

## CHAPTER III

# Chastening and Rewards

*Yes! Eternal life is guaranteed to all believers,* but never make the mistake of thinking Christians can live as they please. They cannot. They can try, but God will not allow it. This should be made very clear as you witness. This is very important because failure to make this clear can keep a person from wanting to trust Christ as his Saviour.

When you are saved, you become God's son, and while you have certain privileges as God's child, remember that God is now your Father and has the responsibility of taking care of you. If a person thinks a Christian could live in sin and not be punished for it, he doesn't know much of the Bible, nor does he understand the working of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian.

History attests to the fact that when evil is allowed to go unpunished, it multiplies and causes heartbreaking damage. Confucius created a social situation that amazed the world: Under his system there was no crime problem. Why? He punished evil and rewarded good. Confucius followed the same plan God uses in dealing with His children.

God deals with His children mainly in two ways: ( 1 ) When you respond to and obey the Lord's leading in your life, God's discipline for you will be mainly one of guidance, encouragement, and further instruction; (2) When you rebel against God's leading, He will deal with you in however strong a measure it takes for you to obey Him. People are motivated mainly by two things: love and fear. God uses each in a perfect blend that is just right for each Christian.

Proverbs 3:11, 12, "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction: For whom the Lord LOVETH He correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." This is quoted in Heb. 12:6. Notice, when God corrects you, is it because He hates you? No, but because He loves you and knows what is best for you.

Job 5:17, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty."

When a Christian disobeys God, he should confess it right away. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). Every time you sin, you should confess it. Every time you confess your sin, you will be forgiven.

### *Please notice two other things about I John 1:9:.*

( 1 ) God does not guarantee restoration of fellowship on the basis of confession of sin. Fellowship with the Lord comes when a Christian disciplines his life so that he has "things in common" with the Lord.

(2) God does not guarantee restoration of damage resulting from sin on the basis of confession of sin. For instance, perhaps a Christian has gone away from things of the Lord and starts to drink, and he ruins his kidneys. If he confesses his sin, yes, the Lord will forgive him . . . but that forgiveness doesn't heal his damaged kidneys.

There is a natural result of sin as well as God's personal chastisement in your life. Galatians 6:7 says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Notice that God does NOT add, "EXCEPT if he confesses it."

A Christian can do wrong things, but he cannot escape the CONSEQUENCES of doing wrong things. A person can put his hand into the fire if he wants to, but he cannot escape getting his hand burned. Some Christians want to sow wild oats all week long and then pray for CROP FAILURE at the end of the week!

One could not say how often you could commit the same sin before God would severely chasten you for it. The Lord uses His discretion in every instance. You will receive “personalized” attention. People often want to know “what God will do to them” if they do “thus and so.” Hebrews 12:11 says when God chastens you it will not be pleasant: “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

A disobedient child is never happy. Continued sin often brings weakness and sickness into your life. If you refuse to respond to God’s dealings with you, if you refuse to discipline your life, God can even take you home earlier than He would have otherwise (I Cor. 11:30-32).

An example of a Christian taken home by God before his time because of sin is found in I Cor. 5:1-5. This person was committing adultery with his mother (or stepmother). Verse five says this person’s body was destroyed—he was taken home—but please notice that he did not lose his salvation. In I Cor. 3:15 we read, “If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved. . . .” Sin in the life of a Christian will result in a loss of his joy, power, testimony, fellowship, and reward.

The passage of Scripture, I Cor. 3:11-15, should be clearly understood by the soulwinner because it gives a good picture of what happens at the Judgment Seat of Christ for believers, and understanding this subject thoroughly will better enable you to answer questions that the lost often ask, such as: “How could God be just and fair if He lets both good people and bad people into heaven?”

Even though everyone is a sinner, and even though Christ has given complete forgiveness of all sin to all those who receive Him as Saviour, yet God still has many ways of seeing that those who truly serve Him are rewarded, and those who do not serve Him suffer loss of reward both on earth and later in heaven.

Notice, in I Cor. 3 :11, that the only foundation God recognizes is the foundation of Jesus Christ. Then, in v. 12, the Christian may build either good or bad works in his life once he is saved. In v. 13 we find that God will judge every person’s work to see what was good and what was bad. Verse 14 says that those who have done good work will receive reward, but v. 15 clearly teaches that those who have not done good works will suffer loss of reward even though they will not lose their salvation.

