

—Understanding the Christian’s Freedom in Christ—

Lesson 14–Question 5

May Christ’s freedmen perform duties for the sake of a reward?

- I. It’s not a question of whether it’s right for believers to work for recompense as if good works are meritorious (contra Roman Catholicism).
 - A. The apostle tells us that we’re saved by grace alone without respect to *any* of *our* works and that we’re saved *unto* good works, or in order that we might walk in good works, Rom 3.20-25; 4.1-5; 6.23; Eph 2.8-10. That which is said to be the fruit and effect of our salvation cannot in any way be the root and cause of it, Tit 2.11-14.
 - B. Calvin, “Glory is not the wages of a servant, but the inheritance of a son,” Gal 4.4-7. Augustine, “God crowns His gifts, not our merits.” Bolton, “We shall therefore cast man’s deservings out of our inquiry; it is too vile for Christian ears. The apostle tells us plainly: ‘Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us,’ Tit 3.5.”
- II. Some say we must have no eye at all to heaven or rewards in our obedience because it’s inconsistent with the willing spirit of a Christian and destructive of his Christian freedom to do his duty with respect to a reward.
 - A. To look to a reward is to make that obedience mercenary and servile which should be son-like and free. If we obey God in reference to heaven and glory, then we don’t obey Him freely and don’t serve Him for what He is in Himself, but for what He can give us, Job 1.9-10.
 - B. Looking to a reward contradicts the fact that all our salvation is God’s gift, Rom 6.23.
 - C. All the blessings we seek are already purchased by Christ and provided to us freely in Him, Eph 1.3.
- III. Others say, *as we do*, that we may have regard to rewards in our obedience without taking anything away from the facts that all we receive is the free gift of God and that all we do is tainted by sin and cannot merit before God.
 - A. If God has set rewards before us as incentives and motives to our obedience, then we have a right to regard them in our obedience. And God has undoubtedly presented glory and heaven as motives to quicken us to obedience, Gen 17.1-2; Rom 2.5-7; 1Cor 15.58; 2Pet 1.5-12; 3.14; Gal 6.8-9; Eph 6.1-3; Col 3.22-24; 2Tim 2.12.
 - B. That which motivated the saints in Scripture may also motivate us. And they had regard for the recompense promised to them by God, Heb 11.8-16, 25-26; Phil 3.13-14; Heb 12.1-2.
- IV. What is meant by rewards?
 - A. Rewards may be either: temporal, spiritual, or eternal. Eternal rewards are the issue mainly being debated.
- V. What is meant by *looking to a reward*?
 - A. It’s a phrase used of Moses in Heb 11.26 and it has a threefold reference. It refers to: 1) *the look of knowledge* whereby a man sees and knows the excellence of a thing promised; 2) *the look of faith* whereby a man believes the truth of a promise and his interest in it; and 3) *the look of hope* and therefore of patience in expectation of the enjoyment of the promise.
 - B. Thus, in Moses’ case:
 - 1. *He knew* the rewards which God laid up for His people in His covenant promises were more preferable than the pleasures of sin.
 - 2. *He was persuaded* that the promise of God was true and that the promises were made to him.
 - 3. *He was willing to wait patiently* for them, Heb 10.36.
 - 4. It was for these reasons, then, that Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ above all the treasures of Egypt. He was looking to the reward. He was not looking to it as that which his choice would merit or earn, but rather made his choice because he knew God’s rewards were better, believed he had an interest in them by faith, and was willing to patiently wait to enjoy them, cf. Col 3.22-24; Heb 6.1-6, 9-15; 10.32-37.
 - 5. Furthermore, Moses was not looking to a reward apart from God (as a mercenary would), but to the reward of God Himself and to those rewards which would bring him into greater fellowship with and enjoyment of God Himself. For saving faith is faith in Christ and not faith in heaven or glory. Christ satisfies the soul of a believer. Whatever else He gives us is enjoyable only in so far

as it leads us more unto Him; and if He gave us nothing but Himself, it would be more than enough.

- VI. Is it an infringement of our Christian freedom to look to the rewards promised by God?
- A. If we understand looking to God's rewards as *knowing, believing, and hoping in those things which God has promised to freely give us*, then, *no*, it's not an infringement of our freedom.
 - B. Instead, given the high praise and commendation God gives Moses for looking to the reward in his obedience, we're compelled to say that regard to God's promises in our obedience is *a large and critical part* of our freedom because it *motivates* us and *puts* zeal, fervency, constancy, and perseverance into our obedience.
 - C. A Christian's obedience, then, *should be* with an eye to the reward. We *should do* our duty with the *knowledge, faith, and persuasion* that God will bless us and never depart from doing us good, Jer 32.40-41.
 - 1. We know God has pardoned all our sins in Christ, Rom 4.25; Eph 1.7; Col 2.13-14.
 - 2. We know God will glorify us at last for Christ's sake, Rom 8.15-17, 28-30; Gal 4.7.
 - 3. And it's with this knowledge of God's gifts, and of our interest in them by faith in Christ, and of our eventual possession of them all, that we're to give ourselves up to all the ways of obedience, love, and service to God, just as the Apostle says, Col 3.22-24; 2Cor 7.1.
 - D. We don't attain anything by our obedience to God, Rom 3.20; 1Cor 2.12; 2Cor 9.9, nor do we expect to, Isa 64.6; 1Cor 4.7; but rather all our obedience to God is motivated and quickened by the very fact that God has freely given us these rewards, setting them before us as incentives and encouragements, 1Cor 15.58; Rev 3.21. Indeed, Christ Himself looked to the reward, Heb 12.2, and therefore so should we, Heb 12.11-13, 18-24.
 - E. Bolton, "Would you walk thankfully and cheerfully? Would you be strong to do and to suffer? Would you submit to all God's dealings with you? Would you rejoice in your sufferings? If you would do these things, you must [as Moses did, Heb 11.26] have an eye to the reward."
- VII. In conclusion
- A. The enjoyment of good things from God is not the ground of a Christian's obedience. It's not that which sets us to do God's service or the spring of our actions. Rather, it's as oil to the wheels to inspire and assist our actions. God's rewards are held out as refreshments for the journey and not as reasons to undertake the journey (cf. Pliable in *Pilgrim's Progress*).
 - B. Think of it in this way: we're *bound* to obey God by a new love for Him; we're *enabled* to obey God by a new Spirit from Him; and we're *quickened* to obey Him by His goodness to us. We don't obey with the thought of purchasing God's good things, but rather with the knowledge of already having them by faith and of the promise of fully enjoying them at the end of our obedience.