

Crowns at His Feet

Part One

From: Every Deed: Created in Christ Jesus for Good Works

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Crowns at His Feet

It was very early on in my adult walk with Jesus that I realized that my attitude needed adjusting. David and I were both extensively involved in the ministries of the church we attended. Everything we did was a labor of love. We wanted to be “pillars in the house of the Lord our God.” We were faithful to the Lord and our pastors in every thought, every word, and every deed. We were not trying to gain heaven or rewards. We simply wanted to please God (and our pastors).

One day, I was conversing with someone about the coming of the Lord. She said that when she finally stood before Jesus, she would cast her crown at His feet. My reaction was immediate, but thankfully, I did not voice it.

I thought, “I’ve worked hard for my crown, and I will want to keep it.” Then it annoyed me that this woman was trying to sound so super-spiritual and humble. Suddenly, I pictured myself among thousands of others casting their crowns before Him, and I was the only one pitifully keeping mine on my head. Something was not right with this picture.

Looking back now, it is apparent that without knowing it, I was beginning to see rewards as wages that were due to me. I was falling into the trap of thinking that justification was by works and not faith alone.

Romans 4:3-5

*For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham **believed** God, and **it** was accounted to him for righteousness.”⁴ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.⁵ **But to him who does not work but believes on Him** who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.*

When it comes to our every deed, we must always keep in mind that nothing we do can improve upon our relationship with God, and stunningly, even when we fail, the Father still loves us and seeks to lovingly restore us.

Matthew 18:12-13

“What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? ¹³ And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.

Our salvation and relationship with God are “not of works.” They are not wages earned. They are the “gift of God.” They are by grace through faith now and forevermore.

Everything we do in this life is a result of our perfect relationship with God, not to obtain it. Our labors in the Lord flow from love, not obligation. We do not work for wages. We work because we love Him; again, not to “repay” Him or any such thing. Considering what He has done for us and the glories that are to come, it is impossible to repay God for His blessings.

In Revelation 4, John sees a glorious scene. The twenty-four elders were sitting on thrones with crowns of gold on their heads. Among them were four creatures who night and day cried, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”

Revelation 4:9-11

Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

*¹¹ “You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power;
For You created all things,
And by Your will they exist and were created.”*

“Not of works lest anyone should boast.” When we recognize that we are saved by grace through faith and thus labor, we become completely aware that only He is worthy to receive praise and worship for what **He** accomplishes through us, and even though He will reward us for our labor, we will be acutely aware that only He deserves the glory.

The Crown of Righteousness

There are three crowns mentioned which will be given to the saints: the crown of righteousness, the crown of life, and the crown of glory.

2 Timothy 4:6-8

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ 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.

Paul is not saying that *because* he fought the good fight that he would be given a crown. He was stating the fact that he had fought the good fight, finished the race, and had kept the faith. Notice, the next word is not “therefore,” it is “finally.” The KJV says, “henceforth.” In other words, now that he had finished his work, the next thing he would see was the crown of righteousness.

This crown was not because of Paul’s hard work, though certainly that will be rewarded. This crown is for all of those who love His appearing—all believers. We have been given righteousness as a gift, and on that day, we will wear that righteousness as a crown. It is amazing. We do not deserve His righteousness. We received it by grace through faith, and even our crown of righteousness is given because we simply love His “appearing.” We can look forward to this crown without needing to earn it. This crown is “incorruptible” as we will also be.¹ It is a gift.

The Crown of Life

James 1:12

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 who love Him.

Again, in this verse, it looks at first as if those “who endure temptation” will receive the crown of life, but with only a second inspection we see that this is not the case. In the previous verses, James encouraged the believers to count it all joy when they fall into various trials. He told them that in doing so, they would be blessed. What is the qualifier for the crown of life? He says that the Lord has promised it to those who love Him. Who loves Him? We do. “We love Him because He first loved us.” We do not have to strive to love him or prove we love Him. We simply love Him by grace through faith. We can look forward to the crown of life, based on our God-given relationship of love with Him. Thus, when we face persecutions and suffer for His name as do all of those who desire to live godly in Christ

¹ 1 Cor. 9:25

Jesus, we look forward to this crown of life, not because we suffered, but because we love Him.² We shall be made immortal and shall never perish.³

The Crown of Glory

1 Peter 5:1-4

*The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ **and** when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.*

The Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary explains that the word “and” which I have highlighted above, means “as the result of.” As a result of shepherding God’s flock willingly and honestly, not lording over those God entrusts to them but rather being examples, these overseers would receive the crown of glory.

