

THE HIGH COST OF REWARD

BY
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Introduction

How many have heard the expression “No Pain, No Gain?” Primarily, that expression is used in a gym where athletes are training and building their strength. I can remember seeing tee-shirts with that slogan when I used to work out in the gym on a regular basis. During my college years and early twenties, I was dedicated to physical training and frequented the gym 5 days per week. Unfortunately, after I married and my job responsibilities increased, I made less time to keep my body in top shape. However, I do remember the dedication I had to seeing my body develop and the great feeling of accomplishment I sensed because of my dedication. I felt great after a workout but the workout was many times painful! I am sure we know the prolific body builder Arnold Schwarzenegger. I remember a word he used one time in relation to being successful in strength training: “focus.” Focus on what you are doing and don’t let anything stand in your way. Again, in strength training the phrase, “No Pain, No Gain,” is paramount. If you want maximum results, you must put forth maximum effort.

With this principle in mind, I want to speak to you as mature believers about continued spiritual development. When I say spiritual development I mean growth or maturity. The end result of that maturity being a person who glorifies God, is rewarded by God for his maturity, and achieves the eternal purpose for which God has created him. The passage we are considering is Matthew chapter 16 verses 24-28. A parallel passage we will also consider is Luke chapter 9 verses 23-27.

In Matthew 16:24-27 we read:

24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 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. 28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Background of the passage

The scripture we have just read came at a critical time in Jesus’ ministry. I think it is important that we analyze the context and setting of this passage in order to fully understand Christ’s teaching.

Jesus, according to John 1:11 came to his own, the Jews. Unfortunately, the Jews rejected their Messiah. More specifically, the leaders of the Jews rejected their Messiah with the rest of the nation following suit. Matthew 15:24 gives us interesting insight into Christ's earthly ministry. Notice what he says to a Canaanite woman who is asking him to heal her demon possessed daughter in verse 24:

But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

What is more interesting are the verses that follow:

25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. 26 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. 27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. 28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. (Matthew 15:25-28)

This is truly a remarkable exchange! It is important that we understand the vast difference in culture to fully understand the conversation. The Jew's considered gentiles dogs or subservient people. Jesus at first was not willing to heal this woman's daughter because the scope of his ministry was to His own people. However, because of the woman's faith and persistence He graciously agreed to heal her daughter. Many lessons can be drawn from this passage but the main idea I want you to take away is that Jesus earthly ministry primarily centered upon the nation of Israel. As we consider this fact it helps us understand the scope of the gospels. Jesus came on the scene to His people demanding they repent:

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 4:17)

As a nation they were not walking in the ways of the Lord and He, the Messiah, was there to provide deliverance via the establishment of the promised kingdom. However, the deliverance was conditional upon Israel's repentance.

Continuing on with our contextual analysis lets look closer at the flow of events in Matthew. In chapter 10 we see Jesus sending forth His 12 disciples to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." Their message is the same as Christ's; "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That is to say the Messiah is here and the promised kingdom is near. Jesus empowers them to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons. He bids them to do this feely among the people of Israel. Unfortunately, their message and ministry is not well received.

Chapter 12 records a critical point in Christ's ministry to the nation of Israel. The Pharisee's, leaders of the nation, who according to Matthew 23:2 sat in Moses seat, accuse Jesus of healing a man by the power of Satan. At this point Jesus pronounces judgment upon the nation because of the leader's blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Thus, when we come to chapter 16 we see continued unbelief from the Pharisees. Jesus calls them hypocrites and unable to discern the signs and times. Again, their Messiah is within their midst and they are in unbelief. In chapter 16 great transition takes place. The church is first mentioned. Jesus reveals to His disciples that he will suffer at the hands of the leaders of Israel and be killed and rise again on the third day. Peter, who had just acknowledged Christ as the Messiah, began to rebuke the Lord. He just knew the Messiah would not suffer but would gloriously reign. Jesus rebukes Peter strongly and attributes his words to those of Satan.

With this brief analysis of context and setting we can now analyze the primary scripture of Matthew 16:24-28.

Christ's coming glory is His millennial kingdom.

