

SURRENDER...AND THE SUBSEQUENT REWARDS

The act of "*surrendering*" is for both the new...and the mature...Christian. However, while the mature Christian's degree of surrender does not differ from the new Christian's degree of surrender, what does differ is the fact that the mature saint has more to surrender to God than does the new babe in Christ simply because, in the process of maturing, he has acquired more spiritual knowledge, skill, and understanding.

The more one matures...grows...the greater is one's capacity for service...which is why growth is so important. Growth not only increases one's capacity for service, but it also increases one's capacity to reveal Christ to others...because...like the stroke from a "*sharpened*" axe cuts more wood than the stroke from a "*dull*" axe...the Christian who is trained and equipped... sharpened...in the things of God can do more for Christ than the Christian who is not so trained and equipped...who has not been so "*sharpened*".

Because man has a free will he does not grow automatically like a vegetable grows - in fact, he may not grow at all!

What I mean? For instance, a head of lettuce cannot decide to resist growth and maturity, but a man can...he can choose, by his own will, to remain immature.

The kind of growth that God desires in the Christian is always that he be conformed into the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ. For the Christian, then, growth, means maturing into the image of Jesus...becoming like Him in His patience, forgiveness, long suffering, and so on. And one does not acquire these characteristics of Christ by learning...or reading... about them in a book...even the Sacred Book...because one only acquires them through actual experiences. That is, one must suffer a long time if he is to become "*long-suffering*" ...he must be in a nerve racking situation that demands patience, if he is to become patient... he must be in situations that would cause him to lose control of his senses, if he is to learn self-control. It is only through life experiences that the Christian learns to "be" the characteristics of Christ, rather than to just "know" about them in his head.

A believer soon learns, if he is astute to the Lord's working, that God allows suffering...sickness...tragedy... disappointments...and other stressful circumstances...to come into the lives of His children in order to produce maturity within them. God never touches our wills...He simply allows external circumstances to come into our lives that will force our wills to make choices under the pressure of distressing situations...it up to us to decide whether we will hate or whether we will forgive... whether we will become anxious or whether we will rest in the arms of faith. God allows the circumstances...we provide the responses to those circumstances.

Man's natural tendency is to go in the opposite direction from God's "*Growth Program*" for Christian maturity because he feels that the best there is in life is achieved when there's plenty of money in his pocket and he can spend leisure time in good

health. Man does not realize that comforts...and ease...rot the human soul, despite the fact that history has proved this to be true time and time again. Life is growth, therefore, to live ...really live...is to grow and, if man does not grow, he regresses and, unfortunately, the things that man...unsaved... unregenerate man...desires from life do lead to regression,...and "death"...while, on the other hand, the things from life that God desires for man lead to growth...maturity...and "life"!

GOD'S WORD TEACHES US THAT THERE ARE "REWARDS" IN HEAVEN

Our "growth" not only enables us to have larger and more effective ministries, but it also enables us to receive greater rewards at the hand of our Master because it is one of Jesus' great delights to honor...and reward...His children.

The deeds...or works...that will bear rewards for the believer are those that he has performed in the power of the Holy Spirit, as a result of his surrender to the Spirit!

This surrender...and subsequent ability of the believer to perform works in the power of the Holy Spirit...can be likened to what is operative when a driver of an automobile exerts his pressure against the power brakes pedal, causing the car to stop...because, just as the engine-produced hydraulic pressure activates the brakes...as a result of the driver having stepped on the brake pedal...and the driver stops the car in the power of the engine, so also, does the believer, who sets his heart on doing the will of God, actually do His will in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us to "lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven"...and, that if we do our alms- giving, praying, and fasting in secret...rather than doing them to be seen of men...that our Father in heaven will "reward us openly".

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 clearly states, "*Wherefore we (Christians) labor, that...we may be accepted of Him (Christ). For we must all appear before the judgment ('rewarding') seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*" (King James Translation). Another translation renders these verses as, "*There fore we strive earnestly with one ambition...to be well-pleasing unto him, for we at the bar of Christ all must appear in our true characters, so that each one may reap the results of the life which he has lived in the body, in accordance with his actions, whether it be well or ill*".

Other Scriptures that deal with the "rewards of the Christian" are as follows:

I Corinthians 3:8-15, "*...every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God; we belong to God as His field to be tilled, as His building to be built, in accordance with God's unmerited favor given to me as an expert master builder. But be careful how you build. For there is no other foundation for the building but that which has been put down, which is Jesus Christ. Whatever is used by those who build upon this foundation; gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; the quality of each man's work will come to light, for the day will show it plainly enough, for the day will arise in the blaze of fire. Everyone's work will be put through the fire so that all can see whether or not it keeps its value. If any man's work which he has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. But if*

a man's work be destroyed under the test, he loses it all, though he himself will be saved, but only as though he were pulled out of the fire."

Romans 2:6-7, "God will render to every man what his actions deserve; to those who, by perseverance in doing good, aim at glory, honor, and all that is imperishable, he will give immortal life".

Romans 14:12, "So then everyone one of us shall give an account of himself to God"

Revelation 22:12, "Behold, I (Jesus) come quickly, and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be."

2 John 1:8, "Keep watch over yourselves, not to lose what you worked for, but, instead, make sure of a full reward."

These Scriptures, and many others in God's Word, teach us that all believers... the lukewarm and the hot...the carnal and the spiritual...the idle and the active...will not be equally rewarded in eternity because, when rewarding believers, God will take into account such things as: careless living, forgotten duties, neglected opportunities, and forfeited privileges!

