HOW GOD TREATS HIS CHILDREN

In this life and at the Judgment Seat of Christ

G. Michael Cocoris

HOW GOD TREATS HIS CHILDREN

In this life and at the Judgment Seat of Christ

G. Michael Cocoris

© 2014 by G. Michael Cocoris

All rights reserved. This publication may not be reproduced (in whole or in part, edited, or revised) in any way, form, or means, including, but not limited to electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or any kind of storage and retrieval system *for sale*, except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the written permission of G. Michael Cocoris, 2016 Euclid #20, Santa Monica, CA 90405, michaelcocoris@gmail.com, or his appointed representatives. Permission is hereby granted, however, for the reproduction of the whole or parts of the whole without changing the content in any way for *free distribution*, provided all copies contain this copyright notice in its entirety. Permission is also granted to charge for the cost of copying.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version ®, Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE **1**
GOD BLESSES HIS CHILDREN **3**
GOD ENCOURAGES HIS CHILDREN **7**
GOD DISCIPLINES HIS CHILDREN **13**
GOD GETS ANGRY WITH HIS CHILDREN **19**
GOD REWARDS HIS FAITHFUL CHILDREN **27**
GOD DISINHERITS THE UNFAITHFUL **57**
CONCLUSION **81**
BIBLIOGRAPHY **89**

PREFACE

When people trust Jesus Christ, God becomes their heavenly Father and they become His children. This raises some issues. As a father, how does God treat His children? God blesses His children, but what are the blessings? God disciplines His children, but what specifically is involved in divine discipline? God judges His children, but does He get angry with His children? Does He punish His children in this life? Does He judge His children in the next life? All of His children must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. What exactly is involved in appearing before the Judgment Seat of Christ? God rewards His children. What are the rewards? Will sin be an issue at the Judgment Seat of Christ? Is the Judgment Seat of Christ solely a rewards banquet or a judgment that results in punishment?

To answer these questions, several biblical concepts need to be examined, such as God's discipline, God's wrath, being an overcomer, the Judgment Seat of Christ, inheriting the kingdom, and being cast into outer darkness. As I have expounded the books of the New Testament, I have dealt with each of these subjects in all the passages where they appear, but I have never systematically dealt with them. Hence, this material is about how God treats His children.

In the fall of 2015, I had lunch with Tom Stegall. Although, as the founder of Grace Gospel Press, Tom had published my book *Repentance: The Most Misunderstood Word in the Bible*, I had never met him. I had a delightful time with him and was impressed by him. At that lunch, he gave me a copy of the book *Should Christians Fear Outer Darkness?* by Dennis Rokser, Tom Stegall, and Kurt Witzig. It deals with outer darkness, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the wrath of God, God's discipline, inheriting the kingdom, and being an overcomer. I found the book to be well-researched, informative, and provocative. Reading it motivated me to put my thoughts together on these subjects. In this material, I refer to it a great deal, but this is not meant to be a review or rebuttal of it. I am using it as a resource for information on how God treats His children. Here and there, I also interact with it.

Many thanks to Teresa Rogers for proofreading this material. She is one of the Lord's servants who will be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

May what I have written provoke you to search the Scriptures to see if these things are so and motivate you to hear "well done" at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

G. Michael Cocoris
Santa Monica, CA

GOD BLESSES HIS CHILDREN

If God is our heavenly Father, what kind of father is He? Human fathers could be classified by such categories as adorable fathers, absentee fathers, abusive fathers, etc. What kind of father is God the Father? How does He treat His children? For one thing, He blesses them. What does that mean? What are the specifics?

Adam From the beginning, God has made a practice of blessing His children. He gave Adam the Garden of Eden and a wife. Someone has put it like this: God created light and said that it was good (Gen. 1:4). God created the dry land on the earth and said it was good (Gen. 1:10). God created vegetation on the dry land and said it was good (Gen. 1:12). God created the sun and the moon and said it was good (Gen. 1:18). God created the fish for the sea and the birds for the air and said it was good (Gen. 1:21). God created animals from the land and said it is good (Gen. 1:25). God created man and said, "I can do better." Then He created a woman and said it was very good.

Noah Genesis 6:8 says Noah found grace in the sight of the Lord. The Lord's used him to deliver His message, to build a boat, and to save his family.

Abraham The Lord promised Abraham a great name, the land of Palestine, and descendants in greater numbers than the stars in the sky.

Israelites He delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt. He gave David a promise of a kingdom and Solomon, David's son, the wisdom for which he asked.

The New Testament In the New Testament, the Lord blesses His children with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3); they are complete in Christ (Col. 2:10). The list of blessings is long. Lewis Sperry Chafer composed a list of 33 things that happen to people when they trust Jesus Christ.

Romans

The Blessing Paul says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). When we trust Christ, we are blessed with justification, that is, declared righteous. That is only the beginning. In Romans 6, Paul explains that believers are *united* to Christ (Rom. 6:5). They have been incorporated into His death (Rom. 6:3) and His resurrection (Rom. 6:5). Being incorporated into His death means their "old man," the person they were before conversion, has been crucified (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; see "put off" in Col. 3:9 and Eph. 4:22). The person who existed before conversion has died; that person no longer exists. When people get married, their single life dies; it no longer exists. Being incorporated into His death makes it possible for believers to live a new life (Rom. 6:4). When people get married, they are united to their mates to live a new life.

The person who existed conversion has been crucified "that the body of sin might be done away" (Rom. 6:6; Col. 2:11) and that they would no longer be a slave to sin (Rom. 6:6). As Paul explains: "For he who has died has been freed from sin" (Rom. 6:7). The word translated "freed" is the Greek word "justification," which is a forensic term. In a figurative sense, the word means "freed." The idea is that believers no longer have any *legal obligation* to sin. A slave owner has *legal* claims over a slave. The slave is *legally*

obligated to obey, but if the slave has been *legally* freed, he is no longer obligated to obey. If the old slave owner orders the slave to lie, steal, or kill, the slave is entitled to answer, "I am no longer obligated to obey you; I have been legally freed (of course, the slave may obey his old master anyway, but he is not *legally* obligated to do so).

The Response Believers, of course, need to respond to what has happened to them: 1) by *knowing* that being united to Christ, they are dead to sin and alive to God (Rom. 6:3-7), 2) by *believing/reckoning* that being united to Christ, they are dead to sin and alive to God (Rom. 6:8-11), and 3) by *not* presenting (using) the various parts of your body, such as their hands or mouth, as an instrument of unrighteousness to sin, but *presenting* their members as instruments of righteousness to God (Rom. 6:12-13).

The Result When we respond with knowledge, faith, choice, and discipline, we are blessed with freedom from the slavery of sin and practical righteousness. Furthermore, God gives us the grace to do what He tells us to do (Rom. 5:2; 6:14). We have access to God's grace, but we have to know, believe/reckon, and obey to experience that grace.

Ephesians

The Blessing In Ephesians 1, Paul's list of believer's spiritual blessings includes being in Christ and being seated in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:3), predestination and election (Eph. 1:4-6), redemption and revelation (Eph. 1:7-12), being sealed and being given the earnest of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14). One of our spiritual blessings mentioned in Ephesians 1 is the blessing of the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7). "Our situation is something like that of a defendant in a trial, who goes free because the evidence scheduled to be used against him had been erased" (Wall, p. 120).

The Response Later, Paul exhorts those who have been so blessed by God, to walk worthy of their calling (Eph. 4:1). To do that, they are to walk in unity (Eph. 4:1-16), in righteousness (Eph. 4:17-32), in love (Eph. 5:1-7), in light (Eph. 5:8-14), and in wisdom (Eph. 5:17-21).

The Result When we respond by walking worthy of our calling, we live a life of righteousness, love, and wisdom. Again, the Lord gives us the grace to do what He tells us to do (Eph. 6:24).

Second Peter

The Blessing In 2 Peter 1, Peter declares that God has given believers "all things that pertain to life and godliness (1 Pet. 1:3), that is, believers have all they need to live a godly life. The "all things" includes "exceeding great and precious promises" (1 Pet. 1:4). Everything believers need to know about godly living is recorded in the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17), but to what promise does Peter refer? Some say Peter has promises in mind, such as 1) prayer (Jn. 16:24), 2) peace (Jn. 16:33), and 3) power (Acts 1:8). While those kinds of things may be included, they are not specifically mentioned in 2 Peter. In this epistle, Peter refers to "the promise of His coming" (1 Pet. 3:4) and the promise of a new heaven and new earth. (1 Pet. 3:13). In other words, Peter probably has the promise of Christ's return in mind. There were (or would be) false teachers among the churches who were denying the Second Coming of Christ (1 Pet. 3:4), living a lustful lifestyle (1

Pet. 3:3; 2:10, 14), and leading others, even believers, astray (1 Pet. 2:14). These teachers were professing Christian, but they were heretics who denied the validity of the Second Coming type of promise. By doing so, they cut the ground out from under Christian morality and holiness. They lured believers into a libertine-type of lifestyle.

The purpose of God giving believers these promises is "that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (1 Pet. 1:4). Through God's promises, believers partake of God's nature and doing that allows them to escape the decay and destruction of the world. God motivates them and empowers them to live a holy life by setting such wonderful and attractive promises that they, through these promises, can lift themselves above the corrupt environment around them and live a holy life.

Peter has two great promises in mind: the promise of the Second Coming and the promise of the new heavens and a new earth. Peter seeks to motivate Christians eschatologically and to set the future and the glory of the future before them. Thus, through the channel of these promises, the power of God is unleashed in believers' lives. Show me a person who is living with an expectation of the future as it is presented in the Word of God and I will show you a person who is able, by the power of God, to rise above the level of the world.

The Response Peter goes on to say, "But also for this very reason giving all diligence add to your faith virtue" (1 Pet. 1:5). The expression "for this very reason" relates to verses 3 and 4; it refers to the believer's position, namely, that God's power has bestowed upon them all things that pertain to life and godliness. Because God has given believers great promises so they can be partakers of the divine nature and escape the world's corruption, believers should diligently develop godly character traits.

Peter continues, "To virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:5-8). Believers are responsible for using what God has given them so that they can grow spiritually.

The Result Peter explains two results of believers establishing their calling and election. "For if you do these things, you will never stumble. For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:10-11). Those cultivating Christian character will not only *not* stumble now, but they will also abundantly enter the kingdom later, that is they will be rewarded later. Spiritual growth has consequences in this life and the next life. Furthermore, the Lord gives us the grace to grow (2 Pet. 3:18).

Summary: God has blessed believers with everything they need to grow to spiritual maturity, and He will bless them with the grace to grow in this life and be rewarded in the future.

To say the same thing another way, if we walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), we will produce the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23): love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

I do not know about you, but I want God's blessing. As a Bible teacher told me years ago, the Lord wants to bless you more than you want His blessing.

GOD ENCOURAGES HIS CHILDREN

Although dogmatically denied by many Christians, believers can be unfruitful. They would say that you were never saved if you did not produce fruit. They quote the verse, "By your fruits, you shall know them" (Mt. 7:20), which is talking about false teachers, not every believer.

Peter says, however, that it is possible for a genuine believer not to produce fruit. After describing virtues (fruit) believers need to add to their lives, Peter says, "For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:8).

How does that happen? What went wrong? Peter explains, "For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Pet. 1:9). If believers fail to cultivate godly virtue, three things can be said of them. First, they are blind. Unsaved people are said to be blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4), but this passage refers to believers. The same people who are said to be blind have forgotten that their sins are forgiven (2 Pet. 1:9) and they are called "brethren" (2 Pet. 1:10). So, how can believers be blind? While not exactly the same thing, we speak of "blind spots." Second, they are shortsighted. They only see what is close by, and they do not see what is far away. Finally, they have forgotten they were cleansed from their old sins.

Peter concludes, "Therefore brethren be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10). Peter addresses this conclusion to "brethren," leaving no doubt that 2 Peter 1:9 is describing what is possible for genuine believers. Because believers can end up blind and barren, they should be even more eager and earnest (see "diligent" in 1:5) in developing godly virtues.

What Peter described in 2 Peter 1:5-7, namely, adding godly virtues to faith, is here designated as making "your calling and election sure." The calling and election are to salvation (2 Pet. 1:3). Peter urges them to make their calling and election "sure." The same word is used in 2 Peter 1:19, where it is rendered "confirmed." In that verse, Peter says the transfiguration confirmed the prophetic word to others. Does 2 Peter 1:19 mean that the prophetic word was not sure before the transfiguration? Absurd! The verb form of this noun is translated "confirm" (Heb. 2:3) and "establish" (1 Cor. 1:6; Col. 2:7; Heb. 13:9). In other words, believers are to add Christian traits to their faith and validate their calling to others. This is similar to James's doctrine of justification by works before people.

What happens to believers who do not produce fruit? How does God deal with His children who do not produce fruit? Jesus says that when believers are unfruitful, the first thing God does is encourage them. Consider what Jesus says about unfruitful and fruitful believers.

The Unfruitful

The Unfruitful Branch God encourages unfruitful believers. Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He

takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (Jn. 15:1-2). Obviously, the Lord is talking about two branches: those that do not produce fruit and those that do. The first question is, "Are both types of branches genuine believers?"

Many have concluded that the first type of branch could not be a genuine believer because it does not bear any fruit. If the interpreter comes to this passage with a theological presupposition that there is no such thing as an unfruitful believer, that is a logical conclusion. That theological presupposition, however, is false. Second Peter 1:8-9 indicates that it is possible for believers, who have been purged from their old sins, to "lack these things," meaning they are unfruitful.

It is obvious that the branches are believers because, according to Jesus, they are "in Me" (Jn. 15:2), not "in the church" or "in Christendom." Furthermore, verse 5 says the disciples are branches and verse 6 says they are cast forth *as branches*. Westcott says, "Even the unfruitful branches are true branches. They also are 'in Christ,' though they draw their life from Him only to bear leaves." Plummer agrees. He, too, says that the branch is "everyone who is by origin a Christian." He adds, "Neither Jews nor heathen are included. Christ would not have called them branches 'in Me.'" Therefore, both types of branches are believers (for a detailed defense of this position, see Derickson and Radmacher).

Except for the theological presupposition that it is impossible for a believer not to bear fruit, no one would ever conclude that the unfruitful branch in John 15 is not a Christian.

The Encouragement The unfruitful branch is "taken away." The Greek word translated "takes away" can mean either lift up (Jn. 8:59) or remove (Jn. 2:16). It is used in John 5:8-12 of picking up one's bed and in John 8:59 of picking up stones. The allegory in this passage indicates that here, it has the meaning of lifting up. When a branch was unfruitful, the vinedresser did not immediately remove it. He would always try to salvage the branch first by lifting it up and propping it on a stick to get more sunlight. When God the Father, the loving vinedresser, finds an unproductive branch, His first response is to take steps to make it fruitful. R. K. Harrison says the vines were lifted up with meticulous care to allow healing (Harrison, cited by Derickson and Radmacher). James Boyce, a Reformed theologian, also argues that "taken away" here should be translated "to lift up or pick up" (Boyce, cited by Derickson and Radmacher).

Derickson and Radmacher explain that the lifting up allows the sun's heat to envelop the branch. They say that if the vine were allowed to lie on the ground, the branches would sink hundreds of little roots directly into the surface of the soil where there was not sufficient moisture to produce anything except small, hard, sour grapes, but if they were lifted up they would be forced to derive their nourishment from the deep roots of the vine.

In other words, God the Father lovingly lifts up the unfruitful branches so they can produce fruit. God encourages unfruitful believers. How does He do that? The Lord does not answer that question, but what He says about the fruitful branches is the vinedresser's process to produce more fruit in them, which implies it is the process used in getting branches to produce fruit.

The Fruitful Believer

The Fruitful Branch The second type of branch bears some fruit. "Fruit" is not defined in this passage, but elsewhere in the New Testament, it is used for spiritual virtues (Rom. 6:22; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9; Phil. 1:11; etc.). Fruit may also include winning others to Christ (see "remain" in 15:15).

The Cleansing The Father prunes the fruitful branch that it may bear more fruit (Jn. 15:2). Continuing the imagery, the Lord says, Jesus tells the disciples, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you" (Jn. 15:3). The word Greek translated "clean" in verse 3 is the noun form of the Greek word translated "prune" in verse 2. In the figure, the operation is pruning. Its spiritual counterpart is cleansing.

Cleansing is done through the Word (Jn. 15:3; 13:10; Eph. 5:26-27; Ps. 119:9). Paul said that Scripture is profitable for correction, reproof, instruction, and teaching (2 Tim. 3:16). As believers are exposed to the Word, they are convicted, corrected, enlightened, and encouraged. Paul goes on to tell Timothy to preach the Word, rebuke, convince, exhort, and teach (2 Tim. 4:2). In other words, the Lord uses gifted believers to communicate His Word to His children so that they can be cleaned and grow (1 Pet. 2:1-2). If that is the process He uses to make fruitful believers more fruitful, would it not be the process He uses to make unfruitful believers fruitful?

Believers, of course, must respond, which is what the unfruitful believers do not do and the fruitful believers do. In John 15:1-3, Jesus teaches that the Father cleanses branches so they will produce more fruit. In John 15:4-11, He looks at this process from the believer's point of view. The believer must abide to produce fruit.

The Abiding Jesus issues the command to abide. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:4-5). The branch cannot bear fruit of itself. Apart from Jesus, believers cannot accomplish anything of eternal value. On the other hand, with Him, believers can do "all things" (Phil. 4:13). Therefore, they must abide in Christ so that they can produce much fruit.

The way to abide is to depend on the Lord, as the branch must depend on the vine. "Abiding is a metaphor for a relationship. It describes a relationship of submission and dependence on our part and a relationship of nurture and enablement on His part" (Derickson and Radmacher, p. 172). Abiding also requires obedience (Jn. 15:10; 1 Jn. 3:24). The believer who lovingly obeys God's Word produces much fruit. As the sailboat cannot sail without its sail up and a car cannot move without its motor on, neither can believers accomplish anything without abiding in Christ.

The Unfruitful Believer

The Unfruitful Branch To emphasize abiding, Jesus adds, "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned" (Jn. 15:6). As in verse 2, the word "branch" in verse 6 is a believer. Since in verse 2, Jesus said, "you," meaning the disciples, "are the branches" (Jn. 15:5), the individual in verse 6 is a believer. Besides, the branch is cast out

"as a branch." There is no question but that this branch is a believer. The problem is this believer is thrown into the fire!

The Fire The fire of verse 6 has sparked a bonfire of controversy. Some say the fire here looks forward to the Day of Judgment (Plummer). Is Jesus teaching that believers could end up in the fire of hell? The answer is "No." Jesus taught that believers were given everlasting life, meaning they had passed from death into life and would not "come into judgment" (Jn. 5:24). Besides, the fire of hell is not the only fire in the Bible.

Those who say this verse is about believers have different interpretations of the fire. The fire has been explained as the fire at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Dillow). The objection to the suggestion that the fire in John 15:6 is the Judgment Seat of Christ is that the *branch* is said to be cast in the fire and not just his works, but believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ are saved "through fire" (1 Cor. 3:15). The fire could be the fire of trials (1 Pet. 1:7; 4:12). Wiersbe says that the fire in this verse "describes divine discipline rather than eternal destiny." Derickson and Radmacher point out that mature wood would have to be removed to build a fire from branches, which indicates that this refers to the severe pruning that began in the dormant season after all the fruit had been harvested. According to them, the fire in John 15:6 illustrates uselessness, not destruction (so also Haddon Robinson in a sermon on this passage). In fact, vine wood is as worthless as wood. Furniture cannot be made from it, nor anything else.

Not abiding has serious consequences. First, there is the loss of fellowship—he is cast out. Next, there is a loss of fervency or vitality—and is withered. Finally, there is a loss of reward—they are burned (or, at least, useless in this life, which results in a loss of reward). Failure to abide produces spiritual disaster. Not abiding means loss. It is either fruit or fire.

Assuming the fire of John 15:6 includes trials would mean that the Father encourages unfruitful believers to produce fruit by having the Word communicated to them and if that does not work because they do not respond, He disciplines them by allowing trials to come into their lives.

Summary: God encourages and disciplines His unfruitful children and cleanses His fruitful children through the Word so that they produce more fruit as they abide in Him.

There is a message here to unfruitful believers. The Lord wants to encourage you to be fruitful, and He does that through His Word. You need to abide in His Word and in Him.

CBS News anchor Dan Rather admits he was always fascinated by the sport of boxing, even though he was never good at it. "In boxing, you're on your own; there's no place to hide," he says. "At the end of the match, only one boxer has his hand up. That's it. He has no one to credit or to blame except himself." Instead, who boxed in high school, says his coach's greatest goal was to teach his boxers that they absolutely, positively, without question, had to be "get up" fighters. "If you're in a ring just once in your life—completely on your own—and you get knocked down, but you get back up again, it's a never-to-be-forgotten experience. Your sense of achievement is distinct and unique. And sometimes the only thing making you get up is someone in your corner yelling" (*Reader's Digest*, December 1990).

There is a message here for fruitful believers. Fruitful believers must abide in His Word and in Him and *minister to others*. The Lord uses people as examples, as educators, and as encouragers.

The Lord wants to encourage you to encourage others. That begins by seeing people's potential, not just their problems. Edward Steichen, who eventually became one of the world's most renowned photographers, almost gave up on the day he shot his first pictures. At 16, young Steichen bought a camera and took 50 photos. Only one turned out—a portrait of his sister at the piano. Edward's father thought that was a poor showing. But his mother insisted that the photograph of his sister was so beautiful that it more than compensated for 49 failures. Her encouragement convinced the youngster to stick with his new hobby. He stayed with it for the rest of his life, but it had been a close call. What tipped the scales was his mother's vision of seeing excellence in the midst of a lot of failures. Abraham Lincoln carried with him a newspaper clipping stating he was a great leader.

The other thing you can do to encourage others is give them an encouraging word. Because of an indiscretion, a professional man lost his job. To put bread on the table, he took a job in construction. "He was suddenly plunged into a drastically different world; instead of going to an office every day, he was hauling loads of concrete block up to the fifth level of a construction site. Gone was the piped-in music in the corridors. Profanity shot through the air, especially from the foreman, whose primary tactic was intimidation; 'For ___ sake, you ___, can't you do anything, right? I never worked with such a bunch of ___ in all my life.'

"Near the end of the third week, the new employee felt he could take no more. 'I'll work until break time this morning,' he told himself, 'and then that's it. I'm going home.' He'd already been the butt of more than one joke when his lack of experience caused him to do something foolish. The stories were retold constantly thereafter. 'I just can't handle any more of this.' A while later, he decided to finish the morning and leave at lunchtime.

"Shortly before noon, the foreman came around with paychecks. As he handed the man his envelope, he made his first civil comment to him in three weeks. 'Hey, a woman who knows you is working in the front office. Says she takes care of your kids sometimes.' 'Who?' He named the woman who sometimes helped in the church's nursery. The foreman then went on with his rounds. When the man opened his envelope, he found, along with his check, a handwritten note from the payroll clerk: 'When one part of the body of Christ suffers, we all suffer with it. Just wanted you to know that I'm praying for you these days.' He stared at the note, astonished at God's timing. He hadn't even known the woman worked for this company. Here at his lowest hour, she had given him the courage to go on, to push another wheelbarrow of mortar up that ramp" (slightly edited from Dean Merrill's *Another Chance*, Zondervan, 1981, p. 138).

GOD DISCIPLINES HIS CHILDREN

Like a good father, God the Father disciplines His children. The Greek word rendered "discipline" means "child train." It only appears 13 times in the New Testaments, but in only three of those passages, is it used of God disciplining His children. What is involved in Divine discipline?

Hebrews

Endure as a Runner The writer to the Hebrews tells his readers, "Therefore we also since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares, and let us run with *endurance* the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author, and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him *endured* the cross, despising the shame and has set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who *endured* such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin" (Heb. 12:1-4, italics added).

Believers are to lay aside every weight and sin and run the race before them with endurance, looking to Jesus as an example. He endured the hostility of sinners to the point of bloodshed; He died (Heb. 12:1-3). Although the recipients of Hebrews had suffered persecution (Heb. 10:32), none had been martyred for the faith (Heb. 12:4).

"We must *keep our weight down*. We are to 'lay aside every weight.' Some people have to join a spiritual Weight Watchers group. There are some things that are not sin, but weights, those habits and actions that take time and energy from what is better" (Lutzer, italics his, p. 123).

Endure as a Son The author of Hebrews explains that they should endure the difficulties they are experiencing because it is a part of children's training. "And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: my son do not despise the chastening (Greek: discipline) of the Lord, nor be discouraged when he rebukes you; for whom the Lord loves he chastens (Greek: disciplines) and scourges every son He receives" (Heb. 12:5-6). The readers had forgotten an exhortation recorded in Proverb 3:11-12. The Greek word translated "exhortation" also means "encouragement."

According to Proverbs, a son should not despise the chastening of the Lord. The Greek word translated "despise" means "to think lightly of" or "make light of" and the one rendered "chastening" is the word "training, discipline," which includes teaching and correction. Children of God should not take lightly the child-rearing of God the Father. They should not neglect to consider its purpose, belittle it, or treat it as insignificant. Nor should they be discouraged (Heb. 12:5; see Heb. 12:3) when God rebukes, that is, corrects them. The Greek word rendered "rebuke" means "to bring to light, expose, connect, convince, correct."

The reason (see "for" in Heb. 12:6) is that the ones God loves, He disciplines. In fact, He scourges every son. The Greek word translated "scourges" means "to whip or flag." Thus, Proverbs teaches that the divine discipline of a son is evidence of divine love. The readers have forgotten that. When trouble comes, we think, "God is displeased with me."

In the context of Hebrews, discipline, at least, includes persecution (Heb. 12:3-4). God does not directly cause persecution, but He incorporates those circumstances in His training program because He loves His children (Rom. 8:28). Therefore, the believer should not be discouraged, despair, or depart from the faith in the face of persecution.

Having reminded the readers of the exhortation they had forgotten, the writer applies it to them. "If you endure chastening (Greek: discipline), God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten (Greek: discipline)" (Heb. 12:7). The *Textus Receptus* Greek text begins this verse with a conditional particle "if" (*ει*), but the majority of the manuscripts contain the word "into" (*εισ*) at the beginning, making this a statement, rather than a conditional sentence. Furthermore, in the Greek text, "endure" can be indicative or imperative.

The *Textus Receptus* could be translated as, "Since God is dealing with you as sons, endure discipline." The Majority Text could be translated, "endure discipline." God is dealing with you as sons" (see NASB: "It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?" NIV: "Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?"). Since God is dealing with them like sons, they should endure. What is happening is not strange. Sons are naturally disciplined by their fathers. Understanding what is happening to them is how God trains His sons.

The author adds, "But if you are without chastening (Greek: discipline) of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons" (Heb. 12:8). This verse is often taken to mean that if a person has no divine discipline, he (or she) is not a child of God at all, but an illegitimate child is still a child! What, then, does this verse mean? In the Roman society, an illegitimate son was a son, but he had no inheritance rights. Those who are without the benefits of discipline because they did not endure will not receive an inheritance (rewards) in the age to come. Without discipline, believers are not sons in the sense that they are not like their father (Heb. 2:10; see also Mt. 5:9-10). They are not being trained for the glory of the many sons (Heb. 2:10).

The point of this passage is that believers should endure the course before them as a runner endures a race and they should endure the discipline they are experiencing as a son endures child training. God the Father disciplines out of love, but that discipline can be like a scourging (Heb. 12:6).

