

**What Is Your
Reward in the
NEXT LIFE?**

by David C. Pack

Herbert W. Armstrong led the Worldwide Church of God (formerly The Radio Church of God until 1968) until his death in 1986. Hundreds of millions heard his voice and read his literature. God called him in the fall of 1926 and he was converted in the spring of 1927. Over the course of Mr. Armstrong's ministry, God revealed through him a great many true biblical doctrines, which had been lost to the Church through the centuries. After his death, his successors ceased to believe and teach these doctrines. Although copyright law prohibits The Restored Church of God from reproducing and distributing literature produced while he led the Worldwide Church of God, we are committed to the preservation and teaching of all of these truths!

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Nothing is more misunderstood than salvation. Why are so many confused—deceived—about what they will do in the afterlife? Does salvation come *by grace* or *through works*—and what is the difference? How—on what basis—are people *rewarded* in the next life? This vital booklet removes all confusion!

Many expect to receive salvation at the end of this life. But what does this mean? So many are ignorant about what the Bible says their final reward will be. Most have no idea what they will actually *be doing* for all eternity.

Do you?

A famous evangelist was once asked what heaven would be like. He answered, “I don’t know but it will be wonderful and we will all be there.” He dodged the question.

Obituaries speak of people who “passed away” and “went home to be with the Lord.” Others write that their departed loved one “joined the angels” and that they are “looking down on us right now.”

Some believe that they are “bound for glory.” When asked what this means, most are unsure. But the most common ideas are that everyone will “ride clouds,” “play harps,” “walk the streets of gold in front of the pearly gates,” “sit in rocking chairs” and just “roll around heaven all day.”

Hundreds of millions of others have been taught to believe that salvation is staring at the face of Jesus for all eternity. Not only is this idea based on a wrong scriptural understanding, but it also teaches that no one will actually be able to see His face *directly*.

What could possibly be more *boring* than fulfilling these ideas? I cannot imagine doing any of these things for an extended period—let alone for ALL ETERNITY! When one man considered these popular ideas, he remarked that he would “rather go to hell, because it sounded much more exciting.”

So much confusion! So much ignorance! The vast majority have been deceived into believing a false salvation.

What have *you* assumed? What popular concepts have you absorbed without checking to see what the Bible actually teaches?

Salvation Is a Gift

Do works have anything to do with your salvation? Put another way, is *your* “righteousness” connected to being saved? If so, do these things automatically ensure salvation? Is salvation “by works?” Can you *earn* salvation by anything that you do?

Some believe that they *can* earn their salvation. We have been accused of teaching “salvation by works,” simply because we believe Christians have a responsibility to *do* certain things.

The Bible does teach that there is something that people “earn” by their works. It states, “*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23). Romans 6:23 adds, “the wages of sin is *death*; but the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.”

But what *is* sin? I John 3:4 states, “for sin is the transgression of the law.”

Isaiah 59:1-2 explains that sin cuts people off from God. He is literally “unreachable” to the sinner whose past has not been forgiven and cleansed. Isaiah 55:7 instructs those who wish to come to God, “Let the wicked forsake his way.”

Many verses explain that sin can be forgiven only through Christ’s sacrifice. The apostle John was inspired to write, “And this is the record, that God has *given* to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life” (I John 5:11-12).

Unless we have a Savior—One who paid the penalty for our sins—we are headed for death! Many more verses could be cited to prove this. Examine John 5:26 to see that only God has the power to grant eternal life. The good news is that God *does* hold the power to grant the *gift* of eternal life. Make no mistake! Salvation cannot be earned—it is a free gift. But it is a gift given with conditions to those who qualify.

Most Christians believe they are “saved by the *blood* of Christ.” *This is not true!* The Bible says that we are “saved **BY HIS LIFE**” (Rom. 5:10), while we are “*reconciled* to God” and “*justified* by His blood” (5:9). Understand this point. We are not *justified* by works, but by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Repentance—turning to God and obeying Him—addresses a Christian’s *future* obedience. It does nothing to cover up PAST sins. Christ’s blood justifies—makes clean, white, righteous—all *past* transgressions, sins. See also I Corinthians 15:17-18. But, being “saved **BY HIS LIFE**” is vital to understand and requires explanation.

Consider! If Christ is not risen from the dead, then His Spirit cannot guide and strengthen new converts, for it is the Holy Spirit that leads Christians. Paul wrote, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *they* are the sons of God”

(Rom. 8:14). It is this same Spirit that God will use to change the converted into spirit-composed sons of God—resurrected Spirit Beings. This Spirit in them, when they are changed, makes eternal life—salvation—possible. Is this clear? If Christ had not been resurrected, then He could not have gone to heaven where the Father and He could send Their Spirit to His followers. Without this Spirit living in a Christian’s mind, there is no hope of eternal life.

Human beings do not have life inherent within them. They are not born with an immortal soul. Genesis 2:7 states that people ARE souls—they do not HAVE souls. And Ezekiel 18:4, 20 states, “The soul that sins, it shall *die*.” Matthew 10:28 confirms this. You are not an immortal being. Your life span will cover a certain allotted time, after which you will die. Unless God intervenes, you have no future beyond a limited time of about 70-80 years. Christ alone has inherent immortality with the Father (I Tim. 6:16; 1:17).