1 Corinthians 15:41 tells us that "there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory". Then verse 42 tells us, "**So also is the resurrection of the dead...**" What these verses teach us is that, just as stars differ in glory, so also will saints...though they will all rise from the dead... differ in "glory" ...in their splendor...brightness... beauty...and brilliancy.

2 Timothy 1:12 says, "For the which cause I also suffer these things, nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day"...or..."I am absolutely sure that He will guard the treasure which I have entrusted to Him until That Day"!

2 Timothy 2:5 tells us, "If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully". The picture drawn here, by the apostle Paul, is that of a contender in a competitive game who, even though he extends his utmost to win, will not be rewarded if he does not abide by the rules.

In 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Paul, at the time of his death, said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, 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**" ...or..."who have set their hearts on, and lived for, His appearance!!!"

In Luke 6:20-22, Jesus speaks of doing without...suffering for His sake ...but then, in verse 23, He says, "Rejoice ye **in that day**, and leap for joy, for, behold, your reward is great in heaven!"

In Matthew 25:14, Jesus says, "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them His goods." Jesus then

proceeds to tell us that **He** is the "man traveling into a far country", and **we** are "His own servants", entrusted with "His goods" ...and, as is illustrated in the rest of this parable, He explains that although He gives different talents to each servant, He expects each servant to use his talents for gain and that, when He returns, He will reward those who have been faithful with their talents...and He will say to each of those faithful ones (verse 23), "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 the Lord!" This teaching seems to clearly tell us that, even though Jesus has "traveled to a far country", He will someday return and reward those servants of His who have been faithful to wisely use their talents for Him.

1 Corinthians 9:24, in likening the Christian life to running a race, admonishes us, "So run your race that you may **obtain a prize.**" Verse 25 goes on to say, "Now every athlete who goes into training conducts himself temperately and restricts himself in all things. They do it to win a wreath that will soon wither, but we do it to receive a crown of eternal blessedness that cannot wither!"

Colossians 3:23-25 teaches us, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily (with all your heart), as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, so keep on serving the Lord. But he that doeth wrong...(acts unrighteously)...shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons."

Colossians 2:18 tells us, "Let no man **rob you of your reward** by false humility, worship of angels, dwelling on visions which he has seen, or in being conceited by merely human intellect."

2 Peter 1:10-11 states, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

God is just, as well as merciful, and only He knows how to reward every man according to his own deeds. Those who have been slackers in the work of the Lord will not receive the same reward as those who have borne the heat of the battle of spiritual warfare. Every prayer...every tear shed... every trial graciously suffered...every service rendered for the Lord...even "a cup of cold water in His name"...will receive its just reward!

1 John 2:28 tells us to so live, "...that when He shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

Hebrews 10:34-36 teaches, "...knowing that ye have for yourselves in heaven something better that is permanent. So you must never give up your confident courage, **for it will receive a vast reward.** For you have need of steadfastness, so that, as a result of having done the will of God, you may receive and carry away (and enjoy to the full) what is promised."

We have just looked at twenty (20) different Scriptures from God's Word which all teach that, when believers arrive in their eternal, heavenly, home, those who have been faithful to the Lord will receive rewards that will bring eternal glory.

The Scriptures teach that the believer will be rewarded on the basis of two things:

1. **FAITHFULNESS** - 1 Corinthians 4:2 tells us, "*it is required of stewards, that a man be found **faithful***".
2. **ATTITUDE** - Colossians 2:18 tells us not to be robbed of our reward by being "*vainly puffed up*."

It is important for us to remember that, not only should we be faithful to do the will of God, but, also, our **attitude** ... **while** doing His will...should be Christ-like, as well.

Because Scripture is not absolutely clear as to just exactly **what** these heavenly rewards will be, Bible scholars differ in their interpretation of what these rewards will consist of, nonetheless, it **is** quite sure that, **whatever** they are, they will give the receive great, eternal, pleasure. While there will be no **un**happiness in heaven, there **will** be differences in one's capacity to enjoy God's eternal bliss! The believer's ability... and capacity...to enjoy eternal bliss is being determined **NOW**... by his faithfulness to...and his attitude while...doing the will of the Lord. Those who accept the responsibility to use their lives for Christ **now** can expect to be trusted with greater responsibility in the life to come!!!

In **THAT DAY**...when we are "*graduated*" to stand before the Lord... to receive what has been done in the body...whether good or bad...the old man will be completely removed and the new man will stand alone. The new man will have been developed... and matured...through afflictions endured... and through the contest between his two natures...and...in **THAT DAY**...the "*Graduation Day*"...the believer will graduate from the "*struggle school*"...(the struggle between his two natures now being over)...into a new-life adventure with God, and he will feel the thrill of the truth of being "absent from the body to be present with the Lord."

As well as putting an end to the struggle between his two natures, physical death puts an end to the believer's time of spiritual development...the development of his new man...and, according to 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, he appears before the Lord in his "*spirit*" form. Philippians 3:20-21 also tells us that, at the resurrection of the believer's physical body, it will be "*glorified*" ...changed and fashioned...like unto the resurrected, glorious body of Jesus Christ!

It should be kept in mind that...while the reality of heavenly rewards can be an incentive for the believer...the goal of the Christian life is to do the will of God...**not** to receive heavenly rewards, because we can never **earn** God's blessings! Because we have a free will, we can choose to do...or not to do ...the will of God and, once we **do** determine to do God's will... by surrendering our will to His...the power of the Holy Spirit **enables** us to do His will and, subsequently, spiritual... and heavenly...rewards become an end-product of that ennoblement...of our initial "*surrender*".