Peter is encouraging the elders/pastors to be good shepherds of God’s people. Considering that loving one another as He loves us is the great command of the New Covenant, then it seems logical that anyone who cares for God’s flock will be rewarded. But let us also remember that it was to Peter the exhortation was given to feed Jesus’ sheep.

John 21:15-17

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?”

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

He said to him, “Feed My lambs.”

¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?”

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

He said to him, “Tend My sheep.”

¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?”

² The crown of life is also mentioned in connection with suffering persecution in Rev. 2:10.

³ 1 Cor. 15:53-54

And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."

Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep."

Surely, this made a lasting impression on Peter, and when He writes to encourage the overseers, he likely remembered the sweet voice of Jesus instructing him to care for and feed His sheep. So precious are they in His sight that those who minister to them will receive a special crown—the crown of glory.

You may not be an official overseer in your local church, but God may have entrusted you with taking care of a group of people. Perhaps you teach Sunday School or have a small group fellowship in your home. Maybe you have special influence among your relatives or a group of friends, and you sense God wants you to minister to them. Let us not forget parents who are the shepherds of the flock God has given them. Your precious sheep are your children. Love them. Nourish them. Feed them the word of God. Pour your lives into theirs. I believe that when the Chief Shepherd appears, you also will receive the crown of glory.

My Joy and My Crown

Paul referred to the ones to whom he ministered as his crown. Even on this earth, their faith in Jesus was a precious crown to him.

Philippians 4:1

Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

Paul had an image of the return of Christ. He would present to Jesus the ones Jesus had saved and to whom Paul had ministered. Their well-being in the Lord was his reason for living.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

In my office, on the wall next to me, is a quilt made for me by our daughter, Christina. In it, she made miniature quilts that are replicas of the quilts I made for each grandchild. In front of me, as I look across the room, I see another quilt made by our daughter, Joella, made from memory fabrics that came not only from the grandkids' quilts but from others I made over the years and even from clothes I made my children when they were young.

As my hand caressed the quilt next to me, I cried, “Lord, our children and their children are our joy and crown.”

We hope that our ministries will reach many for the Lord Jesus and that we will preach well the gospel of the grace of God, but our children and grandchildren are our most precious prize, which we will one day present before the Lord. When we see that they believe in Jesus and are sharing these truths with their own children and friends, we can only be completely thankful for what *He* has done and will continue to do in their hearts.

Rewards: The God Who Sees

Those who were religiously trained in a work-focused environment but who have now gloriously come to the realization that it is by grace that we are saved and it is by grace by faith that we serve, sometimes cringe at the mention of rewards or crowns or any such thing. For them, works were not encouraged as a natural outflow of our relationship with God but were often connected to their right-standing with God—some even being threatened that without good works they could lose their salvation.

To those of you who were damaged by such spiritual abuse, this book is NOT meant to put you back in bondage, but rather to set you free—free to enjoy once again the fact that you are created in Christ Jesus *for* good works. We are saved by grace through faith, not by works. With this glorious truth always in our sights, let us look at rewards from God’s perspective.

I have mentioned previously in this book a common saying: “You can’t outgive God.” This is evident when it comes to our good deeds. God sees each loving thought, each faith-filled word, and each generous deed of ours. Even though we do these things from our hearts, not needing or wanting a reward, He will not allow our good works to go unacknowledged. He sees, and He will reward us anyway. Even though He knows we will give all glory to Him for all He has done through us, He will still not take our good deeds lightly.

Hebrews 6:10

For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

From God’s perspective, it would be unjust to forget our work done in love. Just as powerful as it is that God never again holds our sins against us, so is it His way to always remember the love we have shown to Him by ministering to each other.

We can look back on even the smallest kindness someone showed us in our lives, the thing the doer long ago forgot, and we remain so very thankful. An encouraging word, a much-needed hug, a financial gift to get us through a tight time—all of these things we remember. God is like that.

He is the God who sees. He is the God who hears. He is the God who rewards.

