominion over the world, and his oppression will extend over the saints, over God’s people. He will speak against God and all that He stands for, His laws, His holy days, His Sabbaths, and he will probably state that he is infallible, possessing and forgiving sins, that he can open and shut heaven, and he will excommunicate leaders who are trying to do right, and he will absolve those who are sinning, and he will exact strict obedience to his commands. In doing so he will wear out the saints, or more perfectly translated, “he will wear *away* the saints,” as in the steady pressure of erosion. He will do this by all of the above and in hoping to change laws, by wars and massacres, seizures of property, and persecutions, and of course the mark of the beast.

You can read Revelation 13, because this is where it talks about worshipping the beast, the miracles that will come from him, and of course the mark of the beast. It will be a time of tremendous pressure.

Matthew 24 talks about how false prophets will arise, iniquity will abound, and the love of many will wax cold. This is the true danger facing us, that we will give up and that we will wax cold. This is why God wants us to have our minds filled with His truth.

**Proverbs 29:18** Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law.

Again, the true meaning of the word vision here is not what we would think of today. Rather, it means a prophetic vision; prophetic understanding of what is to come. It is a vision that motivates one to stay on the path the Kingdom of God. "Happy is he who has the vision to keep the law of God," because that is what it is going to take.

We are all watching to see if the end is near, and I think we feel it is, but the one thing that we all have to remember is that the end is going to come whether we are ready for it or not. God is not going to wait for us to be ready for it to come. If we are close to God, good, if we are not close to God, when God's timing is finished the end is going to be here.

None of us know exactly what the future holds, but we all recognize that there are very difficult times on the horizon, and when stress and pressure comes we all tend to become myopic. We all tend to focus on ourselves and on our own problems and we tend to take our eyes off of God. When we do this we lose the big picture and we become vulnerable to falling by the wayside and we can become lost.

When I was in the service, they always taught us that when you were lost you climb a tree and you look or you climb a tall hill or high mountain and you look out and see where you are going. Now you may have to come down and hike through all of the wasteland, but at least you know that you are going in the right direction.

So what I want to do today is to have us to see where we are going so that we do not lose sight of our destination with all that is coming upon this world.

The world sees a mishmash of confusion. They are uncertain, they do not know what is coming on the horizon, but you see, brethren, God does not want us to be uncertain or confused as to our future or what our opportunities are that He has prepared for us.

What memories, what strong remembrances does God want us to carry with us during these times of trials? I have listed three that I feel are very important, but I am sure there are many more. 1) God's gift to us. 2) God's promises, and 3) God's rewards. I think God wants this to be in our minds.

We will take the gifts of God first. In *Strong's Concordance* it is number 5486 and it is the word *charisma*. In the Greek/Hebrew dictionary it means to show favor, a gift of grace of undeserved benefit.

I want you to pay attention to what it refers to in the New Testament, because it literally refers to everything. In the New Testament it is used only of the gifts and graces imparted from God, which are: deliverance from peril; the gift of self-control; gifts of Christian knowledge; consolation; confidence; redemption; and salvation through Jesus Christ.

As we go along here you will see that literally we get everything from God. The synonym just means a gift; a favor; something given; a dividing; a distribution of gifts.

**Acts 2:38** Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

We cannot earn the Holy Spirit. We do not receive the Holy Spirit because we have done great things in the world, because we are wealthy, because we are good looking, etc. We are all called by God and begin to be obedient to God's laws, and as we progress towards baptism, then we continue to be obedient and we become humbled toward God, then we are baptized and have hands laid upon us and God chooses to give us the gift of His Spirit. There is no other way that it can be obtained by our own efforts, it is a free gift from God.

Acts 8 shows us an example of where someone tried to buy it.

**Acts 8:18-20** And when Simon [Simon Magus] saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said

to him, “Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!”

**Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The world around us thinks that they have an immortal spirit or an immortal soul, but you see, eternal life is a gift from God, and He does not *have* to give it to us.

**I Corinthians 1:4-9** I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now I would like to read to you what *Barnes Notes* has to say about this section. It says:

I thank God always in respect to you that God has conferred [given] these favors on you through Jesus Christ. In every respect or regard to all favors conferred to any of his people, you have been distinguished by Him in all those respects in which He blesses His own children. You abound in these things; they are conferred abundantly upon you. You have received a valuable endowment, a treasure of inestimable value. In everything you are enriched by Him in the knowledge of divine truth.