The original readers were contemplating departing from the faith. The writer tells them that if they do that, they can expect a judgment (Heb. 10:27, 30), which he calls a fiery indignation (Heb. 10:27) and a punishment worse than death (Heb. 10:29). Believers who do not endure discipline and depart from the faith experience *severe judgment* (Heb. 10:29-31). What is involved in a severe judgment? The writer to the Hebrews does not give specifics, but Paul does.

First Corinthians

The Censure Paul censures the church at Corinth for the unworthy manner in which they observed the Lord's Table (1 Cor. 11:17-20). It was a disgrace. Paul explains that "in eating, each one takes his supper ahead of others; and one is hungry, and another is drunk" (1 Cor. 11:21). The Greek word translated "supper" is the English word "dinner." It was the main meal of the day. In the gospels, the Lord and the apostles observed the

Passover, which was an actual meal that served as a memorial. At this memorial/meal, the Lord instituted the Lord's Supper. The early church followed the same pattern, that is, they had a meal that included a memorial. The meal was called the Love Feast (2 Pet. 2:12; Jude 12), and the memorial became known as Communion (1 Cor. 10:16).

At Corinth, the Love Feast had become a very unloving fiasco. Instead of everyone bringing food for a common table, or, at least, waiting for all to gather before they ate, each one ate what he or she brought before the others could join them. The rich freemen arrived, spread their provisions, and impatiently sat eating before the others came. Consequently, their meeting was made up of the intoxicated rich and the hungry poor in what was supposed to be the *Lord's* Supper. The Greek word translated "drunk" means just that—drunk.

Paul indignantly exclaims, "What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you" (1 Cor. 11:22). If the purpose of this meal were just to satisfy hunger, they could do that at home. Using the Love Feast to satisfy hunger is to despise (Greek: "think little of") God's church and disgrace the poor.

Communion Paul then explains to them the serious, sober, spiritual nature of the Lord's Table compared to the flippant, carnal way they were observing it (1 Cor. 11:23-26). Based on that explanation, Paul concludes: "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:27).

In the context of this passage, to partake of the Lord's Table "in an unworthy manner" is to do so with disrespect toward the elements and disregard for others at the table. To do that, Paul says, is to be guilty of insulting the body and blood of Christ. In other words, to dishonor a symbol is to dishonor that for which it stands. To trample a flag is to show disrespect to the country it represents.

The Commands Paul issues three commands designed to correct the situation: 1) examine yourself (1 Cor. 11:28), wait on one another (1 Cor. 11:33), and eat at home (1 Cor. 11:34). In the process of issuing those commands, Paul says, "For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks *judgment* to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11:29, italics added). To partake of the Lord's Table without reverence to the Lord and respect for others is to invite the judgment of God because such an individual is not distinguishing the Lord's Table from an ordinary meal. It is to treat the elements as not representing the Lord's body. As Paul explains in the next verse, this judgment is temporal, not eternal: "For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:30). "Weak and sick" describes physical ailments.

Sin can result in weakness. Samson knew that if he sinned, he would be weak. He said, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I *have been* a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man" (Judges 16:17).

Sin can result in sickness. Not all illness results from sins, but sickness can result from sin. Sexually transmitted disease is a simple illustration.

Sin can result in physical death. "Sleep" denotes physical death. Jews and Gentiles used "sleep" as a figure of death. For the Christian, it is the perfect picture of death because after falling asleep, there is an awakening, a picture of a resurrection.

Paul is saying that there were frequent diseases and deaths in the Corinthian church, which were the judgment of God, because of the irreverent manner in which they observed the Lord's Table. Their coming together was for the worse, not the better! (1 Cor. 11:17).

Consequences After those sobering possibilities, Paul offers an encouraging word. He says, "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged (1 Cor.11:31). After speaking directly to them about themselves (1 Cor. 11:30), Paul softens his next statement by including himself (see "we"). If believers judge themselves, the judgment of God that brings disease and death can be avoided.

Nevertheless, if we fail to judge ourselves, God will discipline us. "But when we are judged, we are chastened (Greek: disciplined) by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). God's purpose for disciplining believers is that they not be condemned with the world. To be condemned with the world is usually taken to mean to suffer the final judgment with the world. In Romans 1, Paul teaches that God judges the world by giving sinners over to their sins (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). Later, God will condemn sinners (Rev. 20:11-15). The judgment of believers is not the temporal judgment of unbelievers, whereby God gives them over to their sin, nor the final judgment of eternal separation from God. It is divine discipline, God correcting His children.

Revelation 3:19

What the Lord Does Jesus told the church at Laodicea, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent" (Rev. 3:19). He tells them He loves them, rebukes them, and chastens them. Jesus loves believers. He told the believers at Philadelphia that He loved (Greek: *agapao*) them (Rev. 2:9), but in Revelation 3, He uses a different Greek word (*phileo*), one used for the love of friendship. It is a term of affection.

Jesus rebukes believers. The Lord rebukes those toward whom He feels affectionate. The Greek word translated "rebuke" means "to convince, reprove, rebuke, expose." It does not describe scolding or railing. It is the kind of rebuke that compels people to be convinced of the error of their ways.

Jesus chastens believers. Chasten means "child train." From this, it is obvious that they were born again. God trains His children. The best athletes receive the most demanding training. Allowing children to do as they wish is to allow them to end in ruin.

What believers should do Be zealous, that is, be enthusiastic and repent, that is, change their minds about their spiritual condition. They should fellowship with the Lord (Rev. 3:20).

Summary: Out of love, God disciplines His children by allowing them to be persecuted and by judging them with physical weakness, physical sickness, and premature physical death.

God disciplines His children out of love (Heb. 12:6; Rev. 3:19).

Discipline can be severe. In these passages, it is called scourging (Heb. 12:6), a fiery indignation (Heb. 10:27), judgment (Heb. 10:27, 30; 1 Cor.11:31), and a judgment worse

than death (Heb. 10:29). It can include persecution (Heb. 12:3-4), physical weakness, physical sickness, and premature physical death (1 Cor. 11:30).

The biblical perspective on divine discipline includes these two elements, namely, the love of God on the one hand and the severity of His discipline on the other. The Old Testament contains several excellent illustrations of divine discipline. After delivering them from Egypt, the Lord led the children of Israel to Kadesh-Barnea, where He told them to enter the land, but they refused. As a result, God disciplined them by letting them wander in the wilderness for forty years, where they died. Nevertheless, even though they were under divine discipline, the Lord loved them, provided for them, and protected them. He cared for them and took care of them.

The other great Old Testament illustration of divine discipline is the exile. God repeatedly told the children of Israel to put away idolatry and return to Him. Over and over again, they did not respond. Finally, the Lord allowed Babylon to conquer Jerusalem and carry the people into captivity, but even in the midst of their divine discipline, the Lord demonstrated His love for them.

The Lord wrote a letter to the people in captivity to demonstrate His love for them. "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon. Build houses and dwell *in them;* plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace" (Jer. 29:4-7).

"For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find *Me* when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive" (Jer. 29:10-14).

GOD GETS ANGRY WITH HIS CHILDREN

Does God the Father get angry with His children? Some Christians say God's wrath is only poured out on unbelievers; others insist that God gets angry with His children.

The Old Testament It is undeniable that God got angry *with His children* in the Old Testament. For example, Exodus records, "So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses" (Ex. 4:14; see Num. 25:3). Moses asked the Lord, "Why does Your wrath burn hot against *Your people* whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?' (Ex. 32:11, italics added). Isaiah said the anger of the Lord was aroused against "His people" (Isa. 5:25). The Lord is slow to get angry (Ps. 103:8), but He gets angry! God being angry with His children in the Old Testament is not debatable.

The New Testament In the New Testament, God being angry with His children is debatable. In the book *Should Christians Fear Outer Darkness*, Stegall acknowledges that God got angry with His children in the *Old Testament* but insists that God does not get angry with His children in the *New Testament*. He argues that since God's wrath is His active judgment, His abandonment of people, and since it is never for the purpose of restoration but for retribution and punishment, and since God sees all Christians through the lens of Christ's propitiation (He satisfied the wrath of God by His atoning sacrifice), no believer will ever face God's wrath. He says, "These positional blessings are only for members of Christ's body, the church. They are not the possession of saints in dispensations prior to the church" (Stegall, p. 291; Heb. 3:10-11 says God was angry with "that" generation, Stegall, p. 292). He argues that God's wrath is God's *punishment*, whereby He actively and judicially *abandons* people (Rom. 1:18-32). God's eternal wrath is His final and permanent abandonment of unbelievers in hell (Stegall, p. 251; yet on p. 244, he seems to argue that God's wrath is not eternal). Therefore, God's wrath is only poured out on unbelievers, never on believers.

Others claim that God gets angry with believers today. Hodges, Wilkin, Lopez, and Anderson teach that God's wrath is God's *temporal displeasure* with human sin and that it is not eternal (Stegall, pp. 297-299; some cite Ps. 74:1; 85:5; 103:9; Jer. 3:5; Micah 7:18; see also Mal. 1:4 and Rev. 15:1).

Is God's wrath only on unbelievers, or is it on unbelievers and believers? Is God's wrath eternal or just temporal? Is God's wrath abandonment, or is it displeasure? Is God's wrath punishment or discipline? Which view is biblical? What does the *New Testament* say about the wrath of God?

First Thessalonians

Present Wrath In 1 Thessalonians, Paul speaks of two kinds of wrath: present wrath and future wrath. In chapter 2, he says, "For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Jews, "who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, so as always

to fill up the measure of their sins, but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. 2:14-16).

Notice this passage speaks of a *present* wrath of God. It says that this wrath "*has come upon*" the unbelieving Jews, who forbid Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. The Greek text reads, "has arrived." The phrase "to the uttermost" indicates that God's wrath rests on them completely and entirely. Those who have not trusted Christ have the wrath of God abiding on them *right now in this life*. John 3:36 says, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life, and he who does not believe the Son shall not see light, but the wrath of God abides [present tense] on him."

Future Wrath In 1 Thessalonians 1, Paul says, "For they themselves declare concerning what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:9-10). Christ delivers believers ("us") from the wrath *to come.* There is present wrath (1 Thess. 2:16), but here the reference is to future wrath of God. It is the wrath "to come."

When most Christians today hear the phrase "the wrath to come," they immediately think of eternal wrath (hell), but the New Testament does not teach that there is *eternal* divine wrath. It speaks of a divine wrath that was in the past (Heb.: 3:11; 4:3), a divine wrath that is present (Lk. 21:22; Jn. 3:26; Rom. 1:18; 3:5; 4:15; 5:9; 922; 12:19; 1 Thess. 2:16; Eph. 2:3; 5:6; Col. 3:6), and a divine wrath that is to come (Mt. 3:7; Lk. 3:7; Rom. 2:5, 2:8; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 6:16, 6:17; 11:18; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15). The New Testament *never* speaks of *eternal* divine wrath.

In response to the idea that there is no such thing as the eternal wrath of God, Stegall argues that in Revelation 14:10-11, wrath is connected with torment that is unceasing day and night and lasts forever and ever (Stegall, p. 299) and that the eternal Lake of Fire is the wrath of God (Stegall, p. 300). Revelation 14 says, "Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name'" (Rev. 14:9-11). The third angel says that those who receive the mark of the beast will experience God's judgment in time and *eternity*. In time, they will experience the wrath of God in full strength, a reference to the bowl judgments of the Tribulation (see Rev. 15:7; 16:1-2). In eternity, they will be tormented with fire and brimstone forever.

Therefore, the expression "the wrath to come" does not refer to eternal wrath. If wrath to come is not eternal wrath, when does it occur?

1 Thessalonians 5, Paul says, "For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2). The expression "the Day of the Lord" is an Old Testament prophetic term to designate the coming of the Lord in judgment to establish His kingdom. It includes the Tribulation period, as is indicated by the fact that, according to Isaiah, the Day of the Lord is a time when men go into caves, rocks, and holes of the earth (Isa. 2:12, 19) and that is the same description of the sixth seal judgment in the book of Revelation. Therefore, the Day of the Lord includes the

Tribulation. So, Paul is teaching in this passage that the Tribulation period will come as a thief in the night, that is, unexpectedly.

Paul goes on to say, "For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:3). Before the Tribulation, there will be a period of peace. Men will say, "Peace and safety!" They will be celebrating the current peace and feeling secure. Since the Tribulation period will be a time of war from the very beginning (Mt. 24:6; Rev. 6:4), the period of peace, of which Paul speaks, must take place before the Tribulation itself. Then destruction comes and they shall not escape.

With the words, "But you, brethren" (1 Thess. 5:4), Paul turns his attention from the unsuspecting unsaved to address believers directly. He stresses that believers are distinctly different from those who shall not escape the destruction of the Tribulation.

A few verses later in the passage, Paul says, "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:9). Many automatically assume that this refers to eternal damnation. To conclude, the wrath in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 refers to eternal judgment is a theological assumption read into the verse. In this context, wrath refers to the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:2), the day of destruction (1 Thess. 5:3), from which unbelievers will not escape (1 Thess. 5:3). In short, *the wrath in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 is the Tribulation*. In the book of Revelation, John repeatedly points out that the Tribulation will be a time of the wrath of God (Rev. 6:15-17; 14:10; 19:15). It is that day, that destruction, which shall *not* overtake believers (1 Thess. 5:4). As Paul now explains, that is because God has not appointed believers to wrath (1 Thess. 5:9). Rather, God has appointed believers to obtain salvation (Greek: deliverance), through our Lord Jesus Christ. Is that not what Paul said back in chapter 1: "Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10)? Believers will be delivered from the Tribulation because they will be raptured before it starts (1 Thess. 4:17).

Stegall agrees that 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 indicates believers are not subject to God's wrath in the Tribulation, but he also uses this passage to prove believers are delivered from *all* wrath, including present wrath. According to Stegall, the two reasons this passage indicates that believers are saved from all divine wrath are: 1) In 1 Thessalonians 5:9, the word "wrath" is anarthrous (it is without the article "the"). Therefore, it includes all wrath. (In 1 Thess. 1:10 and 2:16, the word "the" is in front of the word "wrath.") 2) In 1 Thessalonians 5:9, Paul uses a different word for "sleep" than he did in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15, indicating that whether believers are spiritual or carnal, they will participate in the rapture, but if carnal Christians are subject to God's temporal wrath. Why would they be caught up in the Rapture (Stegall, pp. 330-333)? The answers to Stegall's arguments are: 1) The context of 1 Thessalonians 5 is about future wrath. 2) God will take carnal Christians in the Rapture because, in wrath, He remembers mercy (Hab. 3:2).

The point is that according to 1 Thessalonians, there are two kinds of wrath: present wrath on unbelievers and future wrath on unbelievers during the Tribulation. There is no such thing as eternal wrath in the book of 1 Thessalonians, and there is no such thing as eternal wrath in the New Testament. God does not eternally judge sinners out of wrath but out of justice.

Some interpreters claim Romans teaches that believers can experience God's wrath. Others deny such an interpretation.

Believers can View Paul says, "For the wrath of God is (present tense) revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). The wrath (Greek: the anger of God) is not an irrational passion. Instead, it is a holy God's legitimate indignation and outrage against sin. God would not be good if He were not angry with evil. A lack of anger at evil is a lack of love.

People suppressing the truth in unrighteousness presuppose that they knew something about God. As Paul goes on to say, "Because what may be known of God is manifest in them for God has shown it to them" (Rom. 1:19). Thus, a holy, loving God is angry at ungodliness, unrighteousness, and the suppression of truth. To put all of this in chronological order, 1) God has revealed the truth about Himself (Rom. 1:19). 2) People suppress the truth about God (Rom. 1:18c). 3) People are ungodly and, thus, unrighteous (Rom. 1:18b). 4) God is angry at ungodliness, unrighteousness, and suppression of truth (Rom. 1:18a). The statement in verses 18 and 19 provokes several questions: 1) How can it be said that all people have knowledge of God? 2) How do people suppress the truth about God? 3) How does God manifest His wrath on sin today? Paul answers these questions in the following verses.

All have knowledge of God because God has revealed Himself through creation. "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). God is invisible (Rom. 1:18; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17), but this invisible God created a very visible universe. From the moment He created the world, His invisible attributes could be clearly seen and understood by the things that were made. It sounds like a paradox—the invisible can be seen! What does Paul mean? He mentions two truths about the Creator that can be detected from creation: His eternal power and Godhead. By observing the universe, anyone can conclude that it took power to put it here and that that power spans the ages. It took "eternal" power. Paul also claims that God's "Godhead" can be seen from creation. The Greek word translated "Godhead" means "divine nature, divinity." The "power" responsible for creation must be of a higher order than anything on earth. That "higher order" is called "deity."

This revelation of God in creation renders people without excuse for not believing in God. How can that be? Creation may reveal the power and deity of God, but it does not reveal the provision of God for salvation. Paul explains this in verses 21-23. "Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful" (Rom. 1:21). In this verse, the Greek word translated "knew" means "perceive, understand." It refers to the knowledge of God as revealed in creation (Rom. 1:19-20). From creation, people have a revelation of the divine existence. Having that knowledge, people do not glorify God as God, nor are they thankful. In short, people reject God's revelation of Himself in creation. Paul continues, "but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Rom. 1:21). Having rejected the revelation of God in creation, people's very reasoning processes have been affected. When people turn away from God, they cannot think straight. Thus, "Professing to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:22).

Paul adds that those who reject God "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds, four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. 1:23). The ultimate folly is idolatry.

As a result of people's rejection of God, their unrighteousness, and especially their suppression of the truth about God through idolatry, God, in His wrath, gives them over to their sin. "Therefore, God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves" (Rom. 1:24). Three times in Romans 1, Paul says, "God gave them up," which is better translated "gave them over" (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). The idea is *not* that God "gave up on them" in some absolute or final sense, but rather that God deliberately gave them over; He allowed them to go their own way.

To sum up, Romans 1:20-24: Because people have rejected the knowledge of God, in His wrath, God gives them over to sin. Rejection of God results in the *present wrath* of God, which is letting people continue to sin.

God giving people *over to sin* does not mean that He *abandons* them. If that were the case, He would never save sinners! The New Testament is clear, however, that God saves fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Romans 5:9-10 is critical to understanding the wrath of God in the book of Romans. Paul writes, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:9-10). When Paul says those who have been justified by Christ's blood will be saved from wrath, to what wrath is he referring? Most commentaries say Romans 5:9-10 refers to the eternal wrath of God. That isn't very likely for several reasons. None of the previous Roman references to the word "wrath" are about the eternal wrath of God. In fact, the New Testament never speaks of the eternal wrath of God (see Micah 7:18).

What, then, is the meaning of being saved from wrath? The article "the" indicates that this wrath has been referred to in Romans. Romans 1:18-32 speaks of present wrath and Romans 2:5-8 refers to wrath to come, that is, the wrath of the Tribulation (see also 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:2, 9; Rev. 6:15-17). The amount of material previously given to a discussion of the present wrath, plus the fact that Paul goes on to develop the theme of the present salvation (sanctification), suggests that the wrath here is the present wrath rather than the future wrath of the Tribulation. In other words, being saved from wrath refers to being saved from the power of sin now (sanctification). Sandy and Headlam state, "No clearer passage can be quoted for distinguishing the spheres of *justification* and *sanctification*" (Sandy and Headlam, italics added).

Believers shall be delivered from God's anger against sin. In other words, it is salvation from the power of sin. Paul will explain how believers can experience this in chapter 6. In preparation for chapter 6, Paul is simply saying that since justification has occurred because of the love of God and the death of Christ, salvation from wrath should be all the more expected as the result of that same love and provision. (Note carefully: believers must cooperate, Rom. 6:1-14; in Romans, Paul does not contemplate what happens if the believer does not cooperate.)

To sum up Romans 5:9-10, those who have been justified will be saved from the present wrath of God on sin by the life of Christ, which is explained in Romans 6.

Believers do not View Those who say Romans does not teach that God can be angry with believers claim that Romans presents wrath only on unbelievers and that future wrath is the eternal wrath of God on unbelievers in hell. Stegall argues that Romans 5:9 is the most explicit statement in the book, exempting believers from divine wrath (Stegall, p. 317). According to him, Romans 5:9 says that just as Christ's death secured justification, His resurrection guarantees our future salvation from eternal wrath, either by glorification or the rapture (Stegall, p. 318). Again, there is no eternal wrath of God. So, the wrath in Romans 5:9 is either present wrath or future wrath in this life, as in the Tribulation. As was pointed out above, the amount of material previously given to a discussion of the present wrath, plus the fact that Paul goes on to develop the theme of the present salvation (sanctification), suggests that the wrath here is the present wrath rather than future wrath of the Tribulation.

The proof that Romans is teaching believers can experience God's wrath is in the expression "saved from wrath" in Romans 5:9. All commentators agree Romans 5:9 says *believers* are saved from wrath. There are only two possible explanations. Either "saved" refers to justification, and wrath is future wrath in the Tribulation or hell. Or "saved" is different from justification, and, therefore, wrath is present wrath. So, the question is, "Is salvation in Romans justification?" The answer is "No."

Later in Romans, Paul says, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). Does verse 9 mean that people have to confess with their mouth to be justified? If salvation refers to justification, the answer is "Yes." Clearly, verse 9 needs clarification. Thus, Paul adds, "For with the mouth one believes to righteousness [Gr: justification] and with the mouth, confession is made to salvation" (Rom. 10:10). In other words, in verse 10, Paul explains that there is a difference between justification and salvation. The condition of justification is internal faith. The condition of salvation is external confession. A few verses later, Paul speaks of calling on the Lord to be *saved* (Rom. 10:13). In this passage, confessing and calling are part of the same process. To be saved from the power of sin, one needs to call on the Lord to invoke His aid (Heb. 4:16).

Commenting on this passage, Godet says, "*The idea of salvation* is analyzed; it embraces the two facts: *being justified* and *being saved* (in the full sense of the word). The former is especially connected with the act of *faith*, the latter with *that* of profession … there is, in His eyes, a real distinction to be made between *being justified* and *being saved*. Again and again, particularly in chapter 5, verses 9 and 10, the justification is something of the present, for it introduces us from this time forth to reconciliation with God, but salvation includes besides sanctification and glory. Hence, while the former depends only on faith, the latter implies persevering fidelity in the profession of faith even to death and to glory."

Paul began Romans by saying the problem was the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18). Then, he explained how to be declared righteous by faith without the works of the law and added that *after being justified,* we would be *saved from wrath* (Rom. 5:9). In Romans 9, Paul once again brings up the issue of wrath (Rom. 9:22) and once again mentions justification (Rom. 9:30-33) and salvation (Rom. 10:1-13). Romans 10 discusses how Israel can be saved from wrath (escape divine anger) and experience divine favor again. They must trust Christ for righteousness and call on the Lord for salvation.

Exactly what is involved in God's anger? As was explained at the beginning of this discussion of wrath in Romans, the wrath, literally, the anger of God, is the indignation and outrage of a holy God against sin. In His wrath, God gives people who persist in sin over to their sin. Three times in Romans 1, Paul says, "God gave them up," which is better translated "gave them over" (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). The idea is not that God "*gave up* on them" in some absolute or final sense, but rather that God deliberately *gave them over;* He allowed them to continue to sin. God does not force people to stop sinning. If they insist, He allows them to go their own way. He disciplines believers to bring them back to righteousness (more about that later), but He does not force people to return to Him.

Stegall argues, "Both the Old and New Testaments describe God's wrath as His active, judicial abandonment or forsaking of people. In the Old Testament, this can be seen as God's response to Israel for its idolatry and apostasy" (Stegall, p. 248; Psalm 78; Romans 1:18-32). He adds that while Romans 1 may mean that God withdraws His restraining hand, God's wrath should also be "viewed as His active judgment. This abandonment is active on God's part, not passive. It is a deliberate, judicial act" (Stegall, p. 249). He says, "If the divine wrath is God's abandonment (Rom. 1:18-32) or being forsaken by Him, and that believers in Christ today have God's promise that 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you,' how can believers in Christ *ever* be the object of His wrath?" (Stegall, p. 286, italics his). But God's wrath is not abandonment or forsaking. To use Stegall's expression, it is God's withdrawing His restraining hand.

Ephesians

Believers cannot View Stegall says Ephesians 5:3-8 is not teaching that disobedient believers will be under God's wrath: 1) because of the believer's position in Christ and 2) because the phrase "sons of disobedience in Ephesians 5:7 was used earlier in Ephesians 2:2 to describe the Ephesians believers before their regeneration, indicating Paul defines "sons of disobedience" as unbelievers (Stegall, pp. 329-330).

Believers can View Granted, in Ephesians, divine wrath is descriptive of the lost (Eph. 2:3; 5:6; see also Col. 3:6), as in Romans 1. Ephesians 2:3 says that the Ephesians were "by nature children of wrath" in their unregenerate state. Later in Ephesians, however, Paul says, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things [the fornication, covetousness, idolatry mentioned in verse 5] the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them" (Eph. 5:6-7). Believers should not be deceived into thinking this warning is a mere empty threat. God's wrath comes (present tense) upon the sons of disobedience, that is, on the unregenerate (Eph. 2:2). Therefore, believers should not participate in those sins. In other words, *do not be partakers of the sins of unbelievers because God judges sin and He is no respecter of persons. If a Christian practices such sin, God will be angry with Him, just as He is angry with the unbeliever who lives such a lifestyle.*

Does that mean believers can commit such sins as fornication, covetousness, and idolatry? Yes. Paul tells believers to flee sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:18) and tells them to put to death covetousness, which is idolatry (Col. 3:5; see also 1 Jn. 5:21).

Summary: The wrath of God abides on unbelievers now and will be poured out on unbelievers during the Tribulation, not in hell, but since God is no respecter of persons, He can also be angry with His children when they persist in sin (Rom. 5:9; Eph. 5:6-7).

In Romans, God's anger is expressed by allowing people to go their way and continue in sin. "When God really wants to judge people, He lets them have their way (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28)" (Wiersbe, p. 329, cited by Constable). In Numbers 22, the Lord told Balaam not to see Balak (Num. 22:12), but when Balaam persisted, the Lord permitted him to go (Num. 22:20) and was angry that he went (Num. 20:22)! God lets us go our own way, but He doesn't like it.

The Lord may let believers choose to continue in sin, but there are consequences, such as discipline now and loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Lord disciplines out of love, not anger (Heb. 12:6).

The bottom line is to deal with sin so you will not be judged. Paul says, "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:31).

Joe Wall says, "A number of years ago, I came to know an elderly, retired Baptist preacher by the name of P. C. James. His two daughters were members of our church, but at that time, he was the hospital visitor for another church. Occasionally, I would offer to be his driver so I could get to know him better. What a blessing for a young pastor!

"One day, I received word that Dr. James, then in his 80s, was in the hospital facing surgery and might not recover. Immediately, I hastened to see him. When I walked into the hospital room, I noticed that he was quite agitated, so I began to try to encourage him in the face of death.

"He stopped me abruptly, 'Joe, you don't know what you're talking about. I'm not afraid to die. In fact, I've been looking forward to it. My problem is I just bawled out my nurse, and I don't want to appear in the presence of Jesus with that on my conscience. Would you pray with me that I have the opportunity not only to confess my anger to the Lord but also to see the nurse in the morning before I go into surgery so that I can ask for forgiveness?'

"Dr. James believed in keeping short accounts with God. That is the way to keep yourself pure in preparation to meet Jesus" (Wall, p. 121).

GOD REWARDS HIS FAITHFUL CHILDREN

God the Father rewards His children. What is the basis of God's rewards? What are the rewards? When does God reward His children? Several biblical concepts need to be examined to answer these questions, such as the Judgment Seat of Christ, rewards, crowns, ruling in the kingdom, being an overcomer, and receiving an inheritance. (Wall says the words used for rewards are a treasure in heaven, inheritance, rest, rule/dominion, divine commendation, a royal welcome, special treatment by the master, rejoicing, and wreath-crowns, Wall, pp. 79-88).

