

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **A CLOSER LOOK AT REWARDS, CROWNS AND INHERITANCE**

<sup>23</sup> *I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.* <sup>24</sup> *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.* <sup>25</sup> *Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.* <sup>26</sup> *Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.* <sup>27</sup> *No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

*1 Corinthians 9:23-27 (NIV)*

<sup>7</sup> *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;* <sup>8</sup> *in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

*2 Timothy 4:7-8 (NASB)*

<sup>12</sup> *Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

*James 1:12 (NASB)*

<sup>4</sup> *And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

*1 Peter 5:4 (NASB)*

<sup>8</sup> *Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.*

*2 John 8 (ESV)*

<sup>11</sup> *I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.*

*Revelation 3:11 (ESV)*

#### **Some general points about the rewards that will be given out at the Judgment Seat of Christ**

We do not know exactly what the rewards will be. They are spoken of only in general terms, without much detail. Even so, let us try to look at some of the references in the Bible to rewards and see what we can piece together to establish some broad themes and principles. That may help us to understand the rewards better.

One general point to make is that if we are seeking for the praise of men now, then that will probably be our only reward. There will probably be no further praise or reward from Jesus for anything we do with that attitude. We must therefore do all our good works as quietly and secretly as possible, seeking only for *Jesus* to praise and reward us, not for praise from *people* now:

<sup>16</sup> *Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.* <sup>17</sup> *But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face* <sup>18</sup> *so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*

*Matthew 6:16-18 (NASB)*

One is reminded of people or companies who make a donation to a charity, but ask to be photographed with a ten foot long cardboard cheque, so that they can have their picture in the local

newspaper. Why not simply give the cheque quietly instead, so that virtually nobody knows about what we gave?

From the next passage we can deduce that there are such things as a 'prophet's reward' and a 'righteous man's reward', i.e. the rewards that such people will receive. It refers to where ordinary people like us help a prophet or a righteous man and look after them, thereby assisting them in what they are doing for God. If we do, then we will be allowed to have some of the same kind of reward that they are due to receive:

*<sup>40</sup>"He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. <sup>41</sup>"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. <sup>42</sup>"And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."*

*Matthew 10:40-42 (NASB)*

### **What are the various crowns referred to in the Bible?**

The passages we have looked at above tell us that there will be rewards, and of various types and levels, but they don't say exactly what they will be. We get some further information on that from other passages, where some of the rewards are referred to as *crowns*. In Greek there are two different words which mean crown. The first is *diadem*, which is the type of crown worn by royalty.

The second type is a *stephanos*, which means a crown given to a winner in a race or contest. Our equivalent to this today would be an Olympic medal. It is nothing to do with being royalty. It is a mark of success or achievement. It is important to note that it is this second type of crown, the *stephanos*, that we are told will be given out to certain believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

There are five different categories of these crowns referred to in various places in the New Testament. However, there are probably many others as well that haven't been mentioned and which we will only find out about at the Judgment. Let's now look at each of these five crowns that we are told about and see what they are intended to recognise and reward:

#### **1) "The crown that will last forever"**

We are not told what this crown is, or on what basis it is awarded. However, we do learn that it is to last forever. So, it will still be there, all through the Millennium and then on forevermore, even in the eternal state in the New Jerusalem. Given that this crown is eternal, it is infinitely more valuable and worthwhile to pursue than any temporary possession or honour that we may get in this life.

This quality of being eternal seems not to be unique to this specific type of crown. They might all be eternal, or at least many of them probably are. In that case, they will last beyond the 1000 year Millennium and on into the eternal state, when there are new heavens and a new Earth. Alternatively, perhaps some of the crowns may only be for the Millennium. That is not spelled out for us, so we will have to wait and see.

*<sup>24</sup> Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. <sup>25</sup> Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. <sup>27</sup> No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

*1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NIV)*

It would seem that this particular crown is given to those who *exercise self-control, and discipline themselves* in their spiritual life, such that they are victorious in the tests they face and are not disqualified. How many of us can say that that accurately describes us? Paul disciplined himself very strictly, but few of us do.