God is going to give you all you need. Continuing on here,

The knowledge was first established among you by means of miraculous endowments of God’s Holy Spirit. God has so abundantly endowed you with His favor that you are not wanting or deficient in any gift. Not necessarily miraculous or spectacular

endowments, but also the kindness of God that will produce peace of mind, steadfast faithfulness, and humility. These gifts are possessed in rich abundance as you wait for the coming of Jesus Christ, who shall confirm you, who shall establish you in the hopes of the gospel. He shall make you firm amidst all your trials and all efforts which may be made to shake your faith and to remove you from the foundations on which you now rest.

God is not going to let us fail, brethren. These are wonderful gifts that God has given us to stand on in the end time, there is no question. Now let us turn over to I Corinthians 12.

**I Corinthians 12:1-3** Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

So what Paul is actually telling them here is that there is nothing more important than to understand the wonderful gifts that have been given to them by God's Spirit. Then he reminds them that they were Gentiles and as Gentiles they worshipped pagan idols, you had no future, your only future was death. You really have to understand what God has done here by giving you these gifts.

**I Corinthians 12:4-7** There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.

What he is trying to stress here to all the people is that all gifts are designed to answer some important purpose or goal for benefit for the whole church. They are conferred in such measures and in such a manner as to be best adapted to usefulness and to produce good. God is doing something here with the gifts that we receive.



**I Corinthians 12:8-12** for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

What he is saying here is that we are being given gifts in the church. Each person has a gift, each a different gift to be in service for the whole church. Turn to Acts 17, Paul says,

**Acts 17:23-25** For as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things."

One thing that we really have to come to know is that God gives everything and then when it comes time for the trials and tribulations God will be there to give us what we need. Turn over to Luke 21.

**Luke 21:12-15** "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist."

So even during stress and trial, God is going to give us all that we need.

Now why does God want us to remember these gifts? So that we will remember that God will give us everything that we need to stand firm at the end of the age.

One of the things I think He really wants us to understand is that He really does want us. That is what the whole creation is all about. Whatever trial we are required to face at the end of this time, God will give us what it takes to get us through, because He wants us in His Kingdom.

The second memory that God wants us to keep firmly in our minds is His promises to us. God, who cannot lie, has made promises to us and they are sure. When Israel came out of the Promised Land, they always seemed to forget what they were supposed to remember. In Exodus 13 they are told to remember the strength of God that brought them out of Egypt, but they always forgot that.

In Numbers 11, they took their eyes off of their future and they started to think about Egypt again. They glamorized their past in Egypt, it was a memory that started to fade and they wanted it back. The same thing can happen to us as well. We can start to think that the world was not so bad after all. We really have to be careful not to do that.

The term promise, *Strong's* number 1861, means: to tell; to declare God's divine promise of salvation; to render a service; and in its absolute sense it means to give a promise.

**Titus 1:1-2** Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.

Right off the bat here we have two facts here: that we have been promised eternal life and that God cannot lie. These are set things. Now go back to I Timothy 4.

**I Timothy 4:8-10** For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

What he is saying here is that godliness is profitable to all things, and it is profitable to our life now. Living the way God lives will keep us out of trouble, it will keep us from doing the things in the world that are going to cause destruction and pain and suffering, it is going to begin to give us God's mind and it has promise of living in the Kingdom of God in the world tomorrow. Living the way of life of this world points to destruction.

In Hebrews 11, we read about Abraham and some of the others of faith.

**Hebrews 11:8-10** By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Here it tells of Abraham going into a promised land and of trusting in that promise. In verse 13, we have a better sense of this.

**Hebrews 11:13-16** These [heroes of faith] all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they

would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Here we see that these people had not receive the fulfillment of the promise. They *saw* the promises, but they also saw that they would be fulfilled in the future. They were persuaded and they embraced it.

The term here embraced means just like you do when you go to the Feast and see someone you have not seen for an entire year. You wrap your arms around them and you pull them into your heart. That is exactly what they did with God's promises. They brought them into their heart as they would a long lost friend.

All the heroes of Hebrews 11 were motivated by faith in the promises of God to stand fast in their calling, and they viewed themselves as strangers and pilgrims, not looking to this world at all, but looking the world to come. The example is here to motivate us in the same fashion. There are promises that take on a more personal nature as well. They tend to personalize God's Word to us and personalize His protection.

One of my favorites is in II Chronicles 16:9. This is where Asa is being corrected by the prophet, because he is not trusting his God. He was hiring Syria to do his battles for him when he should have gone to God. The prophet was telling him that you should have obeyed God, you should have gone to Him for help.