Let’s get this straight! We must remove all doubt about what brings salvation. It is a free gift from God. There is absolutely nothing a Christian can do to merit or earn it. The only wage that human beings can earn is *death*. Before studying the subject of Christian works, recognize that no one can earn eternal life through works.

Salvation is by God’s grace. But what is grace? It is completely unmerited pardon of one’s sin. This is what *grace* means. Salvation means that one is *saved* from death. Unless God intervenes to apply the blood of Jesus Christ to cover the repentant sinner’s past, there can be no salvation.

What role does faith play? Some believe that being “justified by faith” is all that Christians must be concerned with. They believe that anyone who teaches that *any* works are necessary denies God’s gift of salvation. (We will explore this more fully later.) Faith does play a role, but what is it?

Ephesians 2:8-9 expands on Romans 6:23: “For by grace are you saved through faith; and that [the faith] not of yourselves: it [faith] is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Salvation comes as a free gift, *by grace—through faith!* However, Paul explains that even the faith must be a gift. Otherwise, it would be a “work” generated by human effort. If God gave salvation on this basis, it would mean that a Christian *earned* it through humanly-derived faith. (Read our booklets *What Is Real Faith?* and *Just What Is Salvation?* to truly understand these subjects.)

Another question arises. Should a Christian be preparing—training—for anything that he will be *doing* in the next life? And what does this have to do with the gift of salvation? These questions speak to the heart of another great question: What *is* a Christian?

So many do not know the answers to these basic questions—but you can!

What Is a Christian?

Before explaining whether or not a Christian must perform good works in his life, we must examine a more basic question.

Just what *is* a real Christian? Is he one who “attends Church”—“professes Jesus”—“knows Christ”—has been “baptized?” Is there a single verse that gives the Bible definition of a Christian and eliminates all confusion?

Notice again what Paul wrote, “For as many as are *led by the Spirit of God*, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). A Christian is one who has the Holy Spirit leading him. But is having God’s Spirit absolutely *essential* to being a Christian? Earlier, Paul had said, “But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His!*” (vs. 9).

It is that simple! One either has the Spirit of God and *is* a Christian, or does *not* have it and is *not* a Christian—is “none of His.” All those who are truly converted must have the Holy Spirit in them.

The apostle Peter taught, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the *gift* of the Holy [Spirit]” (Acts 2:38).

As with salvation and faith, the Holy Spirit is a gift! Unless God *gives* it, one cannot *have* it. But notice! There are CONDITIONS to receiving it. Repentance and baptism precede receiving God’s Spirit. Neither of these *earn* God’s Spirit but they are *qualifiers*—CONDITIONS—that must be met for the Holy Spirit to be given!

Now notice what receiving God’s Spirit means, in terms of eternal life, which will be given later, at the resurrection: “Christ...in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest* of our *inheritance until* the redemption of the purchased possession” (Eph. 1:12-14). God’s Spirit, in a person’s mind, is a down payment—“*earnest*”—of our future inheritance with Christ in the kingdom of God. We are “*heirs according to the promise*” of salvation (Gal. 3:29)!

Receiving God’s Spirit begins a process that ends in inheritance with Christ. Is this all there is to Christianity and conversion, or is there more?

There is much more!

When Christ kept the Passover on the night before He was crucified, He indirectly, through prayer, explained an important principle to His disciples: “I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil. They are *not of the world*, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your *truth: YOUR WORD IS TRUTH*” (John 17:15-17).

A Christian believes and follows the *truth*. The *truth* sets him apart (sanctifies him) from all those around him. He is not *of* the world and its ways, customs, and traditions. Again, what does this mean? Also, what is the *truth* about how a Christian’s life *now* relates to what he will be doing for *all eternity*?

Are You Required to Do Anything?

Are Christians required to obey the laws of God? What is the answer—*the truth*—from the Word of God?

Jesus never taught that people should just “believe on Him” to receive salvation. When a young, rich man asked Him what he must *do* to have “eternal life”—receive salvation—Christ did not tell him, “Just believe in Me.” Instead, He told him, “If you will enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS.” Hearing this, the disciples were shocked. (So are most ministers and churchmen.) They did not understand how this was possible and asked, “Who then can be saved?” Christ answered, “With men this is impossible; *but with God all things are possible*” (Matt. 19:17, 25-26). It is possible to obey God.

Christians must not continue in sin after baptism and conversion. Paul wrote, “What shall we say then? Shall we *continue in sin*, that grace may abound? GOD FORBID. How shall we, that are dead to sin [Christ had paid the penalty for us], live any longer therein?” (Rom. 6:1-2).

Verse 12 amplifies this: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.” Verses 14-16 continue, “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, *but under grace*. What then? Shall we sin [transgress the law, I John 3:4], because we are not under the law, but under grace? GOD FORBID. Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”

Christians are under grace. But, while they are no longer “under the law”—*under the death penalty that past disobedience brings*—they now obey God. Forgiveness for past sins is not a license to freely commit future sins.

In Mark 7:7-8, Christ said, “Howbeit *IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME*, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. *For laying aside the commandment of God*, you hold the tradition of men.” It is possible to worship Christ in vain. It is possible to *think* about Him, *talk* about Him and *refer* to Him often as Lord—ALL IN VAIN!