Most of us enjoy our comforts too much and don't want any stress, difficulties or trials. We need to change that attitude. There is so much at stake, and so much available to be gained and kept forever. Therefore it would be tragic for us to miss out on any of these rewards just because we were too soft on ourselves in this life and always avoided hardship.

There has been much debate over what exactly Paul was concerned about when he spoke of the possibility of being *disqualified*. It seems clear that he was *not* referring to the possibility of losing his salvation entirely, i.e. losing his eternal life. I believe he meant that he might lose some or all of the *rewards, crowns or treasures* that he had already built up or become qualified to receive.

He was probably also concerned about those *further rewards* that he still hoped to be awarded. In addition, he must have been concerned about possibly losing the *role or position* to which he was hoping to be appointed in the Millennium and in the eternal Kingdom thereafter.

## 2) "The crown of exultation"

It would seem that this particular crown is given to those who *tell other people about the Gospel*, so that they can be saved. In other words, it looks like it could be a reward for evangelism and for making disciples. It would appear that, in some sense, the crown Paul is referring to here has something to do with the very people that Paul, Timothy and others had evangelised and disciplined.

I believe it is likely that, when we reach the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will find out the real extent of the effectiveness of our ministry work. We may then be told how many people we ultimately influenced, whether directly or indirectly. Possibly this crown will be determined by the number of the people we have helped to reach or to train. It may also reflect how effective they, in turn, became:

*<sup>17</sup> But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. <sup>18</sup> For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us. <sup>19</sup> For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? <sup>20</sup> For you are our glory and joy.*

*1 Thessalonians 2:17-20 (NASB)*

## 3) "The crown of righteousness"

Here Paul is writing to Timothy shortly before his own death. He knew that his death was coming soon, because he was in prison, awaiting imminent execution:

*<sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; <sup>8</sup>in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

*2 Timothy 4:7-8 (NASB)*

This crown appears to be given to those who have "*loved the appearing*" of Jesus. That means those who have looked forward longingly to the return of Jesus. We are all meant to do that, but few of us actually do. We therefore need to focus our thinking on His return to the Earth, and to long for that day.

The *rapture*, when Jesus returns for His Church to take all believers away, needs to be on our minds. It should motivate us to do our very best. This longing for the return of Jesus at the rapture, or even at the Second Coming, when He will appear visibly to the whole world, is not a widespread feature of the modern day Western church.

In fact it is very rarely discussed or taught on. For most of us it barely even registers as an issue at all. If you are willing, you can choose to make sure that that is not true of you, and that you fall into the category of those who “*love His appearing*”.

#### 4) "The crown of life"

Here we have the words of James, who was Jesus' own physical half-brother. He was one of the natural sons of Joseph and Mary:

***Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.***

*James 1:12 (NASB)*

This crown is evidently given to those who *persevere* under difficult circumstances, because of their love for Jesus. We also hear of this crown in the book of Revelation:

***'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.***

*Revelation 2:10 (NASB)*

These people appear to receive this crown because they have been *faithful*, perhaps even until *death*. The emphasis is on long term, determined faithfulness that does not fizzle out or give way under pressure. One would have to assume that, from the church in the West, in our own day, there will not be very many who will receive this crown.

It would seem that many more are likely to receive it in those countries in our own day where the real Church is being persecuted. It will probably also be given to those from past centuries in the West, when the European churches were more faithful.

A prime example of that would be the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when many men and women suffered and died for what they believed. They gained freedoms for us which most of us today do not value and cannot even be bothered to use.

#### 5) "The crown of glory"

It would appear that this is a crown given to those who are *faithful leaders* of God's people in the Church, i.e. to those *genuine shepherds*, or pastors, who lead and care for the people who are in Jesus' flock. It is a reward for faithful pastoral care and teaching.