**II Chronicles 16:9** "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."

To me this is always very encouraging to know that God's eyes are busy and He is looking around this earth to see who may help or be strong for.

Another scripture that has personal flavor to it is Hebrews 13. It reminds me of Richard Ritenbaugh because he explained it one time in a beautiful fashion that just made it stick in my mind, and it is most encouraging.

**Hebrews 13:5-6** Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

Now I will read you from Adam Clarke’s commentary about this here. He says, “There are no less than five negatives in this short sentence, and these connect with two verbs and one pronoun twice repeated to give a literal translation as scarcely possible.”

The literal translation would be, “No I will not leave you, no neither will I not utterly forsake you.” How Richard translated it was, “No, I will never, never, never, never, never leave you or forsake you.” Adam Clarke says it this way, “No, I will never leave you, not I, I will never cast you off.” These are the promises that God wants in our memory banks when it comes time for trouble and trial.

We have many examples of God’s never, never leaving His people and coming to the aid of those in difficulty. We think of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. In Acts 12, one that really struck me was the fact that Peter was about to be beheaded. James had just been killed and Herod thought that he was going to be popular with the people, so Peter was put in prison and shackled between two guards and they had two guards at the gate. (Peter was sound asleep and I do not know how you could sleep when you know you will lose your head the next morning), but then a bright light came into the cell and all of a sudden he felt someone tap him and say “Put your shoes and coat on and follow me.” The shackles fell off and they walked right out of the prison, past both sets of guards and through the main gate and Peter stood there. Then he realized that it was not a dream, as he had thought up until that time. He went to Mary’s house, as you read, but they would not let him in because they could not believe that it was him. The entire church had been praying for him and God answered that prayer.

Now turn over to II Corinthians 11. These are the trials that Paul had to go through and we have gone through nothing compared to this. He was commenting on himself being a minister here and says:

**II Corinthians 11:23-28** Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

This is what this man went through, and he says later on that a crown has been laid up for him, and yet God brought him through every one of these things. Now do we think that God watches over us today? The answer of course is, yes He does. God cares about us, even in the small things.

A minister back in the early years of the church relates a story where he was touring through Europe and he was on a high mountain pass and he parked the car on the shoulder of the road. It was a rather deserted area. They got out to take pictures of the valley below, then they went back to the car but it would not start. The man was not really mechanical, and they started to feel hopeless. They climbed in the car and just sat there. Then all of a sudden the most violent storm they had ever seen came over them and for two hours it shook the car and almost blew them off the hill. He knew that he could not have driven that car through that. Then after the storm passed, he tried to start the car again and it started. That was God's intervention.

Another time he was driving down a mountain road and all of a sudden the steering wheel was taken right out of his hands and he had no control and the car went over into the other lane and there was a turn coming up. Well, the car turned the corner and found a wreck in the middle of the road. Had he have been on the right side of the road he would have been a part of that wreck, but instead God protected him.

I can tell you one example after another of God's protection of His people. Those who have experienced it or witnessed it know that He is watching over them. In this technical age people tend to think that God has gone afar off, but His promise is true that He will never, never leave His Family. Now turn over to Philippians 1. Paul was a very loving apostle, he encouraged people all that he could. He says here:

**Philippians 1:3-6** I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

That is a promise for us too, that God has started the work in us and He will carry it out. In this cursory look at the term promise, we have seen that God cannot lie, that He does promise us that godly living now will produce blessing in this life as well as in the Kingdom. We have also seen that an eternal inheritance and a city, whose maker and builder is God, is ours. We did not turn there, but even Peter promised a New Heaven and a New Earth, and we have seen that He will never ever leave us, and this is His promise.

So far we have seen that God wants us to remember that He will give us all the gifts that we need to stand, grow, and finish the course, and God promises to finish the work that He started in us and to bring us into the Kingdom of God.

The third point is that God wants us to be comforted by the gifts and the promises available to us, but there is one more area that God wants us to focus on, and I dare say that it is not an area that we do not spend a lot of time thinking about. Included in all of God's promises is the promise of reward. The promise should be of special interest to every one of us, in more ways than one, because there is a promise of reward for good or for bad.

Today when we think of reward we think of the poster on the sheriff's wall. But in the Bible the meaning of reward has a deeper meaning than that. It is *Strong's* 3408, *misthos*, wages; higher reward; wages paid for what one has done whether good or bad.

I think many times when we think of having a reward we think we have to do some great awesome work to receive the reward that God wants to give us, but I think you are going to be surprised at what we see here.