Now notice: “Not every one that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven [“of” not “in” heaven]; but he that *does* the will of My Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). Paul wrote, “the DOERS of the law [God’s] shall be justified” (Rom. 2:13).

A Christian is one who actually does certain things. His responsibility is more than just belief. In the context of explaining the difference between those who build their house on a rock and those who build on sand, Christ said, “And why call you Me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). A Christian *does* what God says to *do*! Also, carefully read James 1:22-25; 2:8-12, 14, 17-20. These verses substantiate Christ’s instruction commanding true Christians to keep the laws of God, tying works and faith together. They show it is not *faith OR works* but *faith AND works*.

The Bible speaks of “the Holy [Spirit], [which] God has *given* [IT IS A GIFT] to them that *obey* Him” (Acts 5:32). Receiving God’s Spirit is preceded by repentance (of breaking God’s law) and baptism (Acts 2:38). It is at this point that a new spirit-begotten life begins. The newly begotten child of God is now a “joint-heir with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). He becomes part of the true Church

that Christ promised to build and lead (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18), which He feeds through His true ministry (Eph. 4:11-15).

But what about “having love”? Are not Christians merely those who “show love”? If so, what is it? Let’s consider several more verses. Let’s clear up all confusion!

Paul wrote, “...because *the love of God* is shed abroad in our hearts *by the Holy [Spirit]* which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). When a Christian receives God’s Spirit, he receives some (a very little at first) of the love of God. Over time, through actively exercising it, the depth and amount of love *grows*.

There are two different ways of life. One is the “GIVE” way—the way of love and outgoing concern—God’s way. The other is the “GET” way—the way of selfishness and self-concern—man’s way. Some focus entirely on “getting” salvation for themselves, in the meantime *doing* as little as possible. Christ taught that it is “more blessed to GIVE than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

With this in mind, what is the Bible definition of *love*?

John wrote, “For this is the love of God, THAT WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: and His commandments are not grievous” (I John 5:3). Many who claim to have love believe that the commandments *are* grievous. God says they are not. He calls His law “holy, just, good and spiritual” (Rom. 7:12, 14). (To learn more about God’s Law, read our book *The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” or Required for Salvation?*)

The Bible explains, through Paul, that the commandments and the law are the same: “Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW” (Rom. 13:10). The Bible defines love as “the fulfilling of the law.”

A more detailed explanation of love is found in I Corinthians 13. Take the time to carefully read this chapter. Demonstrating God’s love involves many different aspects of conduct—action—works—that are *done* by the Christian!

Only if they keep men’s laws can people walk free within their societies. Citizens of every nation understand that freedom is a privilege, which can be forfeited by law-breaking. Surely God is not less wise than men. People are free in Christ only if they obey Him.

So, a Christian is a “doer” not just a “believer” or “hearer.” Salvation is a gift, but there are qualifying *conditions*—behavior, conduct, works—that must be performed, or belief in Christ is *in vain*! And one who claims to have love must perform definite “works” of obedience to the law, which demonstrate it.

Why This Booklet?

This booklet is written to explain the reward that a Christian can expect in the next life. Its purpose is to directly connect one’s works in THIS LIFE to the degree of *reward* that will be given in the NEXT LIFE. The Bible has much to say and you must recognize how vital this understanding is to your future. Being “saved by grace” and “rewarded according to works” are entirely different matters. Few understand that it is not one or the other—IT IS BOTH!

Do not misunderstand the tremendous significance of the material here. Almost nothing you will read from The Restored Church of God will be more important than the answer to the question raised in this booklet's title. The purpose here is to explain the relationship between your *works* in this life and your *reward* in the next life.

“Works” Are Not Rituals of Moses’ Law

The Bible repeatedly states that Christians will be *rewarded later* according to their *works now*. We will see that this is an absolutely CLEAR—PLAIN—teaching of scripture. But, what kind of works is this referring to? The Bible actually refers to works with two different intended meanings. This booklet will focus on one of them.

Paul's epistles to the Romans and the Galatians make reference to “the works of the law.” The Greek word for this, *ergon*, refers to the tedious physical ceremonies, rituals, and sacrifices that ancient Israel was required to perform under certain circumstances. The book of Leviticus and other places discuss them in detail. They were often required to be performed *in conjunction with* obedience to the Ten Commandments.

But, this is not the meaning that we will focus upon. *Ergon* can also refer to “physical work, action, labor or acts of spiritual righteousness.” Invariably, when this meaning is intended, the word “works” stands alone, omitting the phrase “of the law” (God's law, the Ten Commandments). The often-used Greek word *praxis*, often translated “works,” also has a nearly identical meaning.

You cannot live your life without *doing* many things each day. All the things that you do are either good or bad. They are your “works.” They define you for what you are. Solomon wrote, “Even a child is known by his *doings*” (Prov. 20:11). If this is true of children, how much more so of adults?

While salvation is a gift, your reward in God's kingdom will be determined solely by your “works” now, in this life. Understand this!

Before examining the scriptures that prove this, you must first understand a little of what salvation will primarily entail.