Let's read verses 27 and 28 again.

27 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. 28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

To understand this passage it is important that we identify the kingdom of which Jesus speaks. It is none other than His millennial or 1000 year reign upon this earth. This kingdom is a literal kingdom with a literal King, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus had much to say about His coming kingdom. In Matthew alone the word kingdom is used 56 times, most of which are a reference to Christ's coming kingdom. All of prophecy is pointing to that coming kingdom which will be characterized by righteousness and peace. The immediate context, as well as the theological context, supports this interpretation.

Jesus goes on to say that several of those standing there, the disciples, will not die until they have seen Him in His kingdom. This statement seems puzzling until we read further in chapter 17 where Jesus takes His inner circle, Peter, James, and John up on a high mountain and is transfigured before them. He was changed and Moses and Elijah appeared with Him. The word "transfigured" is the Greek word (metemorphothee). The word means a change or alteration of form. Jesus was changed before their eyes into the type of body He will have during His millennial reign. Thus, Peter, James, and John saw Jesus as he would be in His glorious kingdom. This event had a tremendous effect on Peter for he references it in his second epistle wherein he says,

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (2 Peter 1:16-17)

Thus, we see that the kingdom spoken of in this passage is undoubtedly Christ's coming Messianic Kingdom which will last for 1000 years. We also see that reward will be administered

by Christ with a view to His coming kingdom. This is evidenced by verse 27. With this understanding lets examine more closely Jesus words to his disciples as it relates to His coming kingdom and reward in that kingdom for believers.

Jesus makes a proposition for His disciples to follow Him on the road of suffering and shame.

Verse 24 says:

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

The immediate road Jesus was to walk was not a road of glory and exaltation. That would come later. The phrase “come after me” makes reference to Christ’s place of exaltation during his future kingdom. However, the road He was about to travel was a rocky and rough road that lead to the cross. His disciples had much to learn and he was preparing them for hard times ahead. His proposition is not one of salvation from sin, but about reward. His disciples were already believers. It is improper for us to attribute this proposition as an invitation to common salvation. Contextually, He is speaking to believers who are being prepared to put their faith into action to a greater degree than they ever imagined. Thus, this proposition is one for discipleship. Discipleship is costly for the believer as opposed to the free gift of salvation. Discipleship is about obedience on a daily basis. Discipleship focuses on our works. Discipleship is about submitting to the Lordship of Christ. Disciples are not born they are made. Let’s look at the components of the road that Jesus walked.

Self denial is typified in Christ’s perfect example.

If ever a man displayed an attitude of complete denial of self it was Christ. He gave to us a perfect example. I am reminded of what He said in Matthew 11:29:

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

He invites believers to “learn” from Him. As we consider His words please remember the phrase “No pain, No gain.” Jesus did not promise a life of comfort and material blessing. In fact, he taught a life of struggle and difficulty. If we are to follow in the footsteps of our Savior we must be prepared for a sometimes difficult journey.

So what does it mean to deny ones self? The opposite of deny is to agree. If I deny self I will not agree with what I want to do. I will put others before me. Primarily, I will put the Lord in first place. I will seek to please Him and not myself. I am reminded of Paul’s words to the Philippian church in Philippians 2:3-8:

3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 5 Let this mind be in you,

which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Denial of self involves having the same mind as Christ. He totally yielded His will to that of the Father. You may ask, how we can follow Christ in this aspect? Certainly we cannot attain the same level of self denial as Christ! No, we cannot, for He was perfect in every way. However, we are commanded to follow Him and seek to imitate Him as much as possible. Scripture is replete with admonitions to deny self, humble ourselves, and serve others. It is important to realize that as believers we should be in a constant state of change. We should not be spiritually stagnate. Our sanctification is progressive. We will always face a battle but the victories should increase.

Taking up the cross is a figure of speech which signifies self denial and submission to Christ's authority.

Cultural differences are important to understand when we explore the truths of scripture. The Roman government used crucifixion as a form of capital punishment for various reasons. One was to show publicly the authority they had over their victims. When Jesus used this phrase He was using language with which the disciples could understand and relate. Up to this point they were not thinking about death, suffering, or humiliation because of their association with Jesus. He is now introducing this difficult fact to them in vivid terms. Let's consider the implications this truth has for us today.