With all the pressures of the world around us, most of us would be thankful to be in the Kingdom, and it might seem unnecessary to burden God with giving us a reward, but brethren, that is the wrong approach. You see, God wants to give us a reward and He wants us to overcome to the very best of our ability so that He can give us the biggest reward possible, because then we bring more honor to Him. The greater reward we receive, the greater service we will be able to be to God and to those we serve. God truly wants us to strive, to really work to put in the effort, to receive a greater reward.

Let us look at some of the examples of the term “reward.” Genesis 15 is the first place where the term “reward” is used.

**Genesis 15:1** After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”

God was Abraham’s reward; He was Abraham’s profit. By Abraham obeying God, he was to receive all that God is. Think about that for a minute. *He was to receive all that God is*: His instructions and the way to live, the mind of God, His protection, His help in time of need, His confidence and faith, His encouragement. He was going to be a member of the God Family, he was going to receive all that God is. God is his reward, and he was going to have a marvelous eternal live with a marvelous future.

Who are Abraham's children? You and I are, so we can put our names in there, “fear not (your name) I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.” That applies to us as well because we are God’s children. Everything that God is He is going to give to us, that is a reward that we have to look forward to.

Now let us look at a few more examples of reward here.



**Numbers 18:26** “Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: ‘When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the Lord, a tenth of the tithe.’

**Numbers 18:30-31** Therefore you shall say to them: ‘When you have lifted up the best of it, then the rest shall be accounted to the Levites as the produce of the threshing floor and as the produce of the winepress. You may eat it in any place, you and your households, for it is your reward for your work in the tabernacle of meeting.’

So here we see that reward is salary; this is what I am giving you, your pay if you will; your reward for working in the service of the Temple.

Deuteronomy 27 says that cursed is the (hitman) man who has been given a reward to kill someone. Deuteronomy 32 says that when God judges He will pay His enemies their reward. In Psalm 40, David prays for his enemies to receive the reward of desolation. Psalm 58 says the righteous will rejoice when they see God’s vengeance against the wicked so that a man will say, “Truly there is reward for righteousness.”

You see salvation is a free gift, but a good reward comes from our good works. That is why God wants us to put forth the effort. Turn to Mark 9. People think that we have to do great things to get a great reward, but listen to this:

**Mark 9:41** “For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

I would like to read what *Barnes Notes* has to say about this.

How easy it is to be a Christian. What is easier than to give a cup of cold water to a thirsty disciple of Jesus, but it must be in His name. That is because he is a Christian and therefore from the Savior.

This is very different than giving it from a mere motive of common kindness. If done from the love of Christ it will be rewarded and hence, we learn that the humblest acts of Christians, the lowest service that is rendered will be graciously noticed by Jesus and rewarded. None are so humble in His Kingdom as not to be able to do good and none so poor that he shall not show attachment to Him. The feeblest of service will be accepted and acts of love that may be forgotten by man will be remembered by Him and rewarded in the Kingdom.

Pretty touching.

We will not turn to Matthew 25:41-46 (I am sure you all know what that is) but it goes something like this: When I was hungry, you came and fed Me, when I was thirsty, you came and gave Me a drink, when I was in prison, you came and visited Me, when I was lonely, you talked to Me, when I wanted someone just to listen, you took time to listen to Me, when I was afraid you encouraged Me. When my car broke down and I could not get it fixed, you came over to help me.

Remember what He said? You sheep you get on this side. And they said, when did we do this? And basically what He was saying, when you showed kindness and love. And what was the reward? He said, "Come, inherit the Kingdom."

Those were not great, lofty things. These people had their mind on God.

We probably consider two general areas in the Bible when we consider the term "reward." I am going to read from Revelation 2 and 3. Most fall into one category, which is eternal life and some have a second category, which is office. I am just going to go through the rewards here. To Ephesus it says:

**Revelation 2:1** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

Here the word paradise comes from the Persian word *paradisos* and it means a wonderful enclosed garden with all the vegetables of the world planted

there. Basically a garden full of good things. So the best I can come up with is that the Ephesians will have eternal life with God in a wonderful environment.

To Smyrna:

**Revelation 2:11** “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.””

Those who overcome in Smyrna will have a crown of life and will have no worry of the second death as eternal life is assured for them.

To Pergamos:

**Revelation 2:17** “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.””

I do not know if we know exactly what this hidden manna is, but in John 6: 48-63, Christ is referred to as the manna that comes down from heaven. So perhaps it means that he will have a fullness of understanding of the mind of God. I do not know.

