

Session 3: Grace as Motivation

Series: The Christian Life: Living Under Grace / Dr. Randy White

I. The “Rewards” Question

- The common evangelical view of crowns:
 - Crown of Life — James 1:12; Revelation 2:10
 - Crown of Righteousness — 2 Timothy 4:8
 - Crown of Glory — 1 Peter 5:4
 - Incorruptible Crown — 1 Corinthians 9:25
 - Crown of Rejoicing — 1 Thessalonians 2:19
- The standard claim:
 - Salvation is by grace
 - Rewards are based on works
 - Heaven includes varying levels of reward
- The real problem:
 - This introduces a **functional works system after salvation**
 - It creates a **hierarchy among believers**
 - It produces **fear-based motivation**
- The emotional engine behind it:
 - “Must I go, and empty-handed?”
 - Fear of loss rather than confidence in completion
- The textual weakness:
 - Each “crown passage” is either:
 - * Contextually tied to Israel and kingdom expectation
 - * Misread beyond what the text actually says
- The right-division issue:
 - Kingdom passages (works, endurance, appearing, judgment day)
 - Imported into the Body of Christ without warrant
- Key tension introduced:
 - If rewards are earned
 - Then grace is no longer sufficient in outcome, only in entry

II. Complete in Christ

- The controlling doctrine:
 - Not partial salvation
 - Not probationary salvation
- The theological conclusion:
 - Salvation is:
 - * Complete
 - * Final in standing
 - * Not awaiting supplementation by works
- The grammatical force:
 - “Saved” is perfect tense -> completed action with ongoing results
 - “And ye are complete in him. . .” (Colossians 2:10, KJV)

- The unavoidable contradiction:
 - If I must earn rewards for fullness
 - Then I am **not actually complete**
- The logical breakdown of the rewards system:
 - Entry by grace
 - Outcome by works
 - This is a “bait and switch” structure

The Judgment Seat Question

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ...” (2 Corinthians 5:10, KJV)

- This verse is routinely used to support:
 - Reward tiers
 - Loss of reward
 - Fear-based motivation
- But before building doctrine, the first question is:
 - Who is the “we”?
 - What program is in view?

The Assumption That Needs to Be Questioned

- Evangelicalism assumes:
 - This is a Body of Christ evaluation for rewards
- But your broader argument already established:
 - Reward systems tied to works belong to **kingdom expectation**
 - Not to those who are **complete in Christ**

The Theological Collision

“For by grace are ye saved... not of works...” (Ephesians 2:8–9, KJV)

“And ye are complete in him...” (Colossians 2:10, KJV)

- If 2 Corinthians 5:10 is:
 - A works-based evaluation determining eternal outcome (even reward tiers)
- Then:
 - Completion is not actually complete
 - Grace is not actually sufficient
 - Works have been reintroduced through the back door

Verse 9 — The Immediate Context

“Wherefore we labour, that... we may be accepted of him.” (2 Corinthians 5:9, KJV)

- “Accepted” (euarestoi):
 - Well-pleasing
 - Not earning position
 - Not securing future reward tiers
- The labor is:
 - Not to gain something missing
 - But because of what is already true

The Rightly-Divided Direction

- Either:
 1. This is a Body of Christ passage -> it must align with grace and completeness
 2. This reflects a **kingdom framework of evaluation** -> consistent with works passages
- What cannot stand:
 - A hybrid system:
 - * Grace saves
 - * Works determine eternal standing or experience

III. Love as the Constraint

“For the love of Christ constraineth us...” (2 Corinthians 5:14, KJV)

- “Constraineth” (synechei):
 - To hold together
 - To compel from within

- Not external pressure, but internal force
- Two competing systems:

A. Fear-Based Motivation

- “I might lose reward”

- “I might be lesser in heaven”
- “I don’t want to be empty-handed”
 - Produces:
- Anxiety
- Comparison
- Performance religion

B. Grace-Based Motivation

- “I am complete”
- “I am already accepted”
- “Nothing to gain, nothing to lose”
 - Produces:
- Freedom

- Loyalty
- Joyful service
- The human analogy:
 - Grace given -> grace returned
 - Law imposed -> pride or avoidance
- Biblical illustration:
 - Luke 18:11 — the law-driven man boasts
 - The grace-dependent man begs for mercy
- Final thought:
 - If rewards are the motivation:
- You serve for what you get
 - If grace is the motivation:
- You serve because of what you already have

IV. The Real Resolution

- The crowns passages:
 - Fit naturally within:
 - * Israel’s kingdom program
 - * Works consistent with covenant expectation
- The Body of Christ:
 - Not working toward inheritance
 - Already seated, already complete
- Therefore:
 - Remove rewards as motivation
 - Restore grace as the only sufficient cause

V. The Outcome

- You do not need rewards to motivate obedience
 - Less burnout, less comparison, less spiritual anxiety
- You need clarity on what has already been given
- Grace produces:
 - Stronger loyalty than fear
 - More consistent service than reward-seeking
- The real question is not:
 - “What will I get?”
- The real question is:
 - “What has already been given?”