Saints to Rule

Christians pray, “Thy kingdom come.” Many scriptures demonstrate that Christ will establish the kingdom of God at His Return. Will He rule by Himself—or will others rule with Him? When He establishes His world-ruling government, how will it be structured?

Examine what Daniel recorded about this kingdom. Daniel 7:13 speaks of Christ's coming. Before His Return, God will officially grant Him the authority to rule the world. Verse 14 states, “And there was *given* Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve

Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Exactly how does God intend to manage all of the peoples and nations of earth? Again, will Christ rule alone, or with others?

Several more verses in Daniel 7 are critical to understand. Notice verse 18: “But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.” That is right! The ultimate calling of true Christians is to join Christ and share rulership in the kingdom of God over all nations and peoples. Truly, Christ is “*KING of kings and LORD of lords.*”

Now read verse 22: “...and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that *the saints possessed the kingdom.*”

Verse 27 confirms the marvelous potential lying ahead for all the true saints of God: “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, *shall be given to the people of the saints* of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.”

Christ states, “And he that **OVERCOMES**, and **KEEPS MY WORKS** unto the end, to him will I give *power over the nations*: And he shall **RULE** them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father” (Rev. 2:26-27) and a few verses later He adds, “To him that **OVERCOMES** will I grant to sit with Me *in My throne...*” (3:21).

Christians are overcomers. They understand that they must “keep” Christ’s “works.” They do not sit idle, “just believing” in Jesus. They recognize that they are in training to be *teachers* and *rulers*!

Revelation 5:10 adds, “[God] has made us unto our God kings [rulers] and priests [teachers]: and we shall **REIGN** on the earth.” No wonder Christ said, in the Sermon on the Mount, “the meek...shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). Also see Jude 14-15.

The phrase “in My throne” (Rev. 3:21) is used because Christ understood that His throne is on this earth—unlike the Father’s throne, which is in heaven. Luke 1:32 shows that Christ will initially sit on the throne of David before eventually sitting on His own throne.

Revelation 20:4, 6 states, “And I saw *thrones*, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them...and they lived and **REIGNED** with Christ a thousand years...Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be *priests* of God and of Christ, and shall **REIGN** with Him a thousand years.”

What could be plainer than these verses? The saints rule with Jesus Christ! They will reign over the entire world with Him! (Read our book *The Awesome Potential of Man* to learn more about this topic.)

Now, could anyone seriously believe that God would give such enormous power to those who have not *qualified* and learned to use it? Could a *human* king effectively rule a country without any training? Of course not!

Some Reject God's Authority Over Them

Christ spoke a very important parable to the end that Christians would understand the coming *reign* of the kingdom of God and their responsibility to QUALIFY to be part of it. Take time to read it.

In Luke 19:11-27, Christ compared Himself to a Nobleman who went to a “far country” (depicts returning to heaven for almost 2,000 years) until His Return. The disciples believed that the kingdom of God would “appear immediately” and Christ wanted to illustrate that much time would pass before it did. The “Nobleman” of the parable “called” His “ten servants” (a type of Christians being called out of this world by God) and instructed them to increase the worth of a “pound” (money) He gave to each of them for investment. The pound symbolized a unit of basic spiritual worth or value. Remember this is a parable, so Christ was not referring to literal money. He told His servants to “Occupy till I come”—or to “grow” the pound into more money. While the Nobleman was gone, it says, speaking of His servants, “But His citizens hated Him, and sent a message after Him, saying, *We will not have this Man to REIGN over us.*” It is important to understand the intent of this statement!

Some brief history is needed to better understand the setting of this parable. Christ was a Jew preaching this parable in the land of *Judah*. Judah was merely one of twelve tribes in ancient Israel. Ten of those tribes had become lost over 700 years earlier because they had rebelled against Solomon’s son, Rehoboam. They had been taken into captivity by the ancient Assyrians (the modern-day Germans) and had later migrated into Northwestern Europe. They became the democratic, primarily English-speaking peoples of the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and certain other Western European nations. Also, some of the tribes of Benjamin and Levi remained with the Jews, whose capital was Jerusalem.

When this parable speaks of the Nobleman’s citizens “hating Him” and stating, “We will not have this Man to reign over us,” it is a reference to the Jews, who history records rejected the authority of Christ. This is what John 1:11 means when it states that “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” The “ten servants” (those Christians called today) are a spiritual type of the LOST TEN TRIBES of Israel. Christ sent His disciples (Matt. 10:6) “to the *lost sheep* of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). He offered these tribes an opportunity to rule because the Jews rejected His authority over them.

Many do not want Christ telling them what to do. They do not want Him ruling them. They DO want salvation, but with no strings attached.

These “citizens” understood that the Nobleman (Christ) was coming to “reign” on Earth. They demonstrated that they wanted no part of this and rejected His government (reign) over them—and thus their future part in it (Luke 19:27). They recognized that the kingdom of God would be a ruling

government. Understand! The parable had begun with the Nobleman (Christ) going to heaven to “receive for Himself a *kingdom* and to *return*.”

Upon the Nobleman’s return, He called each servant into His presence to give an accounting of how each had increased the pound that he had been given. Christ wanted to know how “every man had *gained*” (vs. 15) while He had been away. Some had gained five pounds, others ten, etc., but one servant had buried his pound in the ground and produced nothing with it.