For starters, it should be pointed out that God rewards *faithfulness*. In a passage discussing the judgment of believers (1 Cor. 4:4-5), Paul says, "It is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). Jesus told several parables in which He taught servants were rewarded for being faithful (Mt. 25:21; Lk. 19:17). God the Father rewards His *faithful* children.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

Speaking of judgment, the first thing you need to know is that unbelievers will be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15) and believer will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10). For believers, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, their eternal destiny is not the issue. *In that sense,* they shall "not come into judgment" (Jn. 5:24). Nevertheless, believers will be judged, as Paul says, "So then each of us shall give an account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12).

The Greek word translated "judgment seat" (bema) means "a raised place, a platform reached by steps." Originally, it was used of the Pnyx (a hill in Athens that was the place of assembly) from which orations were made. It was frequently used of the tribunal of a Roman magistrate or ruler. It appears twelve times in the New Testament (Mt. 27:19; Jn. 19:13; Acts 7:5, 12:21; 18:12, 16, 17; 25:6, 10, 17; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:19), but only two refer to the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Pontius Pilate was sitting on the "judgment seat" (Mt. 27:19; Jn. 19:13) when he released Barabbas and sentenced Jesus to be scourged and crucified (Mt. 27:26; Jn. 19:16). Herod "sat on his throne (Greek: bema; English: judgment seat) and gave an oration" (Acts 12:21). The Jews brought Paul to Gallio, who was sitting on the "judgment seat," to have him condemned (Acts 18:12, 16). The Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before Gallio's "judgment seat" (Acts 18:17). Festus was sitting on his "judgment seat" when he passed judgment on Paul (Acts 25:6, 17). Paul spoke of standing before Caesar's "judgment seat" to be judged (Acts 25:10). In the New Testament, the Judgment Seat of Christ is only mentioned by name twice.

Romans 14:10 In Romans 14, Paul discusses the relationship between strong and weak believers. He begins by telling the strong to receive the weak (Rom. 14:1). The strong believed that they could eat anything received with thanksgiving (1 Tim. 4:4-5). The weak were vegetarians (Rom. 14:2). Paul tells the strong not to despise the weak and the weak not to judge the strong (Rom. 14:3). Love dictates that believers receive each other and not judge one another concerning doubtful things. Believers are not to judge

one another concerning doubtful things because each believer is accountable to his master (Rom. 14:4). After bringing up another debatable issue, the observance of days (Rom. 14:5-9), Paul asks, "Why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother?" (Rom. 14:10a). These two questions are addressed to two groups mentioned earlier: the strong and the weak. "Show contempt" is the translation of the same Greek word rendered "despise" in verse 3. Paul asks, "Why do the weak judge the strong, and why do the strong show contempt for the weak?"

Paul explains, "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10b). In other words, believers are accountable to their master, Christ, and they shall appear before Him. He is their sole judge. If that is the case, why judge or condemn? It is inappropriate for us to judge or despise another concerning doubtful things. We all must stand before Christ. He is Lord, not us.

Paul affirms this truth by quoting Scripture, "For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Rom. 14:11). This is a quote from Isaiah 14:23, where Isaiah is proclaiming the universal nature of God's judgment. God will judge all men. Paul is applying the universal truth to believers.

Paul concludes, "Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way" (Rom. 14:13). Because God is the judge, we should not judge others, especially concerning doubtful things.

To sum up, Romans 14:1-11: believers should not judge one another concerning doubtful things because all believers belong to the Lord and are accountable to Him. All believers must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The issue is not heaven or hell, but the nature of the judgment is that believers must *give an account of all that they do*. The food they eat and the days they observe.

We are commanded to judge false doctrine (2 Cor. 11:4) and the difference between good and evil (1 Cor. 6:2-4). We are not to judge other believers concerning doubtful things. In Paul's day, the debatable items he had in mind were food and festivals, diet and days. In our day, it goes from A to Z. The modern list includes alcohol, bingo, cosmetics, dancing, eating pork, football on Sunday, going to movies, Halloween, insurance, jeans, kissing, lodges, newspapers on Sunday, opera, pants, rock music, smoking, TV, wine, X-rated movies, and zippers instead of buttons. Paul teaches that we should not judge one another based on moral issues. We are to know that we all have to give an account of ourselves to the Lord.

Second Corinthians 5:10 In 2 Corinthians 5, after Paul speaks of always being confident of being in heaven (2 Cor. 5:1-8), he says because he was confident he will be with the Lord, he made it his aim, whether present in the body or out of the body, to be well-pleasing to the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9). He adds, "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). In other words, the reason for aiming to please Him (2 Cor. 5:9) is not only because we will be with Him (2 Cor. 5:8), but also because all believers will stand before Him at the Judgment Seat to receive the things done in their life, according to what they did, whether what they did was good or bad.

Several words in verse 10 need to be explained. The Greek word translated "appear" means "to make visible, clear, known, manifest." Here, it could refer to nothing more

than an appearance, like appearing in court before a judge. Or it could mean we must stand revealed in our true character (Hodge). Hughes says, "To be made manifest means not just to appear, but to be laid bare, stripped of every outward facade of respectability, and openly revealed in the full and true reality of one's character. All our hypocrisies and concealments, all our secret, intimate sins of thought and deed, will be open to the scrutiny of Christ."

Wow! Is Hughes reading something into this passage that is not there? Will our *thoughts*, as well as our deeds, be on display? Jesus said, "Every idle word men may speak, they will give an account of it in the day of judgment" (Mt. 12:36). That passage *may* be restricted to unbelievers, but Jesus told His *disciples*, "For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore, whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops" (Lk. 12:1-3). James says the words of believers will be judged (Jas. 3:1). Paul says, "Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. 4:5). The "counsels of the hearts" refers to motives. The Lord's judgment will consider all the facts, including motives. The writer to the Hebrews says, "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom *we* [believers] must give an account" (Heb. 4:13, italics added). All believers must give an account to the all-seeing, all-knowing God. Paul says that everything believers do in their bodies (in their lives) will be taken into consideration, both good and bad. In his book on rewards, Wall says, "Every thought, every word, every deed, and every motive will one day be evaluated by Jesus" (Wall, p. 12).

Some Greek manuscripts read "bad" (*kakos* in the *Textus Receptus* and Majority Text), and some say "worthless" (*phaulon* in the Critical Text). Modern translations take *kakos* (bad; NASB: "good or bad;" NIV: "good or bad; ESV: "good or evil"). No standard translation takes *phaulon* (worthless). Here is the way *kakos* is translated in the New Testament: "wicked men" (Mt. 21:41), "evil servant" (Mt. 24:48), "what evil has he done? (Mt. 27:23; Mk. 15:14), "out of the heart of men, proceeds evil thoughts" (Mk. 7:21), during his lifetime, Lazarus received "evil things" (Lk. 16:25), "What evil has he done?" (Lk. 23:22), "If he were not an evildoer" (Jn. 18:30), "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil" (Jn. 18:23), "how much harm he has done" (Acts 9:13), "Do yourself no harm" (Acts 28), "we find no evil in this man" (Acts 23:9), "no harm" (Acts 28:5), "inventors of evil things" (Rom. 1:30), "who does evil" (Rom. 2:9), "let us do evil" (Rom. 3:8), "evil this present with me" (Rom. 7:21), "repay no one evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17), "do not be overcome by evil" (Rom. 12:21), "evil" referring to criminal behavior" (Rom. 13:3), "if you do evil" (Rom. 13:4), "love those no harm" (Rom. 13:10), "it is evil" (Rom. 14:20), "simple concerning evil" (Rom. 16:19), "lust after evil things" (1 Cor. 10:6), "think no evil" (1 Cor. 13:5), "evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Cor. 15:33), "do no evil" (2 Cor. 13:7), "beware of evil" (Phil. 3:2), "evil desires" (Col. 3:5), "evil for evil" (1 Thess. 5:15), "root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10), "did me much harm" (2 Tim. 4:14). "evil beast" (Titus 1:12), "discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14), "cannot be tempted by evil" (Jas. 1:13), "unruly evil" (Jas. 3:8), "evil for evil" (1 Pet. 3:9), "those who do evil" (1 Pet. 3:12), "refrain his tongue from evil" in (1 Pet. 3:10;

"turn away from evil and do good" (1 Pet. 3:11), "what is evil" (3 Jn. 11), "those who are evil" (Rev. 2:2), "foul" (Rev. 16:2).

The Greek word translated "received" means "to receive back, to get what is one's own, to get an equivalent, to get one's due." Plummer says, 'done' is in the aorist tense, meaning the individual's whole life is viewed as a unit. He adds that "good or bad" is in the neuter, indicating that acts are not done one by one, but our actions as a group are being considered" (Hughes, fn., p. 181). The believer's entire life will be evaluated to determine what each believer will receive.

Thus, Paul declared that all believers will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ so that they may receive their due for all they did in their lifetime, whether it was good or bad. Based on that, he concludes, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11a). The "terror of the Lord" is the fear of standing before the Lord and having one's life "exposed and estimated" (Plummer). Barclay says, "This does not describe the fear of a dog, who waits for a whipping, or the fear of a cowed and beaten child. That reverence keeps even a thoughtless man from desecrating a holy place. That fear keeps a man from doing things that would break the heart of someone he loves."

The reality of giving an account to the Lord motivated Paul to "persuade men." Paul is speaking of the need to convince the Corinthian Christians of his sincerity and integrity (Plummer). The second half of verse 11 explains, "We persuade men." It says, "But we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences" (2 Cor. 5:11b). The Greek word that is translated "well known" here (twice) is the same word that was rendered "appear" in verse 10. It means "to make visible." Paul is saying that he has been open to God's view; he hopes he is open to their view (2 Cor. 4:2). Hodge explains, "Although misunderstood and defamed by others, he trusted that the Corinthian Christians as a body had an inward conviction of his integrity."

To sum up 2 Corinthians 5:1-11: believers should make it their aim to be well-pleasing to the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9), because they are confident that they will be with the Lord and because they will stand before Him at the Judgment Seat to receive the things done in their life, according to what they did, whether what they did was good or bad. The reality of giving an account to the Lord should also motivate believers to persuade others that they have sincerity and integrity.

As in many other passages, Colossians 3:23-25 does not mention the Judgment Seat of Christ by name, but it discusses it. Paul told the slaves, "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23-24). The inheritance is usually explained as heaven (Eadie), but if the inheritance is heaven, heaven is gained by works! The inheritance is a reward (see "reward consisting of inheritance" in the NASB margin; "an inheritance from the Lord as a reward" in the NIV; "inheritance as your reward" in the ESV; compensation "consisting of the inheritance" in JFB; "just recompense consisting in the inheritance" in the *Expositors Greek NT*; and "inheritance… as a reward" in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*; see also Constable).

On the other hand, "He who does wrong will be repaid for the wrong which he has done; and there is no partiality" (Col. 3:25). The Greek word rendered "wrong" means "to do wrong, act wickedly, or criminally." Paul used this word to describe the crime of Onesimus (Phlm. 18). The Greek word translated "repaid" means "to receive back" (it is

the same word that appears in 2 Cor. 5:10). The question is, "When does this take place?" It is possible that Paul is describing the law of sowing and reaping in this life. On the other hand, the Greek word translated "repaid" is used for the Judgment Seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:10. Bruce suggests that this implies that while the sowing is now, the reaping is at the Judgment Seat of Christ and says that it is difficult to understand how believers will be required for wrongdoing at the Judgment, but it is accord with biblical teaching. He adds that this is by no means to be contemplated lightly.

I was taught that only our works would be considered at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11-15). As an evangelist, I spent a week with a pastor who tried to convince me that everything good and evil would be considered at the Judgment Seat. To use Paul's expression, I withstood him to the face. I argued with him for one solid week. After leaving town, I thought, "He may have a point." Years later, after studying all the passages involved, I had to conclude that he was right and I was wrong.

So the two passages that mention the Judgment Seat of Christ by name (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10) combined with Colossians 3:25 indicate that at the Judgment Seat of Christ, believers will be rewarded for the good things they do in life, and will be repaid for the "bad/evil" (2 Cor. 5:10), "wrong" (Col. 3:25) things they have done. They will give an account of all that they do (Rom. 14:10). Everything, including motives, will be evaluated (2 Cor. 5:10). To sum up, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, believers will give an account, be revealed, rewarded, and repaid.

These verses raise questions about the nature of a reward and repayment, but they do not supply the answers. What is good? What is bad/evil? What is the reward? What is the repayment? To answer those questions, several other biblical concepts need to be explored.

I do not know all that is involved in this process because, as far as I can determine, the New Testament does not answer all the questions. Based on what I know, it seems that the New Testament is probably saying that all we do will be evaluated. Everything will be taken into consideration and based on our final "grade," we will be rewarded.

Suppose you received As, Bs, and a few Fs in class. The final grade will consider all you did, the As and the Fs. That final grade would be a B.

In the meantime, we know that all believers will give an account of all they have done. Act accordingly.

Rewards

Passages with the Word The Greek word rendered "reward" means "wages, reward." Wall says it carries the idea of paying for a job one is hired to do (Mt. 20:8) and honor for a job well done, possibly with some sacrifice (Lk. 6:23; Wall, p. 79). In Luke 14:12-14, Lutzer says, "Christ did not shy away from calling rewards 'repayments'" (Lutzer, p. 91).

Here is a summary of every occurrence of that word in the New Testament. It is used of wages (Mt. 20:8; Lk. 10:7; Jn. 4:36; Acts 1:18; Rom. 4:4; 1 Tim. 5:18; Jas. 5:4; Jude 11) and reward (1 Cor. 9:18). It is also used of receiving a reward from the Lord. No one doing something spiritual to be seen by others will be rewarded by the Lord (Mt. 6:1, 5). When doing something to be seen by others, being seen by them is the reward (Mt. 6:2). Loving those who love you does not get rewarded (Mt. 5:46). Those who receive a prophet in the name of a prophet receives a prophet's reward (Mt. 10:41). Giving a cup of

water in the name of a disciple guarantees one of not losing his reward (Mt. 10:42; Mk. 9:41). Those who are persecuted for Christ's sake (Mt. 5:12; Lk. 6:23), who love their enemies, do good, and lend, not hoping for anything in return receive a "great" reward (Lk. 6:35). Believers who serve Christ receive a reward according to their labor (1 Cor. 3:8). Works that survived the fire of the Judgment Seat of Christ will be rewarded (1 Cor. 3:14). Paul says if he preached the gospel willingly, he had a reward (1 Cor. 9:17). John told believers to look to themselves that "we" not lose those things "we" work for, but that "we" may receive a full reward (2 Jn. 8). In the book of Revelation, the 24 elders say the time has come for the dead to be judged and that God should reward His servants the prophets, the saints, as well as those who fear His name small and great (Rev. 11:18). At the end of the book of Revelation, Jesus says He is coming and His reward is with Him to give every one according to his work (Rev. 22:12).

From what is said about rewards, it is apparent that motives are an issue. If the motivation is to be *seen of others*, the reward is being seen of others; no reward will be received from the Lord (Mt. 6:1, 5; 6:2; see Col. 3:23-24, where doing things heartily as unto the Lord receives a reward from the Lord). Loving others who will love you back does not get a reward (Mt. 5:46), but loving your enemies, doing good, and lending, *not hoping for anything in return* will get rewarded (Lk. 6:35). It is important that what is done for the Lord be done *willingly* (1 Cor. 9:17) as unto the Lord (Col. 3:24). Assuming the motives are right, those who work for the Lord will be rewarded according to their labor (1 Cor. 3:8). Even a small service, such as giving a cup of water (Mt. 10:42; Mk. 9:41), will be rewarded and a "great" reward is given to those who are persecuted for Christ's sake (Mt. 5:12; Lk. 6:23).

After a preacher died and went to heaven, he noticed that a New York cab driver had been given a higher place than he had. "I don't understand," he complained to St. Peter. "I devoted my entire life to my congregation." "Our policy is to reward results," explained St. Peter. "Now, what happened, Reverend, whenever you gave a sermon?" The minister admitted that some in the congregation fell asleep. "Exactly," said St. Peter. "And when people rode in this man's taxi, they not only stayed awake, they prayed." (Ray Heit, *Reader's Digest*).

The reference to rewards in 2 John 8 and Revelation 3:11 will be discussed later.

Passages without the Word Passages that refer to rewards without using the term indicate what is included in rewards. In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul spoke about being judged by the Lord (1 Cor. 4:4). He said that at that time, the Lord will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the heart. Then each one's praise will come from God" (1 Cor. 4:5). One of the rewards is praise from the Lord. It is hearing Him say, "Well done" (Mt. 25:21; Lk. 19:17). Those whose faith passed the test of painful trials will receive "praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7).

Lutzer says, "At the *Bema,* the false accusations leveled against you will be brought to light. Cruelty, gossip, and misunderstanding will be cleared up. The judgment will be as detailed as it has to be to satisfy justice. All the 'he said' and 'she said' arguments will cease. Here, the specifics are finally revealed: nothing but facts, nothing but the truth—the whole truth and nothing but the truth. If you need vindication, you will have it; if you need to be shown that you are in error, you will have that too" (Lutzer, p. 30).

As a pastor, Wall lamented, "Sometimes I get really frustrated with some church people. I put in fifty to sixty hours a week and all it ever earns me is more griping and

criticism" (Wall, p. 20). He explains, "When one accepts leadership responsibilities in the ministry, as in any business or profession, criticism and unfair accusations go with the territory. Even in hard times, when difficult decisions have to be made, there are still those who are quick to judge our wisdom and even our motives. During these times, one major biblical truth can provide reassurance and encouragement: the biblical teaching that Jesus Christ will someday set the record straight at His judgment seat" (Wall, p. 12). "Your beloved Lord publicly sets the record straight. All the false accusations, lies, and unfair criticisms you received in life are exposed for what they really are—full vindication at last (Romans 14:6-12; 1 Corinthians 4:3, 5; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10)!" (Wall, p. 17). Wall adds that at the Judgment Seat of Christ, "If we need vindication, we have it. If we deserve condemnation, we will receive it" (Wall, p. 20).

Teaching about being rewarded in the kingdom, Jesus spoke of a servant being told, "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" (Mt. 25:21). He also spoke of a servant being told, "Well *done*, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities" (Lk. 19:17). These references indicate that in the kingdom, one of the rewards is joy and another is being given the rule over one or more cities. Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Mt. 6:19-20). These three rewards are pleasure (joy), power (ruling), and possessions (treasure). In other words, instead of seeking pleasure, power, and possessions on the earth, seek first the kingdom of God here, and you will receive *eternal* pleasure, power, and possessions in heaven.

The joy experienced by believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be like the joy experienced by college students at graduation. "Some have greater joy because of greater rewards, but all the graduates rejoice in the fact that they have graduated, and they also rejoice in the honors given to their friends" (Wall, p. 61).

Pleasure, possessions, and power tempt us. For example, Eve was tempted by pleasure (she saw it was good for food, Gen. 3:6), possessions (she saw it was pleasant to the eye, Gen. 3:6), and power (she saw would make a wise, Gen. 3:6). Satan tempted Jesus with pleasure (make these stones turned to bread, Mt. 4:3), power (throw yourself down and the angels will deliver you, Mt. 4:5) and possessions (I will give you the kingdoms of this world, Mt. 4:8-9). John warned about the temptation of pleasure (the lust of the flesh, 1 Jn. 2:16), possessions (the lust of the eye, 1 Jn. 2:16), and power (the pride of life, 1 Jn. 2:16). In the Mosaic Law, the Lord said that kings should not multiply themselves wives (pleasure), silver and gold (possessions), or power (horses; Deut. 17:14-20).

To sum up, Faithful Believers will be rewarded with praise, pleasure, possessions, and power.

Some object that being motivated by rewards is selfish. Being motivated by the hope of reward is not selfishness but self-interest. Whatever it is, Jesus commanded us to lay up treasure in heaven for ourselves (Mt. 6:20; Lk. 6:35). In the final analysis, it's not selfishness; it is a command! Men in the Scripture were motivated by a reward.

Abraham: "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" (Heb. 11:8-10).

Moses: "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward" (Heb. 11:24-26).

Paul: "But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27).

Jonathan Edwards wrote, "Resolved: to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness in the other world as I possibly can, with all the power, might, vigor, and vehemence, yea violence, I am capable of, or can bring myself to exert, in any way that can be thought of" (Edwards, cited by Lutzer, p. 18).

The rewards are praise, pleasure (joy), power (ruling), and possessions (treasure). In other words, instead of seeking praise, pleasure, power, and possessions on the earth, seek first the kingdom of God here and you will receive *eternal* praise pleasure, power, and possessions in heaven.

Some react to rewards with an attitude of being content with "a little shack in heaven." Those with such an attitude are the ones who are spending their energy to build a mansion on earth.

Crowns

In the New Testament, two Greek words are translated "crown:" *diadem* and *stephanos.* The *diadem* was a royal crown; it only appears three times in the New Testament and in all three cases, it refers to Jesus (Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 19:12). Believers do not receive the *diadem.*

The *stephanos* was a wreath-crown made of branches woven together and placed on the head of a person who had won a victory or gained public honor for distinguished service. It was also used as a badge of valor and joy. It has been said that there were three kinds of crowns: a crown of leaves, a crown of flowers, and a crown of gold. The crown of leaves was given to the victor in an athletic game. The crown of flowers was worn at the time of joy, like a wedding. The crown of gold rested on the head of a king. There was a crown of victory, a crown of gaiety, and a crown of royalty.

Believers are crowned with a *stephanos. Stephanos* appears 15 times in the New Testament. Jesus wore a crown (*stephanos*) of thorns (Mt. 27:29; Mk, 15:17; Jn. 19:2, 19:5). He is also said to wear this type of crown in Revelation 14:14. In Revelation 6, the antichrist is given a crown as he goes out to conquer (Rev. 6:2). The winner in the Olympics wore a perishable crown (1 Cor. 9:25), but believers who are temperate in all things receive an imperishable crown (1 Cor. 9:25). Believers who endure trials receive a crown of life (Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10). Believers who love the Lord's appearing and, thus, are motivated to live a righteous life receive a crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8). Believers who lead people to Christ will receive a crown of rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19-20; see also Phil. 4:1). Elders who tend the flock with the right attitude, motive, and manner receive a crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:4). Jesus told the church at Philadelphia to "hold fast what you have that no one may take your crown" (Rev. 3:11).

The Crown of Life James says, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those that love Him" (Jas. 1:12). The Greek word translated "temptation" means either "trial" or "temptation." This verse should be rendered "trial" (see Jas. 1:2-11) because trials are endured; temptations are to be resisted, not endured. Furthermore, the only other place in the New Testament where a crown of life is mentioned is in Revelation 2:10, and there it is granted for enduring a trial, not resisting temptation. Therefore, the point of James 1:12 is that when believers endure a trial, they have demonstrated that they genuinely love Jesus Christ and, thus, they will receive a crown of life at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Crown of Righteousness Paul says, "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). The crown of righteousness is not a crown consisting of righteousness. It is a crown that is a reward for righteous living. "That Day" refers to the Lord's return and/or the Judgment Seat of Christ (see 2 Tim. 4:1). The crown of righteousness is available to all who love the Lord's appearing. Those who love the Lord's appearing purify themselves. The apostle John says, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 Jn. 3:2-3). Hence, loving His appearing motivates righteous living and results in a crown of righteousness in recognition of that.

The Crown of Rejoicing Paul says, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown or rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2:19-20). Paul tells the Thessalonians that his crown of rejoicing when Christ returns are those he has led to Christ. His boasting, joy, and reward would be at the Judgment Seat of Christ. No wonder he desired to return to see to it that they grew spiritually. They were his future reward.

The Crown of Glory Peter tells elders that if they tend the flock with the right attitude, motive, and manner, "when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away" (1 Pet. 5:4). The Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, will reward undershepherds when He returns. The elder's reward, which they receive, not now but later and not by men but by God, will be eternal, not perishable.

The passages about crowns indicate that rewards are given for exercising self-control, enduring trials, living righteously, and ministering to others.

An Imperishable Crown Paul says, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown" (1 Cor. 9:24-25b). Paul exhorts the Corinthians to run in their spiritual lives in such a way as to win the prize, a crown that will not perish. To do that, they must be temperate in all things. "Temperate" means to exercise self-control. The one who runs must have self-control, not just in one area but all things. Using himself as an example of what a winner must do, Paul states, "Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus, I fight; not as one who beats the air, but I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27). The Greek word translated "discipline" was used of

severe self-discipline and the one rendered "subjection" means "to lead about as a slave." Paul makes sure that he controls his body instead of it controlling him. The reason he put himself through this discipline is so that he would not be disqualified. He is not talking about his salvation; he is speaking of his service. Paul is not expressing worry about losing his salvation; he fears losing his crown, his reward for service.

Erwin Lutzer says, "There are many ways to fail in the Christian life. But all of them began with the lack of discipline, a conscious decision to take the easy route" (Lutzer, p. 119).

Ruling in the Kingdom

Luke 19 In Luke 19, Jesus told a parable about a wealthy man who left on a trip. Before his departure, he gave a mina (worth about four months' wages) to ten servants and told them to engage in business until he returned. When he returned, he asked for an accounting. The first to report had earned ten times what he had received. He was told, "Well done, good servant; because you have been faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities." The second to report had earned five times what he was given. Like the first, he was told, "Well done, good servant; because you have been faithful in a very little, have authority over five cities" (see Lk. 19:12-19). The servants who believed what their master told them and did what they were told to do were rewarded with administrative responsibility. They rule in the kingdom.

Second Timothy 2 Paul talks about the possibility of reigning with Christ: "If we endure, we shall also reign with *Him*" (2 Tim. 2:12). Paul is talking about experiencing suffering (2 Tim. 2:10, where Paul uses the same Greek word for "endure"). Hence, endurance is about "bravely bearing up" under the affliction that is heaped upon believers because of their relationship to Christ (Hiebert). If believers endure suffering for Christ in the present, they will reign with Christ in His future kingdom. This is not the first time Paul has mentioned or alluded to reward in this book (see "find mercy from the Lord in that day" in 1:18, "crowned" in 2:5, "first to partake of the crops" in 2:6, and "obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" in 2:10).

Revelation 3 In Revelation 3:21, Jesus says, "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."

"*Dependability on earth translates into greater responsibility in heaven*" (Lutzer, italics his, p. 14).

"Just as God sought a bride for Adam, so God sought a bride for his Son, Jesus Christ. He chose to prepare a companion who would be able to share His Son's rule over the universe, someone who would enjoy His dominion. The bride would be loved, honored, and invited to join Christ on His throne of the universe" (Lutzer, italics his, p. 47).

To sum up, Believers who faithfully serve the Lord will receive imperishable crowns and will rule in the kingdom.

Again, this way of speaking about rewards (crowns and ruling) reveals requirements for rewards and the nature of rewards.

As we have seen, the requirements include: doing whatever you do as unto the Lord (Col. 3: 23-25), not loving others who will love you back (Mt. 5:46), but loving your

enemies, doing good, and lending, *not hoping for anything in return* will get rewarded (Lk. 6:35). Even a small service, such as giving a cup of water (Mt. 10:42; Mk. 9:41), will be rewarded and a "great" reward is given to those who are persecuted for Christ's sake (Mt. 5:12; Lk. 6:23). To that list can be added enduring trials (Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10), righteous living (2 Tim. 4:8), ministering to others (1 Thess. 2:19-20; 1 Pet. 5:4), exercising self-control (1 Cor. 9:24-25b), and enduring suffering (suffering (2 Tim. 2:10, 12).

As we have seen, the nature of rewards includes praise, pleasure, power (authority), and possessions. To that list can be added being crowned and ruling with the Lord, which is the same as power.