Ephesians 2:8, 9 tells us we are saved by grace through faith, but verse ten says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” God wants His children to live a life of service to Him—not to be saved, but because they are saved.

After a person trusts Christ for salvation he should heed Romans 12:1, 2 for service, “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. 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.”

A life of service for the Lord will be richly rewarded both now and later. When you obey God’s Word and let the Lord run your life, you will have love, joy, and peace in your life (Gal. 5:22). God promises, “If they obey and serve Him they shall spend their days in prosperity and their years in pleasures” (Job 36:11) . Jesus said, “. . . I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

If you want God to honor your life, you must serve Him. And if you DO serve the Lord, God is BOUND to honor your life. “. . . If any man serve Me, him will My Father honor” (John 12:26). The “secret” of “Christian Victory” is no more or less than obeying God. You might sometimes think disciplining your life to serve the Lord is difficult. What you want to do will often be the opposite of what God wants you to do, but the reward is great . . . and have you considered what it will cost you if you do not serve the Lord?

Job exhorts, “. . . who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?” (Job 9.4) Listen to the warning in Deut. 28:47, 48, “Because thou servedest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the

Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and IN WANT OF ALL THINGS: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck until he have destroyed thee.”

In Isaiah 30:1 God says those Christians who rebel against Him will have trouble . . . those who refuse the counsel of God in the Scriptures so that they can live their own lives of sin can expect trouble. “Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of Me; and that cover with a covering, but not of My spirit, that they may add sin to sin.”

Satan will always give you the best excuses why you shouldn't obey God. But the decision as to what you will do with your life is completely up to you. As we have mentioned before, salvation is voluntary, and service is voluntary. If you do not serve the Lord, you will have no one to blame but yourself.

Perhaps you may feel you have no particular “talent” to give to the Lord. God says the greatest ABILITY in Christian work is DEPENDability. “. . . It is required in stewards that a man be found FAITHFUL” (I Cor. 4:2). It is not required that you are (1) popular, (2) wealthy, (3) successful, (4) educated, or (5) influential. God honors the believer who faithfully does his best for the Lord each day.

Notice in I Tim. 1:12 the reason that God put Paul into the ministry. It wasn't that God just “chose” him for some intangible, vague reason. Paul had proven to be a faithful servant already, and God put him into the ministry because he could be counted upon to continue being FAITHFUL.

An interesting insight God has given us into the real reasons why many people do wrong and think they can actually get away with it, even in the sight of God, is found in Ecclesiastes 8:11, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” People forget that there is usually a TIME LAPSE between planting and reaping. The result of what we do is often not produced until later. (But then, when we realize the harm that has been done, it is too late to remedy the damage.) Deut. 32:35 says, “To Me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in *DUE TIME*....”

What you plant in your life will always come up. If you sow to the flesh, you will have nothing but heartache. Worldly pleasures are (1) trouble to get, (2) they don't satisfy when you do get them, and (3) there is great sorrow when they are lost. It has been said that the life of the world is the “life of the constantly bursting bubble.”

A disciplined life for the Lord will cost you work, time, and effort. But an undisciplined life costs much more. Usually you will find it is not so much a question of KNOWING God's will for your life as being willing to DO it.

Determine that your life is going to amount to something for the Lord, and then discipline your life to that end. Every successful business has a time-table . . . a plan of progress . . . a projection for the future. There is no room in today's world for the mediocre person. AIM FOR THE HIGHEST. Don't settle for being an “average Christian.” After all, “average” is just as close to the bottom as it is to the top. Don't be ordinary. STAND UP for the Lord Jesus Christ, and serve Him with all that is within you.

Remember that happiness is not found in pleasure, money, laughter, fame, or getting what you think you want . . . but is a by-product of a Spirit-controlled, useful life for the Lord Jesus Christ. Your future is being determined by what you do TODAY. If you want to accomplish great things for the Lord in the future, you must accomplish something for the Lord today.