Now this is vitally important. Get this, because it clarifies how your works *now* impact your degree of reward *later*. Do not misunderstand!

The first servant gained *ten* pounds. Christ explained his reward, saying, “You good servant: because you have been faithful in a very little, have you *AUTHORITY OVER ten cities*” (vs. 17). His *works* brought him this reward.

The servant who had gained *five* pounds was put “*OVER five cities*.” Because the second servant produced half as much, his reward was half as great. So, these men were given *AUTHORITY*—they were given positions of great rulership *over cities*. Their reward was to *REIGN* with Christ in His world-ruling kingdom. And it was directly connected to their works in this life!

The servant who buried his pound in a napkin had wasted a great opportunity to qualify for rulership in the kingdom of God. He produced nothing during his lifetime. Verse 22 states, “And He [the Nobleman, Jesus] said unto him, Out of your own mouth will I judge you, *you wicked servant*.” This servant had not grown and, thus, had not qualified for rulership over cities. Christ gave the wicked servant’s reward to the one who had gained ten pounds—so that the latter had even more than his own reward. The wicked servant may have *thought* he had salvation, but he had deceived himself. He was an “*unprofitable* servant” and was “cast...into outer darkness” (Matt. 25:30).

No one will be given rulership before he has proven he can be ruled! No one can be part of God’s government unless he has learned to submit to the government of God—to be ruled by God and Christ in this life. This is the all-important lesson of this parable! Christians must “*grow* in grace, and... knowledge” (II Pet. 3:18). Even grace does not come all at once.

When Christ called His servants into account, He was showing that all people would one day stand and give an account before the judgment seat of Christ. Like the reward of the apostles who will “sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28), some will be given great *AUTHORITY* to rule over cities with Christ “in the throne of His glory.”

Remember, the “citizens” said, “We will not have this Man to *reign* over us.” Only you can determine if you will let Jesus Christ reign over you now, and if you will *prepare yourself to reign over others later!*

What Does “Saved” Mean?

Some review is important in explaining *when* a Christian is saved. This is a subject of great confusion. Understanding it is critical to the salvation process.

One is actually saved in *three* distinct ways. Recall that Romans 6:23 explained that the wages of sin is death. At repentance, baptism and conversion, a Christian is forgiven by the blood of Christ and immediately *saved* from the penalty of PAST sins. So, in one sense, the person has been “saved,” *at that moment*, from death. By now you realize that this is not the whole story.

There are two more applications of when and how a person is saved. The word *salvation* is derived from the word *saved*. So, the second way is the most obvious—salvation at the resurrection upon Christ’s Return (I Cor. 15:50-55; I Thes. 4:13-18).

But no one receives salvation without first undergoing a life of trial, testing, learning, growing and overcoming. The third way one is saved is that he is “being saved”—an ongoing process—throughout his lifetime. Many verses show that nothing is automatic after conversion. To believe it is mocks God. We have already seen many verses state certain pre-conditions *before* baptism, and further requirements, *after* baptism, of those who receive salvation.

Not “Once Saved, Always Saved”

Consider that Christ said, “But he that endures to the end shall be saved” (Matt. 10:22; 24:13). Christianity is an endurance test, with nothing automatic. A Christian can abort in this lifetime, if he does not *continue* in the right path. No one is permanently saved at conversion. Christ said (twice) that His servants must “endure to the end” of their lives. What is the point of this statement if salvation is assured upon accepting Christ?

The book of Hebrews contains several admonitions—WARNINGS—to those who would live the Christian way in a negligent manner! Paul wrote, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should *let them slip* [Greek: to run out as leaking vessels]. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we *NEGLECT* so great salvation...” (Heb. 2:1-3).

Be careful! This is a caution to all. Salvation is not easy. It can slip away if we let important understanding and need for action “leak” from our lives.

Paul continued by describing the grave danger of willful sin: “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to GOOD WORKS: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together [members of the true Church of God meet together each Sabbath]...For *if we sin willfully* after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains *no more sacrifice* for sins” (Heb. 10:23-26).

This is serious! The ministers of this world teach that people are under grace—that they are already saved in this life—that they cannot fall away or abort because of misconduct, sin. Do not be confused by soothing words of

deceit from those who claim to represent Christ. God has standards and they must be met. (Also read James 4:17.)

In Hebrews 6, Paul described the one who has “fallen away.” He paints a sobering picture: “For it is *impossible* for those who were *once enlightened*, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made *partakers of the Holy Spirit*, and have *tasted the good word* of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall FALL AWAY, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame” (vs. 4-6). For such “there remains no more sacrifice for sins.”

These verses leave no doubt that it is possible to be a true Christian and fall away from the path to salvation. I have known many who have “tasted the good word of God” and been “partakers of the Holy Spirit” who have ceased to be “enlightened”—and have fallen away from God and salvation. Paul states that it is IMPOSSIBLE for such people to recover!

These are the plain words of the Bible. Each scripture referenced here is critical and must be carefully read, even to begin recognizing the obligations that God places on His servants. Do not be like so many who easily dismiss them, falsely trusting that they have “Jesus in their heart.”

