

# THE PROBLEM OF REWARDS: WHAT ONE RECEIVES FOR FOLLOWING CHRIST MARK 10:28–31

## *Introduction*

The idea of rewards in heaven is foreign to many; it is rejected by others, feeling the idea of God's rewarding people is mercenary. They feel rewards of rank and position, of possession and levels of responsibility have no place in a perfect world. However, Christ Himself endured the cross "*for the joy set before Him*" (Heb 12:2). And it is said of Moses that he "regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasure, of Egypt" (Heb 11:26; see Heb 11:1-40). Scripture abounds with the teaching of rewards "in the age to come" (v.30).

Reward is the point of this passage. Jesus deals with the problem of rewards, of just what a true disciple shall receive both in this world and in the world to come. (notes, Lk. 16:10-12; Jn. 4:36-38.)

- I. Peter asked about rewards (v.28).
- II. A person receives a hundred times what he gives up (vv.29-30).
- III. A person receives persecution (v.30).
- IV. A person receives eternal life (v.30).
- V. A person receives an immediate assurance and warning (v.31).

## **I. *Mark 10:28 Peter Asks about Rewards***

Peter asked about rewards, for he had just been shocked. He had seen a rich young man with enormous potential turn and walk away from Jesus. The man had rejected Jesus because he was unwilling to forsake all he had, unwilling to forsake his wealth and use it to meet the needs of the world. Then Peter had heard Jesus give an earthshaking discussion on riches — just how difficult it is for people with riches to enter heaven. Why? Because they are unwilling to give their wealth to meet the needs of the world. A person must forsake all to enter heaven; he must give all he is and has to save a desperate world.

The demand sounded hard and stringent. Peter was shocked and stunned. He felt he and the disciples had given all. *He was almost sure they were holding nothing back, but he wanted to make absolutely sure.* Anyone would need assurance after what Jesus had just said. Few sell everything and give it all away, and few (rich or poor) control their dreams and urges to have more (note, Mat 19:25). The disciples, as all honest men, knew this. They also knew the extreme demands Jesus was making to be a true follower of His. *They, unlike so many of us in our attempts to soften His words, understood exactly what He was saying.* The extremity of His words was shocking. They could not see how

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anyone could be saved. And the answer Jesus gave to their question about salvation said nothing to give them personal assurance: “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Mat 19:26).

The disciples sensed a deep need for assurance. Had they done enough, given up enough? They thought so, were almost sure they had, but had they? Peter, somewhat meekly, said, “Lord, [look] we have left everything, and followed you. We have surrendered all to you. What shall we have therefore? Shall we receive eternal life...?” (Mat 19:27.)

Jesus used Peter’s question to teach a wonderful truth. They, His own dear apostles, and all who follow Him thereafter, can rest assured — they shall all be enormously rewarded.

1. “We have left everything.” What a glorious testimony! Just think about these men. They had “left everything” for Christ and the gospel (v.29). They had left family, friends, businesses, professions, wealth — left all in order to meet the needs of a desperate world. It should be noted that they readily met the needs of their family (see Mat 8:14). Even Jesus saw to the care of His mother (Jn. 19:26-27). *Leaving everything does not mean the desertion or shirking of one’s responsibility. It means centring one’s life and possessions upon Christ and using all one is and has to serve Him and to meet the needs of the world.* It means putting Christ first (Mat 6:33).
2. “We...have followed you.” They had followed Jesus and His gospel; they had not followed some other self-proclaimed Messiah or false message (see Gal 1:6-9). They knew Him to be the true Messiah, the Son of the living God; and they had committed their lives and possessions, all they were and had to Him and His gospel.

*Leaving everything and following Christ* are the two bases for reward. Any person who leaves everything and follows Christ can expect reward. This is the wonderful truth Jesus was about to teach His disciples. They were uneasy because of what had just happened to the rich young ruler and because of Jesus’ comments about the incident. Jesus wanted to assure them. They were very dear to Him because they had left everything and were following Him. He wanted them to know they would be rewarded and rewarded abundantly.

