

Glory

Prominent in the New Testament, and in the writings of the early Christian Fathers, is the idea of glory. Salvation is constantly associated with palms, crowns, robes, thrones and splendor like the sun and stars. C. S. Lewis said the word “glory” at first suggested two ideas to him: either it was fame, or it was luminosity. The first seemed wicked, the second, ridiculous. In the New Testament the word “glory” is translated from the Greek word “*doxa*” which means, “good opinion concerning someone, and resulting from that, praise and honor.”¹ The meaning is best illustrated by the words of Jesus when He said in the parable of the talents,

Matthew 25:23 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

“Well done...” are the words every man wants to hear. They are the words the Christian longs to hear. Praise from the Master is the proper fulfillment of the life of the Christian. And it is not wicked to desire it.

But there is more.

As C. S. Lewis said, “The proper rewards are not simply tacked on to the activity for which they are given, but are the activity itself in consummation.”² For example, the proper reward for lovers is not money, but marriage. And as the Lord said, faithfulness in a few things finds as its reward to be made ruler over many things.

Jeremiah said,

Jeremiah 17:10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. 11 "As a partridge that broods but does not hatch, So is he who gets riches, but not by right; It will leave him in the midst of his days, And at his end he will be a fool."

A man receives from the Lord according to the fruit of his doings. As Paul wrote to the Galatians in chapter six of that letter,

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the

¹ Thayer, *δοξα*.

² Lewis, C. S., *The Weight of Glory*. p. 2

Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

The writer of Proverbs said,

Proverbs 21:21 He who follows righteousness and mercy Finds life, righteousness and honor. Proverbs 21:21.

In this connection, Matthew records a remarkable thing that Jesus said,

Matthew 10:37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. 40 "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. 41 "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42 "And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

The meaning of what He said is that if a man knowingly befriends the representative of Christ and of God then the man will receive a reward of the kind that belongs to that representative. Christ insists that the character of a man be good. The character of a prophet must be of good quality in keeping with his message. In this saying of Christ, character is the fundamental issue, but respect for it is next best. The underlying principle is: the thing we respect shapes our own character. So, if you are looking for the reward that comes to a worthy character, then respect characters that are worthy. What do you admire? Do you admire a Hollywood icon whose virtue is questionable, or do you admire the Apostle Paul? A vice ridden rock star, or Joseph? A Rambo-style super-hero, or Jesus? Christ says reward attends a proper respect to God, a prophet and a righteous man.

Randy White, who played defensive tackle for the NFL Dallas Cowboys, owned a ranch. The NFL inducted him into the Hall of Fame in July 1994. In his acceptance speech he said that he had named his ranch, "The Fourth Quarter." The fourth quarter of a football game is important to players, and fans alike. Frequently, performance in the fourth quarter decides the outcome of the contest; it is the fourth quarter that exposes character. The fourth quarters are dominated by the players with endurance and determination. White knows that.

Years ago my wife and I traveled to Chatuge Village, North Carolina, to visit her parents. Her parents had retired there. Houses in the village were mostly small, A-frame dwellings built on steep hillsides. Below the hillside village lay Chatuge Lake. Many of the people who retired there had put on their houses, and

mailboxes, signs that reflected the professions they had practiced in their working careers. One of them, painted by a school teacher, read: "Aftermath." On my father-in-law's mailbox was "Photo Finish." In life, people had known him more for his work in photography than the job he had at the telephone company. His sign was more prophetic than he evidently knew. He died there.

So it is, that the things we do in this life become a part of us. Our characters are seen in what we do, and what we say.

The Scripture says in Revelation,

Revelation 14:13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me,

"Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' "

"Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

In Acts, Luke tells us about Tabitha, a woman whose life abounded in deeds of kindness and love. In the ninth chapter, Acts says,

Acts 9:36 At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. 37 But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. 38 And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. 41 Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

The great truth of the gospel is that salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ. That is, the benefits of redemption that God freely gives us are in Christ, and have as their basis the work that Christ completed by suffering in the flesh and dying upon the cross. It is through His efforts, and on His merits that we are saved, and not according to our merits. In this connection Paul said to the Ephesians,

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus

for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Indeed, we are His workmanship.

And, although that work of redemption is complete, other work is not, and He continues to work with us, to teach us, and to improve our characters. Lessons come hard. Some of them are painful. Yet, he even uses the pain, and turns it into something of value for the perfecting of the believer. Whereas Paul gave no place to human works in the matter of redemption, he insisted that they do have their essential place in the life of the believer. He said, we are "...created in Christ Jesus for good works..."

Tabitha was walking in those good works just as God had prepared for her. The Scriptures do not indicate that Tabitha had a high social standing. She evidently was not a rich or influential woman. She was not young and beautiful. But she was kind and charitable. Luke uses the Greek middle voice indicating that the disciples were wearing the tunics that she had made. Dorcas was known for her good works. They attended her.

A person's life is not hidden from view. Paul said,

1 Timothy 5:24 Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. 25 Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.