This world’s professing “Christian” ministers teach an unscriptural, false, pagan “salvation” of going to heaven, instead of the truth—that this life is to prepare us for rulership. They ignore the verses that we have just examined because they do not want to be responsible for having to *do* anything. How does “already saved” fit with living a life of suffering, growing, obedience to God and intense persecution (John 15:20; II Tim. 3:12; Psa. 34:19; etc.)?

If salvation comes instantly, at the moment of some kind of religious experience labeled “conversion,” with no obligation to perform good works, why does God not simply bypass this life and take people *immediately* to whatever their reward is supposed to be? The ministers of this world do not and cannot answer this question!

Do not fall for the siren song of “just believe.” It is the greatest single deception that spiritually blind “Christian” theologians have foisted upon an unsuspecting traditional Christianity!

“Rewarded...According to Works”

We have read Ephesians 2:8-9 about salvation “by grace...through faith” and that even faith is a gift. Theologians, religionists and churchmen almost universally stop reading at this point. Why does almost no one continue on to read the all-important verse 10?

Notice: “For we are *His workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God has before ordained that we should *walk in them*.” That is right! Christians must “walk...in good works” as “His [God’s] workmanship.”

Now read and understand a critical verse. Matthew 16:27 states, “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He

shall REWARD every man according to his WORKS.” Notice it did not say, “saved by works” (for salvation is a gift) but that every man is “REWARDED...according to his works.” Christ brings every man’s reward with Him at His Coming.

When he was under attack by the evil works of Alexander the copper-smith, Paul said, “The Lord reward him according to his works” (II Tim. 4:14). In this case, Alexander’s *evil* works had earned him a “reward.”

Consider this: Your *reward* is what you *earn*—after receiving the *gift* of salvation by grace! You can earn the “wages” of a greater or lesser reward in the kingdom of God by the amount and degree of your good works. Notice what Paul wrote to the Romans: “Now to him that *works* is the reward *not* reckoned of *grace*, but of DEBT” (4:4). Salvation is by grace, but the reward is a debt paid by God to each person for his works.

Think of it this way. *Nothing* you do will get you into the kingdom. This comes by grace. *Everything* you do determines your degree of reward after you get there. In other words, salvation is not *grace* OR *works*, but *grace* AND *works*!

A Lifelong Battle

We read, “He that *endures* to the end shall be *SAVED*.” Living a life of growing and overcoming is not easy. It is a constant daily struggle against the pulls of the flesh and the temptations of sin. This is why Christ also said, “Enter you in at the *strait* [difficult] gate: for wide is the gate, and broad [easy] is the way, that leads to destruction, and *many* there be which go in thereat: Because *strait* [difficult] is the gate, and *narrow* is the way, which leads unto life, and *few* there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14). Most naturally seek the easy, “broad” path.

But Peter wrote, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that *obey not* the gospel of God? And *if the righteous scarcely be saved*, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (I Pet. 4:17-18).

Christians are now being judged. The world is not. (Read our booklet *A World in Captivity* to learn why.) What would be the point of this judgment if our works—our conduct—made no difference to God? Our works do make a difference to Him.

Paul understood this. Notice: “And this I do...that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know you not [most do not] that they which run in a RACE run all, but *one* receives the prize? So *run*, that you may obtain [win]. And every man that strives for the mastery [championship or victory] is temperate in all things. Now they [non-Christians] do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we [Christians] an incorruptible. I therefore so RUN, not as uncertainly; so FIGHT I...lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway [failure, loser]” (I Cor. 9:23-27) and “Wherefore...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us RUN with patience the RACE that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1).

Paul knew that his race was a marathon, not a sprint. So is yours.

He also described Christianity as “wrestling” (Eph. 6:11-12) against the “wiles of the devil.” And he instructed the Philippians to “PRESS toward the mark for the *prize* of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (3:14). He recognized that it takes great effort to run and win a long race.

Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 contains the parable of the sower. Carefully read it. It describes a “sower” who threw seed across the landscape. Four different types of responses are described in this extensive parable.

The *first* category heard the gospel and the truth and did nothing about it—were never converted. A *second* category received God’s truth with great joy and endured for a short time, until trials and tests caused them to quit in discouragement. The *third* was “choked” by the “cares of this world and deceitfulness of riches” and “became unfruitful.” They missed out on salvation. They allowed the pulls and cares of this world to destroy them.

The *fourth* became converted and did “bear fruit, and bring forth, some an HUNDREDFOLD, some SIXTY, some THIRTY.” Luke’s account records the fourth category as those “which in an honest and good heart, *having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience*” (8:15).

Christ’s statement about a “hundred fold...sixty...thirty” is an obvious reference to different degrees of reward that Christians will receive in the kingdom of God, based on what they do in this life. One’s *status, office, rank, degree of position* or amount of *glory* will depend on how much one does with what he has in the allotted time his calling gives him to do it.

Rivers of Water—and Fruit

Christ described the Holy Spirit as “rivers of living water” (John 7:37-39). He explained to His disciples that it would flow from them like a river. Romans 5:5 explained that “the love of God is shed abroad” in a Christian’s heart “by the Holy Spirit.” Galatians 5:22-23 described the “fruits of the Spirit,” which *flow* from the Spirit of God in the converted mind. Fruit (good works) is always evident in the Christian. To be one, you must evidence fruit in your life.