Cross bearing is a daily battle for the believer.

It is interesting to note the parallel passage in Luke's gospel. Luke 9:23 says:

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Notice the word "daily." Cross bearing for you and I means to submit our will to the will of God on a **daily** basis. Romans 12:1-2 gives us wonderful instruction as to how we are to live our lives in the will of God.

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

When the Lord saved us from sin He did that without any of our works. Since we are justified in His sight, we now have the choice to serve ourselves or Him on a daily basis. Paul made reference to the idea of daily cross bearing in 1 Corinthians 15:31 where he said, "I die daily."

In 2 Corinthians 4:10 he said:

Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

In Colossians 3:5 he told us to:

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

The cross was an instrument of death and the believer is to mortify or put to death the flesh and walk in the spirit daily. Later in Colossians 3:16 Paul tells us how we can accomplish the destruction of the flesh and its desires on a daily basis. Verse 16 says:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

It is the Word of God that accomplishes the destruction of the flesh. As we submit to His will, which is revealed in His Word, we will be victorious over the flesh.

Follow me speaks of discipleship/fellowship and denotes the pupil/master relationship.

Jesus has now succinctly laid out a proposition that is very difficult for his disciples to swallow. Following Christ in discipleship is a difficult road. It does not promise immediate material wealth, popularity, prosperity or anything else that normally appeals to our fleshly desires. The disciples up to this point enjoyed popularity and were expecting a position in Christ's coming Kingdom. Now Jesus has outlined a difficult road that must be traveled in its entirety in order for them to have a place of honor in His kingdom.

The cross is now in view, although He has not directly told them he was going to be crucified. Crucifixion was the ultimate in humiliation. The process could last for days where the subject was naked before all those who passed by. The truth being introduced is that the cross would precede the crown. Christ must suffer the cross before He enjoyed the crown in His Kingdom. So also must his followers suffer prior to exaltation. This biblical principle must be fully understood by believers: suffering precedes exaltation.

Discipline, submission, and passion are all associated with following Christ.

Again, if ever a man were our example Christ is the man. He was an extremely disciplined man. He was deeply committed to knowing and submitting to His Father's will. He was a man of intense prayer. He made it a habit of rising early for prayer. He allowed the scripture to permeate His thought life. When tempted in the wilderness He turned to scripture to defeat the enemy. When he was tempted by the Pharisees He many times turned to the scriptures to answer and defeat them. If we hope to follow him we must be men and women of like passion. We

must realize the road will be a difficult one. The journey is one that demands self denial and submission to the Lord's will and not our own. In order to accomplish this we must follow Christ's example and be men and women of intense Bible study and prayer. We must want more than anything else in our lives to know the will of God. We must seek to know His character, attributes, likes, and dislikes. We must understand that God speaks to us through His Word! We cannot expect to follow or please Christ if we are not in His Word and on our knees on a daily basis.

All through Jesus teaching was the principle of submission. Let's read a few passages in Matthew to further illustrate this doctrine.

26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; 27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: 28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:26-28)

11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. (Matthew 23:11-12)

Jesus is saying in both of these passages that being a servant in this life will lead to being a sovereign in the life to come. Those who humble themselves now will be exalted in His kingdom.

Jesus promises reward for following Him in v. 25b

Verse 25 is an interesting verse that demands our close attention. We must remember the context and determine the meaning of several key words in the passage: namely the words life, save and lose. The word for life in the Greek text is (psuche). It is the same word used in verse 26 for soul. In context, it is used to describe our will and desires. The word save is the word (sozo) in Greek, which means to deliver or protect. The word for lose is (apollumi) in Greek, which means to destroy fully.

Losing our life means to follow Christ in the way of self denial and cross bearing.

