

## D.M. PANTON ON REWARD

Beloved Brethren,

Our last meditation was on Work it is appropriate therefore that we now turn to REWARD. Scripture regards each disciple as a runner racing, an athlete wrestling, a warrior fighting, a farmer sowing, a mason building, a fugitive flying, a besieger storming; and all this strenuous intensity rests on a fundamental of revelation - that God is, and that "He is a Rewarder" (Heb. xi. 6). "With many disciples," in the words of Dr. Pierson, "the eyes are yet blinded to this mystery of rewards, which is an open mystery of the Word. It must be an imputed righteousness whereby we enter: but, having thus entered by faith, our works determine our relative rank, place, reward."

### I. A CHURCH TRUTH.

Perhaps no words are more frequently on our Lord's lips than these:- "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each [disciple] according as his work is" (Rev. xxii. 12). To whom is this said? "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the Churches." So Paul says:- "He that planteth and he that watereth are one" - in standing and redemption - "but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (1 Cor. iii. 8). Our Lord singles out a grave act of discipline, and presents it as symptomatic of His habitual action. "I do cast her into great tribulation: . . . and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works" (Rev. ii. 22). So Paul balances the double-edged recompense. "Servants, obey: . . . knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: ye serve the Lord Christ. For - on the other hand - he that doeth wrong shall receive again for the wrong that he hath done: and there is no respect of persons" (Col. iii. 22-25). It is a truth that concerns us.

### II. CHARACTER.

All honest difficulty on this truth vanishes, I think, when we examine what God rewards and, first of all, God's recompense rests supremely on godlikeness, and godlike conduct. "Love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for He is kind toward the unthankful and evil" (Luke vi. 35). Here reward turns upon likeness in character and conduct to our Father in heaven. Secret devotion, also, will be rewarded. "Pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee" (Matt. vi. 6): not only will the prayer be answered, but the praying will be recompensed. Moreover our attitude of heart will help to sway the Lord's adjudication on our service: "Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke vi. 37). Our life is putting, word by word, the sentence upon ourselves into Christ's lips: we are manufacturing, as servants, our own adjudication. For goodness and glory are but two halves of one whole: goodness is the suffering side of glory, and glory is the shining side of goodness.

### III. LABOUR.

So labour, also, will be exactly recompensed. "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only" - the minimum of gift - "in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. x. 42). For what is reward? "To him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt" (Rom. iv. 4): so, as requital for services He graciously owns, God is pleased to bestow tangible evidences of His approval. Its

measure will be exactly graded. "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward" (Matt. x. 41) : for "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7).

#### IV. MOTIVE.

But, most searching truth of all, God rewards supremely the why that underlies the service. "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness" - conduct really good in itself - "before men, to be seen of them : else ye have no reward with your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. vi. 1). Motive is thus revealed as decisively crucial. "The Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts ; and then shall each have his praise from God" (1 Cor. iv. 5). For exaltation in the Kingdom is in inverse ratio to lowliness of service in the Church. "For whosoever would [wishes to] become great among you, shall be your servant : and whosoever would be first among you, shall be slave of all" (Mark x. 43).

#### V. SUFFERING.

Reward is also reserved for all suffering undergone for Christ. "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven" (Luke vi. 23).

Suffering generally ensures purity of motive; and the Lord counterbalances the fear of man, not only by the more tremendous fear of God (Rev. ii. 16), but also by the magnitude of His rewards. "Every reward suggested," in the words of Mr. J. H. Lowe, "is a prize of a value inconceivable by us at present, and can only be appreciated at the Judgment Seat." So Moses accounted "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt : for he looked unto the recompense of reward" (Heb. xi. 26). He who of all mankind best knew the value of the Prize, and who perhaps, after our Lord, laid down the costliest price for it ever paid, said, "This one thing I do." "If I can be thus crowned," says Preb. Webb-Peploe, "can I be otherwise than a fool if I am not prepared to sacrifice all to win it?"

Thus Reward not only supplies a motive in itself legitimate: it is a motive to which our Lord and His Apostles make constant and direct appeal ; - e.g., Christ (Matt. vi. 1), Paul (1 Cor. ix. 24), Peter (1 Pet. i. 17), James (Jas. i. 12), and John (2 John 8).

"I believe for my part," says Dr. Alexander Maclaren, "that we suffer terribly by the comparative neglect into which this side of Christian truth has fallen. Do you not think that it would make a difference to you if you really believed, and carried away with you in your thoughts, the thrilling consciousness that every act of the present was registered, and would tell, on the far side beyond?"

Remember, beloved, three things:- that Sadoc, the founder of the Sadducees, started his career of unbelief by denying the doctrine of reward: also, that this principle took full effect even upon our Lord - "who for the joy that was set before Him endured" (Heb. xii. 2): moreover, that no wise disciple can afford to neglect so great a mass of Scripture, or to throw away so mighty an incentive to holiness. Our discovery of this truth at the Judgment Seat will be too late. Every seed we drop into the soil - every thought and word and act - banked in God, and will one day spring up in lovely, or alarming, harvest, - as we sowed, what we sowed, as much as we sowed, and why we sowed. Therefore

**"LOOK TO YOURSELVES THAT YE LOSE NOT THE THINGS THAT YE**

HAVE WROUGHT, BUT THAT YE RECEIVE A FULL REWARD” (2 John 8).

**Yours in Christ Jesus,**

**D. M. PANTON.**

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