On the night of His betrayal, Christ kept the Passover with His disciples. He gave much instruction about their future responsibility as Christians. John 15:1-8, 16 contains vital teaching about the importance of bearing fruit.

The chapter opens with Christ saying, “I am the true VINE, and My Father is the Husbandman. Every branch [Christians] in Me that bears not FRUIT He takes away and every branch that BEARS FRUIT, He purges it, that it may BRING FORTH MORE FRUIT” (vs. 1-2). Four separate times in these verses Jesus tells His disciples to “bear much fruit” or “bring forth fruit.”

There is vital instruction here. The Father (Husbandman or Vinedresser) purges (prunes) the branches (individual Christians) who must be connected (vs. 4) to the Vine (Christ). Notice that those who do not bear fruit God “takes away.” These suffer loss of salvation and are “cast...into the fire, and...burned” (vs. 6). Some will suffer hell fire for not having produced anything in their lives.

Not “Our” Works or Righteousness

It is supremely important to understand that Christians are connected to Christ. The Bible often speaks of “Christ in us” (Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Col. 1:27; Eph. 3:17; II Cor. 13:5). *We* do not do the works but rather “Christ in us does them,” with His Spirit flowing from the Vine, like water carrying vital nutrients to each branch. Understand. The Father guides the fruit-building process as each Christian remains in contact with Him through the Spirit of Christ (and God) in him.

Keep this clear. It is not anything that *you* do, of and by yourself, which produces works of righteousness. Recall that Romans 5:5 said God’s love “is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.” Each Christian must exercise the “fruit” of love but this is only made possible by God having first given His Spirit carrying the potential for each of the *fruits of the Spirit* in every person.

Romans 10 warns of those who do not understand God’s role in the building of character, good works and righteousness: “For they being *ignorant* of GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS, and going about to establish their *own righteousness*, have not submitted themselves unto the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD” (vs. 3).

It is a complete waste of effort to build your *own* character, your *own* works of righteousness. They gain you nothing with God!

God describes Himself as a “Potter” working with clay, when He works in the lives of human beings. He is molding and shaping each person into a beautifully finished product. Paul describes those who are “in Jesus Christ” as being “a *NEW* creature.” God, as Creator, is fashioning a new creation in those who have His Holy Spirit working in them.

Peter described Christians as “partakers of the divine nature”—the nature of God. There is the *physical* nature of creation, *human* nature and GOD’S nature. God is re-fashioning corrupt, carnal human nature into wonderful, glorious, perfect and holy spiritual character!

All spiritual growth comes from God!

The Corinthian brethren suffered from having “partisan spirits,” with some preferring one minister over another, thus dividing the Church. Paul instructed them, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed, even *as the Lord gave to every man?*” (I Cor. 3:5). Verse 6 continues with “I have planted, Apollos watered; **BUT GOD GAVE THE INCREASE.**” Local brethren were picking favorites when all the spiritual *increase* (Revised Standard Version says “growth”) really came from God’s Spirit at work (par-

tially through His ministers). After explaining that human servants are *nothing*, verse 7 reiterates the same thing.

Verse 8 is fascinating. Notice what it reveals: “Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his OWN REWARD *according to his own labor*.” This means that each person is responsible for, and will be rewarded for, his own works—his own effort! How plain—how obvious!

Grace puts us in the kingdom but our works define our reward once there.

Paul continues, “For we are laborers together with God: you are *God’s husbandry*, you are *God’s building*” (vs. 9). God is building His Family. He is a Husbandman. We are all the *product* of His “husbandry.”

This Church, The Restored Church of God, is doing the Work of God. We are “laboring together” around the world as God calls more laborers into His harvest (Matt. 9:36-38). We have scores of booklets and other materials containing God’s truths being distributed by the tens of millions annually. We are counseling and baptizing those who come to repentance and conversion. Many members and co-workers, with more all the time, are assisting through *daily prayers* and *financial support* in this expanding work!

Our Headquarters staff assists in all of these efforts, as the gospel of the kingdom of God goes out around the world. It is our task to help people grow and overcome so that they might have a greater degree of reward when God, by *His grace*, saves them. Our job is to fulfill what Paul describes in verse 10: “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon.”

It is critical to understand this. Remember, *God* is building His Church. Christ said, in Matthew 16:18, “I will BUILD My Church.” This is why Paul wrote, “you are GOD’S BUILDING.” Every building of substance has a proper foundation. So does God’s Church. Verse 11 states, “For other FOUNDATION can no man lay than that is laid, which is *Jesus Christ*.”

The Church of God stands on the way of life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Luke 4:4 says that Christians “live...by every word of God.” Recall that Christ warned how most “do not the things which I say” (Luke 6:46). What Christ says are His *words*. All who “build their house on a rock” (Matt. 7:24-29) are described as those who “hear these *sayings* [words] of Mine, and do them.”

Bible study and earnest prayer are part of the Christian’s daily schedule. He has found the “pearl of great price” and is determined to build the spiritual character and nature of God in his life. This, in turn, is directly building the degree of *reward* he will experience for all eternity. While none of this will get him there, the *substance* of his character determines his reward.