That is leadership which comes not from the desire for financial gain, or the wish to have power over people, but from having a true shepherd's heart. Sadly, such leaders are rare, whereas those who seek for money, or for power over God's people, are far too common. (See Book 8.)

***<sup>1</sup>Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, <sup>2</sup>shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; <sup>3</sup>nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but***

*proving to be examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup>And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

*1 Peter 5:1-4 (NASB)*

**There is also a specific reward or honour which Jesus refers to as ‘the morning star’**

Jesus will give this reward to those who *hold fast* what they have until Jesus comes, who *conquer*, and who *keep His works to the end*. To such people, Jesus says He will also give *authority over the nations*. That must surely be a reference to allowing them to reign under Him in various positions of subordinate authority, during the 1000 year Millennium and beyond.

However, Jesus also says that such a person will be given ‘*the morning star*’. He does not explain what this honour or award consists of, but it is referred to again, later in the book of Revelation. On that occasion it would appear that the ‘morning star’ is *Jesus Himself*. The term is used as a title, or description, of Him:

*“I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star.”*

*Revelation 22:16 (RSV)*

Whatever the morning star may be exactly, we can be sure that it is something very good. It would appear to be given only to a quite small minority, i.e. those who hold fast and conquer etc and who are therefore appointed to ruling positions in Jesus’ Kingdom:

<sup>25</sup> *But hold fast what you have till I come. <sup>26</sup> And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—*

<sup>27</sup> *‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron;*

*They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—*

*as I also have received from My Father; <sup>28</sup> and I will give him the morning star.*

*Revelation 2:25-28 (NKJV)*

I only know of two other references to the morning star in the Scriptures, but neither of them really help to clarify what this reward would consist of. The passages are from Job and Isaiah:

*while the morning stars sang together  
and all the angels shouted for joy?*

*Job 38:7 (NIV)*

*How you have fallen from heaven,  
morning star, son of the dawn!  
You have been cast down to the earth,  
you who once laid low the nations!*

*Isaiah 14:12 (NIV)*

The first passage from Job does not make it entirely clear who ‘*the morning stars*’ were, but they sound like angels. The second passage is clearer. It is a reference to Satan, in his previous form as an archangel, i.e. when he was called Lucifer. That was before he fell into sin. At that time he was the highest created being in the universe and was more senior than all the other angels.

At any rate, whatever this reward of being given the morning star may involve, it is clearly something that we are meant to want and which will be a huge honour to be awarded. So, there are at least five crowns available for us to earn, plus this specific award called the morning star. There are almost certainly many others too, which haven't been mentioned in the Bible.

There is no reason to suppose that the ones that we are told about add up to a complete list. The very fact that even these five crowns, and also the morning star, are only briefly mentioned suggests that, for whatever reason, this subject of rewards is not an area about which God has chosen to go into detail.

Accordingly, there could well be dozens, or even hundreds, of different types and levels of reward, honour, crown, medal, treasure, inheritance etc. Different types of people will receive each of the various crowns or rewards for different types or levels of service. There would actually need to be a wide range to enable God to accurately reward the many different types of people and levels of service that He will want to recognise.

Consider the honours system in Great Britain. We have a huge range of peerages, knighthoods, medals and so forth. There are many different levels of peerage, going all the way up from a baron to a duke – and there are different levels of knighthood. One has to assume that God's system of honours will be even broader, better and more varied than what the Queen has to offer.

### **Why is the Judgment Seat of Christ so widely ignored and forgotten?**

Isn't it obvious that we should give high priority to trying to do well so as to be praised and rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ? We should be thinking about it every day. Yet, the reality is that most of us barely even consider it. Contrast that with the experiences of a former client of my firm. He was wrongly arrested after a football game. Two police officers lied about him and assaulted him, despite the fact that he had *not done anything wrong*.