## **II. Mark 10:29–30 The Abundant Reward**

Jesus made an astounding promise. The *true disciple* will be abundantly rewarded; in fact, he will receive a hundred times what he gives up and sacrifices. But note the crucial point: what is given is given “*for Christ and for the gospel.*” The person’s motive has to be that he is giving for Christ and the spread of the gospel. He is sacrificing and giving what he has for the Lord and His cause.

He is doing his part, all that he can, to accomplish the mission of redemption and the helping of mankind. Note what Jesus mentioned.

1. The giving of housing and family. There are two ideas here.

- a. Some have been rejected by family and lost their home. When they turned to Jesus for salvation or set out to serve Jesus, their family rejected them and turned them out.
- b. All *true disciples* serve Jesus, putting Him first. They take all they are and have, including family and house, and use it “for Christ and the gospel.” The house and family are sacrificed for Him, that is, centred around Him and used for Him. The house and family are known...
  - as a place where He is honoured
  - as a place that is used to spread the gospel

There is also the fact that a true disciple serves Jesus away from the house and family. The disciple has to sacrifice, to leave his home and family to serve Jesus out in the world through visiting, ministering, preaching, doing whatever his missionary call is. This often involves being away from home and family for extended periods of time (for example: evangelists, missionaries, even ministers who are on call day and night).

Now, note the glorious promise of Christ. The true disciple who gives up his house and family for Christ and the gospel will receive a hundredfold. He will receive...

- a spiritual bond and kinship with a much larger family, the family of God throughout both heaven and earth. (See *Brotherhood*, Mat 12:46-50; Lk. 8:19-21.)
- a fellowship and communion, a very present and practical help when needed through the local church, the fellowship of believers within his own community (See Acts 2:42).
- the presence of the Spirit of God who communes with and directs him day by day.

**Thought 1.** A true believer needs to make sure that he is in a local church or fellowship that is truly centred on Christ and His gospel. Not every church is.

**Thought 2.** Every church needs to search its heart and make sure that it honours Christ and His gospel, that it does have the warm heart and spiritual bond, the open arms and strong fellowship, that are needed among God’s people.

**1 John 1:3** *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

**1 John 1:7** *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

**Acts 2:42** *They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

**Mat 18:20** *For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.*

**Rom 12:5** *So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

**Psa 119:63** *I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.*

**Mal 3:16** *Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honoured his name.*

2. The giving of property and wealth. The promise of being *blessed materially*, of receiving a hundredfold is astounding to the world, but not to the believer. The believer understands what Jesus is saying. Jesus is laying down God's principle of money, of finances, of riches, of possessions, of material goods, of giving, of stewardship — whatever we wish to call the *mammon* and *things* of this world that we value. The principle is simple. It can be stated several ways.
  - => The true believer seeks the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first, and then all the necessities of life are given to him (Mat 6:33). He simply gives all he is and has to the Kingdom of God, and God sees to it that he has what is needed to take care of his necessities. The idea is a present experience, a continuous process. The believer keeps on giving of himself and what he has, and God keeps on giving to the believer.
  - => The true believer works so that he may have enough to give to others. His very purpose for working is not only to take care of his own needs but also to earn enough to help others. Again the idea is a continuous process. The believer works and earns and gives to others, so God continues to give to him so that he can continue to spread the gospel and help others.
  - => A true disciple gives all he is and has to meet the needs of a desperate world. God sees to it that the believer receives more. But what the believer receives is not given to keep and store up. God replenishes the believer so that the believer can continue to reach and help the world. The true believer keeps on giving, and God keeps on giving to him, so that the believer, as long as he lives, can continue to spread the gospel and meet the needs of the world.

The whole idea is that the believer never sees an end to what he receives from God. The giving and receiving goes on and on, never ending. The resource is unending, never ceasing.