Now back to I Corinthians 3. Paul makes the critical point of building on Christ absolutely clear with the following unmistakable analogy. Notice how he describes what it means to do this: “Now if any man build upon this foundation *gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble*; every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire;

and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a REWARD" (I Cor. 3:12-14).

These verses speak to what we build in our lives. The first three substances, "gold, silver, precious stones," are of great worth. They also survive the fire described in verse 15: "If any man's *work* shall be *burned*, he shall *suffer loss*: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." Fire has no chemical effect on these valuable metals or jewels. But the verse warns of those who can "suffer loss" because some of their work was "wood, hay, stubble" in value. Fire destroys these last three substances, which are of little worth. These people *are* saved but lose some reward.

All six substances depict descending value in worth. Hay is practically worthless—useless in value. Stubble is completely worthless.

Every Christian had better take real stock of how he builds!

What Is the Fire?

Various verses explain how God uses "fire" to temper or purge those in whom He is building His character. Speaking of a time when all people will learn the truth of God's Word, He states that He will have to bring them "through the *fire*, and will refine them as SILVER is *refined*, and will try them as GOLD is *tried*: they shall call on My Name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, the LORD is my God" (Zech. 13:9).

Malachi 3 amplifies the concept of fire in Zechariah: "...the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in: behold, He shall come, says the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a *refiner's FIRE*, and like fullers' soap: And He shall sit as a *refiner* and *purifier* of SILVER: and He shall *purify* the sons of Levi, and purge them as GOLD and SILVER, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering IN RIGHTEOUSNESS" (vs. 1-3).

Also notice that it is the fire of trials (I Pet. 4:12) that brings the pure quality of gold and silver in one's character. Verse 2 above actually states that Christ Himself is the "refiner's fire" and all those being referred to in the account who have built upon wood, hay and stubble will see that part of their character burned up. Yes, some may barely enter the kingdom of God and will receive a very small reward for the little bit of precious metal or jewels that they allowed God to build into their character. It will be by His gift of grace that they are saved. But because they have *done little*, they will *receive little* in reward—position, office, rank, status and glory in the soon-coming, world-ruling government of God. Though they will be there, they will be given authority over few cities.

Others however show zeal and seek God with their whole heart in this life. They actively strive to grow and overcome the flesh and their faults, sins and weaknesses. Their first goal is the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33), and they keep their eyes squarely on it—and the reward that will come with it!

Christ asks the professing Christian, “Why call you Me Lord, Lord, and DO not the things which I say?” Those who choose to *do the things* that Christ says to do in THIS LIFE will ultimately be *rewarded according to their works* in the NEXT LIFE. That is God’s sure promise from Scripture. Nothing can alter it!

What will be YOUR reward in the next life?

In Summary

In his booklet *What Will You Be Doing in the Next Life?*, Herbert W. Armstrong concluded under the subhead “Your Part in GOD’S WORK”:

“In my over fifty years’ intensive, rich, active experience, since God changed MY direction into HIS WAY, I have observed that the *very first* need of every Christian, who is to GROW and develop this spiritual character, is to have his heart completely in THE WORK OF GOD, which the *living* Christ has called His servants to do, as His instruments! Our ‘WORKS’ are our part in GOD’S WORK—getting His true Gospel to the whole world *as a witness*—preparing the way for Christ’s coming. We are merely His INSTRUMENTS. It is GOD’S WORK! Those who condemn ‘WORKS’ are condemning the Great GOD who is the actual DOER *through us* as His instruments and Co-Workers! It is not, after all, *our* works!

“Those who are self-centered, caring nothing for the WORK OF GOD, having not enough *outgoing concern* to want to help GET CHRIST’S MESSAGE out to this blinded, deceived, dying world, fall away. Those who center their whole ‘Christian’ life and activity on developing *their own selves* spiritually, whose hearts are not in or concerned about this great OUTGOING worldwide WORK OF GOD, actually directed by the *living* CHRIST, develop only INWARDLY, until they shrivel up spiritually and fall by the wayside! Those whose hearts, their active, constant, earnest, fervent PRAYERS, and their tithes and offerings are in GOD’S WORK continue to EXPAND spiritually—they become HAPPIER—they become greatly BLESSED—their lives become richer and fuller—and their faces beam in smiles. They RADIATE! They PROSPER!”

“The New Testament is literally *filled* with instruction on *Christian living*—leading a new, different, sparkling, joyous life—or, perhaps more correctly, allowing Jesus Christ to live such a life—GOD’S WAY in them!

“How WONDERFUL is *God’s Way*!

“SALVATION comes—if we are willing—as God’s FREE GIFT—by GRACE!

“But *we must be changed*. There is DOING, not hearing only (Rom. 2:13). There is development of a new righteous CHARACTER. Yet, even that is CHRIST *IN YOU* actually DOING it! Actually, even the ‘works’ are primarily done by HIM! But how WONDERFUL that there *are* righteous “WORKS” in the true Christian life—opportunity for *more* than salvation, priceless though that be—opportunity for higher position, rank, opportunity to SERVE, higher GLORY!”

The following literature expands on topics discussed in this booklet:

- The Awesome Potential of Man
- The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” *or* Required for Salvation?
- A World in Captivity
- Just What *Is* Salvation?
- What Is *Real* Faith?

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