There is a sense in which life is a paradox. The Lord gives us life and then asks us to return it to Him. The Lord gives us time and opportunities and asks us to use them for Him. The Lord gives us material things and asks us to use them for Him. If we do what He asks instead of losing, we get rewarded above and beyond all that we can imagine, but to do that, we have to give it away. As I heard a preacher say, "The calling of God requires sacrifice."

There's an old myth that illustrates this. I have heard several versions of it. One version goes something like this. A poor beggar sat beside a road, fingering the rice in his little bowl. It was not a well-traveled road. The few travelers who passed by occasionally gave him a little rice. One day, he heard the thunder of a chariot in the distance. It was the grand entourage of the king. This was a moment that had never come before. Surely, the king would stop and give him baskets of rice.

The golden chariot of the king stopped before the poor beggar. The king stepped down and the beggar fell before him. Then, the sky seemed to fall in. "Give me your rice," said the king. Shocked, the beggar grudgingly reached into his bowl and thrust one grain of rice toward the king. "Is that all?" said the king. A scowl marked the face of the beggar. He reached into his bowl and thrust another grain of rice toward the king. This one continued until the beggar gave the king five grains of rice. Finally, the king turned, entered his chariot, and was gone. The angry, empty, and crushed beggar fingered the remaining rice he had hoarded in his bowl. As he did, he felt something different from the rice. He pulled it out. It was one grain of gold. He poured out his rice, caring nothing for it now. He found four other grains of gold. Had he trusted the king, he could have had a grain of gold for every grain of rice. We rob ourselves because we do not want God to get our rice, and He is ready to pour out more than we can contain.

Being an Overcomer

Several authors in the New Testament utilize the word "overcomer" and, except for John's usage, there is no question about its meaning. The Greek word translated "overcomer" means "to conquer, prevail." There is a controversy, however, concerning the meaning of the word as used by John, especially in the book of Revelation.

Many have concluded that all believers are overcomers (Swete; Smith). That interpretation is usually based on 1 John 5:4, which says, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith." Furthermore, many of the rewards for being an overcomer in Revelations 2 and 3 seem true for all Christians. Overcomers eat from "the tree of life which is in the midst of the

paradise of God (Rev. 2:7), are not hurt by the second death (Rev. 2:11), are given "hidden manna" and a "white stone" with a new name on it (Rev. 2:17), are given the morning star (Rev. 2:28) and will be clothed in white garments (Rev. 3:5), will not have their names blotted out of the book of life (Rev. 3:5), will be made a pillar in the temple of God (Rev. 3:12), and have God's name and city written on them (Rev. 3:12).

Others claim that only faithful believers are overcomers (Lang; Trench; Barnhouse). That explanation points to such verses as Revelation 2:26, which says, "and he who overcomes and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations."

Who, then, is the overcomer?

In the New Testament In the New Testament the word "overcomer" is used of the physical conquest of men (Lk. 11:22; Rev. 6:2; 11:7; 13:7), the spiritual conquest of Christ (Jn. 16:33; Rev. 3:21; 5:5; 17:14) and even of God (Rom. 3:4). Most often, however, it is used of believers. They are not to be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:24). They are said to have overcome the devil (1 Jn. 2:13-14; Rev. 12:11), the world (1 Jn. 5:4-5), false teachers (1 Jn. 4:4), and the Beast during the Tribulation (Rev. 15:2). In the letters to the seven churches, what is overcome is not stated (Rev. 2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:26; 3:5, 3:12, 3:21; see also 21:7).

In 1 John The most detailed passage in the New Testament defining the overcomer is 1 John 5:3-5. At first glance, it appears that this passage is saying that the overcomer is someone who has believed. Hence, many conclude that all who have trusted Jesus Christ for eternal life are overcomers. Close examination, however, finds that is true, but it is not the whole truth.

Having established that God's children should obey God's commandments, John adds, "And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 Jn. 5:3). The commandments are to love God and others (1 Jn. 4:7, 21). John explains, "For whoever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4). This verse indicates that *all believers* have overcome the world by trusting Jesus Christ for eternal life. It says "whatever" (neuter), not whoever (masculine or feminine) is born of God. In other words, the new nature that is born of God overcomes the world. So, 1 John 5:4 declares that the faith that produces the new nature is the victory that has (past tense) overcome the world.

In the next verse, John says, "Who is he who overcomes (present tense) the world, but he who believes (present tense) that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 Jn. 5:5). John moves from having overcome (past tense) in verse 4 to overcoming (present tense) in verse 5. Many commentators have recognized the change of tense. One says it "describes the continuous victory the Christian should enjoy" (John R. Stott). Another says that the present tense "may suggest a personal victory seen in its continuation" in contrast to the completed act of verse 4. He adds that the present tense of the word "believe" in verse 5 implies "*maintaining* the faith" (Smalley, italics his). Others agree (see Westcott; Brooke).

A Greek professor has explained the present tense this way. The Greek construction of "he who overcomes" and "he who believes" characterizes people by some act or acts without indicating how often they were done or whether or not those acts will continue to be done. This construction is similar to English words often ending in "er" that express completed and/or continuous action, like he is a murderer" or "she is a winner." Since

John is discussing the issue of God's commandments not being a burden, the point here is that faith is the key to continuing victory (Hodges, *The Epistles of John*).

However, the present tense is explained, there is no question but that John changes tenses and that change means there is an overcoming that *has taken place* in a believer's life and there is another overcoming that should be *continuous*. Therefore, from these two verses in 1 John 5, it is evident that there is an overcoming of the world at regeneration (1 Jn. 5:4) and a continuous overcoming of the world after regeneration (1 Jn. 5:5). Both are by faith.

In Revelation, Each of the seven letters in Revelation 2 and 3 ends with a promise to the overcomer. Several factors support the conclusion that the overcomer in Revelation is a faithful believer.

1. One of the purposes of Revelation leads to the conclusion that the overcomer in Revelation is a faithful believer. The backdrop of the book is the persecution that broke out when Domitian demanded emperor worship. Some were suffering, even to death (cf. Rev. 1:9, where he says, "companions in tribulation;" see also Rev. 2:10, 13; 6:9; 20:4). It must have looked as if wicked men were in control and evil would prevail. It appeared that Rome was reigning supreme, but the final victory belonged not to Rome but to Christ. So, one of the purposes of the book is to reassure persecuted believers that Christ will eventually deal with the nations, judge sin on the earth, establish His kingdom, and bring in everlasting righteousness.

At the same time, some believers were lax and lukewarm. The Ephesians had left their first love (Rev. 2:4), Pergamos and Thyatira allowed things they ought not (Rev. 2:15-20), and the Laodiceans were lukewarm (Rev. 3:16). John wanted to challenge complacent believers to steadfastness and perseverance, so he writes to remind them that the Lord is returning and He has His reward with Him (Rev. 22:12). Hence, another purpose of the book is to encourage believers to be faithful to the end, if necessary, even to death. In the end, the victory belongs to Christ and believers who overcome.

In discussing the purpose of Revelation, Swete says that the purpose of chapters 4-22 is "to strengthen faith and kindle hope in the hearts of the faithful" and that the whole book is "inviting the churches to seek strength in the faith of a triumphant and returning Christ" (Swete, p. xcvi). The Gospel of John was written to get unbelievers to believe (Jn. 20:30-31). The purpose of the book of Revelation is to get believers to be faithful.

Therefore, the challenge to be an overcomer is not for an unbeliever to become a believer but for believers to be faithful to be rewarded when the Lord returns.

2. The *content* of the seven letters leads to the conclusion that the overcomer in Revelation is a faithful believer. Revelation is the uncovering, the revealing, of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:1) *as Judge* (Rev. 1:12-20). Jesus judges the churches (Rev. 2:1-3:22) and the world (Rev. 4:1-20:15). The content of the seven letters to the seven churches indicates that what is being judged is their works, not their salvation (Rev. 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15). The judgment of works results in rewards or a lack of rewards. At the end of to every one according to his *work*" (Rev. 22:12, italics added). Therefore, the overcomers are the faithful believers who are rewarded for their works.

3. The *immediate context* of the overcomer statements leads to the conclusion that the overcomer in Revelation is a faithful believer. At the close of each of the seven letters, a promise is given to the overcomer. The immediate context of those promises indicates that the overcomer is the believer faithful to the end.

In the letter to the church at Smyrna, believers are told that if they are faithful until death, they will receive a crown of life (Rev. 2:10). Immediately afterward, a promise is given to the overcomers (Rev. 2:11). The implication is that the faithful unto death and the overcomer are the same.

In the letter to the church at Thyatira, believers are told to "hold fast what you have til I come" (Rev. 2:25). Immediately afterward, a promise is made to the overcomer (Rev. 2:26). This time, the connection between the faithful and the overcomer is not just based on the implication of juxtaposition. The two are connected by "and," which here means "even" (Rev. 2:26)! Furthermore, after the mention of the overcomer in verse 26, the Lord adds, "and keeps My works until the end." In this letter, the conclusion is unmistakable. The overcomer is the faithful believer.

In the letter to the church at Sardis, believers who have not defiled their garments are told that they will walk with the Lord in white (Rev. 3:4). Immediately afterward, the overcomer is promised a white garment (Rev. 3:5). The conclusion is unavoidable. The overcomer is the faithful believer.

In the letter to the church at Philadelphia, believers are told to hold fast to what they have so that no one takes their crown (Rev. 3:11). Immediately afterward, a promise is made to the overcomer (Rev. 3:12). Again, especially in light of the previous letters, the implication is that the overcomer is the faithful believer.

Thus, in four of the seven letters, a reward is promised to the faithful believer immediately before the promise to the overcomer. Is it not logical to conclude that at the end of each of these letters of evaluation, the Lord is exhorting believers to overcome by offering them a reward for faithfulness? Would it not be strange to promise a reward to the faithful and immediately say that all believers will be rewarded? If all believers are overcomers and all overcomers receive all these listed rewards, the challenge to be faithful is meaningless. As Fuller has so well said, "A command that everyone keeps is superfluous, and a reward that everyone receives for a virtue everyone has is nonsense" (Fuller, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, September 1983, p. 299).

4. The definition of the overcomer leads to the conclusion that the overcomer in Revelation is a faithful believer. The tense of the Greek word "overcomer" in Revelation 2 and 3 is like the one in 1 John 5:5 (present participle, 2:11, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). One commentator says, "This denotes continued action" (Smith, p. 79). Moreover, it is in the singular, which "implies that the victory is made on an individual basis, that not all Christians attain it" (Fuller, p. 299).

Specific statements that further define the overcomer restrict the overcomer to a faithful believer. Revelation 2:26 says, "He who overcomes and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations." In this verse, "he who overcomes" is further defined as the one who "keeps My works until the end. The Greek word translated "and" can also be translated "even." Smith, a Greek professor, says the Greek word "and" in this verse "has the sense of even" (Smith, p. 79). Mounce agrees saying, "the overcomer, that is, the one who continues in the works of Christ until the end. It is by faithful allegiance to the cause of Christ that believers overcome the hostile environment of pagan values and practices." Swete states, "He who conquers is he who keeps."

Revelation 2:7 says, "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." At the end of the book, John writes, "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of

life, and may enter through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). The overcomer has the right to the tree of life, and later it is revealed that the one who does His commandments is the one who has the right to the tree of life.

Therefore, the overcomers in Revelation are not all believers but those who are faithful.

Many respected commentators have concluded that the overcomers in Revelation 2 and 3 are faithful believers. Mounce says overcomers "remained faithful to Christ to the very end." Morris says overcomers persevere to the final victory and are "triumphant followers." Even commentators who say that overcomers are all believers are forced to admit that more than believing is involved. For example, Swete, who calls overcomers "redeemed humanity" (Swete, p. 30), later says that overcomers receive a "reward" (Swete, p. 65). Walvoord, who says overcomers are "genuine Christians," later, concerning overcomers, says, "It is especially appropriate that those who hate the evil deeds of the world and the idolatrous wicked worship are given that spiritual recompense of abiding in the abundant life which is in Christ in the eternity to come." In a footnote in his commentary on 1 John, Marshall says that the word "overcomer" in the book of Revelation is used of "maintaining one's faith and overcoming temptation even to the point of martyrdom" (Marshall, p. 230).

No doubt, many of those who think that overcomers are believers who endure to the end do so based on the theological assumption that all believers persevere. Hadjiantoniou concludes that victory means "faith in the redeeming work of Christ," but the full definition of "overcomer" involves more. He says, "Although our entrance into heaven will depend solely on our faith in the cross of Christ, the place that we shall occupy in the life of heaven will depend upon the quality of the fruits of our faith." He is of the opinion that "genuine faith will inevitably bring forth fruit" (Hadjiantoniou, p. 147).

It is simply not true that all believers are faithful to the end (1 Cor. 3:11-15; 11:30; 2 Pet. 1:5-11). Those who endure will reign with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12), but not all will reign (Lk. 19:11-27). Lang points out that Peter was defeated by the fear of man and Ananias and Sapphira by the love of money. Peter repented and continued to the end. Ananias and Sapphira died in defeat (see 1 Jn. 5:16; 1 Cor. 11:30).

To sum up, there are indications in the text and the context of Revelation 2 and 3 that the overcomer is a faithful believer. To insist that all believers are faithful is to import a theological notion into the text, a notion that is contrary to Scripture. The conclusion is that the overcomers in the seven letters are faithful believers and are promised rewards for their faithfulness.

The problem with the conclusion that overcomers in Revelation are faithful believers is the nature of some of the rewards promised to them. At first glance, it appears that in some cases, what is promised is true of all believers. However, a careful examination of each of the seven promises indicates that what is promised is a reward for faithfulness.

In the letter to the Ephesian church, the Lord says, "To him who overcomes, I will give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). This statement provokes several questions.

What do the overcomers overcome? None of the seven letters specifically describe what the overcomer overcomes. The content of the letters suggests that the overcomer overcomes "the special difficulties in which he finds himself" (Scott, pp. 64-65; see Lang, p. 108; Barnhouse, p. 77). The church at Ephesus was overcome because they had

lost their first love (Rev. 2:4). The individual believer who overcomes that loss of love will be rewarded with the right to eat of the tree of life.

How is eating the Tree of Life a reward? Because 1 John 5:4 indicates that all believers are overcomers and because Genesis 3:22 says those who eat of the tree of life "live forever," it is often assumed that Revelation 2:7 teaches that all believers will eat of the tree of life and live forever (for a detailed defense of that interpretation see Wong, pp. 211-226).

In the first place, believers do not live forever because they eat of the Tree of Life in Paradise. They live forever because they trusted the One who hung on a tree. Barnhouse says that making eating from the Tree of Life equivalent to receiving eternal life is a "false interpretation." Bennetch states, "All saints are given life eternal, but some are rewarded with added privileges in heaven" (Bennetch, p. 350).

In the second place, "the tree of life" is used in several different ways in Scripture. The expression appears in Genesis, Proverbs, and Revelation.

Genesis says God placed a tree of life in the middle of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9). After Adam's sin, he was prevented from eating from it, lest he "eat and live forever" (Gen. 3:22, 24). Thus, in Genesis, the tree of life was a literal tree, and eating it enabled one to live forever.

Proverbs mentions a tree of life four times. Wisdom (Prov. 3:18), the fruit of righteousness (Prov. 11:30), fulfilled hope (Prov. 13:12), and a wholesome tongue (Prov. 15:4) are a tree of life. In Genesis, the Tree of Life was literal and had eternal consequences. In Proverbs, it is figurative and has temporal consequences. The tree of life in Proverbs has nothing to do with living forever, as in Genesis. Instead, it speaks of a higher level of living *in this life*.

The one who holds on to wisdom gains a tree of life and is happy (Prov. 3:18). If people gain wisdom, it is life and happiness to them. Wise decisions renew and energies, while stupid decisions drain and depress.

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life" (Prov. 11:30). The second half of this verse indicates that the benefit (fruit) of the righteous, in this case, is on others. It says, "and he who wins souls is wise." A righteous person is "exceedingly beneficial to those around them" (Wardlaw, vol. 1, p. 304).

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life" (Prov. 13:12). Fulfilled hope breathes a new life into a person.

"A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit" (Prov. 15:4). A wholesome tongue "has a morally and spiritually healing influence" (Wardlaw, vol. II, p. 26).

In other words, in Proverbs, the tree of life is in contrast to unhappiness, not having a righteous influence, discouragement, and hurting others. In his commentary on Revelation 2, Barclay says that the tree of life in Proverbs is a "source of the kind of life that a man ought to live," giving people life that is "life indeed." Dillow says the tree of life in Proverbs "suggests a quality of life – rich fellowship with God – rather than the notion of regeneration" (Dillow, p. 474).

Then, of course, the Tree of Life appears in Revelation. The question is, "How is the Tree of Life used *in Revelation*?" Two different conclusions are possible based on assumptions taken from verses outside Revelation. First, Revelation 2:7 says that all believers partake of the Tree of Life and live forever (Genesis view). Second, Revelation

2:7 states that believers who continue will somehow be rewarded (Proverbs view, where a person gets something for living a certain way).

Which one is accurate? Are there factors *inside* Revelation that indicate which explanation is correct? Are there indications in Revelation that the Tree of Life is a reward?

The indication in Revelation 2:7 that eating of the tree of life is a reward is the phrase "I will give to eat." The Greek construction for "give to eat" means "I will grant him to eat." This same construction occurs in Revelation 3:21, where it is translated "I will grant." This is significant because "I will give" conveys the concept of bestowed without merit, but "I will grant" involves the idea of bestowal with merit, that is, it was earned. The eating of the Tree of Life in this passage is a reward the overcomer earns (Benedict, pp. 10-11).

In Revelation 22:14, the right to eat the tree of life is a reward. John writes, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:12-14). The subject of the context is *reward based on work* (Rev. 22:12). Then, Revelation 22:14 says explicitly that "are those *who do His commandments*" have the right to the tree of life. What could be clearer? Furthermore, the tree of life is in contrast to the water of life. The water of life is free (Rev 22:17; Rom 3:24), but the tree of life is given to those who do His commandments.

Instead of "those who do His commandments," a few manuscripts (very few) read "those who wash their robes." "Those who wash their robes" is not the correct reading in Revelation 22:14 (The majority of extant manuscripts—the vast majority—read "those who do His commandments"), but if it were, that would not change the conclusion that eating the tree of life is a reward. Believers can defile their garments. Only a few believers in the church at Sardis had not done so (Rev. 3:4). Granted, those in this church were dead (Rev. 3:1), but what is said of them indicates that they were, nevertheless, genuine believers (Rev. 3:2-3). The believers in Revelation 7:14 had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb "by confession and appropriation of the blood of the Lamb." In other words, "they have lived faithful and persevering lives" (Dillow, p. 475). If the correct reading of Revelation 22:14 is "those who wash their robes," the statement is still conditioned on the believer being faithful, which means the tree of life is a reward. Reeve, who takes the reading "those who wash their robes," says it means those "who lead the clean and pure Christ life for they thereby have the right and privilege of entering into the gates of the city and partaking of the tree of life" (Reeve, *ISBE*).

So, no matter which reading is taken, Revelation 22:14 indicates that the tree of life is a reward. Barnhouse concludes, "Eating of the tree of life is a reward that shall be given to the overcomer in addition to his salvation." Benedict concurs, "Only the victorious Christian will have the right and the privilege to partake of the tree of life" (Benedict, p. 11).

Does not the fact that those who eat of the Tree of Life "enter through the gates of the city" (Rev. 22:14) indicate that all believers eat of the Tree of Life since all believers enter the city? In the Greek text, "by the gate" is emphatic. John emphasizes the way they

enter, not just the fact that they enter. It is true that all enter the city, but not all enter *through the gate*. In ancient cities, "to be known in the gates" (Prov. 31:23) was a high honor. Lange says to enter by the gates means to enter "as conquerors in triumphal procession." So, to enter by the gate means to enter with special honor. Entering through the gate has been compared to Caesar entering the city of Rome through the victory arch. There were thousands of entryways into Rome, but Caesar entered through the victory arch (Dillow, p. 477).

If eating the tree of life is a reward, what is the nature of the reward? It can be demonstrated that the Tree of Life is a reward, but beyond that, not much else is known. It has been suggested that the "postscripts" are the most "significant part" of these letters because they are "seven windows" into the substance of life later. The problem is that what is said is symbolic. It is like a caterpillar imprisoned in a cocoon, trying to understand a message from the outer world. How can a butterfly penetrate the walls of the cocoon to send a message to the caterpillar describing the "green hills and shady valleys, of the rose-tipped sunsets and the foaming waves of the sea?" Therefore, we should be humble and honest to admit our limitations in trying to grasp the details of that life. We are unable to proceed beyond a certain point. At the same time, it is obvious that there are "degrees of glory in heaven" and that the conditions of our life later will depend on our life now. The degree of our glory will be the outcome of the quality of our spiritual life now (Hadjiantoniou, pp. 146-147).

Nevertheless, there are suggestions. According to Barclay, it was a "regular Jewish conception" that when the Messiah came, those who had been faithful would eat of the Tree of Life. He adds that the Tree of Life means "to have all the joys that the faithful conquerors will have when Christ reigns supreme." Dillow suggests that since eating is a symbol of fellowship (Rev. 3:20), it is probable that overcomers "will enjoy a special fellowship with Christ throughout eternity." He goes on to point out that the tree of life yields fruit monthly (Rev. 22:2) and that "it seems possible, therefore, to understand participation in the tree of life as a regular experience of fellowship with God, i.e., eating of this monthly fruit" (Dillow, p. 474).

In the letter to the church at Smyrna, the Lord says, "The second death shall not hurt him who overcomes" (Rev. 2:11). The church at Smyrna was not overcome, but they were facing persecution and suffering (Rev. 2:9-10). The individual believer who overcomes the circumstances of persecution and suffering will be rewarded by not being hurt by the second death, which is the lake of fire (Rev. 20:6, 14; 21:8).

In the Greek text, the statement "will not be hurt by the second death" contains a double negative, a construction that is not used in English. This Greek construction is employed to express an emphatic denial and to make a strong positive statement. So, this emphatic, positive statement is that the second death will by no means hurt the overcomer.

There are three basic interpretations of this statement. One is that all believers are overcomers, which is a *warning* that if they are not faithful unto death, they will be in the lake of fire. Rather than take the statement as it is, an empathic, positive statement, this view reverses it to make the opposite of what is said, the meaning, which, of course, is not necessarily true with any statement. Given the Greek construction (an emphatic, positive statement) and the figure of speech used (see the third view), it would not be "legitimate to infer that the non-overcomer will be involved in the second death"

(Benedict, p. 14). Besides, the problem with this view is that faith, not faithfulness, is required to escape this judgment (Jn. 5:24).

Another approach is that all believers are overcomers; therefore, since a believer cannot go to the lake of fire, this is a *reminder* that even if they were martyred in the first death, the second death would not harm them, that is, the lake of fire. The problem with that view is that in Revelation 2 and 3, the overcomer is a believer who is faithful unto death.

A third explanation is that in the context of the seven letters, only faithful believers are overcomers, and this is an understatement that promises to do not only exactly what is stated but also much more. The expression "shall not be hurt by the second death" is a litotes (pronounced lie tuh tease), a figure of speech, which, according to the dictionary, is an affirmation expressed by the negation of its opposite. A litotes extremely understates a fact to make the opposite positive point. To say "that is no small problem" means "it is a big problem." When Jesus said, "Whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward, He was saying that the disciple was guaranteed not to lose his reward (Mt. 10:42; Mk. 9:41). The writer to the Hebrews says, "God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love" (Heb. 6:10), the point is that it is for certain that because God is just, He will remember and reward your labor of love. In Revelation 2:11, the litotes "intimates a splendid experience of the divine life and presence" (Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege*, p.119; Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, pp. 107-111). The Lord is not only saying that overcomers will *not* experience the second death but that they will be *rewarded abundantly* for their faithfulness.

Many years ago, after a fabulous meal, I said to the hostess, "There is nothing wrong with your cooking," meaning, of course, that it was exceptional. Her husband responded, "What didn't you like?" He totally missed my point. I was stating a very positive point by making what sounded like a negative statement.

The nature of the reward is not specifically stated, but the implication of the litotes is that the opposite of death is life, abundant life. That conclusion is supported by the fact that the faithful are given a crown of life and it can be argued that the crown of life in verse 10 and not being hurt by the second death in verse 11 are the positive and negative sides of the same thing (Benedict, p. 15). Moreover, that crown is "the capacity to enjoy and to experience even more deeply the divine life" (Benedict, p. 13).

Some reason, "Is it not true that all believers will "not be hurt by the second death"? The answer, of course, is "Yes." Well, then, "Does that not prove that all believers are overcomers?" The answer is "No" because there is more than just escaping the lake of fire in Revelation 2:11. It is an understatement design to communicate that the overcomer will be rewarded. In a litotes, the negative statement is not the point. The opposite positive idea is the point.

In the letter to the church of Pergamos, the Lord says, "To him, that 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 which no one knows except him who receives it" (Rev. 2:17). The church at Pergamos was overcome with toleration of false teaching that involved eating things sacrificed to idols and committing sexual immorality (Rev. 2:14-15). The individual believer who overcomes the temptation to tolerate false teaching or to eat things sacrificed to idols and commit sexual immorality will be rewarded with the privilege of

eating the hidden manna and the honor of receiving a white stone engraved with a new name chosen just for that individual by the Lord Himself.

The overcomer will eat hidden manna. In contrast to eating "things sacrificed to idols" at the pagan feast (Smith; Mounce), those who remain faithful and do not deny the Lord will eat hidden manna. The Children of Israel were supernaturally fed with manna in the wilderness, but that manna was certainly not hidden. The hidden manna is usually taken as the manna placed in the Ark as a memorial for future generations (Ex. 16:32-34; Heb. 9:4).

A Jewish tradition says that when Solomon's temple was destroyed, Jeremiah hid the pot of manna, which had been placed in the Ark, in Mt. Nebo (or Mt. Sinai, Barclay) until the Messiah came. At that time, it will be taken to the new Temple in Jerusalem (Swete; Mounce). In other words, to eat the hidden manna was "to enjoy the blessing of the Messianic Age" (Barclay).

If this promise were for all believers, would it not be that they would eat manna, not hidden manna? All the children of Israel eat manna in the wilderness. The fact that the promise is that the overcomer will eat *hidden* manna indicates that 1) this promise is not for everyone and 2) this manna is special. Using a figure without much detail, the Lord says that as a reward for refusing to eat the meat offered to idols, the overcomer will eat a special food. Wilson concluded that the hidden manna was a "special diet to open the eyes of their understanding and lend strength to those who shall rule and reign with the Lord Jesus Christ" (Wilson, pp. 134-135).

The overcomer will receive a white stone. There are "almost endless" interpretations of the white stone (Barclay). One theory is that it alludes to the white stones in the high priest's garments (Smith). Another view claims that it represents the white stone use of acquittal in a court of law (Walvoord). The sense is that it is the pledge of the Divine favor (Swete), some "assurance of blessing" (Morris).

The most probable explanation is that it is the "little white stone of friendship" (*tessera* in Latin). A sign or letters were inscribed on it and its possessor had the right of hospitality in the house of the one who gave it to him (Hadjiantoniou). It served as a token of admission to the banquet (Mounce). This, then, is the overcomer's ticket to the house and table of the Lord.

The overcomer will receive a new name. One commentator has well written, "To attempt to know what Christ declares none but the receiver shall know is absurd" (Govett). Another put it like this, "It is folly to seek to interpret what *no man knows*" and then he goes on to suggest that the new name is "probably identical with "my new name of Revelation 3:12" (Smith)! It seems obvious that the name is a special name given to the overcomer. It is not public; it is a "little secret" between him and his God (Morris).