Here the Apostle mentions one class of deeds—"...sins that go before."

The Pulpit says, "Some men's sins are notorious, requiring no careful inquisition in order to find them out; nay, they of themselves go before—before the sinner himself—into judgment."³

The book of Second Chronicles records a grim and bitter epitaph for readers to ponder. It is the epitaph of Jehoram, king of Judah. In the 21st chapter of that book we read,

2 Chronicles 21:20 He was thirty-two years old when he became king. He reigned in Jerusalem eight years and, to no one's sorrow, departed. However they buried him in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.

The NASB says it differently. Jehoram was "...thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years; and departed with no one's regret..."

What a grim legacy Jehoram left. Jehoram had a reasonably good start in life. His father was Jehoshaphat—one of the best kings of Judah. But in this case—as we have seen in many cases ourselves—the best of men can have the worst of sons. Proverbs says, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when

³ Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 21, p101.

he is old he will not depart from it." But Jehoram married the daughter of Ahab. Association led the son of a reasonably good king to consort with wicked friends.

Jehoram had six brothers—he murdered all of them when he became king. The Bible says,

2 Chronicles 21:4 Now when Jehoram was established over the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself and killed all his brothers with the sword, and also others of the princes of Israel. 5 Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 6 And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD.

Worse, Jehoram was not content with his sin—he caused his people to sin.

2 Chronicles 21:11 Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit harlotry, and led Judah astray.

What sinner, or scoffer, is there who is content with his sin? Not many. Jehoram was a cruel man, a murderer, and an idolater, and he led his nation into sin. He had sunk so low, morally, that he was not worth a visit from the prophet. The judgment of Elijah came by "letter."

2 Chronicles 21:14 behold, the LORD will strike your people with a serious affliction; your children, your wives, and all your possessions; 15 and you will become very sick with a disease of your intestines, until your intestines come out by reason of the sickness, day by day.

At length, a disgusting disease smote him according to Elijah's prophecy, and he died a lingering death. When news got out in Jerusalem that Jehoram was very sick, and probably could not get well, nobody was sorry. The sacred writer says that "...he departed with no one's regret."

The sins of Jehoram went before him into judgment.

Have you ever known someone at whose passing there was no regret? Maybe a sigh of relief? A prayer of thanks? Others of the class of Jehoram are: Judas Iscariot, Nero, Adolph Hitler, and Lee Harvey Oswald. The list goes on. Their sins have great notoriety; they are quite evident, because they do them where all can see, and the sins are open to judgment. The lives of these men, and how they ended are visible evidence of how God punishes sin, here and now. They tell also of a final and terrible judgment. They go before their perpetrators into judgment. They tell of an ordeal that has only begun. They tell of an eternity as a murderer, or as a thief, in which the agony of their perversity will never cease.

Paul mentioned another class of deeds—sins that follow after men to find them in judgment.

America, and the world for that matter, remembers Jim Thorpe as one of the greatest athletes who has ever lived. In 1911 and 1912 he was an all-American left-halfback at the Carlisle Indian school in Pennsylvania. He led his team to victories over Harvard, Army, and the University of Pennsylvania. In 1950, the U.S. Sportswriters and Broadcasters selected Thorpe as the greatest American athlete of the first half of the 20th Century.

In 1912, Jim Thorpe went to the Olympic Games at Stockholm, Sweden. At those games he won the pentathlon, and the decathlon. But the Olympic Committee forced him to surrender the medals he had won. Thorpe had once taken pay as a semiprofessional baseball player, and as minor as the offense might seem, it was a violation of the rules. As was the humiliation of Jim Thorpe in the Olympic Games, so will be the humiliation of many people in the Olympic Games of life. What a man might consider a minor infraction could rise up at the last and rob him of his prize.

On that day when they reach for the medal it could be as Matthew wrote,

Matthew 7:22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Run so that you may attain unto the prize of the high calling that is in Christ Jesus. If you don't you may be sure that your sins will find you out. Moses said to the children of Israel,

Numbers 32:20 ... "If you do this thing, if you arm yourselves before the LORD for the war, 21 "and all your armed men cross over the Jordan before the LORD until He has driven out His enemies from before Him, 22 "and the land is subdued before the LORD, then afterward you may return and be blameless before the LORD and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. 23 "But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.

There is an Eastern proverb that says, "Curses, like chickens, always come home to roost." If we are fortunate, our mistakes find us here—we repent of them, and find forgiveness.

In Judges the First Chapter we read that after the death of Joshua, Judah and his brother Simeon went up to fight against the Canaanites, and the Perizzites. The Lord gave them into the hands of Judah and Simeon. The Scripture says they defeated ten thousand men at Bezek.

Judges 1:5 And they found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek, and fought against him; and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. 6 Then Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes. 7 And Adoni-Bezek said, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me." Then they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

Sins will be brought to light. They will find us out.
Paul said,

1 Corinthians 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

The sins that follow after, and find the ones who commit them in judgment, are the sins of the many. These are sins that are not so notorious, but are, nevertheless, sins. These are sins that are hidden, but they warn of justice that must find us out.