He then had to wait a year or so for his trial. During that year he felt very apprehensive, as he feared he could be wrongly convicted. Thankfully he was found not guilty by the Magistrates Court and, instead, it was the police who were criticised. We later found CCTV evidence from the football club which proved our client's innocence.

Therefore we sued the Police for assault, wrongful arrest and malicious prosecution. They eventually settled the case and paid full damages and costs. One of the things we claimed for in that case was the stress, anxiety and apprehension that our client felt for a whole year, as he awaited his initial criminal trial. It was a very difficult time for him, even though he knew he was innocent.

However, compare the heightened concern that he felt with the apathy of most Christians, who ignore the infinitely larger prospect of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Admittedly, our face to face encounter with Jesus is not going to be a criminal trial. We will not be 'prosecuted' by Him. Nonetheless, what we face at the Judgment Seat of Christ is vastly bigger, more important, more long-lasting and more serious, than the trial our client faced.

The worst that he could have received was a fine and a criminal record, albeit undeservedly. However that would only have affected him for a few decades at most, i.e. until he dies. Then it would no longer matter. However, the results of our future appraisal before Jesus will last *forever*. Therefore it ought to matter to us far more than our client's impending trial mattered to him.

Nevertheless, the truth is that for most of us, at least in the Western church, the concept of judgment simply isn't real. We may say we believe in it, but if we really did, then our behaviour would surely be very different. We would be motivated, zealous and determined to persevere and to do well.

However, the reality is that most of us aren't any of those things. In fact most of us don't even know about the concept of the Judgment Seat of Christ, let alone focus on it. It simply isn't preached on, or even mentioned, in most churches. There are probably many reasons for that widespread silence, including the following:

- a) There is a famine of hearing the Word of God. Most churches do not teach the Bible adequately. Such teaching as they do is limited and superficial, such that concepts like judgment never get spoken about.
- b) Many leaders and pastors don't know the Bible well enough themselves to be able to teach on this topic.
- c) Many leaders would not want to teach on judgment and choose not to do so, because they fear that they would become unpopular and lose members if they did.
- d) They also fear that they would also arouse the opposition of their denominational hierarchies if they ventured into this kind of territory. So they steer clear of it and deliver ear tickling, '*feel good*' messages instead.
- e) Some may fear that if they were to teach that our works (from conversion onwards) are going to be judged/assessed/appraised, then they might be misunderstood to be preaching that salvation itself (justification) is on the basis of works rather than faith. Therefore the minority who have that concern avoid this subject altogether, for fear of being misunderstood in that way.

Therefore, today, very few church leaders, let alone members, know anything about the Judgment Seat of Christ. Consequently, here are some of the most common errors that many preachers make, in so far as they ever think or speak about any of this at all:

- a) Some think that judgment is only for *unbelievers*, i.e. when they are sent to the Lake of Fire. Therefore they think that judgment, of any description, cannot be for Christians at all.
- b) Some think that not even unbelievers will be judged. They believe that the entire concept of judgment is an *old fashioned* one, which should be abandoned, even in relation to non-Christians.
- c) Some think that God is "*too loving*" to judge anybody at all - whether unbelievers or believers. However, this is to seriously misunderstand His love and also to make the mistake of seeing it in isolation from His other characteristics like His justice, righteousness, holiness etc. Some people therefore focus on God's love alone, or else they over-emphasise it, to such an extent that His other characteristics are forgotten, ignored or under-emphasised.
- d) So, if such a person is objecting to the very concept of Judgment (of whatever kind) on the basis that it does not seem *loving*, then they are forgetting God's justice. That is actually the very thing which makes it necessary for God to judge us in the first place. Therefore, if we redefine or redesign God so as to eliminate judgment, we would also have to get rid of His sense of justice. However, that would not be a good idea, even if it was possible.