Understanding the meaning of these key words helps us more fully understand what Jesus was saying. Looking at the overall context and understanding how the words are placed together, their syntax, we see Jesus is not talking about heaven or hell. We have already established the context of the passage does not concern the gospel of grace as it relates to our eternal destination. Jesus is speaking to His disciples about His proposition for discipleship. Thus, to lose ones life simply means to follow Christ! He has defined what it means to follow him in verse 24. Christ is telling His disciples that reward awaits them in His coming Kingdom if they lose (destroy) their life (desires) on earth. This is seen contextually in verse 27:

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.

If we walk the path Jesus walked we can expect to receive reward with Him in like fashion. God's Word abounds with promises to the faithful believer and Jesus had a great deal to say about rewarding faithfulness. Let's examine a few passages to expound further upon this doctrine. In Matthew 5:12 Jesus says:

Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Jesus was speaking to his disciples about being persecuted. If they lived the way he prescribed in the prior 9 verses, the beatitudes, they would enjoy great reward. His teaching was that of submission, meekness, mercy, and peacemaking in the believer's life. This teaching is directly in line with the passage in chapter 16 which is summarized in the phrase "follow me." There is great future reward for following Him! There is also great temporal cost.

In Matthew chapter 6 he continues to speak of reward and laying up treasures in heaven. The focus was on trusting God and walking in His ways. Again, this can be summarized in the phrase "follow me."

Matthew chapter 10 verses 41 and 42 speak of a prophet's reward and a righteous man's reward. We could go on and on to reference the teaching of rewards in Scripture. Suffice it to say that the mention of reward in Matthew 16 must apply to those who are believers and the scope of that reward is in direct correlation to Christ's coming Kingdom.

The apostle Paul was very familiar with the doctrine of following Christ for reward. Observe his words in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27:

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Notice Paul's reference to bringing his body into subjection. He is reiterating Christ's teaching of self denial and cross bearing. In essence, Paul is teaching believers that he and they must follow Christ. Paul made it his burning desire to follow Christ. He knew the prize awaited him if he finished the race.

Notice what he says in Philippians 3:14:

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The prize is the ability to rule and reign with Christ. In this passage Paul calls it the “high calling” or it could be translated the “upward call.” At the end of his life the Lord revealed his reward to him. Notice Paul’s dying words in 2 Timothy 4:7-8:

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

One other passage that is worth our attention is 2 Timothy 2:12:

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.

We see from this passage the fact that suffering or enduring for Christ yields reward (reigning). The opposite is also brought out in this passage that leads into our next point.

The cost for not following Christ is to lose our reward in His coming millennial kingdom v. 25a, 26.

Jesus spoke plainly and warned His disciples of the disastrous consequences associated with not following Him. To save one’s life now would cause them to lose it during His coming kingdom. The disciples had received a great amount of “light”; they had walked, talked, learned, eaten, and lived with the Son of God! Their responsibility was great as it related to spreading of the gospel and accomplishing God’s will. God had chosen them for the task and with their privilege came great responsibility. To turn their back and not follow Christ would have serious repercussions.

In verse 26 Jesus expounds further upon the idea of losing the life. The word for soul in the Greek text is the same exact word as life in verse 25. Jesus asks what has a man profited or gained if he does not follow Christ in discipleship. The pleasures of sin for a season cannot be compared with the glory that will be afforded the faithful who follow Christ. The picture Christ paints is that of a man who owns the entire world. Even that kind of riches and glory cannot be compared to what Christ will share with those who follow him in discipleship. Notice what Jesus tells Peter in Matthew 19:27-30:

27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? 28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. 30 But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

Saving our life now is deciding to walk contrary to Christ.

Ephesians chapter 5 illustrates the decision a believer has as it relates to following or not following Christ. Let's look at this passage closely:

1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. 3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; 4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. (Ephesians 5:1-6)

Paul strongly admonishes the Ephesian believers to walk in love and follow Christ. He says they should not walk like the world. This along with numerous other admonitions in scripture show us that believers should always be on guard and diligent about their walk with the Lord. It is very possible for us to fall into sin and walk in our old man of flesh and not in our new man of spirit. In the previous chapter of Ephesians Paul told them to put off the former lifestyle and put on a new one fashioned after righteousness and holiness.

Losing our life there means to forfeit any reward in the coming kingdom.