In the ancient world, a man was given a new name to mark a new status: Abram became Abraham, Jacob became Israel, and Octavius, Augustus. According to this connection, Christ is "promising a new status to those who are faithful to Him." The new status will be one "of honor and glory into which the man who has been true to Christ will enter." The faithful will "enter into His glory" and "sit on His throne" and "become kings and priests to Him." (Barclay).

Barnhouse points out that we do not have secrets with casual acquaintances. Secrets are a mark of intimacy. He says, "I am called Doctor by those who know me least, Pastor by some who know me more closely. My close friends use my given name. My children

call me Father or Daddy. A mother has called me Son, while in the most intimate of all human relationships, there is a place for endearing names that refinement will not permit to be bandied about in public. Those names will not even be used in letters. The actual presence of the loved one is demanded for the use of the names, which even the children of the family do not know. This is the intimacy promised to the overcoming believer by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bridegroom will speak to the bride. He will have a tender name for her that shall not be known, even to the cherubim and seraphim."

For the overcomer to receive a white stone engraved with a special secret name is something like receiving a Purple Heart engraved with a special name selected by the President, signifying what was done for the country. Hadjiantoniou suggests that if you want to taste the hidden manna and learn the new name, there is only one way to gain such knowledge. Be an overcomer.

In the letter to the church of Thyatira, the Lord says, "He who overcomes and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations; 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" (Rev. 2:26-28). The church at Thyatira was overcome with a compromise with sin (Rev. 2:20-23). The individual believer who overcomes the pressure to compromise with sin and is faithful to the end of life (Rev. 2:26) will be rewarded with authority in the kingdom and the morning star.

The overcomer will be given authority over nations. Smith points out that, of the 404 verses in the Book of Revelation, over 300 allude to the Old Testament, but here is one of the few in Revelation where an Old Testament passage appears almost verbatim. Psalm 8 says, "Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. 8:8-9).

Christ will rule the nations (Rev. 12:5; 19:15). What God promised to Christ, He will share with the overcomers (Rev. 2:27). The "same promise is given to the overcomer as a part of his reward" (Barnhouse). The Greek word used for "power" here means "the power or right to act, authority." It is authority that is being promised to believers (Lk. 19:11-28). Faithful saints will reign with Christ (Rev. 20:4).

The overcomer will rule with a rod of iron. The Greek word rendered "rule" comes from the word for "shepherd" and means "to tend, shepherd, govern." The Shepard was an autocrat. His power was absolute (Morris). The rod of iron is the "shepherd's oak club clapped with iron" (Swete; Mounce). The rule will not be just to execute judgment. It will also include administering mercy (Walvoord).

When will this ruling of the overcomers over the nations take place? Smith answers that it could not be during their present lifetime because it is after the "end" of their life (Rev. 2:2). Nor could it be at the end of time, because then all things are subject to God alone (1 Cor. 15:28). Nor could it be in heaven, because there are no nations in heaven. Besides, no one will be "dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels" in the celestial abode. Nor could it be in hell because no saints exist (much less overcomers). The only time left is between the saints' departure and the new heaven and earth's appearance. The only place must be on the earth because it is the only sphere that saints and nations inhabit. To support his conclusion, he cites several passages (Dan. 7:22, 27; Lk. 22:29, 30; 1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 5:10; 20:6).

The overcomer will be given the morning star. From ancient times, "the morning star" has been the object of various interpretations. One author says that in the "symbolism of all antiquity, the star has been the image of the king" and that the morning star, the one that ushers in the dawn, is said to be the most beautiful (Hadjiantoniou).

According to Revelation 22:16, the morning star is Jesus (Swete, who says that this promise points to the Second Coming; Smith; Walvoord). Is the conclusion, then, that the overcomer will be given Christ? That cannot be because the overcomer already has Christ (1 Jn. 5:12)! It has been suggested that as the Morning Star, Jesus is that "*brilliant* Morning Star in royal splendor" (Rev. 22:16) and that by giving overcomers the morning star, Jesus is making them like Himself. Hence, the point is that the overcomer will be like Christ in royal splendor (Benedict, pp. 27-28, who is relying on Lenski). The Old Testament promised that the wise would shine like a star. "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

One of the Messianic passages in the Old Testament combines authority and glory. Numbers 24:17 says, "A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel." The Scepter represents dominion and the star represents splendor. These two promises, in which the overcomer will be given dominion and glory like Christ, are two parts of one concept.

In the letter to the church in Sardis, the Lord says, "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" (Rev. 3:4). The church at Sardis was overcome with spiritual deadness (Rev. 3:1). The individual believer who overcomes spiritual deadness will be rewarded with a white garment and confession before God the Father and angels.

Overcomers will be clothed in white garments. White has been said to denote justification (Mounce), festivity, victory, purity, the heavenly state (Swete; Barclay), and "spotless purity" (Smith). What are the white garments here? Just before this promise to the overcomer, the Lord said that those who had not defiled their garments would walk with Him in white (Rev. 3:4). Now, the overcomer is promised a white garment (Rev. 3:5). Two conclusions are unavoidable. The overcomers are the believers who have not defiled their garments, that is, faithful believers (Jas. 1:27), and the white garments are related to the overcomer's walk, not justification.

Putting off the rags of the old life and putting on the garments of the new life in Christ is a motif repeatedly used in the New Testament (Eph. 4:20-32; Col. 4:5-14; 1 Pet. 2:13; etc.). In the book of Revelation, to be clothed in white garments refers to the "righteousness of the saints—not the righteousness of God" (19:8; see Walvoord). Thus, the white garments here are the *righteous acts* of the saints. They have not defiled their garments as others in Sardis (Walvoord). The smallest victory or defeat is of the greatest significance because they are threads woven into the material, making the believers "robes of resurrection life" (Hadjiantoniou).

It has been suggested that believers wear at least two robes in glory—both dazzling white! The undergarment will be the covering of Christ's imputed righteousness. They have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14). The second garment will be an outer vesture woven from their good works, for it will be

arrayed in "fine linen, clean and white," which is "the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19:8).

Overcomers will not have their names blotted out of the Book of Life. There are two basic interpretations of not having one's name blotted out of the Book of Life. One assumes that this implies that the *reverse* is possible, namely, having one's name blotted out of the Book is possible. Some conclude that means the possibility of losing salvation. Others say that the Book contains the names of all for whom Christ died and if they do not trust Christ, their names are then taken out of the Book (Walvoord).

Another approach sees this as a litotes, an *affirmation* expressed by negating its opposite. "This is no small problem" means "This is a big problem" (see Rev. 2:11; Lloyd-Jones, pp. 314ff.). Thus, "the possibility of being saved and lost is not in this" (Benedict, p. 31). A litote is an extreme understatement, which promises to do exactly what is stated and much more. Hodges says that here the point is "your honored name will never be erased," which suggests, "Your name will be glorious forever" or something similar (Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege*, p.119; see Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, pp. 107-11). Perhaps much more is expressed in the next statement concerning confession before God the Father and the angels. In other words, not only will the Lord not blot the overcomer's name out of the Book of Life, but the overcomer will also receive "public recognition and honor" (Benedict, p. 34). The overcomer, then, will receive both private (Rev. 2:17) and public (Rev. 3:5) recognition.

According to Barclay, a king kept a register in the ancient world. When a man committed a crime against the state or when he died, his name was erased from that register. So, to have one's name written in the Book of Life is to be numbered among the faithful citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Fuller has a fascinating interpretation of this phrase. He rejects the litotes explanation and points out that the Greek word translated "name" has four different meanings, including "reputation," which is the way it is used in Revelation 3:1. He suggests that the word "name" has the meaning of "reputation in Revelation 3:5." Thus, the point of the passage is that while they had not lost their reputation on earth, they were in danger of losing it in heaven (Fuller, pp. 297-306).

The problem with this novel suggestion is that elsewhere in Revelation, the word "name" about the Book of Life means "name," not reputation (Rev. 13:8; 17:8). Fuller attempts to answer this objection by suggesting that there is "blurring of the semantic categories" of the word "name" in Revelation, but he fails to show how that solves the problem. Therefore, this interpretation must be rejected, but in light of all that Revelation 2 and 3 say about the overcomer, it sure is fascinating.

Overcomers will have their names confessed before God and angels. In Mathew 10:32, Jesus said He would confess before the Father those who confess Him before men and in Luke 12:8, He said He would do the same before angels (Mk. 8:38; Lk 9:26). Revelation 3:5 combines the two statements. Jesus Christ will be true to those who are true to Him. For those faithful in trials now, there is "reward beyond measure in the life to come" (Mounce).

These three promises to the overcomer paint a picture of great honor. The overcomer stands before the holy assembly of God the Father and all the angels, dressed in white, having God the Son announce, "Well done, My good and faithful servant." Far from having his name blotted out of the Book of Life, his name will be greatly honored before

God! The overcomer overcame having a name that was not connected to reality and is rewarded for what was really accomplished. In his book, *The Seven Churches*, Trench says he knew of a book dated in 1733 by Thomas Allen entitled *The Christian's Sure Guide to Eternal Glory* (Trench, p. 73). For the overcomer, eternity will be glory!

In the letter to the church at Philadelphia, the Lord says, "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And 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 (Rev. 3:12). The church at Philadelphia was not overcome, but they were faced with opposition (Rev. 3:9). The individual believer who overcomes trials and is faithful to the end will be rewarded by being made a permanent pillar inscribed with various names.

The overcomer will be a permanent pillar in God's temple. There is no doubt this is figurative language. In the first, there will not be a temple in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:22). Therefore, the temple here is a figure of speech and so is the pillar. Elsewhere in the New Testament, "pillar" is used in a symbolic sense (Gal. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:15; see also Rev. 10:1). All believers are part of a spiritual temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 4:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:5). In that spiritual building, overcomers are pillars. Those who had "a little strength" (Rev. 3:8) will be a pillar, a picture of strength.

As a pillar, the overcomer will "go out no more." This indicates that the overcomer will be a permanent pillar. The backdrop for this statement is probably the earthquakes in Philadelphia. In 17 AD, an earthquake destroyed eleven cities in the region. In Philadelphia, the aftershocks continued for years; Strabo said it was a "city full of earthquakes." That ancient author described the scene. Because of the fear created by the daily shaking, the gaping cracks in the walls of the houses, and the falling masonry, most of the population lived in huts outside the city and feared to go on city streets lest they should be killed. During those years, those who dared to live in the city were considered mad; they spent their time shoring up the shaking buildings and fleeing to the open spaces for safety. These days were never forgotten. People in Philadelphia waited for tremors, ready to flee the shaking city (Barclay). Once in the New Jerusalem, they would not go out anymore, as they did during an earthquake when they fled into the countryside to establish temporary buildings (Mounce). They will be permanently in the presence of God (Morris).

The overcomer will receive various names. On the overcomer will be written the name of God the Father, the name of God's city, the New Jerusalem, and the Lord's new name. In the Old Testament, Aaron, the High Priest, wore a gold plate on his forehead that read, "Holiness to the Lord" (Ex. 28:36-38) and God said, "They shall put my name upon the people of Israel" (Num. 6:22–27; see also Rev. 7:3; 14:1; 22:4). The New Jerusalem is the eternal city of chapters 21-22. It stands for "the gift of citizenship in the city of God to the faithful Christian" (Barclay). To have the Lord's new name indicates that overcomers will be in a "special way related to Christ" (Mounce).

To be like a pillar with names inscribed on it would have been significant to overcomers in Philadelphia for several reasons. Solomon's Temple had two pillars with a name inscribed on each one. On one was the name Jachin, which means "He establishes," and on the other was the name Boaz, which means "He is strength" (1 Kings 7:15-21). Also, when the earthquake devastated Philadelphia in AD 17, Tiberius, the Roman Emperor, remitted taxation and made a generous gift to rebuild the city. In their gratitude,

Philadelphia called itself by a new name, Neocaesarea, the New City of Caesar. Later, when Vespasian was kind to them, they renamed the city Flavia, the family name of Vespasian. Jesus Christ will give His "faithful ones" (Barclay) a new name. Most significant of all is the fact that in Philadelphia, as well as other cities of Asia Minor, when a priest died after a lifetime of faithful service, He was honored with a new pillar in the temple in which he had served by inscribing his name and the name of his father upon it. Barclay claims that this then describes "the lasting honor, which Christ pays to His faithful ones."

The close association with Christ is "striking." Note, "the name of *My* God," "the name of the city of *My* God," and "*My* new name" (Darby, vol. 5, p. 515).

In the letter to the church at Laodicea, the Lord said, "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" (Rev. 3:21). The church at Laodicea was overcome with lukewarmness (Rev. 3:16). The individual believer who overcomes lukewarmness will be rewarded with co-rulership with Christ in the Kingdom. Rulership is a reward, indicated here by the fact that it is not "given" as a gift but "granted," which implies that it was earned.

This is an "extension" of the promise made to the twelve (Swete). While, on the one hand, claiming that the promises to the overcomers are granted to all Christians, on the other hand, Walvoord says that it is obvious that this one "hinges upon their separation from the lukewarm state and their manifestation of true devotion to Christ." This is a promise to the "faithful" (Mounce, who refers to 2 Tim. 2:12).

The Lord overcame (Jn. 16:33; Rev. 3:21; 5:5; 17:14) and was faithful even unto death. Believers are challenged to overcome "as" Christ did. He obtained the throne by way of the cross. If Believers are to share His glory, they must first share His humiliation (Hadjiantoniou). This means that the overcomer does not sit on the throne with Christ as an "inherent right of salvation" but because, like Christ, he was obedient to the Father's will on earth (Benedict, p. 40).

Those who had shut the Lord out are given the opportunity to sit next to Him on His throne! The church that sank to the lowest level is called to ascend to the greatest heights. If they draw near and keep close here below, they will find themselves very near up there (Hadjiantoniou). The victor in this life will "share the throne of the victorious Christ." The eastern throne was more like a couch than a single seat (Barclay). This reward is kingship in the kingdom (Mt. 19:28; 25:21; Lk. 22:30).

The mother of James and John wanted her sons to sit on either side of Christ in the kingdom (Mt. 20:20-29). The twelve tribes of Israel were promised the right to sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve of Israel (Mt. 19:28). The overcomer will sit with Christ on His throne! The overcomer will have the closest possible relationship with Him.

Thus, "at the close of each of the seven letters of Rev. 2-3, the believer who 'conquers' is promised an eschatological reward" (Mounce, *ISBE*, vol. III, p. 623).

Besides the letters to the seven churches, the overcomer is also mentioned in Revelation 21. The passage begins by saying, "I [Jesus] will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts" (Rev. 21:6b). The water of life is eternal life (Jn. 4:14) and it is freely given. In other words, the *gift* of God is eternal life (Rom. 6:23). Jesus goes on to say, "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son" (Rev. 21:7).

There is a difference between the thirsty individual who receives the gift of eternal life and the overcomer. The mention of the overcomer here "carries the reader back" (Swete) to the letters to the seven churches. In Revelation 2 and 3, the overcomer is the faithful believer. Those who endure will reign with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12), but not all will reign (Lk. 19:11-27). The overcomers, the victors, are now assured that they will inherit all things in the final triumph. They will have a special relationship with the Supreme Ruler of all (Rev. 7:17; Morris).

In "sharp contrast" to the heritage of the conquerors is the doom of the unbelieving (Swete). "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

To sum up, While it is true that 1 John 5:4 teaches that all believers are overcomers, it is also correct to say that there is a sense in which only those believers who continue, that is, are faithful to the end, are overcomers and that is the meaning of the overcomer in Revelation 2, 3, and 21.

More specifically, all believers are overcomers, at least in the sense that their faith has overcome the unbelief of the world (1 Jn. 5:4). The world does not believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who has come into the flesh (1 Jn. 4:3; 5:5). By believing that Jesus is the Christ, Son of God, who has come into the world, believers have overcome that unbelief of the world (1 Jn. 4:4; 5:4). Moreover, there is a sense in which believers who continue, that is, who are faithful to the end, are overcomers (1 Jn. 5:5, 13). Overcomers, in this sense, are those who overcome the circumstances in which they find themselves, including 1) continuing to believe (1 Jn. 4:5), 2), obeying the commandments to love God and others (1 Jn. 4:3; Rev. 2:7), 3) being faithful unto the end (Rev. 3:10-11). In addition, an individual may have to overcome circumstances that require conquering such things as 1) the lack of love, as in Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7), 2) the fear of death, as in Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11), 3) tolerating false teaching, as in Pergamos (Rev. 2:12-17), 4) compromising with sin, as in Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29), 5), spiritual deadness, as in Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6), 6) not holding fast, as in Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13), and 7) spiritual lukewarmness, as in Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22).

The results of overcoming depend on what is overcome. Overcoming the unbelief of the world results in regeneration. Continuing in the faith results in a reward, but the rewards vary. As there are degrees in hell, so there are degrees in heaven.

The whole issue can be summarized very simply. According to 1 John 5:4 all believers are overcomers, but the present tense in the very next verse (1 Jn. 5:5) indicates that believers who continue are overcomers. In the book of Revelation, faithful believers are overcomers (Rev. 2:26). In short, the overcomer is the believer who is rewarded in later for being a spiritual victor over circumstances in this life and not a victim of them.

In his book *Awake My Heart*, J. Sidlow Baxter says, "Are all believers 'overcomers'? Let him think twice about who would answer a dogmatic 'Yes' to this question. The letters to the seven churches, at least, suggest otherwise to the unprejudiced reader." Those who come to the seven letters *without prejudice* will conclude that only faithful believers are overcomers. In his commentary on Revelation, G. H. Lang says, "The assertion that all believers are overcomers is so plainly contrary to fact and to scripture that one wonders it ever has been made. It involves the false position that no believer can be a backslider" (Lang, p. 91). If no believer can fail, why are believers warned about the

possibility of failure in the New Testament?" As Dillow has so forcefully said, "a warning about a failure which no one can experience is ludicrous!" (Dillow, p. 478).

The sum is simple: the Lord rewards those who overcome. Overcomers conquering such things as 1) the lack of love, as in Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7), 2), the fear of death, as in Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11), 3) tolerating false teaching, as in Pergamos (Rev. 2:12-17), 4) compromising with sin, as in Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29), 5), spiritual deadness, as in Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6), 6) not holding fast, as in Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13), and 7) spiritual lukewarmness, as in Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22).

The point of the Lord telling the seven churches of Revelation that being an overcomer is a reward is to motivate them to live in such a way that they will receive the reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Do not be overcome; become an overcomer. Do not be a victim; be a victor.

It would be like talking to a discouraged high school student who was contemplating dropping out of school. He might have a lack of interest in school. You would tell him to remember the diploma. He might be afraid of failing. You would tell him to remember the diploma. He might be listening to people telling him school is not necessary. You would say to him to remember the diploma. He might think he could make money by committing crimes. You would tell him to remember the diploma. When he is not holding on or is lukewarm about the possibilities and staying in school, ask him to remember the diploma.

Likewise, when there is a loss of interest, a fear of death, the temptation to compromise with false teaching, sin, or being self-sufficient, remember the overcomer is rewarded.

Inheritance

Most of us do not have to be concerned about receiving an inheritance because, as of 2016, the typical American dies with an average of $62,000 in debt and little to bequeath. God the Father, however, gives His children an inheritance.

The concept of inheritance is simple. Upon death, people leave their possessions as an inheritance to others. An heir receives as an inheritance the possessions of someone who has died. Of course, it can be a bit more complex. A father with three children can leave his property to all three divided equally, or he can leave 50% of his property to one and 25% of his property to each of the two others. Then, there is the possibility that he could leave 50% of his property to each of his two children and "disinherit" the third child.

So, the question is, when the Bible talks about God the Father giving His children an inheritance, exactly what does that mean? Does He give the same inheritance to all of His children? Or do some of His children get more of an inheritance than others?

In the OT: Everyone Received Something In the Old Testament, all Israelites in the land received Canaan as an inheritance (Deut. 19:14; 25:19; 26:1; Ps. 105:10-11),

In the OT: Some Received More The firstborn received a double inheritance (Deut. 21:15-17). Some inherited their land because of obedience (1 Chron. 28:8). Caleb inherited his land because he fully followed the Lord (Num. 14:24).

So, in the Old Testament, all of God's children got an inheritance, but some of God's children got more of an inheritance than others.

As a millionaire real estate mogul, it wasn't too odd for New Yorker Maurice Laboz to leave each of his daughters about $10 million when he died in 2015. However, the stipulations tied to that inheritance money were more than a little esoteric. The two youngest Laboz daughters won't get their cut until they turn 35, but that's not all—they each also have to attend an accredited university and write an essay about the inheritance, marry well-positioned men who legally swear not to touch said inheritance money, stay gainfully employed, and not have any children out of wedlock. If the girls hold decent jobs by 2020, they get a yearly payout equal to three times their income. There is no word on whether their father is still trying to figure out how to impose a curfew on his daughters from the grave.

In the NT: The Words In the New Testament, the terms heir, inherit, and inheritance are used of several different people. Here is a survey of every occurrence of those words in the New Testament. Noah became an heir of righteousness (Heb. 11:7). Abraham was given the land as an inheritance (Heb. 11:8; see also Acts 7:25). Abraham was promised that he would be the heir of the world, not through the law, but through promise (Rom. 4:13-14). The son of the bondwoman was not an heir with the son of the freewoman (Gal. 4:30). Esau did not inherit the blessing (Heb. 12:17). A man says to Jesus, "Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me" (Lk. 12:13). In the parables, these words are used of an heir inheriting an inheritance (Mt. 21:38; Mk. 12:7; Lk. 20:14). An heir, who was a child, is no different than a slave (Gal. 4:1). The Rich Young Ruler asked how he could inherit eternal life (Mt. 19:29; Mk. 10:17; Lk. 18:18). Jesus is an heir who inherits an inheritance (Heb. 1:2, 4).

In the NT: Everyone Received Something All believers are heirs solely because of their faith in Christ. To say the same thing another way, all who have trusted Jesus Christ become children of God (Jn. 1:12) and all of God's children are heirs (Gal. 3:29; 4:7). Paul says, "And if children—heirs of God" (Rom. 8:17a). Sonship implies heirship. Their inheritance includes an expectation of eternal life (Titus 3:4-7).

"All believers will inherit an eternal home in heaven, have glorified bodies, and have an eternal relationship with God that allows them to enter freely into the throne room of God. All believers enjoy the blessings of living forever in the new heavens and new earth, and all believers inherit the blessing of being with their beloved loved ones in eternity—all simply by faith" (Wall, p. 81). "Every believer will have an eternal, indestructible body, just as Christ has; we will not be limited by distance or endurance. Also, every believer will have proximity to the Father, the ability to behold Him and all of His beauty, to spend an eternity studying the wonders of His attributes and purposes" (Lutzer, p. 50).

In the NT: Some Received More Some believers have an additional inheritance because they did something beyond simply trusting Christ. After saying that all children of God are heirs, Paul adds, "and joint-heirs with Christ if indeed we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified together" (Rom. 8:17b). There are two different heirships in this verse: the simple heir and the joint-heir. That is indicated not only by the fact that one is the heir of God and the other is the joint heir of Christ but also by the fact that the requirement to be an heir is to be a son, but the condition of joint-heirship is suffering.

Commentaries agree. Murray says there is no sharing in Christ's glory unless there is sharing in his suffering (Murray, p. 299). Bruce says suffering is the indispensable prelude to glory (Bruce, p. 159; see also Godet). Martin Lloyd-Jones says, "There is it

teaching in the Scripture which suggests that there may be a variation in the amount of the inheritance dependent upon our conduct and behavior" (Martin-Jones, *The Sons of God: Exposition of Romans 8:5-17*, p. 40).

Christian slaves are told to obey their masters, knowing that from the Lord, they will receive the "reward of the inheritance" (Col. 3:23-24). In that sense, the believer's inheritance is a reward in heaven, not heaven itself. To *possess* eternal life, you simply need faith in Christ; to truly *inherit* it, you need faith and obedience" (Lutzer, p. 69, italics his; see Joseph Dillow, p. 37).

What must believers do to receive an additional inheritance? The meek shall inherit the earth (Mt. 5:5), that is, the meek, "those who do not demand their own rights, will have a special place of rule in the kingdom" (Wall, p. 83). The righteous, who help the needy, will inherit the kingdom (Mt. 25:34). Believers who are rich in faith are heirs of the kingdom (Jas. 2:5). Those who bless others will inherit a blessing (1 Pet. 3:9). Believers who suffer for Christ will be a joint-heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Those who heed what they have heard (Heb. 2:1) will inherit "eschatological salvation" (Heb. 1:14). Those who have faith and patience inherit the promises (Heb. 6:12, 14). The overcomer will inherit all things (Rev. 21:7).

All believers have God as their inheritance, but there is another inheritance, an additional one given to those who are faithful" (Lutzer, p. 54).

Some individuals will *not* inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9, 10; 15:50; Eph. 5:5; Gal. 5:21; more about these people below).

To summarize the concept of inheritance, while all believers have an inheritance, faithful believers have an additional one.

This concept reveals what things qualify the doer for additional rewards. Those things include not just having faith but being rich in faith (Jas. 2:5), being obedient (Heb. 2:1; 1:14), being patient (Heb. 6:12, 14), overcoming (Rev. 21:7), being meek (Mt. 5:5), helping the needy (Mt. 2:34), blessing others (1 Pt. 3:9), and suffering or Christ (Rom. 8:17). This concept also indicates what the reward will be. This "additional" inheritance includes inheriting the earth (Mt. 5:5), the kingdom (Mt. 25:24, Jas. 2:5; Heb. 1:14; 6:12, 14), a blessing (1 Pet. 3:9), joint-heirship with Christ (Rom. 8:17), and all things (Rev. 21:7). These things seem to suggest ruling with Christ in the kingdom.

Rocker says, "Most New Testament passages address the believer's inheritance ss a *gift* of God's grace lavished upon *all* believers in Christ (Col. 1:12), but only a few verses communicate that *certain* unfaithful believers will receive 'the reward of the inheritance' given over and above the gift of the inheritance. To illustrate that industry as a gift and a reward, let's imagine for a moment a rich father with three sons. Upon the father's death, his last will and testament is read aloud in his son's presence. It reveals that this gracious father bequeathed to ALL his sons a great but equal inheritance that they received as a GIFT merely because of the father's generosity and their birth into his family. But in addition to the GIFT, the same father gave as a REWARD certain additional blessings to ONE of his sons who faithfully served him every day for many years while he was in poor health before he died." Likewise, all believers receive God's inheritance (1 Pet. 1:3-5) and some receive an additional reward (Col. 3:23-24) (Rocker, p. 411, italics and capitals his).

Summary: At the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Lord rewards faithful believers, as demonstrated by the study of the New Testament concepts of the Judgment Seat of Christ, rewards, crowns, ruling in the kingdom, overcomers, and inheritance.

Those who do good in this life will be rewarded in the next life. Peter teaches that we can have an abundant entrance into the kingdom. He writes, "But also for this very reason: giving all diligence; add to your faith virtue, faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, you will never stumble; For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:5-11). In short, believers who grow will be rewarded in the kingdom. They will have abundant entrance into the kingdom.

Commenting on the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, Lutzer says, "We were not given the same number of talents in life; some are given one, others are given two, while a few are given five or ten. God does not expect a five-talent ability from a two-talent man. But since rewards are based on faithfulness to opportunity, both the two-talent man and the five-talent man received the same reward" (Lutzer, p. 75).