Even unsaved ministers, doctors, and psychiatrists know the best advice they could give a depressed and unhappy person is to help someone else—to go and be of service. This brings joy. The Lord, our Great Physician, knows that serving Him brings the highest joy possible. Instead of trying to “buck” God's plan, why not follow His advice and share in all the good things God wants to bring into your life?

God is looking all over this earth for those who are singlemindedly, sincerely wanting to serve Him, that He might exercise His mighty power in their lives. “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him . . .” (II Chron. 16:9). God WANTS to do things for His children . . . but He cannot reward EVIL. When you serve Him, He will do all things for you.

Besides the contentment you will have now, as you live your life for the Lord, knowing you are truly experiencing the fullest life possible on this earth — that of being in the service of our King—our wonderful God also promises that the person who is a faithful servant here will be greatly rewarded in the kingdom of God.

While it would be wrong for the Christian to serve the Lord ONLY because he will be rewarded for it, there is nothing wrong with realizing that God has set such a HIGH VALUE upon serving Him that He does promise to reward His servants . . . and with living our lives in accordance with the standards of value that He has placed upon things.

In Hebrews 11:24-26 we find that Moses did just this. “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ GREATER RICHES than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense OF THE REWARD.?” Moses served the Lord, motivated by the knowledge of future reward.

“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.” (Matt. 16:27). “His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:21).

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (II Cor. 5:10).

Make it very clear that this person is not in a judgment to determine if he will go to heaven or hell. That was determined while the person was still living on earth, on the basis of whether or not he had received Christ as his Saviour. But this is a judgment for believers only, to determine whether or not they will have rewards during the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.

A person must build upon the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 3:11). Even the best works a person could build outside of Christ are only “filthy rags” and could never amount to the righteousness needed for eternal life in heaven (with or without rewards).

This must constantly be emphasized to people, and especially to an audience. If you are in the position of teaching a group on this subject, you must not only make the gospel clear in their minds, but clear enough in their minds so that they know how to make it clear to someone else; and not only so, but clear enough in the minds of your group so that they not only CAN make it clear to someone else, but that they will see the IMPORTANCE of staying with the gospel to others, until it is clear to them also.

Paul was expressing this in II Timothy 2:2 when he said, “And the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

We should serve the Lord for the praise of God and not for the praise of men. It is the Lord who will reward you. Certainly men will not. “Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive OF THE LORD, whether he be bond or free” (Eph. 6:8).

Situations are bound to occur in your Christian service in which you have done something for the Lord but another Christian seems to be receiving all the credit. Don’t let it bother you. The Lord is keeping the books. YOU will be rewarded for what YOU do regardless of how people look at it on earth. “Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his OWN reward ACCORDING TO HIS OWN LABOUR” (I Cor. 3:8). “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (I Cor. 15:58) .

## **Instructions for a New Christian**

### **Study Your Bible**

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (I Peter 2:2).

A person has faith that Christ will save him when he hears the plan of salvation from the Word of God

and believes it (John 5:24) . . . and a person strengthens his faith that the Lord will lead him in his Christian life as he studies God’s Word, believes God’s Word, and obeys God’s Word. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

The only way really to understand the Bible is to study it, and every Christian who studies his Bible will tell of the great enjoyment he has in doing so, as well as gaining much knowledge. God’s Word is power! KNOWLEDGE of God’s Word and HOW TO PRESENT His Word will give you the power necessary to be an effective soulwinner.

The Bible tells us to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15).

Another reason why we should study the Bible is also found in II Timothy, chapter 3, v. 16, 17, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is PROFITABLE for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” Encourage the new believer to read his Bible, perhaps beginning with the Gospel of St. John.



## **Pray**

Prayer is not some stilted, memorized speech that you make to God but conversation with your heavenly Father, who loves you very much. It should be just as natural for a Christian to talk to the Lord as it is for a little boy to talk to his Daddy. In fact, in Romans 8:15 the word “Abba,” referring to our heavenly Father, is actually a very close, personal term, just like our word “Daddy” is today. Children of God can know Him intimately. There is no reason why a Christian should approach God in prayer with formal speeches. It does not show disrespect for God to address Him personally, but rather, it shows Him that we love Him deeply. Galatians 4:6 says that God Himself has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, so that we would call our Father “Abba.” God really wants us to “feel at home” when we talk things over with Him.