Already Blessed

In Every Thought, we discussed at length the many things we have already been given in Christ. When we think of rewards, it is important to remind ourselves of these things. We are blessed with “every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.”⁴ He has already given to us “all things pertaining to life and godliness.”⁵ We are “partakers of the divine nature.”⁶ This means we are partners with God. The Father gave His only Son for us, “How will He not with Him also, freely give us all things?”⁷

Not only do we have “exceedingly abundantly above all that we could ask or think for this life,”⁸ but we have been given an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven” for us.⁹

Colossians 3:24

*And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴ knowing that **from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance**; for you serve the Lord Christ.*

Even though we have all we need, we are motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit to do good deeds. It is our destiny, and we supernaturally understand this. All of us, because of the love we have for our Savior, would gladly work without reward. All that we do is for His glory and praise, and yet God will still reward us. It is part of His kingdom principle to reward those who serve Him.

A Cup of Water

Even something as simple as providing water to drink in the name of Jesus will not go unnoticed.

Matthew 10:41

*He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's **reward**. And he who receives a*

⁴ Eph. 1:3

⁵ 2 Pet. 1:3

⁶ 2 Pet. 1:4

⁷ Rom. 8:32

⁸ Eph. 3:20

⁹ 1 Peter 1:3-5

*righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's **reward**.*

Mark 9:41

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

Loving Our Enemies

It is easy to love those who love us, but we are encouraged to do good for those who oppose us. It is unlikely they will return the kindness, but love them anyway. Great is your reward.

Matthew 5:46

*For if you love those who love you, what **reward** have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?*

Luke 6:35

*But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your **reward** will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.*

Persecution

While Jesus hung dying on the cross, he prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." He did not deserve to be there. He deserved praise and honor but received just the opposite. It was for His persecutors that He accepted death.

"All those who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution," so when it comes, you are in good company. You are blessed, so be exceedingly glad. Rejoice and jump for joy. Great is your reward in heaven.

Matthew 5:12

***Blessed** are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

¹¹ ***Blessed** are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.*

¹² *Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for **great is your reward in heaven**, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Luke 6:23

*Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed **your reward is great in heaven**, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.*

Charitable Deeds

When we help those in need it is just as if we are doing it to the Lord. Each of us has many opportunities in life to do good. We may never be acknowledged for what we do, but that is fine. God sees our secret kindness and will reward us openly. From an encouraging word to helping a neighbor, to sending gifts or cash to help those in need—we are laying up treasures in heaven.

Matthew 6:3-4

*But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself **reward you openly.***

Praying in Secret

Prayer is between you and God. We need not give an account of how often or how long those prayers may be. We can pray seated, lying down, while walking, or dancing for joy. God loves hearing our one-minute expressions of love just as much as he enjoys extended times of prayer. Prayer is our joy, and even so, He will reward us for them.

Matthew 6:5

*“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their **reward.***

*⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will **reward you openly.***

Building the Body of Christ

The body of Christ is nourished by the Lord and by each of its members. One person sows, another waters but God makes us grow. Those with speaking ministries need to carefully speak. Those with giving ministries joyfully and bountifully give. Every thought, every word, and every deed that we willingly contribute to the body of Christ will be rewarded.

1 Corinthians 3:8

*Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own **reward** according to his own labor.*

1 Corinthians 3:14

*If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a **reward**.*

1 Corinthians 9:17

*For if I do this willingly, I have a **reward**; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.*

Holding Fast to the Truth

In Galatians 5, Paul exhorts them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ set them free. They were not to come under the restraints of the Jewish laws. Circumcision would do them no good, nor keeping the feasts, nor using the Ten Commandments as their moral guide. These things would not lead them closer to God. On the contrary, they would become estranged from Christ.

We are also to be aware that there are deceivers among the body of Christ; that is not to say they are part of it, but they are among us. They want to lead believers astray unto themselves, and as Paul puts it, "cheat you of your reward." Do not allow yourself to be distracted by them. Our reward is before us. It is certain. Do not allow someone to take this freedom away from you. Keep your eyes on Jesus.

Colossians 2:6-10

*As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,⁷ rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.⁸ Beware lest anyone **cheat you of your reward** through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;¹⁰ and you are **complete** in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.*

[Continued in "Crowns at His Feet" Part 2 in 24/7/365](#)