In 2009, an extremely wealthy German woman died. By German law, her direct descendants would inherit her estate. The wealthy woman had a sister living in the U.S. and a daughter. The daughter was deceased, but she had two sons, who were next in line to receive their mother's portion of the inheritance. Those two sons, Zsolt and Geza Peladi, were homeless, living in a cave in Hungary. The estate was valued at roughly $5.32 billion. The story I read was entitled "From Zero to a Billion." I saw it. I thought some believers who have zero now would be billionaires later.

What about receiving the bad/evil things done in this life?

GOD DISINHERITS THE UNFAITHFUL

In 2 Corinthians 5:10, Paul says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." As was pointed out, this verse indicates that at the Judgment Seat of Christ, all believers will have their entire life evaluated to determine what each believer will receive for what they did in their lives, whether it was good or bad (Greek: "wicked, evil"). The good will be rewarded, but what is received based on the bad? What happens to unfaithful believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ? Another way to ask the same question is, "Are there negative consequences at the Judgment Seat of Christ?"

Loss of Inheritance

As with humans, God the Father disinherits some of His children. What would cause Him to do that?

Old Testament In Genesis 49, Jacob gave his sons their inheritance. One received a double portion (Joseph) and three were disinherited (Reuben, Simeon, and Levi).

As the firstborn son, Reuben should have been given preeminence among his brothers, leadership of the tribes, priesthood within the family, and a double portion of his birthright (Deut. 21:17), but because of his sexual immorality with Bilhah, his father's concubine (Gen. 35:22), he was disinherited (1 Chron. 5:1-2). Jacob told him he was "unstable as water" and would "not excel" because he "defiled his father's bed" (Gen. 49:4). The Hebrew word translated "excel" means "excel, show pre-eminence." Neither Reuben nor his descendants ever excelled. The leadership of the tribes went to Judah, the priesthood to Levi (Exod. 32:25-29; Num. 3:12-13), and the double portion to Joseph. Reuben lost his right to inherit.

Concerning Simeon and Levi, Jacob said, "Instruments of cruelty *are in* their dwelling place. Let not my soul enter their council; let not my honor be united to their assembly; for in their anger, they slew a man, and in their self-will, they hamstrung an ox. Cursed *be* their anger, for *it is* fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel" (Gen. 49:5b-7). When a prince violated their sister Dinah, Simeon and Levi took vengeance, not just on him but on his whole city. In their anger and self-will, they slew a man and hamstrung an ox. Jacob had previously strongly condemned what they did (Gen. 34:30). Now, he disinherits them. He does not want his honor to be connected with them. He curses their cruel anger, scattering them among the tribes of Israel. Because of their wickedness, they would have no tribal territory; their descendants would live scattered among the other tribes.

When the Israelites entered Canaan, the Simeonites had become the smallest tribe (Num. 26). Moses passed over them in his blessing of the Israelites (Deut. 33). They received only a few cities within the allotment of Judah rather than a separate geographical territory (Josh. 19:1-9). They eventually lost their tribal identity and lived among the other tribes, especially Judah (cf. 1 Chron. 4:27, 38-43). The Levites did not receive a land grant; Joshua gave them several cities where they lived among the other tribes (Josh. 21:1-42). The Levites, however, gained a special blessing by siding with

Moses when the other Israelites rebelled against him (Exod. 32:26-28; Num. 3:5-13; 18:6-32). As a result, they became a tribe of priests.

Because of sexual immorality, fierce anger, and cruelty, these brothers were disinherited, but they were allowed to live in the Promised Land.

Other Old Testament illustrations could be given. The entire Exodus generation, except Caleb and Joshua, forfeited the inheritance due to the firstborn. Even Moses lost the inheritance of being able to enter the Promised Land because of his disobedience out of anger (Deut. 4:21-22). Jeremiah laments that his generation of Israelites had their inheritance turned over to foreigners (Lam. 5:2).

New Testament Three passages in Paul's epistles speak of people who do not inherit the kingdom of God. Unlike the Old Testament, the concept of inheritance in the New Testament is controversial. Many, if not most, commentators have concluded that those who do not inherit the kingdom are unbelievers, but not all agree. Some say a believer can be disinherited.

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul speaks of a believer taking a legal matter with another believer before *unrighteous* judges rather than before the saints (1 Cor. 6:1). At the end of that discussion, he says, "You yourselves do *wrong* (Greek: "unrighteous"), and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! Do you not know that the *unrighteous* shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 6:8-11, italics added).

Those who believe that unbelievers will not inherit the kingdom of God point out that in this passage, *unbelievers are called unrighteous* (1 Cor. 6:1) and, therefore, the unrighteous who will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6: 9-11) are unbelievers (Rokser, p. 407). In verses 8-11, Paul contrasts the *position* of unbelievers before God ("unrighteous") followed by their *practice* (fornicators, idolaters, etc.) with the *position* of believers before God ("washed, sanctified, justified") followed by an appeal for their *practice* to become consistent with their position in Christ (Rocker, p. 408).

Those who believe that it is possible for a believer not to inherit the kingdom of God point out that in this passage, *believers are said to be doing wrong* (Greek: "unrighteous (1 Cor. 6:8), which is the same word translated unrighteous in verses 1. Therefore, the unrighteous who will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11) are believers (Findley and Fee connect "unrighteous in verse 9 with "wrong in verse 8, but they conclude these are believers who forfeit their salvation).

Most commentators say that not inheriting the kingdom means being excluded from the kingdom, but Paul does not say that they will not *enter* the kingdom. He is teaching that such will not *inherit* the kingdom. There is a difference between entering a house and inheriting a house. Unrighteous Christians will be *in* the kingdom, the rule of God on the earth, but they will not *reign* in the kingdom. The Corinthians thought they were kings, but if they did unrighteous things, such as those listed here, Paul said they would not rule (1 Cor. 4:8).

Paul goes on to enumerate ten other sins, which will exclude one from *inheritance*. He says, "Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor

extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9c-10). The word "fornicators" is a general term covering all forms of sexual sins. Idolaters are those who worship anything or anyone other than the true and living God. Adulterers are those who violate the marriage bed. Grosherde says that homosexuals and sodomites designate passive and active homosexuals, respectively (Grosherde, p. 140). The five sins listed in verse 9 are sexual, except idolatry. The inclusion of idolatry may indicate the immorality of the heathen worship of the day. First Corinthians 6:10 lists five more sins that disinherit one from the kingdom. Thieves steal. The covetous are those desirous of having more. The drunkards do not control their intoxicating beverage; it controls them. Revilers are those who abuse others. Extortioners steal money.

Paul adds, "And such were some of you, but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). They were washed of their sins, set apart to God, and declared righteous, all of which was done by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. They were justified (1 Cor. 6:11), but they were doing unjust things (1 Cor. 6:8), which would disqualify them from inheriting the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9). They would be better off suffering the injustice now so that they would inherit the kingdom later.

In Ephesians 5, Paul exhorts, "Therefore be followers of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for the saints, neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:1-4). Paul then gives the reason for not living such a sinful life. He says, "For this you know that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph. 5:5).

What does Ephesians 5:5 mean? The most common interpretation is that Paul says those who practice them are not part of God's kingdom. According to this view, "inheriting the kingdom" is synonymous with entering the kingdom. The problem with that view is that Paul readily acknowledges that believers commit such sins (Eph. 5:3-4). Furthermore, if that is the correct interpretation of the passage, Paul is saying, "Walk in love, not fornication, uncleanness or covetousness, because if you do those things, you are not saved." Ultimately, salvation depends on continuance, which is salvation by faith *plus works*.

Another possibility is that there is a difference between entering the kingdom and inheriting the kingdom. The Levites of the Old Testament entered the land but did not inherit any of it. According to this interpretation, inheriting the kingdom is a reward in the Millennial Kingdom by ruling and reigning with Christ.

Paul further warns, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them" (Eph. 5:6-7). God's wrath comes (present tense) upon the sons of disobedience, that is, on the unregenerate (Eph. 2:2). In other words, Paul concludes, do not be partakers of the sins of unbelievers because God judges sin and He is no respecter of persons. If a Christian practices such sin, God will be angry with Him, just as He is angry with the unbeliever who lives such a lifestyle.

In Galatians 5, Paul says, "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions,

jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like, of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21). Paul told them when he was with them, and he warned them that anyone who practices such sins will not inherit the Kingdom of God. What does that mean? This is often interpreted to mean that those who habitually sin will be excluded from heaven.

The problem with that explanation is that this warning is for believers. Verse 16 says if *believers* walk in the Spirit, they will not fulfill the *lust of the flesh*. No one questions that verse 16 is talking about believers not fulfilling the desires of the flesh. Verses 19-20 list the *works of the flesh*. In other words, believers will not do this when they walk in the Spirit.

Although he believes that inheriting the kingdom of God is synonymous with entrance into the kingdom of God, concerning Galatians 5:19-21, Hendriksen states, "With a majority of commentators, I hold that the apostle mentions the particular vices in the list that follows because they needed to be mentioned. In other words, the Galatians had not as yet gained a complete victory over these evils, though here, as always, the degree of success must have varied with the individual." Exactly! Jewett concludes, "Although these features are typical of such a catalog in the comparable Jewish literature, they probably reflect the actual behavior of the Galatians." Both a proper exposition of Scripture and the experiences of life teach us that believers commit these kinds of sins.

Betz goes so far as to contend that the anti-Pauline forces got a foothold in the Galatian churches because the Galatian Christians were having a concrete problem with the flesh. He said, "Their daily life came to be a dance on a tightrope!" The anti-Paulinists gave them the law to tell them what was right and wrong and rituals to correct transgression. Lull, a disciple of Betz, disagrees, claiming the Galatians considered turning to the Law of Moses because they were religiously and ethically scrupulous and desired to be genuine Jews (Lull, pp. 29-43). Betz may be, as Lull suggests, going beyond what the data demands in saying that flagrant misconduct gave the opponents of Paul a foothold in the Galatian churches, but no doubt they were at least struggling with the flesh. The simple reality is believers commit and sometimes practice these sins.

Believers who practice the works of the flesh will not *inherit* the kingdom of God. Paul is not talking about entering the kingdom; he is talking about inheriting the kingdom. In the Old Testament, not everyone who entered the land inherited the land. For example, the Levites did not receive land like the other tribes. In return for the work they performed in the Tabernacle, the inheritance of the Levites was the tithes given by the Israelites (Num. 18:21). To *inherit* the Kingdom is to rule and reign with Christ in it. To qualify for that, one must walk in the Spirit now and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh so as to produce the works of the flesh (see Mt. 19:29).

To sum up, even though believers will enter the kingdom, if they live in sin, they will not inherit the kingdom, meaning they will not rule in the kingdom.

Two questions must be asked. The first is, "What must people do to enter the kingdom of God?" The answer to that is in John 3:5; they must be born again by faith in Jesus Christ (Jn. 3:15). The second question is, "What must people do to inherit the kingdom of God?" As we have seen, there are many answers to that question, but one is "live a righteous life." That is stating the issue positively. To say the same thing negatively, the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. That is not to say that

the unrighteous will not *enter* the kingdom of God; it is to say they will not be *rewarded* in the kingdom of God.

Kendall says, "Are we to say that anybody who *does* any of these things (e.g. evny, strife) is not going to heaven? Not at all. But such things as, "covetousness" and "foolish talking," as well as sexual immorality, forfeit one's inheritance in God's kingdom" (Kendall, p. 129, italics his).

If you are running after the flesh, you are running in the wrong race and will be greatly disappointed. In his book *Thinking and Acting Like A Christian*, D. Bruce Lockerbie tells the story of a world-class woman runner who was invited to compete in a race in Connecticut. On the morning of the race, she drove from New York City, following the directions given to her over the telephone. She got lost, stopped at a gas station, and asked for help. She knew that the race started in the parking lot of a shopping mall. The station attendant also knew of a race scheduled up the road and directed her there. When she arrived, she was relieved to see a modest number of runners preparing to compete in the parking lot. It was not, however, as many as she had been led to expect. She hurried to the registration desk, announced herself, and was surprised by the race officials' excitement at having so renowned an athlete show up for their race. No, they had no record of her entry, but if she hurried and put on this number, she could just make it before the gun went off. She ran and, naturally, she won easily, some four minutes ahead of the first male runner who came in second place.

Only after the race, when there was no envelope containing her sizable prize and performance money, did she realize that the event she'd run was not the race to which she'd been invited. That race was held several miles farther up the road in another town. She'd gone to the wrong starting line, run the wrong course, and missed her chance to win a valuable prize (Lockerbie, p. 52).

Don't run in the wrong race, competing for earthly praise and pleasure.

Loss of Potential Reward

Several passages speak of the possibility of losing a potential reward, the most well-known of which is in 1 Corinthians 3, but first, consider what Jesus said.

Luke 19 Jesus told about a wealthy man who left on a trip. Before his departure, the wealthy man gave money to ten servants and told them to engage in business until he returned. When he returned, he asked for an accounting. The faithful servants believed what their master told them and did what they were told to do. They were rewarded with administrative responsibility (Lk. 19:16-19). They rule in the kingdom. These were discussed earlier. You will only hear the Lord say "well done" if you have done well.

Then Jesus said, "Another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow" (Lk. 19:20-21). This servant did not do what his master told him to do. His problem was fear, fear of his master. This servant saw his master as demanding and unfair. "And he [the servant] said to him [the master], '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?'" (Lk. 9:22-23). The master called this servant "wicked."

The servant did not reject or squander his master's money. He carefully guarded it. Nothing is said against the man's character or life. His wrongdoing is not doing as he was instructed, namely, increasing the money he was given. The master then instructed those standing by to take the mina from the fearful servant and give it to the most faithful servant (Lk. 19:24-26).

The parable does not end there. In the parable, the master says, "But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them and slay them before me" (Lk. 19:27). These were the disloyal citizens mentioned in Luke 19:14. They are now called His enemies, and he has them killed.

In the parables, "talents" and "Minus" were actual items of money, but there is a sense in which they symbolize "all that Jesus has given us to be used wisely in His absence: our physical capacities, our natural talents, our spiritual gifts, our training, our family ties, our wealth, our time, and our energy" (Wall, p. 98).

Notice the faithful servants receive rewards, the wicked servant does not receive any reward, and the enemies are destroyed. The enemies represent unbelievers, who appear at the Great White Throne Judgment and who experienced the second death (Rev. 20:11-15).

A. J. Gordon said, "I cannot think of the final divine reckoning, which shall assign the same rank in glory, the same degree of joy to a lazy, indolent, and unfaithful Christian as to an ardent, devoted, self-denying Christian" (Gordon, cited by Lutzer, p. 18). "*The person you are today will determine the reward you will receive tomorrow*" (Lutzer, italics his, p. 21).

Some years ago, Harry Jerome, a young sprinter from Vancouver, won the 100-meter race at the Pan-American games in Winnipeg. Elated, Jerome was heard to say, "I am going home with a medal, while many others are empty-handed."

> For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
> The saddest are these: "It might have been!"

First Corinthians 3 In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul develops the concept of a messenger as a builder (1 Cor. 3:10-17). He begins by saying, "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it" (1 Cor. 3:10a). Paul calls himself a "wise master builder." The Greek word translated "wise" means "skill." The master builder was a skilled architect. By the grace of God, as a skillful architect, Paul laid the foundation of the church at Corinth (see also "I planted" in verse 6). Paul warns, "But let each one take heed how he builds on it" (1 Cor. 3:10b). After he established the foundation, others built on it (see "Apollos watered" in verse 6).

Paul explains ("for"), "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). As a skillful master builder, Paul laid the right foundation by preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). There is no other foundation for a church. While there is only one foundation, a variety of materials can be used to build the superstructure. Paul listed the building materials. "Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood hay, straw" (1 Cor. 3:12). Gold, silver, precious stones, wood hay, and straw signified true and false teaching (Hodge).

Each teacher must take heed to what he teaches and thus to what he builds in a church because his work will be tested. "Each one's work will become manifest; for the Day will declare it because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is" (1 Cor. 3:13). Believers will have to give an account of themselves (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10-12) and their work at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Here, Paul applies that awesome truth to teachers. In "the Day," obviously the day of judgment, the true nature of every believer's work and every teacher's teaching shall be declared, a Greek word that means "made plain," because the day will reveal it by (the Greek text says "in") fire. The fire will test the quality of each man's work. There are several possible results of the test.

If believers' work endures the fire test, they shall be rewarded. Paul says, "If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward" (1 Cor. 3:14). The nature of the reward is not stated, but it will be something corresponding to the ten cities and the five cities in the parables Jesus told.

On the other hand, if believers' works do not pass the fire test, they will not be rewarded. As Paul states, "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:15). The loss is the loss of reward (1 Cor. 3:14). Although his reward is forfeited, he shall be saved, that is, he will go to heaven. Abruptly, Paul says, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). The building (1 Cor. 3:13-15) is a temple. In this passage, Paul is referring to the church as the temple of God. Later in this epistle, he teaches that each believer is also the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).

With that in mind, Paul contemplates the possibility of not just building but tearing down what is already built. He says, "If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Cor. 3:17). The Greek word translated "defile" is the same one translated "destroy." It means "to corrupt, spoil, ruin, mar." *To ruin what has been built is to be ruined.* Those who ruin the local church are not the ministers, in this case, Paul, Apollos, and Peter. In the context of the problem at Corinth, they were the dissenters who were ruining the church by dividing the unity of it. The one who ruins a church by dividing it will be ruined.

What does that mean? It does not mean that the person will go to hell. The Greek word rendered defile/destroy is never used of hell. This may be a temporal result. Whatever is involved is serious and rightly so because, as Paul says, "The temple of God is holy." The church of God is no common ordinary house; it is the very dwelling place of God.

To sum up, if those who work for the Lord in the church do so with true teaching and by the grace of God, they will be rewarded, and those who build with anything else and by any other way, such as self-effort, will lose a potential reward, although that individual will still go to heaven.

Second John 8 In his second epistle, John wanted to make sure that his readers continued to walk in the truth of love because there were false teachers whose teaching would undermine their continuance in the faith. Thus, they must protect the truth (2 Jn. 7-11), so they can practice the truth, which includes love (2 Jn. 4-6). To protect the truth, they must 1) abide in the truth concerning Christ (2 Jn. 7-9) and 2) avoid supporting or even encouraging those who deny the doctrine of Christ (2 Jn. 10-11).

John writes, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. “This is a deceiver and antichrist” (2 Jn. 7). He was concerned that many deceivers in the world were not confessing Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. These deniers and deceivers taught that Jesus’ body was not truly human. Thus, they denied the manhood and Godhood of Jesus Christ. Anyone who denies the doctrine of Christ is opposed to Christ and deceives men.

Because of the presence of these perverters of the truth, John warns, “Look to yourselves that you do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward” (2 Jn. 8). The unmistakable point of this statement in this context (verse 7) is that if these believers did not guard against the deceivers, they would lose their reward, not their salvation. Marshall states, “It is hard to be sure that he excludes the possibility of genuine believers embracing heresy; certainly, he warns them in the clearest terms about the dangers attendant on dabbling with heresy.”

Note the danger. First, they were to look to themselves that they “not lose those things we work for.” John regarded himself as a co-laborer with them; he would share their loss. What was it for which they had mutually labored? It was, at least, their spiritual maturity. John and others have labored to bring them to spiritual maturity (Col. 1:28-29). They had labored to that end (Phil. 2:12).

Furthermore, John adds that they should look to themselves that “we may have a full reward.” If they did not effectively resist the false teaching of the false teachers, neither they nor John would receive the full reward they would otherwise obtain (Phil. 4:17).

John goes on to say, “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son” (2 Jn. 9). Because this verse says something about not having God, it is assumed by most that it is referring to an unregenerate person, but the word “abide,” which is used throughout John’s gospel and first epistle of the abiding life of believers, strongly suggests that John is speaking of a defection from the truth by those who once held to it. Both the context (verses 8 and 10) and the content of the verse indicate that it talks about believers. That does not mean that such believers lose their salvation. They will, however, lose their fellowship with God now and His reward later. Concerning this verse, Stott says, “He cannot ‘have’ God, that is, enjoy fellowship with him.”

“We should not think that the loss of rewards means that Christ takes away from us something we once had. As Woodrow Kroll says, ‘We are not stripped the rewards as an erring soldier is stripped of his stripes’” (Lutzer, p. 63).

Galatians 4 Paul says, “But, now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?” (Gal. 4:9). Before their conversion, they did not know God (Gal. 4:8), now they know Him. The issue is that they were converted, meaning that they were made sons (Gal. 4:1-2). The astonishing thing is that these sons wanted to return to the bondage of the Law.

Paul says, “You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain” (Gal. 4:10-11). Since these Gentile believers were choosing to observe the ceremonial and moral laws (Sabbath) of the Old Testament, Paul was afraid he had labored in vain to make them mature (Gal. 4:19). If they went to law-keeping, his time would have resulted in nothing.

Revelation 3:11 The Lord told the church at Philadelphia, "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" (Rev. 3:11). The statement that He will come quickly refers to the rapture. The Greek word translated "quickly" does not necessarily mean "immediately." Here, it means "sudden and unexpected" (Walvoord; see his note on Rev. 1:1). After the Lord raptures the church, believers will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, where rewards will be dispensed (Rev. 22:12). If they hold fast to the end, if they endure, they will receive a crown of life (Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10).

Those who do not hold fast to the end lose their reward. The Lord says others might "take" their reward. The Greek word translated "take" means "to take, receive." The idea here is "not that of a thief snatching away what is feebly held, but rather of a competitor receiving a prize which has been forfeited" (Swete). No one can "steal" another's crown, but it can be "forfeited" (Morris). God will take it from them and give it to someone else (Barclay), who did what you would have been rewarded for if you did it.

Trench lists people in the Bible who lost their place to someone. Esau lost his place to Jacob (Gen. 25:34: 27:36). Reuben lost his place to Judah (Gen. 49:4, 8). Saul lost his to David (1 Sam. 16:1, 13). Shebna lost his place to Eliakim (Isa. 22:15–25). Joab and Abiathar lost their places to Benaiah and Zadok (1 Kings 2:25). Judas lost his place to Matthias (Acts 1:25-26). The Jews lost their place to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11).

To sum up, if believers do not obey, work, and endure, they will forfeit the reward they would have received had they been faithful.

Imagine having a job, not showing up for work, and someone else getting your paycheck. Imagine not doing a job as you were supposed to and getting paid in sawdust. Imagine not finishing the job and not getting paid. Those kinds of things happen every day and those kinds of things will happen at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

"If we consider ... the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures ... like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased" (Swindoll, *Improving Your Serve*, June 29, 1993).

King Henry IV of France once asked the Duke of Alva if he had observed the great eclipse of the sun that had recently occurred. "No," said the duke, "I have so much to do on the earth that I have no leisure to look up into heaven." Commenting on this, Thomas Brooks said, "It is sad to think how heart and time are so taken up with earthly things that we have no leisure to look to Christ and the things that belong to everlasting peace." Yes, how foolish is the person who caters entirely to this temporal world! It gives only momentary pleasure and cannot bring the eternal rewards of Heaven."

Shame

Confidence Some believers will experience shame when Christ returns. John says, "And now, little children, abide in Him that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 Jn. 2:28). John has been urging his readers to let *that which they have heard* from the beginning abide in them (1 Jn. 2:24-27) and now he admonishes them to abide *in Christ* Himself. Abiding "in the Son" involves obedience to His commands, especially His command to love (1 Jn. 3:23-24).

The believer who abides in Christ will have confidence when Christ appears (1 Jn. 2:28; 4:17-18). The Greek word translated "confidence" means "freedom of speech, openness, confidence, boldness." Those who abide in Christ, who maintain their fellowship, and obey Him by living a loving life will be open, free, confident, and bold to approach Him when He is revealed at His coming.

Shame On the other hand, John contemplates the possibility of believers not abiding in Christ and, as a result, being ashamed of themselves before Him when He appears. The preposition "before" usually means "from," but can mean "by." Some translate it "from" and conclude those who will not abide will "shrink back in shame" (Westcott; Brooke). Others contend it means "they will be put to shame by Christ; they will be disgraced openly" (Marshall and others; see Marshall fn., p. 166).

Paul told Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). The Greek word translated "diligent" means "to make haste," hence, "to be zealous, eager, give diligence." As God's worker, Timothy is urged to eagerly, diligently "exert" himself so that he is not ashamed but approved before the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Hiebert). Incompetence or shoddiness makes any worker feel shame (Guthrie). Kent says, "In contrast to the useless discussions just warned against, the laborer for God must give diligence to the kind and quality of his work so that when he meets God's inspection, he will stand the test can be approved, having no need for shame because of faulty workmanship" (Kent; Phil. 1:20).

Bible teachers who mishandle the Word will be ashamed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The way to gain the approval of God is by "rightly dividing" the word of truth. The Greek word translated "rightly dividing" means "to cut straight" as a road. It is the Greek word from which we get the English word "orthodoxy." The word of truth is the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:9). The idea of cutting, which is inherent in the word, refers to "the correct analysis of the word of truth" (Guthrie). "There must be discernment between the various subjects taught in Scripture: salvation and service, the Jew and the church" (Kent).

Many, however, contend that there are two ideas in the word (cutting straight and right) and that the concept of rightness became dominant (Plummer). Thus, the more general sense is "right handling." For example, Hiebert says it signifies "handling aright" in contrast to striving about words. The approved worker must be "scrupulously straightforward in dealing with the *word of truth*, in strong contrast to the cricket methods of the faults teachers" (Guthrie, italic his). Timothy is to "handle the word of truth rightly instead of waging thoroughly useless word-battles" (Hendriksen, who adds, "The man who handles the word of truth properly does not change, pervert, mutilate, or distorted it, neither does he use it with a wrong purpose in mind"). This word "excludes all fanciful and perilous deviations and evasions, such as those in which the false teachers indulged, and all those 'strivings about words,' which distract men's minds and divert them from the substance of the Gospel" (Plummer).

When we stand before the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ, there will be no place to hide, no opportunity to put a better spin on what we have done, and no attorney to represent us (Lutzer, p. 22).

When I stand at the judgment seat of Christ
And He shows me His plan for me;
The plan of my life as it might have been
Had He had His way, and I see
How I blocked Him here and I checked Him there
And I would not yield my will,
Shall I see grief in my Savior's eyes;
Grief though He loves me still?
Oh, He'd have me rich, and I stand there poor,
Stripped of all but His grace,
While my memory runs like a hunted thing
Down the paths, I can't retrace.
Then my desolate heart will well-nigh break
With tears that I cannot shed.
I'll cover my face with my empty hands
And bow my uncrowned head.
No. Lord of the years that are left to me
I yield them to Thy hand.
Take me, make me, mold me
To the pattern Thou hast planned.
Source Unknown.

Profound Grief

Matthew 8:12 In Matthew 8, when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion pleaded with Him to heal his paralyzed servant who was at home (Mt. 8:5-6). When Jesus offered to come to the man's house and heal his servant, the centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed" (Mt. 8:7-8), explaining, "I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this *one,* 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does *it*'" (Mt 8:9). "When Jesus heard *it,* He marveled, and said to those who followed, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!'" (Mt 8:10). It is important to notice that the context of Matthew 8:12 is Jesus seeing a man with *great* faith.

In response to seeing a Gentile with great faith, Jesus said, "Many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (8:11). This is an allusion to Psalm 107:3. Those coming from east and west are Gentiles. The setting is a reference to a banquet. "For a Jew to sit at a table with a Gentile was to contract ritual defilement, yet Jesus here envisages the patriarchs themselves sitting down with the Gentiles as fellow-guess at the banquet" (France). "The Jews looked forward with all their hearts to this Messianic banquet, but it never for a moment crossed their minds that any Gentile would ever sit down in it" (Barclay). *The point is that Gentiles will be in the kingdom, and those with <u>great</u> faith will be seated at the banquet table of honor.*

Jesus goes on to say, "But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt 8:12). Most commentators

assume that the sons of the kingdom are Jews who *should* inherit the kingdom because they are descendants of the patriarchs, but *do not* because they did not have faith (Alexander; Berkeley; Toussaint). The outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth are usually taken to be descriptions of hell. McNeile says that outer darkness is the final judgment. France contends that outer darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth were symbolic Jewish descriptions of the fate of the ungodly. Those interpretations are usually accepted without question.