There is another idea behind what Jesus was saying: the idea of security and confidence and assurance. The man who seeks God first, who gives all he is and has, is assured of being taken care of — always. God promises the true believer that he will always have food, clothing, and shelter — if he truly seeks God first. A price tag cannot be put upon such assurance, confidence, and security. It is invaluable, more than a hundredfold. As long as the true believer is to remain on earth, until God is ready to take him home to heaven, the believer is assured of God's taking care of him. And then on top of all this, there is life eternal, the glorious experience of living forever in all the majesty and glory of God and serving Him forever.

**Mat 6:33** *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* (see Mat 6:25-34)

**John 10:10** *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

**2 Cor 9:8** *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*

**Eph 3:20** *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*

**Phil 4:19** *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

**2 Pet 1:11** *And you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

**Exo 23:25** *Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you.*

**Prov 23:5** *Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.*

**Psa 36:8** *They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights.*

**Psa 68:19** *Praise be to the Lord, to God our Saviour, who daily bears our burdens.*

**Isa 30:23** *He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows.*

**Joel 2:26** *You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the Lord your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed.*

**Mal 3:10** *“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”*

### **III. Mark 10:30 The Reward of Persecution**

The true disciple also receives the reward of persecution. This statement is shocking. How can persecution be considered a reward? Peter tells us.

**1 Pet 4:14** *If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*

The words “insulted because of...Christ” mean that a believer suffers for righteousness; that is, he is persecuted or abused or ridiculed for Christ. When a disciple suffers for Christ, “the Spirit of glory and of God rests on [him].” He is given a very *special*



*closeness*, a oneness with Christ that is beyond imagination, unexplainable (Acts 7:54-60). The Holy Spirit infuses him with a deep, *intense consciousness* of the Lord's presence, a consciousness so deep that it cannot be experienced apart from some severe experience of suffering.

In suffering for Christ the disciple also experiences a very special identification with Christ. For as the Lord suffered on behalf of the disciple, so now the disciple suffers on behalf of the Lord. There is a sense in which the disciple's sufferings "fill up Christ's afflictions [sufferings]" and complete the sufferings of Christ for the church (note, Col 1:24).

These two experiences, gaining a deeper consciousness of the Lord's presence and being used to complete the sufferings for the church, are gained only through suffering. They make suffering a privilege and a joy for the disciple, for the disciple suffers even as his Lord suffered (Mat 10:24-25; Act. 5:41).

*Mat 5:11-12* "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

*Phil 1:29* For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.

*2 Tim 3:12* In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

*1 Pet 2:21* To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

*1 Pet 3:14* "But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened."

#### **IV. Mark 10:30 The Reward of Eternal Life**

The true disciple receives eternal life. Christ not only promises to reward the disciple in this life, He promises to reward him "in the age to come [with] eternal life." Imagine the reward: to *live forever in a perfect state of being*. Imagine the heavens and earth's being made into "a new heavens and earth," being made perfect and eternal. Living forever in that *perfect world* is what Christ promises to the true disciple, the man who gives all he is and has for Christ and the gospel (See *Eternal Life*, Mat 19:28; *Life in Jesus Christ*, John 1:4; *Eternal Life*, John 17:2-3).

*Mark 10:21* Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

*Jn 5:24* "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

## **V. *Mark 10:31 The Final Assurance and Warning***

Jesus both assured and warned the disciples. God is going to switch and change and reverse the order of men in heaven. Many who are first in this world are going to be placed last, and they are going to be last forever, for all eternity. But many who are last are going to be placed *first* by God forever.

God is going to place every man exactly where he belongs. He is going to rectify injustices. No matter what the esteem and rank are on earth, if a man belongs last, God is going to place him last. If he belongs first, God is going to place him first. And Christ actually says that “many” changes are coming.

The idea is that the majority of people will be switched. In God’s eyes, some of the dearest, most repentant, heartbroken, and diligent people are now last; but He is going to exalt them to be ever so near and close to Him.

*2 Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

*1 Cor 3:13-15 His work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.*

*Luke 1:52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.*

*Luke 6:25 “Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.”*

*Luke 16:25 But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.’*

*Psa 75:7 But it is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another. ■*