The word for “a white stone” is *tessera*. There are two thoughts on this. One is that a *tessera* was an invitation or a passport to a banquet and it would have the name of the person invited on it and he would be accepted at the door. In the Greek dictionary it was a small stone or pebble, an allusion to the ancient custom among the Greeks of acquitting with a light stone or pebble and condemning with a black one. They would use this in a court case to show their ruling. It was derived from a word indicating reckoning or calculating; to give one’s vote. So in either case the white stone means acceptance. Now the new name reflected one’s growth, character, aptitude, ability, and position.

To Thyatira:

**Revelation 2:26-29** "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'—as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

Evidently those in this category will not rule over Israel, because that will be ruled by David, but they will rule over the Gentile nations and they will be involved in the governing at a national level. They will receive the morning star, and we are not sure what this is, except that we know it will shine when we are resurrected.

To Sardis:

**Revelation 3:5-6** "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

Here there is no office mentioned, but they are told that they will walk with Christ dressed in white, a symbol of righteousness, and they will have eternal life.

To Philadelphia:

**Revelation 3:12** "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name."

They will be pillars, the main support of the church, they will have those positions forever, they will have the name of God the Father written on them and the name of the Holy City—the new Jerusalem—and Christ will write

their new name for them on them and I am sure that will indicate office or position and also where they are from.

To Laodicea:

**Revelation 3:21** “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”

They will evidently sit with Christ and assist Him with the administration of His office.

So we see here the overall general rewards that have been promised to the church eras, but within each group there will be those who have done exceptionally well, those that have done well, those that have been average, and those that have performed below average.

Now on what basis does God give out reward? The second group we think about is the Parable of the Minas in Luke 19.

**Luke 19:12-27** Therefore He said: “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’ But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’ And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’ And the second came, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned five minas.’ Likewise he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities.’ Then another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. [here is your calling and the chance to grow and develop godly character, I did not do anything

with it]For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.'

And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.' (But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.') 'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.'"

What we see is, first of all, that the rewards will be given when Christ returns. We see that each person's reward is according to his or her works. Those who put their heart into the calling and really work at overcoming will receive much, and those who put in little effort will receive little. God is not going to force us to do the right thing. God provides us the opportunity, but He wants us chose to do the right thing and actually do the right thing. God is not willing to make of us what we are not willing to become. If we do not want it, God is not going to give it to us.

Sometimes we get down in the dumps because we do not have this skill or that skill. God's people have so many gifts, abilities, and talents that I often feel that I am a day late and a dollar short. There are a lot of people that come from wretched backgrounds and maybe feel like second class citizens and do not feel that they could ever earn a reward, but you see brethren, we are also rewarded according to our own abilities and that should be encouraging to us all, because we do not all have the same abilities. For us to tear ourselves apart inside because we do not have some skill is not right.

God measures us on the same basis, the same set of standards, but not as all having the same natural ability. We are not all the same with the same talents. We all have different backgrounds, personalities, interests and so on. Turn to Matthew 25, verse 14 and we will see this.

**Matthew 25:14-15** “For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.”

He gave to everyone according to their ability. God knows what each person's talents are. He knows what your abilities are, and He is only going to give you what you can handle. God called us based upon our ability and He gave us the power to do it, so we have no excuses.

**Matthew 25:16-24** “Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. “So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’

So what we see here is that each man was given a responsibility based on his ability. Nobody can run and hide from this. We see that two servants increased their abilities by 100% and received the same reward. But the one who feared and did nothing with his ability lost everything he had.

Revelation 21:8 lists all to the characteristics that will not be in the Kingdom of God and the first thing listed is the fearful, those that will not overcome for God.

Concerning our reward, God wants us to have a reward that we will be thrilled with. The Kingdom of God is not going to be drudgery. It is going to be wonderful! God the Father personally called us and He knows us far better than we know ourselves. He knows our strengths and weaknesses and He knows our full potential.

In order for us to be really happy, we must have responsibilities that are a challenge to us and not a burden we cannot handle. Each of the abilities that we have is God given and we have been created with this specific purpose in mind. God personally selected us and chose us and will do all that He can to see that we develop to our full capability.

He will reward each overcomer according to the spiritual growth each has attained and at His return He will give those who accomplished more with their limited natural ability, the greater rewards than those who accomplished less. And as we saw, the one who was fearful will get nothing and not be in the Kingdom.