Matthew 8:12 poses three questions. Who are the sons of the kingdom? What is outer darkness? What is weeping and gnashing of teeth?

The problem is the expression "the sons of the kingdom." Plummer accepts the usual interpretation and says, "It is a strange irony that the sons of the kingdom are excluded from the kingdom." The resolution to this strange irony is in the meaning of the expression of "sons of the kingdom." It only appears twice in the Gospel of Matthew (here and in 13:38). In Matthew 13:13, Jesus says, "The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked *one.*" According to Jesus, *the sons of the kingdom are believers*, which is obvious from the fact that they are opposite to the sons of the wicked one (see G. H. Lang, *Pictures and Parables*, pp. 301-310; Zane Hodges, *Grace Eclipse*, pp. 84-95; Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, pp. 344-353). The sons of the kingdom enter the kingdom, but in Matthew 8, they are cast into outer darkness. Thus, the contrast in Matthew 8 is not between faith and no faith. It is between having *great faith* (Mt. 8:10) and *just enough faith* to enter the Kingdom.

What, then, is the meaning of outer darkness? Granted, darkness is used of hell (2 Pet. 2:4, 17; Jude 13), but that does not mean that all occurrences of darkness are references to hell. Darkness can simply refer to physical darkness (Lk. 23:44-45). Neither the notion of judgment nor the judgment of hell is the intrinsic meaning of the word. The expression "outer darkness" is better translated "the darkness outside" (Hodges, p. 89). It simply means "outside the house in the darkness" (Alexander). In Matthew 22, the expression "outer darkness" is used to refer to being outside of a wedding banquet. The banquet was at night in a brightly lit hall. The gardens around the house were in the darkness outside. In other words, the darkness outside is the opposite of the joy inside. "The faithful servants *enter into* the joy of their Lord. The unfaithful servant is *excluded from* that joy (Hodges, p. 93).

The expression "gnashing of teeth" appears seven times in the New Testament (Mt 8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk. 13:28). Several of these unmistakably refer to people in hell (Mt. 13:42, 50; Lk. 13:28). Since that is the case, most expositors conclude that every reference to gnashing of teeth is describing the experience of people in hell, but just because that expression is used of unsaved people in hell does not mean that it could not be used for people in other situations. Weeping occurs in places other than hell. In other words, weeping *and gnashing of teeth* describe not just sorrow (weeping) but the deep agony of the soul. When it is used in connection with loss, it describes the deep agony that is a part of grief. Jesus taught that there would be profound grief at the judgment of believers. In five parables, Jesus spoke of that possibility (Mt. 8:5-14; 22:11-15; 24:45-51; 2514-31; Lk. 13:22-31). No remorse exists in heaven; this is "profound regret" (Dillow, p. 351, cited by Rokser, pp. 16-17).

To sum up, Jesus is saying that believers who do not have great faith will be in the darkness outside during the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. At the judgment, some believers will also experience profound grief. This experience is described as weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 22:13 In Matthew 22, Jesus told a parable about a wedding feast. In the parable, a king sent his servants to call those invited to his son's wedding (Mt. 22:1-3a). When those who had been invited refuse to come (Mt. 22:3b), the king sent "other servants" to "Tell those who are invited, 'See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle *are* killed, and all things *are* ready. Come to the wedding'" (Mt. 22:4). Two invitations were customary. Several days before the feast, the first invitation was given to prevent the invited guests from making other engagements. A second invitation was announced a few hours before the feast (Shepherd, cited by Pentecost).

Instead of coming, those who had been invited "made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business" (Mt. 22:5). To make matters worse, "the rest seized his servants, treated *them* spitefully, and killed *them*" (Mt. 22:6). Notice the progression. At first, they were simply unwilling (Mt. 22:3). Then, they made light of it (Mt. 22:5) and, after that, a minority killed the servants (Mt. 22:6).

"When the king heard *about it,* he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore, go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding'" (Mt. 22:7-9). Those on the highways stand for sinners and Gentiles who had not expected an invitation into the Kingdom of God. In the previous parable, Jesus said that the kingdom would be taken from Israel and given to another (Mt. 21:43).

"So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding *hall* was filled with guests" (Mt. 22:10). There is no mention of work or service in this parable, just a free invitation to a wedding banquet. An old proverb says, "There is no such thing as a free lunch." This puts the lie to that line. Here is a case of a free lunch. Salvation is free; it is a gift.

"When the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment" (Mt. 22:11). Who is the guest without a wedding garment? There are several indications that he was a believer: 1) He accepted the invitation to come to the wedding (Mt. 22:10). 2) He was in the kingdom and at the wedding feast (Mt. 22:11). 3) He is called a friend (see 20:13 and 26:50). Pointing out that Jesus said one has to be born-again to enter the kingdom (Jn. 3:3), Dillow says, "Since this man has entered into the kingdom and even the wedding feast, it seems justifiable to conclude he is regenerate" (Dillow, p. 347).

A friend of mine points out that these guests are not enemies because they accepted an invitation to the wedding (Mt. 22:10). He adds that the parable of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30) includes a "servant" cast into outer darkness. That servant is not an "enemy" because the enemies are destroyed in a similar parable (Lk. 19:27), not sent into outer darkness. In that parable, those who were rejected were destroyed.

What does the wedding garment represent? It is usually said to be the robe of righteousness, Christ's righteousness, that believers put on by faith (Tasker). Although it is generally assumed that the king supplied the wedding garment (Walvoord), that is nowhere stated (Plummer). That interpretation has been called "a guess of Augustine"

unsupported by any evidence (Tasker), a "theologically motivated suggestion" not supported by "any relevant evidence" (France). Guests were responsible for their own clothing (France).

The wedding garment was not a special type of garment. The wedding garment here is nothing more than clean clothes, preferably white, normally worn on special occasions. To come in dirty close was an insult to the host (France). Rather than the righteousness of Christ, the clean garments represent the righteous acts of the Saints (Rev. 19:8), "the righteous character and holy life" (Shepherd, cited by Pentecost).

Dillow puts it like this, "We are not here in a court of law standing before a judge. Instead, we are in the palace of the King at a wedding feast. The garment consists then not of the imputed righteousness of Christ but of deeds suitable to qualify us to participate in the King's banquet. In Isa. 61:10, righteousness is compared to a robe. The garment is not worn by a criminal being counted righteous but by a bridegroom and bride dressing for a wedding" (Dillow, p. 346).

When the king asked the man without a wedding garment, "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? (The man) was speechless" (Mt. 22:12). "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'" (Mt. 22:13). The binding of a person's hand and foot depicts severe restriction. Such a person is unprepared for special privileges in the kingdom and his activities in the kingdom are severely restricted (Hodges, p. 89).

Acknowledging that Peter (2 Pet. 2:4) and Jude (Jude 13) describe hell as dismal darkness, Hodges claims that "outer darkness" in Matthew is a distinct form that could be rendered "the darkness outside" (Hodges, p. 89). In other words, it means "outside the house in the darkness" (see Alexander on Mt. 8:12). Thayer says it is "darkness outside the limits of the lighted palace" (Thayer, cited by Dillow, p. 348).

As was pointed out in the comments on Matthew 8:12, the banquet was at night in a brightly lit hall. The gardens around the house were in the darkness outside (Dillow, p. 348). In other words, the darkness outside is the opposite of the joy inside. "The faithful servants *enter into* the joy of their Lord. The unfaithful servant is *excluded from* that joy (Hodges, p. 93).

Also, as said in the comments on Matthew 8:12, "the weeping and gnashing of teeth" is an expression depicting grief for what has been lost or forfeited (Alexander on Mt. 8:12). It speaks of the "grief experienced by a true Christian over a wasted life" (Dillow, p. 350). Rather than joy, those without great faith will experience great grief.

Hodges says, "There is no suggestion here of punishment or torment. The presence of remorse, in the form of weeping and gnashing of teeth, does not in any way require this inference. Indeed, what we actually see in the image itself is a man soundly "trussed up" out on the darkened grounds of the king's private estate while the banquet hall glows with light and reverberates with the joys of those inside. That is what we see. And that is all! But that is enough! We do not need to embellish the parable with the lucid colors of eternal damnation. There is no fire and brimstone on the King's handsome estate, no worms of corruption creeping out from under the boulders of his well-kept grounds" (Hodges, pp. 89-90).

To sum up, when the original invited guests did not attend the wedding, others were invited, but those who came unprepared will experience anguish of soul.

Matthew 24:51 In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus delivers three parables one right after the other: the parable of the two servants (24:45-51), the parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13), and the parable of the ten talents (25:14-30). In each case, the people are divided into two parts: the faithful and wise servant versus the evil servant, the wise virgins versus the foolish virgins, and the good and faithful servant versus the lazy and unprofitable servant.

It is generally assumed that the evil servant, the foolish virgins, and the wicked, lazy, and unprofitable servants are unbelievers. The evil servant mistreated his fellow servants and drank with the drunkards (Mt. 24:49). The foolish virgins were not prepared for the Lord's coming (Mt. 25:8). The wicked and lazy servant buried his talent (Mt. 25:24-25). Also, the evil servant was cut in two and put with the hypocrites, where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 24:51). The foolish virgins were shut out of the banquet and the Lord told them He did not know them (Mt. 25:11-12). The wicked, lazy, and unprofitable servant was put into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 25:30).

While it is true that the general impression is that the evil servant, the foolish virgins, and the wicked, lazy, and unprofitable servant are unbelievers, there are also indications that that conclusion may be premature. The evil servant is a *servant* who believes in the Second Coming of Christ. The foolish virgins are virgins who have oil; they just don't have enough. The unprofitable servant was a servant the Lord expected to be profitable.

The difficulty with that interpretation is what happens to each of them. Dillow says, "Consistency requires that the unfaithful householder, the evil servant, the foolish virgins, and the wicked servant all refer to the same class of individual. There is nothing in the context that requires us to interpret these four individuals as any other than carnal Christians" (Dillow, p. 385). He believes the Christians who fail to persevere to the end will experience three negatives at the Judgment Seat of Christ: 1) a stinging rebuke (cf. "cut in two" in 24:45; Dillow, p. 535 and cf. 25:26), 2) exclusion from the wedding banquet (25:1-13), 3), millennial disinheritance (25:14-30; Dillow, p. 353).

Wiersbe suggests it is reasonable to assign Matthew 24:45-25:30 to the present age. During this time, the Lord appears to delay His return (2 Peter 3).

Matthew 24:45 Jesus says, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods" (Mt. 24:46-47). The master of a household places one of his slaves in charge while he goes on a journey. That slave is to distribute food to the other slaves. Since the master will not be present to supervise him, the servant will have to exercise wisdom and faithfulness in discharging his duties. If the slave who has been put in charge is a wise servant, he will faithfully fulfill his responsibility. He will be faithful until the master returns. The reward for faithful service is greater responsibilities in the kingdom (25:21, 23; Lk. 16:10). When we do a good job, we get promoted.

Jesus adds, "But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming and begins to beat *his* fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* and at an hour that he is not aware of and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 24:48-51). Who is the evil servant? Based on his conduct (Mt. 24:49) and what happens to him (Mt. 24:51), most assume the evil servant is an unbeliever. The evil servant mistreats his fellow

servants and drinks with drunkards (Mt. 24:49). He is cut into two pieces, appointed with the hypocrites, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 24:51).

Other factors seemed to suggest that he is a believer. The evil servant is a *servant* (Mt. 24:48). If the wise *servant* is saved, there is good reason for assuming the evil *servant* is also saved. The evil servant calls the Lord "my master" (Mt. 24:48). That is not just an empty profession. The Lord acknowledges that he has a master (Mt. 24:50). He believes the Lord is coming back (Mt. 24:48). He is a potential ruler over the master's goods.

His problem is that he says to himself his master is delaying his coming (Mt. 24:48). Assuming a delay before his master returns, the wicked servant uses the delay for the mistreatment of those under him and self-indulgence. There is a progression here. First, in his heart, the servant denied the Lord's imminent return. Second, the servant decided he could get away with mistreating other servants. Third, the servant drank with drunkards. His downfall began with miscalculating the Lord's return. It progressed to mistreating the Lord's servants and resulted in personal misbehavior. Being convinced that the master was delaying his return, the wicked servant was not watchful and consequently was caught unprepared.

As a result of his sin, the evil servant is cut in two. This is not necessarily the description of the punishment of an unbeliever. The Greek word rendered "cut in two" is used figuratively of severe scourging (A-S), punishment with the utmost severity (A-G). Wiersbe points out that even in the day of despotic rulers, it would be unthinkable for a master to cut his servant in half. Therefore, he suggests that this be translated "and shall punish them severely and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites."

Hodges argues that being cut in two is a figure of speech and suggests that it says the day of accounting is dreadful for the unfaithful servant of Christ. After quoting Hebrews 4:12-13, he says, "No doubt, for the kind of man whom our Lord's parable describes, the Judgment Seat of Christ will seem like an exquisitely painful surgery on his soul. The sharp, two-edged sword of the divine Word will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the heart" (1 Cor. 4:5). Surely the agony of exposure will be indescribably acute" (Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, p. 87). In another place, Hodges observes, "No doubt when our Lord judges unfaithful servants by His penetrating *word*, such servants will feel as if they have been 'cut apart'! The rebuke by Christ at His Judgment Seat (often called the Bema) will certainly be a spiritually painful experience" (Hodges, *Jesus, God's Prophet*, p. 38, italics his).

Granted, unbelievers, such as the Pharisees, can be hypocrites (Mt. 6:2, 5, 16). It is also true that believers can be hypocrites. Paul charged Barnabas and Peter with hypocrisy (Gal. 2:13; cf. 1 Pet. 2:1). The man of whom the Lord speaks in Matthew 24 is not a hypocrite in the sense of pretending to be a Christian. He assumed the role of the servant, but he was a hypocrite: he did not serve his master; he only served himself (Dillow, p.389). As Hodges says, the man's role was to feed his Lord's household, but instead, he beat his fellow servants and indulgently fed himself (Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, p. 88).

Also, while unbelievers may weep and gnash their teeth, that does not mean that believers can't do the same thing. Weeping and gnashing of teeth is an expression of "profound grief" (Dillow, p. 387). In fact, France says this savage scene recalls the

tormentors of Matthew 18:34, and there is simply no question that the servant in that passage was a believer. He was forgiven (Mt. 18:27)!

Wiersbe concludes, "The whole picture is one of pain and loss. This does not suggest punitive measures at the judgment seat of Christ because there we will have glorified bodies. But it does suggest loss of reward and loss of opportunity," adding "not to have a place of ministry and in His kingdom would, to me, be a tremendous loss."

The weeping will not last forever. God will wipe away their tears (Rev. 21:4), but there will be deeply felt sorrow over an unfaithful life (Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, p. 88).

Matthew 25:10 Jesus says, "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom" (Mt. 25:1). Some argue that the word "then" is used in the temporal sense (Tasker) and, therefore, it indicates that this will happen "at the time of the Messiah's coming" (Plummer; Walvoord says this indicates the time is the Second Coming). Toussaint says this parable and the next one deal with the Jews in the Tribulation. Dillow concludes that all ten virgins are regenerate believers in the Tribulation (Dillow, p. 392; so also, Hodges).

Perhaps the "then" of this verse is parallel to the "therefore" of Matthew 24:44, carrying the reader once again to the period just before the Tribulation begins. If that is the case, the primary explanation of this parable is to believers in the church age. If the primary interpretation is to the Tribulation saints, there is still an application to saints today. Even if this story is directed to the Tribulation saints, the universal truth is the warning not to be caught unprepared, a warning that applies to different groups at different times (France).

To understand this parable, it is necessary to understand that an ancient wedding had three stages. First, the parents of the bride and groom entered into a legal arrangement that the two should be married. At this point, they were the betrothed, which was like our engagement, but, in their case, even though they had not consummated the marriage, they were considered to be married. In the second stage, the bridegroom left his house and went to the bride's home to bring her back to his father's house. Finally, there was the wedding banquet (Walvoord; Toussaint). In this parable, the scene is near the house of the bridegroom, "who has gone to fetch the bride from the house of her parents" (Plummer). The ten virgins were the bridesmaids, the servants of the bridegroom, or the children of the friends and family of the couple (Tasker; France).

The bridegroom represents the Son of Man (Mt. 25:13). The bride, who is not part of the story, represents the saints. Walvoord says they represent the church, but Pentecost says this is a Jewish context, which shows that the church is not in view. Toussaint says they represent the Tribulation saints. The wedding feast represents the messianic banquet (France, who points to Mt. 22:1-14 and Mt. 8:11), not the kingdom, only an aspect of it. Entrance into the feast is not to be equated with entrance into the Kingdom (Dillow, p. 390).

Jesus continues, "Now five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. Those who *were* foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them," "but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps" (Mt. 25:2-4). It seems foolish to take a lamp without oil. They had some oil (Mt. 25:8); they did not have extra oil. That would be like taking a flashlight without extra batteries. It is assumed that the foolish virgins represent unbelievers. The oil is said to be a symbol of the Holy Spirit (Walvoord); being without oil is being

without the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, they were not allowed into the wedding banquet (Mt. 25:11) and the Lord said He did not know them (Mt. 25:12).

There are indications, however, that the foolish virgins represent believers. The foolish virgins are *virgins*, hardly a symbol for unbelievers. Elsewhere, virgin is used of regenerate people (Rev. 14:4; 2 Cor. 11:12). The foolish virgins did have some oil. Their lamps were "going out" (Mt. 24:8), showing that they had been burning. The foolish virgins believed in the coming of the bridegroom and were waiting for him (Mt. 25:1). Their problem is that they were not prepared for his coming. In this context, the oil represents the life that is prepared to meet the Lord; it symbolizes preparedness. The foolish virgins represent believers who are foolish. The Greek word translated "foolish" means "dull, sluggish, foolish, stupid."

Jesus says, "But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight, a cry was *heard:* 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then, all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'" (25:5-8). The oil represents everything necessary for preparedness (McNeile). The single and simple point of the story is the foolish virgins were not prepared. They panicked. The first thought is to get the wise virgins to share their oil.

Jesus concludes, "But the wise answered, saying, *'No,* lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward, the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!.' "But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" (Mt. 25:9-13). When the foolish virgins finally got oil, the door to the banquet was shut and the Lord told them He did not know them.

When Jesus said, "I never knew you," to unbelievers (Mt. 7:23), He used the Greek word *ginosko*, but when He said here, "I do not know you," He used *oida*. The former means to know by observation and experience, and the latter means to know by reflection (A-S). Furthermore, the Greek word used for "know" in this passage can also mean "respect, appreciate" (A-S; 1 Thess. 5:12). Dillow concludes that when the Lord says He does not know them, He means He does not appreciate, respect, or honor them. He does not know them in the sense of honoring them as one of His co-heirs (Dillow, p. 395).

The point is they did not have time to prepare. Jesus concludes the parable with the warning to watch because the exact time of His coming is unknown. This echoes Matthew 24:42. The central thought of the story is to be prepared for the coming of the Son of Man (Toussaint). The wise, who are prepared, are rewarded. They are prepared by serving (Mt. 24:46-47). The foolish, who are unprepared, suffer.

In the first parable, the wicked servant decided the Lord delayed His coming and, as a result, was involved in misconduct and the mistreatment of others. In this parable, the five foolish virgins did not do that. They were waiting, but they were not prepared because of neglect. Believers can be unprepared for the Lord's return by either misconduct or neglect.

Note the unprepared were left "out in the dark" (see "outer darkness" in Mt. 8:12; 22:13). They were shut out of the banquet, not the kingdom.

Matthew 25:30 In Matthew 25, Jesus told a parable in which He said, "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" (Mt. 25:14-15). The English word "talent" refers to natural ability, but that is not the meaning here. The Greek word translated "talent" means "that which is weighed, a talent" and is used as a sum of money equivalent to a talent in weight. The value of the talent depended on the metal used, either copper, silver, or gold (Barclay). In any case, it was a huge sum of money. One talent could be worth as much as about 20 years' wages (Wiersbe). The large sum suggests the greatness of privilege (McNeile).

Wall modernizes the story. "A man left on a long trip and entrusted his managers with thousands of dollars (fn. a gold talent was worth more than $5 million and a silver one, about $400,000). One manager was given $2 million dollars; the second, $800,000; and the third, $400,000, each in accordance with his ability to manage. The first manager wisely invested his money in a diversified portfolio, and in a short time, he had doubled his capital: $4 million. The second manager, likewise, exhibited his business acumen. He improved his stewardship allotment to more than $1.5 million. The third, however, put his $400,000 into a safety deposit box at the local bank, fearing the possibility of failure and his boss's anger (Wall, p. 97).

"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" (25:16-18). When the master returned, the servants had to give an account (Mt. 25:19).

"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 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.' But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming, I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away'" (Mt. 25:20-29).

The parable ends with Jesus saying, "And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 25:30). Because the one-talent servant is cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 25:30) the impression is that the one-talent servant represents an unbeliever. There are reasons to believe, however, that the one-talent servant is a believer. He is a servant (Mt. 25:14-15). Furthermore, the Lord called him "his own" (Mt. 25:14). The Lord put

him into His service (Mt. 25:15). Wilson says, "God does not delegate His authority to nor does he commission unsaved people to do His work in the spread of the gospel. The work of the Lord is committed unto the children of the Lord" (Wilson, p. 174).

What about the punishment of being in outer darkness? Most commentators automatically assume that this is a reference to hell. Therefore, they conclude that the unprofitable servant was an unbeliever (Darby; Toussaint). For example, Walvoord concludes that the one-talent man was not a backslidden Christian because a believer would never be cast into outer darkness.

The context of the other two references to outer darkness indicates that believers, not unbelievers, are put into outer darkness (see comments on Mt. 8:12 and Mt. 22:13). In this case, the unprofitable servant is a servant, not a sinner. Outer darkness is not a reference to hell. It is a reference to the darkness outside the banquet hall (see comments on Mt. 8:12 and Mt. 22:13). The weeping and gnashing of teeth is not a reference to the torments of hell but to the grief over a loss (see comments on Mt. 8:12 and Mt. 22:13).

Wiersbe says, "Some feel that this unprofitable servant was not a true believer. But it seems that he *was* a true servant, even though he proved to be unprofitable. The "outer darkness" in verse 30 need not refer to hell, even though that is often the case in the Gospels (Matt. 8:12; 22:13). It is dangerous to build a theology on parables, for parables illustrate truth in vivid ways. The man was dealt with by the Lord; he lost his opportunity for service, and he gained no praise or reward. To me, that is outer darkness."

"To do nothing is often the greatest mistake of all the possibilities" (Plummer), or as someone has said, "Tis better to have fought and lost than never to have never fought at all." An anonymous author has penned the following: "The work of my hands was hidden, the strength of my soul seemed small—just a single, lonely talent that seemed of no use at all. Everyone else had so many to invest in different ways, but my one pitiful talent just grew smaller with the passing days. So, I buried my little talent completely out of sight. I left it there uncared for until, in a sudden fright, I went in haste to get it and found it all dull with blight. But I polished that little talent with patience and tender care and used it in the service *of* the wonderful Hearer of Prayer. The more I used my talent, the greater its power, but only constant usage made it glow through each passing hour. And that experience taught me a lesson, a lesson so very old: Our talents unused will diminish, but when used, they increase many-fold!"

To sum up, faithful and profitable servants will be rewarded, and unfaithful and unprofitable servants will miss the Messianic banquet and experience profound grief over the loss. Some will weep. These tears "will be those of regret and shame, tears of remorse for lives lived for ourselves" (Lutzer, p. 9).

Some Bible teachers object to using passages in the Gospels to teach what will happen to believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ, claiming that what is written in the Gospels was written to Jews, not to the church. Granted, the church did not start until Acts 2, but that does not mean that what is in the Gospels does not apply to the church. For one thing, some of what is taught in the Gospels is repeated in the epistles (*cf.* Mt. 12:36; Lk. 12:1-3 with 1 Cor. 4:5; Heb. 4:13). Furthermore, some of what is said in the Gospels goes beyond the Jews, to what will happen in the future, including what will happen to non-Jews. For example, in Matthew 8, when Jesus said, "Many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, He was referring to Gentiles. In Luke 19, when Jesus gave the parable about the judgment

that is to come, He gave it to people who thought that the kingdom of God would appear immediately (Lk. 19:11). In other words, in that passage, He is teaching that He will leave and when He comes back, there will be a judgment.

Acknowledging that what Christ taught in the Gospels is pre-church, Wall says he is comfortable applying the principles in the Gospels to Christians because 1) "The disciples became the foundation of the church, and these teachings were preparatory for their role in the church." 2). "The Gospels were addressed to and used first and only by the church, thus implying relevance to Church-age believers." 3). "There is a good possibility that the judgment of believing Israelites will be part of the event of the judgment seat of Christ" (Wall, p. 30, fn. 6).

Summary: While it is true that all believers have the Lord and eternal life as their inheritance, it is also true that there is an inheritance that can be merited by obedience and a potential reward that can be lost through disobedience. Believers who live a loving life will have nothing to fear at the Bema, but unfaithful believers will be ashamed and will experience profound grief.

Some Bible teachers argue that since believers are forgiven, their failures and sins will not be an issue at the Judgment Seat of Christ. In Romans 14, Paul says each of us shall give an account of himself to God (Rom. 14:12). Believers will be evaluated. As has been pointed out, several passages seem to suggest that both good and evil things (2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:25) will be considered. Lutzer says, "We can be sure that our sins will provide input into the evaluation" (Lutzer, p. 29). When a friend asked Lutzer, "Doesn't Calvary cover it all?", he replied that if there is no deep regret or loss of privilege at the Judgment Seat of Christ, it is no judgment. All believers would pass with flying colors (Lutzer, p. 10). Lutzer adds, "King David, who committed the twin sins of adultery and murder, was judged for his sins, even after he confessed and was assured of God's forgiveness…. David reminds us that *God judges us for sins that have been confessed and forgiven.* Judicial forgiveness is one thing, but the discipline of the Father inflicts upon His wayward children is quite another" (Lutzer, italics his, p. 11).

"Most of us live in houses or apartments that are beautiful on the outside. But inside, there is a mixture of cleanliness and dirt; perhaps a neat den, but a closet filled with junk. During the tornado season, the walls of the house were often blown off, and everything within the closets and drawers lies visible to those who walk by. Just so, Christ will walk through our lives that now will be without walls. He will inspect the *rubies* as well as the *rubble*. He will show us whatever might be relevant to the judgment at hand" (Lutzer, italics his, p. 31).

Quoting 1 Corinthians 11:31, Lutzer says, "Unconfessed sin, sin that we have rationalized and idolized, will play a special part in the revelation and judgment [at the judgment seat of Christ]" (Lutzer, p. 29).

Hoekema suggests that the sins and shortcomings of believers will be "revealed as forgiven sins, whose guilt has been totally covered by the blood of Christ" (Hoekema, cited by Lutzer, p. 63).

"Not only can the inheritance be merited by obedience, but it can be lost by disobedience. Even Moses was excluded from the land of Canaan (i.e., the inheritance) because of his disobedience (Dt. 4:21-22). Clearly, Moses will be in heaven, but he forfeited his earthly inheritance. Not entering Canaan does not necessarily mean one is

not born again" (Constable on Numbers 4:21-22). "Even though Israel had become God's firstborn son (Ex. 4:22-23), the entire wilderness generation with the exception of Caleb and Joshua forfeited the inheritance due to the firstborn. God disinherited them, and they wandered in the wilderness for forty years" (Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, p. 50).