### **Is it right to want to be praised and rewarded by Jesus at the Judgment Seat of Christ?**

If God has chosen, to set up an *honours system*, such that He rewards and recognises those who serve Him well, then who are we to disagree or disapprove as some people do? In view of that, is it right or wrong for us to try to pursue rewards, crowns, treasures in heaven, recognition, roles and positions in the Kingdom?

Should we actively seek for those things or just wait for them passively and see whether we get them, without taking any interest in them? Should we be aiming to please God *in order* to be honoured by Him? As we saw in Chapter Two, the answer is that the desire for rewards should be at least one of the factors which motivates us to seek to please God and to obey His Word.

If you are still unpersuaded, consider the attitude that Nehemiah had. He not only sought for rewards and recognition; he openly prayed that God would not overlook his loyal deeds and good service for Him:

***Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out my loyal deeds which I have performed for the house of my God and its services.***

*Nehemiah 13:14 (NASB)*

Nehemiah felt able to pray like that and the Bible records his prayer without expressing any disapproval. Therefore why shouldn't we take the same approach? The truth is we should feel able to be much more open about seeking for rewards and not be ashamed in any way that we are setting out to get them.

Indeed, it will help others if we speak of this openly and let other Christians know that we are seeking for rewards, including treasure. That will help to prevent others from making the mistake of thinking that we should not seek for rewards, or that we should feel ashamed of doing so, and thus keep quiet about it.

**We shall do better at the future Judgment Seat of Christ if we start to judge ourselves and to voluntarily receive God's correction now**

To improve our position at the Judgment Seat we should start to *judge ourselves* i.e. to critically assess ourselves now, in this life. Where we find sins, faults, bad habits, bad attitudes etc, we should confess them, and seek God's help to change. If we examine and judge ourselves now, we will not need to encounter God's judgment later, or at least not to the same extent.

We come across this concept of self-examination and repentance in relation to taking the bread and wine in an unworthy manner. If we do, then we are told that we bring God's judgment upon ourselves. We are also told that we can avoid that outcome simply by judging ourselves and repenting, as above, before God judges us. Surely the same point must apply in relation to the Judgment Seat?

***<sup>27</sup>Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup>Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup>For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. <sup>30</sup>That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. <sup>31</sup>But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged. <sup>32</sup>But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world.***

*1 Corinthians 11:27-32 (RSV)*

Paul tells us above that we are to judge ourselves now by examining ourselves, looking for areas which require repentance and self-improvement. However, earlier in the same letter to the Corinthians he suggests that he does *not* judge himself. That may sound like a contradiction, but it isn't. He is actually using the word *judge* in a different sense:

***<sup>1</sup>This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup>Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. <sup>3</sup>But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. <sup>4</sup>I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. <sup>5</sup>Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then every man will receive his commendation from God.***

*1 Corinthians 4:1-5 (RSV)*



When Paul says in the above passage from 1 Corinthians 4 that he does not *judge* himself, he does not mean that he does not *examine* himself. We know he does that, because he has said so previously and he says it again later. Moreover, he tells us to examine ourselves. He would never say that if he considered it wrong or unnecessary for us to do so.

What he means is that when he does look at his conduct and achievements he neither *acquits* nor *convicts* himself. Paul does not reach a verdict about himself of the kind that Jesus will reach, whereby He will find a person guilty or not guilty, worthy or unworthy, faithful or unfaithful and so on.

Neither was Paul willing to give any “grade” to himself about his own performance. He knew that it was not his place to do that. Such final conclusions and verdicts as those are only for Jesus to arrive at, just as He is the only Person who can judge other people. So, it is not our place even to judge ourselves in that way.

We are not to arrive at any definite, overall conclusions about how well, or how badly, we have done, or even try to decide what our motives were. We simply aren’t clever or honest enough to manage any of that, or to bear in mind all the right factors. That’s why we aren’t qualified to judge other people either, at least not in that sense. For the same reasons, we aren’t qualified to judge ourselves in that way.