In his book, *I Am Third*, Gayle Sayers tells of his friendship with Brian Piccolo. Both men were football players, both running backs for the Chicago Bears of the National Football League. Both men were gifted athletes. Both had the opportunity to attain unto greatness. And they were great. But Brian Piccolo died at the height of his career—from lung cancer.

In one of the great stories about sports, Sayers portrays Brian Piccolo as the man who carried his destruction in his breast. There is a moral in the suffering of Brian Piccolo: the cancer he carried was as the sin we harbor within us. That sin, like cancer, has a small beginning, but it can grow, and at the last find us reaching for the prize, and then drag us down.

"...our sins follow after us into judgment."

There are also deeds done in righteousness. These deeds also follow the doer. Regrettably, these are the deeds of the few. They are as the deeds of Tabitha, for she was "abounding with deeds of charity and kindness, which she continually did..." Tabitha's works follow with her, as our works follow with us. Our works—by God's grace—show evidence of our character. The Scripture says, "...you know a tree by its fruits." And so it is of people.

God rewards good character. It is not pride to work for glory, honor and approval from the Maker. That approval is proper. Milton, Johnson and Aquinas looked upon glory as fame—as good report, but glory of the proper kind is to be famous with God. Zig Ziglar, that salesman's salesman, has remarked that if you sow a habit you reap a character, if you sow a character you reap a destiny. In

this he is right. Let us sow habits as did Tabitha, so that we may reap a character that will endure in eternity.

I read an article once in which the writer of a periodical said, "The fundamental thing is how we think of God..." His advice goes wide of the mark. Truly, he is not even close to the bull's eye. His view is reversed. It is not how we think of God, but how God thinks of us. It is not, "What will you do with Jesus?" But, "What will Jesus do with you?"

We must all stand before God one day to be inspected. Creatures great and small will tremble before that awful majesty. It will be as John said in the Revelation,

Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

In view of the warning about that terrible day, let us perform deeds as advised by Malachi,

Malachi 2:6 The law of truth was in his mouth, And injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, And turned many away from iniquity. Malachi 2:6.

Paul admonished the Ephesians,

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. 3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them. 8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes

manifest is light. 14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."

Even the best of Christians make some mistakes, and have bad days. They should not lose heart, but should rely on the Lord both for correction and comfort. Bart Starr, the former quarterback for the Green Bay Packers, tells a story about his son when the boy was quite young. Starr said he made a practice of rewarding the boy for "perfect" papers that he brought home from school. If the youngster got a perfect score on a composition, Starr left a dime for him. If he scored a hundred percent on a test, he got a dime.

Starr believed this would teach the boy to love excellence in his work, and to show that reward follows good performance.

As it happened, Starr performed poorly in a football game one Sunday. After the game he told reporters that he could hit any receiver, except those from his own team. It was one of those days when no play seemed to work for his Green Bay Packers, but it was a day the opponent made everything look easy. These are the games the athlete wishes he could end quickly, if for nothing else, to put the agony to rest. Starr said games like these require much more of a person than the ones where victory is assured.

Does that remind you of your struggle against evil?

When Starr came home that night, he arrived after everyone had gone to bed. He was glad, too. He felt terrible about his performance, and was in no mood to face his family, or to make the excuses. So he went up to his room to go to bed. When he got there he looked down at his pillow, and found two dimes. Beside the dimes was a note. The note said,

"Congratulations Dad, on the greatest of games you've played. Love, your son."

On those days when you know you have been outplayed—you know you have suffered a defeat—and the only thing you want to do is forget it, remember that there is someone watching, someone sympathetic, and someone who has your best interest at heart. He is there to ensure that you do not lose in the game of life.

For those who feel they have worked hard as a Christian and wonder why the rewards seem to go to others there is the story of the missionary who served for forty years in Africa. A day came when he headed home by boat. It happened that the same ship carried Theodore Roosevelt. When they arrived in New York Harbor President Roosevelt received a great welcome—a band played, and officials offered words of welcome home.

Dejected, the missionary left the ship thinking that after forty years laboring in a foreign mission field he ought to get something of a welcome when he got home. Then a small voice said to him, "Henry, you're not home yet."

The Potter spins the wheel, and shapes the clay until He is satisfied with the work. When He is satisfied with the work, then the work can be satisfied with itself—not until.

Honor and approval await only those who have chosen the high road to glory. Remember, Paul said that God,

Romans 2:6 ... "will render to each one according to his deeds": 7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; 8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath...

To avoid the indignation and wrath, consider the lives of those who have gone before, especially Jesus. Avoid not only the notorious sins, but secret sins; instead, pursue deeds of kindness and love as Tabitha did. Paul also warns that there will be,

Romans 2:9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; 10 but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God.

Work what is good because you have chosen the better way. You're in the glory land way.