Paul makes a bold statement in verse 5 of Ephesians 5. He tells the believers that those who chose to walk in the old man or the flesh will not have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ. We don't have time to do an in depth study on inheritance but we will look at it briefly.

Inheritance in scripture is used primarily in two ways. Context always governs the meaning. Most of the time inheritance speaks of reward for faithfulness. This is seen vividly in the Pentateuch where second generation Israel via the leadership of Joshua inherited the land. The opposite can be seen of the first generation of Israelites who forfeited their inheritance because of their unbelief and unfaithfulness. They were prohibited by God from entering the promised land of reward.

In the New Testament, inheritance is viewed basically the same way. Colossians 3:23-25 illustrates the relation between reward and inheritance.

23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Thus, we can see that to lose our inheritance as a believer is to lose our reward. The reward is rulership with Christ in His kingdom.

Notice what Jesus says in Revelation 3:21:

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

If we lose our reward we are prohibited from participating in Christ's coming millennial kingdom. Further, we should understand that rewards are eternal in nature. Hence, after the millennial kingdom we will enjoy rewards with the Lord throughout the ages. Consequently, loss of rewards is also eternal. The scriptures do not indicate that we will be able to earn rewards after the judgment seat of Christ.

Take heed to Hebrews chapters 3 and 4. The writer of Hebrews is addressing the "holy brethren" in verse one of chapter 3. Notice what he says in Hebrews 3:12

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

Now look at Hebrews 3:19-4:1

19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. 1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

The writer is addressing the brethren and includes himself in the warning. There is a great deal to lose for the unfaithful and unbelieving brethren. It may seem strange to say that the brethren can be referred to as those who don't believe. However, we must realize we are all able to live our lives in doubt, especially when we face difficulty. We must believe what God's Word says, especially as it relates to the reward He wants to give us for being faithful. If we don't believe He is a rewarder of those who seek Him diligently (cf. Heb 11:6) then we will easily lose heart and give up. But if we understand that God is going to recompense His faithful servants and that our labor in the Lord is not in vain (cf. 1 Cor 15:58) we are less apt to grow weary!

One last passage I want to bring to your attention is the parable of the talents in Matthew chapter 25. This parable speaks of the judgment seat of Christ and Christ's faithful assessment of the talents he has given to his servants. Verse 19 says the lord of the servants reckoned with them or judged their performance. Those who used their talents wisely were given praise and allowed to enter into the joy of the lord. However, the servant who did not use his talent was called a wicked and slothful servant. His lord dealt harshly with him because of his unfaithfulness. Notice Matthew 25:28-30:

28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.
29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. 30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The disobedient servant is not allowed to enter the joy of the lord. He lost that privilege or reward and was cast outside in the darkness where he is in great anguish. This casting into the darkness is not a picture of a servant being cast into the lake of fire. Rather, the darkness outside refers to a place of dishonor. This servant was not worthy of reward and received for the wrong he had done (cf. Col 3:25). In shame (cf. 1 John 2:28) he does not enjoy the benefits of those servants who were faithful. Some want to debate whether this is a description of a Christian who stands before the judgment seat of Christ. Some say the servant described is a Jew. While I believe it describes a Christian at the judgment seat of Christ, the main point is that God deals justly with His servants – whether Jew or Christian. Servants who are not faithful will receive just recompense – loss of reward, honor, and commendation.

Conclusion

Please listen, and listen closely to what Jesus has to say. If we choose to follow Him on earth and identify with His sufferings, we will enjoy unfathomable reward in His kingdom. However, the cost for the believer is extremely high. It requires that we submit to Christ's will and Lordship in every aspect of our lives. It requires that we live a disciplined submissive life, seeking to serve others and not ourselves. It requires mortification of our fleshly desires. It is likened to a race and a fight that is never ending until the day we die. It is the most difficult road we can choose to travel. But, the return on our investment is out of this world!

If, however, after we have been saved by His marvelous grace and given exceeding and gracious promises, we chose to live for the here and now, we will not share in His coming glory; suffering must precede glory. He is no respecter of persons and will reward us in accordance with our works. We will experience indescribable loss due to our unfaithfulness.

Remember, No Pain, No Gain!!!