However, that brings us back to where we started, with the apparent contradiction of Paul telling us above, in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, that we *are* to judge ourselves. How therefore can we do that, and what exactly should such judgment of oneself involve? We get further guidance about this from what Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 9:

*<sup>24</sup>Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. <sup>25</sup>Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. <sup>26</sup>Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; <sup>27</sup>but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*

*1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (RSV)*

Paul explains in the above passage from 1 Corinthians 9 that he treats himself as a boxer or athlete would do. He sees himself as being in a race and is aiming single-mindedly to win the prize. He therefore disciplines himself, denies himself things, and takes care not to be disqualified.

He wants to avoid losing out on the prize or rewards that he is aiming for. That involves being willing to see, and even to look for, faults and sins in ourselves and to want to eliminate them voluntarily. That sums up what our attitude should be towards carefully preparing ourselves for the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**God's minor acts of judgment and discipline in this life are meant to wake us up and to warn us, so that we can change, ready for the final judgment**

God’s holiness means that He must judge us. However, His mercy means that He also warns us about this impending judgment because He does not actually *want* to punish us. He takes no pleasure at all from doing so:

*Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?*

*Ezekiel 33:11 (ESV)*

God therefore ensures that even while we live our lives now, we receive small doses of His judgment in the form of discipline or chastisement. He does what any good parent does. He makes sure that in our daily lives we reap what we sow. We are therefore corrected, convicted, and even punished, in small ways when we do things that displease Him.

If we are willing to be taught, such correction helps us to learn about the things that are going to please, or displease, Jesus at the Judgment Seat. If He did not discipline us during this life then that would be a sign that He does not consider us to be saved and that we are not His. Parents only discipline their *own* children, not someone else's.

Therefore it's actually a good thing to be disciplined and corrected by God, even if it is painful. It confirms that we really are His children. It also helps us by giving us the chance to realise our faults now, and to change, before we ever get to the Judgment Seat of Christ:

***<sup>5</sup>Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you. <sup>6</sup>So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him.***

*Deuteronomy 8:5-6 (ESV)*

***Blessed is the man whom you discipline,  
O LORD, and whom you teach out of your law,  
Psalm 94:12 (ESV)***

***<sup>5</sup>And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. <sup>6</sup>For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." <sup>7</sup>It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup>If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.***

***<sup>9</sup>Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup>For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. <sup>11</sup>For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.***

*Hebrews 12:5-11 (ESV)*

***<sup>11</sup>My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline  
or be weary of his reproof,  
<sup>12</sup>for the LORD reproves him whom he loves,  
as a father the son in whom he delights.  
Proverbs 3:11-12 (ESV)***

So, when we face God's correction in this life, then we should welcome it. It is for our benefit, both now and later. Any adjustments we make now to the way we live as a result of that correction will eventually result in us being rebuked less and rewarded more. Moreover, that will have eternal consequences, whereas God's discipline in this life is only temporary.

Therefore, instead of resisting God's correction and rebuke in this life, we should accept it all willingly, whether it comes directly from Him, or indirectly, via other people. You should actually go looking for it, and get as much of it as you can. If you are willing to listen and change, it has the potential to alter the outcome of the final Judgment that you will, one day, receive from Jesus face to face.

## **Don't lose, or throw away, your rewards**

It is not easy to earn rewards. It takes effort, persistence and courage and it also takes time. However, one gets the impression that it is much easier to lose them or have them reduced. That does appear to be the case, because we are warned a number of times not to act in such a way as to *lose* our rewards or crowns, or to be *disqualified*:

***Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.***  
***2 John 8 (ESV)***

***I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.***  
***Revelation 3:11 (ESV)***

***But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.***

***1 Corinthians 9:27 (ESV)***

For us to *lose* our rewards or crowns, or to have them *seized* from us, or for us to be *disqualified* from receiving them, sounds very much like a *punishment* to me. See below for a discussion of why it may be correct to view such losses or disqualifications as being *punishments*, rather than referring to them in a more neutral sense, as the mere absence of rewards.