What is conspicuous by its absence is any reference to any punishment at the Judgment Seat of Christ. "Hell, purgatory or any other kind of punishment is not in view at the *bema*… There are two ways. The Bible describes the negative compensation we might receive: loss of reward (along with grief over the loss) and shame" (Wall, pp. 115-116).

Lutzer says, "The purpose of the judgment seat of Christ is to properly evaluate us, to grade us so that our position in the coming kingdom is made clear. This life is like a college entrance exam that helps us know where we will be slotted in the kingdom of the coming King" (Lutzer, p. 35). As for punishment, Lutzer says, "Imagine a father who promises his son a ride in his airplane if only the lad would mow the lawn six weeks in a row. Six weeks later, the boy's record is one of failure: he mowed the lawn only three times, skipped two weeks, and the last week only partially completed the job. The test period is over, and the father tells the boy what he should already know: his dream of taking a flight above the town will not come to pass.

"The father is not angry but saddened by the boy's lack of faithfulness. He does not formally 'punish' his son for his negligence. He does, however, reprimand the son, and the boy must live with the consequences of his unfaithfulness. He must stand by while another boy in the neighborhood responds to the same challenge and is rewarded with a Saturday morning flight. What hurts most, however, is the look on the father's face. All that is punishment enough" (Lutzer, p. 35).

There is no punishment, but there are negative consequences. Several passages seem to suggest that. The writer to the Hebrews says, "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sin is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment, and that of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God" (Heb. 10:26-27). After saying the Lord will judge His people, the writer to the Hebrews adds, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

Paul says knowing the "terror of the Lord" at the Judgment Seat of Christ motivated him (2 Cor. 5:12).

In Colossians 3:24-25, Paul tells slaves that whatever they do, they should do it heartily, as unto the Lord, "knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality." Wall does not think this passage applies to the Judgment Seat of Christ. He thinks it is saying that persecuting Masters will be judged by the Lord, because in verse 25, Paul switches from the second person (you) to the third person (he), implying that it is the evil Masters who will be judged (Wall, p. 114, who also points out that "without respect of person," which is used in Colossians 3:25 is used in the parallel passage in Ephesians 6 to refer to masters).

"In 2 Timothy 1:16-18, Paul refers to special mercy from the Lord for the house of Onesiphorus in 'that day' (in the context of referring to the day of Christ's coming in judgment of His own). If there is no possibility of negative judgment at the *bema*, why would mercy be needed beyond that which is the direct benefit of the cross to salvation?

In Matthew 5:7, when Jesus promised that those who show mercy will receive mercy, He hereby implied that we will need mercy. That is in contrast to the warning that we will be judged with the same kind of judgment that we have measured out to others (Matthew 7:1-2)" (Wall, p. 113; see also Jas. 2:12-13).

"The negative part of the *bema* judgment may be similar to the time when Peter stood near Christ during His trial. Jesus looked over at the man who had denied Him three times and He convicted him with His eyes of betraying the love—not with vindictive words, but with the general reproach of someone who truly understood Peter's human fears. His will not be an antagonistic legal judgment by someone who desires to punish us. It will be the loving judgment of one who died for us" (Wall, p. 119).

George Whitefield said the only epitaph he wanted on his tombstone was:

Here lies George Whitefield;
What sort of man he was
The great day will discover

Do not make a worthless investment of your life. Someone has put it like this:

"Dear Art:

"I don't know if you would be interested in the following, but I thought I would mention it to you because it could be a real "sleeper" in making a lot of money with very little investment. "A group of us are considering investing in a large Cat Farm near Bogota, Colombia, in South America. It is our desire to start a rather small business with about 1 million cats. Each cat averages about 12 kittens per year; skins can be sold for about $.20 for the white ones and up to $.40 for the black ones. This will give us 20 million cat skins per year to sell at an average price of around $.32, giving us annual revenues of approximately $3 million a year. This averages out to a gross profit of $10,000 a day, excluding Sundays and holidays.

"In Bogotá, a good catskinner can skin about 50 cats per day at a wage of about $3.15 per day. It will only take 663 men to operate the ranch. So the net profit would be about $8200 per day. "The cats would be fed on rats exclusively. Rats multiply four times as fast as cats. We anticipate starting a Rat Ranch adjacent to our Cat Farm. If we start with 1 million rats, we will have four to feed each cat daily. The rats, in turn, will feed on the carcasses of the cats we skin. You can see by this that the business operates cleanly, is self-supporting, and is automatic throughout. The cats will eat the rats, and the rats will eat the cats, and we get all the skins!

"Eventually, it is our hope to cross cats with snakes because the resulting mutation would skin itself twice a year. This would save the labor cost of skinning and give us two skins for each "cat."

"If the above program is not of interest to you, I would be one of the first to understand your…. When you compare the earthly investments we make of our time, talent, and wealth with the truly valuable eternal investment, most of our investments are but a joke" (from Joe L. Wall, *Going for the Gold*, pp. 105-106).

CONCLUSION

While this material has dealt with how God deals with His children both now and at the Judgment Seat of Christ, most of it has focused on the Judgment Seat of Christ. In conclusion, questions concerning the Judgment Seat of Christ need to be summarized. When will it take place? What will be rewarded? What will the nature of the rewards be? Are there negative consequences? All of these questions have been addressed, but it would be helpful to see the answers succinctly summarized.

The Time of the Rewards

References to rewards seem to suggest that the Judgment Seat of Christ will take place immediately after the Lord comes (1 Cor. 3:13; 4:5; Phil. 2:16; 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 3:11; 22:12). If that is the case, the Judgment Seat of Christ will take place immediately after the Rapture.

In his book *Things to Come*, Dwight Pentecost suggests that the Judgment Seat of Christ takes place immediately after the Rapture because 1) rewards are associated with a resurrection (Lk. 14:14). 2) When the Lord returns with his bride, the bride is already rewarded (Rev. 19:7). 3) Rewards are associated with "that Day," which is the day in which he comes for his own (1 Cor. 5:4; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:12; Pentecost, pp. 220-21).

The Qualifications for Rewards

Living Life of Faith Believers who are rich in faith are heirs of the kingdom (Jas. 2:5; see "great faith" in Mt. 8:10). Those who heed what they have heard (Heb. 2:1) and as a result, live a life of faith (Heb. 6:11-12) will inherit "eschatological salvation" (Heb. 1:14). The writer to the Hebrews says, "and we desire that each of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:11-12).

The church at Sardis was overcome with spiritual deadness (Rev. 3:1). The individual believer who overcomes spiritual deadness will be rewarded with a white garment and confession before God the Father and angels. The church at Laodicea was overcome with lukewarmness (Rev. 3:16). The individual believer who overcomes lukewarmness will be rewarded with co-rulership with Christ in the Kingdom.

Live to please the Lord (2 Cor. 5:). Work as unto the Lord. Paul told the slaves at Colosse, "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23-24).

From what is said about rewards, it is apparent that motives are an issue. If the motivation is to be *seen of others*, the reward is being seen of others; no reward will be received from the Lord (Mt. 6:1, 5; 6:2; see Col. 3:23-24, where doing things heartily as unto the Lord receives a reward from the Lord).

Loving others who will love you back does not get a reward (Mt. 5:46), but loving your enemies, doing good, and lending, *not hoping for anything in return,* will get rewarded (Lk. 6:35).

Living a Righteous Life Paul says, "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). The crown of righteousness is not a crown consisting of righteousness. It is a crown that is a reward for righteous living. Those who love His appearing to purify themselves (1 Jn. 3:3).

Those passages that teach that those who live *unrighteous* lives will *not* inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5) teach that those who live *righteous* lives *will* inherit the kingdom of God. The church at Pergamum was overcome with a tolerance of false teachings that involved eating things sacrificed to idols and committing sexual immorality (Rev. 2:14-15). The individual believer who overcomes the temptation to tolerate false teaching or to eat things sacrificed to idols and commit sexual immorality will be rewarded (Rev. 2:14-15). The church at Thyatira was overcome with a compromise with sin (Rev. 2:20-23). The individual believer who overcomes the pressure to compromise with sin and is faithful to the end of life (Rev. 2:26) will be rewarded with authority in the kingdom and the morning star.

The meek shall inherit the earth (Mt. 5:5). The Greek word rendered "meek" means "gentle, humble, considerate, meek." Actually, no one English word captures all of the shades of meaning of the Greek word meek. Meekness has a submissive, gentle spirit. , Most think the meek may get to heaven, but the mighty get the earth. Nietzsche, the famous philosopher, rewrote this beatitude to read, "Assert yourself; it is the arrogant who take over the earth." In the 1940s, Leo Durocher said of the New York Giants, "Nice guys finish last. Jesus said, the meek, not the mighty, shall inherit the earth.

Living a Loving Life "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love" (1 Jn. 4:17-18: see also Eph. 5:2-7; Rev. 2:7),

James says, "So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty" (Jas, 2:12). The law of liberty is the law of love. James explains the judgment of verse 12 in verse 13 ("for"). "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment" (Jas. 2:13). If believers are the type of people who have dispensed mercy during their lifetime, they will be judged mercifully at the Judgment Seat of Christ. If they have been harsh, unmerciful, and played favorites with people, they will not receive mercy at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The way believers treat others is the way God will treat them.

The church at Ephesus was overcome in that they had left their first love (Rev. 2:4). The individual believer who overcomes their lack of love will be rewarded with the right to eat of the Tree of Life.

In Romans 14, Paul tells the strong not to despise the weak and the weak not to judge the strong (Rom. 14:3). Love dictates that believers receive each other and not judge one another concerning doubtful, debatable things. Believers are not to judge one another concerning doubtful things because each believer is accountable to his master (Rom. 14:4). After bringing up another debatable issue, the observance of days (Rom. 14:5-9), Paul asks, "Why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your

brother?" (Rom. 14:10a). These two questions are addressed to two groups mentioned earlier: the strong and the weak. "Show contempt" is the translation of the same Greek word rendered "despise" in verse 3. Paul asks, "Why do the weak judge the strong, and why do the strong show contempt for the weak?" Paul explains, "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10b). In other words, believers are accountable to their master, Christ, and they shall appear before Him. He is their sole judge. If that is the case, why judge or condemn? Paul concludes, "Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way" (Rom. 14:13). Because God is the judge, we should not judge others, especially concerning doubtful things.

I am tempted to make serving the Lord a separate category, but I'm going to place it under loving the Lord because the service is to be done out of love. Paul says, "Through love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13). It is loving service that gets rewarded. Even a small service done for the Lord, such as giving a cup of water (Mt. 10:42; Mk. 9:41), will be rewarded. Paul says, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown or rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2:19-20). Paul tells the Thessalonians that his crown of rejoicing when Christ returns are those he has led to Christ.

When He returns, the chief Shepherd, Jesus, will reward undershepherds (1 Pet. 5:4).

Suffering Believers who suffer for Christ will be joint heirs with (Rom. 8:17). "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Mt. 5:10-12).

The church at Smyrna was not overcome, but they were facing persecution and suffering (Rev. 2:9-10). The church at Philadelphia was not overcome, but they were faced with opposition (Rev. 3:9). The overcomer will inherit all things (Rev. 21:7).

Giving Believers will receive a reward for supporting God's work. When the Philippians sent money to support Paul's ministry (Phil. 4:15-16), he told them that he was not seeking a gift, but "I seek the fruit that abounds to your account" (Phil. 4:17). By supporting his ministry, the Philippians had the result of Paul's ministry put to their account. In other words, they would be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Mt. 6:19-20). Some who have hoarded their financial resources on earth will be paupers at the Judgment Seat of Christ and some who have sacrificed here for the Lord's work will be richly rewarded as they stand before Him (see Gal 6:6-8, where Paul says financially supporting the teachers results in eternal life, which in that passage is a reference to reaping reward later in the Kingdom (Gal. 5:21; 2 Pet. 1:11).

Those who bless others will inherit a blessing (1 Pet. 3:9).

"Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in

prison and you came to Me.' "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You,* or thirsty and give *You* drink? When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You?* Or when did we see You sick, or in prison and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.' (Mt. 25:34-40).

What I spent is gone
What I kept is lost
but what I gave away
will be mine forever

Joe Wall tells of a friend whose entire business was destroyed by a flood on the Platte River in Denver. Exhausted and seemingly left with nothing, he told his wife, "You know, honey, the only thing we have left is what we have given away" (Wall, pp. 98-99).

Faithfulness In a passage discussing the judgment of believers (1 Cor. 4:4-5), Paul says, "It is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). Jesus told several parables in which He taught that servants were rewarded for being faithful (Mt. 25:21; Lk. 19:17). God the Father rewards His *faithful* children.

Endurance to the End James says, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those that love Him" (Jas. 1:12). The Greek word translated "temptation" means either "trial" or "temptation." In this verse, it should be rendered "trial" (see Jas. 1:2-11), because trials are endured; temptations are to be resisted, not endured (see Rev. 2:10 and there it is granted for enduring a trial, not resisting temptation. When believers endure a trial, they have demonstrated that they genuinely love Jesus Christ and, thus, they will receive a crown of life at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

"He who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations" (Rev. 2:26). The writer to the Hebrews says, "We desire that each of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:11-12) and "he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise" (Heb. 6:15).

Wall says in the parables of the talents and the minus, rewardable traits are: goodness (acting kindly and ethically), faithfulness (loyalty), wisdom (prudent investments), and industry (hard work, not laziness). Wall has 10 "tips" for gaining rewards.

1. Invest in the lives of those who minister the word (Galatians 6:6-7).
2. Minister to those in need (Matthew 10:42).
3. Sacrifice to follow Christ (Matthew 19:27-29).
4. Give without fanfare (Matthew 6:1-3).
5. Except for abuse for Christ's sake (Matthew 5:11-13).
6. Pray in secret (Matthew 6:5-6).
7. Engage in spiritual activity without fanfare (Matthew 16:16-18).
8. Love your enemies by being willing to help them (Luke 6:35).
9. Give service to the Lord and not just to please men (Colossians 3:23-24).
10. Entertain those who cannot repay you (Luke 14:12-14).

The Nature of Rewards

Praise Paul says when the Lord brings "to light the hidden things of darkness and revealed the councils of the heart. Then each one's praise will come from God" (1 Cor. 4:5). It is hearing Him say, "Well done" (Mt. 25:21; Lk. 19:17). Those whose faith passed the test of painful trials will receive "praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7). One of the rewards is being honored by the Lord.

Pleasure Teaching about being rewarded in the kingdom, Jesus spoke of a servant being told, "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" (Mt. 25:21).

Power Jesus spoke of a servant being told, "Well *done,* good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities" (Lk. 19:17).

Possessions Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Mt. 6:19-20).

The rewards are praise, pleasure (joy), power (ruling), and possessions (treasure). In other words, instead of seeking praise, pleasure, power, and possessions on the earth, seek first the kingdom of God here and you will receive praise, pleasure, power and possessions of in heaven.

Overcomers eat from "the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God (Rev. 2:7; fellowship), are not hurt by the second death (Rev. 2:11; abundant life to experience even more deeply the divine life), are given "hidden manna" (to enjoy the blessing of the Messianic Age; special diet) and a "white stone" with a new name (a new status) on it (Rev. 2:17; friendship ticket to the house and table of the Lord), are given the morning star (Rev. 2:28 Rev. 22:16be like Christ in royal splendor rule the nations a rod of iron) and will be clothed in white garments (Rev. 3:5), will not have their names blotted out of the book of life (Rev. 3:5 public recognition and honor), will be made a pillar in the temple of God (Rev. 3:12 They will be permanently in the presence of God), and have God's name and city written on them (Rev. 3:12 special way related to Christ).

The Negative Consequences

Exposure Will the Judgment Seat of Christ be private or public? Jesus said He would confess us before angels (Lk. 12:8). In the parable of the talents, the king said: "to the bystanders" (Lk. 19:24). Commenting on the parable, Lutzer says, "Those who were present saw what happened and actually played a role in taking the mina away from the one slave and giving it to another. The judgment was public indeed" (Lutzer, p. 33).

Jesus said, "There is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner room will be proclaimed upon the housetops" (Lk. 12:2-3). Commenting on that verse, Lutzer says, "Obviously, not everything said in our bedroom will be shouted from the housetops. Christ is speaking of those sins we covered and refused to bring to Him in confession and repentance" (Lutzer, pp. 65-66).

Sorrow and Profound Grief Will there be negative consequences at the Judgment Seat of Christ? Four answers have been given to that question: 1) Unfaithful believers **will lose reward**. They will have their works judged, not their sins (C. I. Scofield; William R. Newell; Lewis Sperry Chafer; John Walvoord; J. Dwight Pentecost; Charles Ryrie; Merrill Unger; Stanley Toussaint; J. Vernon McGee). 2) Unfaithful Believers **will be in Outer Darkness** (figuratively), where they will experience wailing and gnashing of teeth (Zane C. Hodges; Joseph C. Dillow; Robert N. Wilkin; Kenneth F. Dobson in *The Prize of the Up-Calling*; Tony Evans' Charles Stanley). 3) Unfaithful Believers **will be excluded from the Millennial Feast** (literally), a literal place of severe punishment (Watchmen Née; Chuck Missler). 4) Unfaithful Believers **will be excluded from the Millennium.** They will miss the 1000-year reign of Christ on the earth (Robert Govett; D. H. Penton; A. Edwin Wilson; J. D. Faust; Gary T. Whipple; see Rokser, pp.10-24).

Stegall makes a distinction between the "more mild version" of the penal view and the "more extreme form." According to the mild version, unfaithful believers will receive 1) a stern, stinging rebuke, 2) momentary "exclusion from joy" during the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and 3) the loss of all reigning privileges and rewards in the millennium kingdom (Stegall, pp. 222-223). The more extreme form of penal judgment teaches that unfaithful believers will be excluded from the Millennial Kingdom and cast into outer darkness, where they will weep and gnash their teeth (Stegall, p. 223). Stegall adds, "Historically, this punitive view of the bema was introduced by the partial-rapture proponents of the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries" (Stegall, p. 223).

In a *Bibliotheca Sacra* article, Samuel L. Hoyt said there were three views of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Some Bible teachers view the judgment seat as a place of intense sorrow, a place of terror, and a place where Christ displays all the believer's sins (or at least those unconfessed) before the entire resurrected and raptured church. Some go even further by stating that Christians must experience some sort of suffering for their sins at the time of this examination. At the other end of the spectrum, another group, which holds to the same eschatological chronology, views this event as an awards ceremony. Awards are handed out to every Christian. The result of this judgment will be that each Christian will be grateful for the reward which he receives, and he will have little or no shame.

Other Bible teachers espouse a mediating position. They maintain the seriousness of the examination and yet emphasize the commendation aspect of the judgment seat. They emphasize the importance and necessity of faithful living today but reject any thought of forensic punishment at the Bema. Emphasis is placed on the fact that each Christian must give an account of his life before the omniscient and holy Christ. All that was done through the energy of the flesh will be regarded as worthless for reward, while all that was done in the power of the Holy Spirit will be graciously rewarded. Those who hold this view believe that the Christian will stand glorified before Christ without his old sin nature. He will, likewise, be without guilt because he has been declared righteous. There will be no need for forensic punishment, for Christ has forever borne all of God's wrath toward the believer's sins. (Samuel Hoyt, "The Judgment Seat of Christ in Theological Perspective," Part 2, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, electronic media).

As I was preparing this material, I shared it with my brother bit by bit. He, of course, wanted to know my conclusion. When I was almost done, I called him and said, "I have reached two conclusions: 1) at the Judgment Seat of Christ, everything will be exposed (1

Cor. 4:5) and 2) for unfaithful believers, there will be a loss of potential reward accompanied by profound grief over the loss.

Summary: When the Lord returns, He will reward those who have been faithful to Him.

For thoughtful believers, this is a sober, sometimes fearful subject. "When Billy Graham was asked by Diane Sawyer how he would like to be remembered, sadness came across his face. 'I would like to hear the Lord say to me, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant,' but I don't think He will" (Lutzer, p. 37).

Don't get to the end and say, "I wish I had;" get to the end and say, "I'm glad I did." When George Beverly Shea, the famous Christian soloist who worked with Billy Graham, was asked what he would be when I Christ returned, he said, "on pitch."

Frustrated that his team was in last place, Cotton Fitzsimmons, coach of the Phoenix Suns, hit on an idea to motivate his team. Before the game, he gave them a speech centered around "pretend." "Gentlemen, when you go out there tonight, instead of remembering that we're in last place, pretend we're in first place; instead of being in a losing streak, pretend we're in a winning streak; instead of being in a regular game, pretend this is a playoff game." The team charged on the basketball court and were soundly defeated by the Boston Celtics. Fitzsimmons was upset about the loss, but one of his players slapped him on the back and said, "Cheer up, coach! Pretend we won."

"*Rewards are not based on results are the size of ministry*" (Lutzer, italics his, p. 37). "We will not be rewarded by a scale that asks for the number of souls saved, the number of sermons preached, or the number of books written. Comparisons with someone else will be off-limits. Nor will we be rewarded for the length of time we serve. New converts can also receive Christ's approval. We will be judged on the *basis of our loyalty to Christ. The time, talents, and treasures that were at our disposal*. In other words, we are judged for the opportunities that were given to us, be they few or many, small or great. All believers have the potential to be generously rewarded" (Lutzer, italics his, p. 38). See what Peter says about an abundant entrance into the kingdom (2 Pet. 1:10b-11).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barclay, William. *The Letters to the Corinthians*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956.

_____ *The Revelation of John.* Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976.

Barnhouse, Donald Gray. *Revelation: An Expository Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971.

Bennetch, John H. "The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ for the churches of the Apocalypse," *Bibliotheca Sacra*. vol. 96, #383, July 1939.

Betz, Hans Dieter. *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia Series. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.

Brooke, A. E. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles. International Critical Commentary series. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912.

Bruce, F. F. *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968.

Bruce, Frederick F. *The Letter of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale New Testament Commentary series. Revised ed. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, and Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985.

Cranfield, C. E. B. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. International Critical Commentary series. 2 vols. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975.

Constable, Thomas, "Dr. Constable's Expository (Bible Study) Notes." Available at http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm.

Darby, John Nelson. Synopsis of the Books of the Bible. 5 vols. Revised ed. New York: Loizeaux Brothers Publishers, 1942.

Derickson, Gary, Earl Radmacher. *The Disciplemaker*. Miami Springs, FL: Conley & Schoettle Publishing, Co., 2001.

Dillow, Joseph C. *The Reign of the Servant Kings*. Miami Springs, Fla.: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1992.

Eadie, John. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957.

Expositors Greek New Testament. Bible Analyzer 4 Software, 2012.

Findley and Fee 1 Cor

Fuller, J. William. "I will not Erase His name from the Book of Life," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 26/3, September 1983, pp. 297-306.

Geisler, "Colossians," *Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament,* edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck. Wheaton: Scripture Press Publications, Victor Books, 1983.

Godet, F. L. *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. 2 vol. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. 1883.

Govett, Robert. Govett on Revelation. Reprint ed. 2 vols. Maimi Springs, Fla.: Conley & Schoettle, 1981.

Grosheide, F.W. *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians.* The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953.

Gromacki, Robert G. *Stand True to the Charge*. Schaumburg, Ill.: Regular Baptist Press, 1982.
Guthrie, Donald. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries series. London: Tyndale Press, 1964.
Hadjiantoniou, G. A. *The Postman of Patmos.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961.
Hendricksen, William. *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*. Reprint ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968.
Hiebert, D. Edmond. *First Timothy*. Moody Colportage Library series. Chicago: Moody Press, 1957.
Hodge, Charles. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967.
_____ *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians.* London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1964.
_____ *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1963.
Hodges, Zane C. "1 John." In The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament, pp. 881-904. Edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck. Wheaton: Scripture Press Publications, Victor Books, 1983.
_____ *Grace in Eclipse*. Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1985.
_____ *The Epistles of John: Walking in the Light of God's Love.* Irving, Tex.: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999.
_____ *The Gospel Under Siege*. Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1981.
Hughes, Philip E., *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962.
Kent, Homer A., Jr. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1966.
Lang, G. H. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ.* London: The Paternoster Press, 1948.
Lange, John Peter, ed. Commentary on the Holy Scriptures. 12 vols. Reprint ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960. Vol. 12: James-Revelation, by J. P. Lange, J. J. Van Oosterzee, G. T. C. Fronmuller, and Karl Braune. Enlarged and edited by E. R. Craven. Translated by J. Isidor Mombert and Evelina Moore.
Lloyd-Jones, D. Martin. *The Sons of God: Exposition of Romans 8:5-17.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975.
Lloyd-Jones, D. Martin. *The Final Perseverance of the Saints, Romans 8:17-39:* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.
Lull, David J. "'The Law Was Our Pedagogue': A Study in Galatians 3:19-25." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105, 3 (September 1986): 481-498.
Lull, David J. *The Spirit in Galatia: Paul's Interpretation of 'Pneuma' as Divine Power*. Dissertation Series, ed. Howard C. Kee. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980.
Lutzer, W. Erwin. *Your Eternal Reward*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1998.
Marshall, I Howard. *The Epistles of John.* The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978.
Morris, Henry. *The Revelation Record*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1983.
Morris, Leon. The Revelation of St. John. Tyndale New Testament Commentary series. Reprint ed., Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, and Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984.

Mounce, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation.* New International Commentary on the New Testament series. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983.

_____ "Overcome," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Grand Rapids: William B, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986.

Murray, John. *The Epistle to the Romans*. New International Commentary on the New Testament series. 2 vols. in 1. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968.

Pentecost, J. Dwight. *Things to Come*. Findlay, Ohio: Durham, 1958.

Plummer, Alfred, *The Gospel According to St. John.* The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Cambridge: University Press, 1902.

Plummer, Alfred, *The Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, International Critical Commentary Series. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915.

Plummer, Alfred, *The Pastoral Epistles* in *The Expositor's Bible* series. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1891.

Rosscup, James E. "The Overcomers of the Apocalypse." *Grace Theological Journal*, 3, Fall 1982, pp. 261-86.

Sanday, William, and Arthur C. Headlam. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. International Critical Commentary series. 5th ed. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902.

Scott, Walter. *Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ*. London: Pickering and Inglis, Ltd., n.d.

Seiss, Joseph A. *The Apocalypse.* Charles C. Cook, 1900; reprint ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973.

Smalley, Stephen S. *1, 2, 3 John.* Word Biblical Commentary series. Waco: Word Books, 1984.

Smith, J. B., *A Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald, 1961.

Stott, John R.W. *The Epistles of John: An Introduction and Commentary.* The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964.

Swete, Henry Barclay. *The Apocalypse of St. John*. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1906.

Trench, Richard C. Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches. New York: Macmillan, 1861.

Wall, Joe L. *Going for the Gold.* Chicago, MoodyPress, 1991.

Walvoord, John F. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press. 1966.

Wilson, *Selected Writings of A. Edwin Wilson*, ed. Arlen L. Chitwood. Miami Springs, FL: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co. ND.

Wardlaw, Ralph, *Lectures on the book of Proverbs*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1981.

Westcott, B. F. *The Gospel According to St. John*. London: James Clark & Co., 1958.

Westcott, Brooke Foss. *The Epistles of St. John: The Greek Text and Notes.* 1882. Reprint. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966.

Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Alive.* Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1986.

Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Transformed*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1986.

Wong, Daniel K. K. "'The Tree of Life in Revelation 2:7,'" *Bibliotheca Sacra*, #618, April 1998, vol. 155, pp. 211-226.