One of the final rewards I would like to mention is that we are going to be made kings and priests.

**Revelation 1:5-6** and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Did you get that? It is already in the past tense, it says He *has already* made you kings and priests. Now overall what this means is that with this reward we will all rule and that we will all teach. I do not think that we begin to understand completely the tremendous job that is in front of us. We have an entire physical world that is going to have to be rebuilt and a spiritually



famished people that are going to need teaching. There is going to be a tremendous need for leadership and guidance with all the projects that will have to be done.

Brethren, God wants us to truly strive to receive the finest reward we can get. Please do not forget that.

The last section here is, how do we receive these gifts and promises and rewards that are offered? What is our part? We know that there are qualifiers that God sets in place prior to the receiving of the things He has offered here.

**II Chronicles 16:9** “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal [perfect] to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars.”

From Revelation 2 and 3 we know that we have to overcome, we have to be a victor, a conqueror in producing right moral character by overcoming our carnal human nature.

Let us take a broad look at what Revelation 2-3 tells us is expected of us. We must regain our first love; we must not compromise God’s truth with corruption; we must put away sexual sins; we must not allow false teaching into the church; we must hold fast to the truth; we must strengthen those who are weak in it; and we need to examine ourselves to make sure that we are not puffed up and lukewarm.

Even though we cannot earn the gifts and promises of God, still, salvation costs us something. It costs us the death of the old self. That is not hard to understand. I might add too that the Lake of Fire costs us something. It costs us eternal life.

So many people today make it complicated and miss the mark in all their frustrations. Some people have gone and they say, We have got to pronounce the name of God right. That will get us into the Kingdom. We have to do this technical thing. They are missing the entire point.

I would like to read some of the simplicity that is in Christ here. What does God expect of us?

**I John 5:3** For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

It is not a hard thing. We are to keep and understand all of the commandments. We are to study and show ourselves approved in all of these things. Turn to Zechariah 7. Listen to what God is saying here. It is not complicated.

**Zechariah 7:9-10** “Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother.’”

Now turn back to James 1. In my Bible this is entitled The Test of True Religion.

**James 1:26-27** If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

We can deceive our hearts and say “God doesn’t mind. He can put up with me the way that I am.” But following God requires change. It is really hard to keep ourselves unspotted in this world today.

I would like to read one more here in I Thessalonians 4. This is a model of how a Christian should conduct himself.

**I Thessalonians 4:1-12** Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more [Do not just be content with how you are living. You are to grow], just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for

you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.

You are to be the special people God calls. You are to be the light; you are to be the example. Brethren, we all know that we are to make our bodies a living sacrifice, as it says in Romans 12:1-2. Our job is to become a sacrifice by changing our desires and our will to conform to God. We know that we are to put away the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, because that is what this world is strictly motivated by.

Herbert Armstrong did a marvelous job of defining the job that God sent for us to do and I would like to read that to you here.

Building godly character is this, the attainment of the ability in a separate independent entity of free moral agency, to be able to discern right from wrong, the true values from the false, truth from error, the right way from the wrong, and then make the right choice or decision even against self-desire, impulse, or temptation, plus the will and self-discipline to resist the wrong and to do the right.

What is going to get God's attention? Our building of godly character is what will capture God's attention.

This is the kind of character that we all have to build, this is our part, the reason for our calling. I could not help but think about what God said about Sardis, through John. "He who overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment. I will not blot his name out of the Book of Life." I do not want my name blotted out and you do not want your name blotted out. God is very serious about us doing our part, and that is to build godly character. If we do our part God is faithful to do His part and give us the gifts He promises and rewards and bring us through the difficult time ahead, wherever we may be and whatever circumstance.

I felt a little guilty about starting out so heavy with Daniel 7, but there are good things in Daniel 7 as well.

**Daniel 7:9-14** "I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."

**Daniel 7:26-27** 'But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'

So, brethren, there is a time forecast when this will be all over. Even though there is a difficult time in the near future it a relatively short time compared to the lives we lived. And from that time on the most wonderful future that can be imagined will be here, when all pain is taken away and all tears are wiped and all anguish removed. It is a time when Israel will at last know their God and the wonderful future in store for them. It will be a time when we can really make a difference and heal the earth and teach people to become part of God's Family, just as we will be.

God's purpose for the world and for us will not fail and God is personally working in our development and working with so that we will have the brightest future possible and will allow nothing to separate us from Him.

**Romans 8:28-39** And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Brethren, be of good cheer! God will provide all that we need for this end time, and He will never let us down.