God invites us to talk to Him, “Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jer. 3:3 ).

One of the wonderful things about prayer is that the Lord will never turn a deaf ear to you: He is always interested in what affects you. I Peter 5:7, “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” Encourage the new believer to pray often every day.



## **Meet Together With Other Christians**

Your love for the Lord, for Christians, and for the unsaved will be greatly increased as you meet with believers and have fellowship with them. The New Testament believers gathered together often for prayer, Bible study, and to encourage one another in their witnessing and comfort one another in their testings.

“And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them . . .” (Acts 14:27).

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb.10:25).

Also see Acts 15 :4; Acts 20:7; Acts 21:18-20; and Galatians 6:1, 2.

It is the rare person who can withstand the pressures of his friends. If your friends are not those who know the Lord and take a stand in serving Him, they will constantly pull you down. It is of utmost importance to make your friends the kind of Christian you aspire to be.

Some of the most precious times in the lives of Christians have been spent in the prayer meetings of churches where believers gathered together to share their needs and help one another through the encouragement of testimonies and the power of earnest, intercessory prayer. Encourage the new believer to attend a good, Bible-believing and teaching church.



## Tell Others How To Be Saved

A person who has just trusted Christ is often radiantly happy about experiencing the love of God. This glowing “first love” is best nurtured by telling others that God also loves them, and explaining how they, too, can be saved. A newly-saved person usually will readily see the need for his friends to trust Christ as their Saviour and will be eager to witness.

While endless preparation can go into learning how to witness most effectively, never leave a new Christian thinking witnessing should be done only by pastors and Bible college graduates. It is the responsibility of every Christian.

“But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts” (I Thess. 2:4).

It is such a privilege for us . . . that God would actually put US in trust with His wonderful gospel message! It is not only a privilege in the sense that we can exercise it or not at our own choosing, but once we have the Holy Spirit living in us (as all Christians do), He works in us and gives us a desire to witness for Him that is all but impossible to ignore.

“Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, not speak any more in His Name. But His Word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I COULD NOT STAY” (Jeremiah 20:9).

God says that all those who have been reconciled to Him —those who have been given a righteousness through trusting Christ as their Saviour—are His AMBASSADORS.

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to US the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto US the word of reconciliation. Now then WE ARE AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (II Cor. 5:18-20).

Any person who understands enough of the plan of salvation to receive Christ as his Saviour knows enough to tell others what happened to him and how they also may be saved. Often, even after you know the Bible very well, the most effective witness you could give would be your own testimony with a few, simple, salvation verses. Encourage the new believer to be a witness for the Lord.



Give the new Christian some literature that is clear on salvation. Chapter 22 of this book recommends literature of interest to the soulwinner and to the new Christian as well. A very effective tract, which has a distribution of over three million, “Am I Going to Heaven?” is pictured in Chapter Five. This tract is about salvation and is very good to leave with a new Christian.



The Holy Spirit indwells every believer and will guide the Christian in all facets of his life in Christ. Your example and testimony before the new Christian, as the one who led him to the Lord, will no doubt influence him very greatly, especially at first. As you pray for him, pray also for your self, that you will always be the proper influence.

As you see your child in the faith endeavoring to serve the Lord, you should encourage him to be water baptized as a testimony to others that not only is he saved, but also he now wants the Lord to use his life for His glory (Romans 6:4). (See Chapter Nine for coverage of the false teaching that man must be water baptized for salvation.)

## MEMORY VERSES FOR CHAPTER THREE

Proverbs 3:11, 12

- \* 1 John 1: 9
- \* I Corinthians 5 :5
- \* I Corinthians 3:15
- \* I Corinthians 11:30
- \* Ephesians 2:10
- \* Romans 12:1, 2
- \* Galatians 5:22, 23
- Job 36:11
- \* I Corinthians 4:2
- \* II Corinthians 5:10
- \* I Corinthians 3:11
- I Corinthians 15:58
- I Corinthians 3:8
- I Peter 2:2
- \* Romans 10:17
- I Peter 5:7
- Hebrews 10:25
- \* Hebrews 12:6, 11
- \* I Thessalonians 2:4

**Note:** If you are unaccustomed to memorizing Scripture, we recommend you start with the verses marked \*.

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