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God's Rewards



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RIMMER LETTER

Let me read a letter ⁽⁷⁾ Dr. Harry Rimmer wrote in 1953, just a week before his death. He wrote to the great radio Bible teacher, Dr. Charles Fuller who was just starting a series on heaven, just as we are doing. Listen and carefully ask yourself if your confidence is as firm as his. If not may I urge you to make preparation for heaven before its too late?

Next Sunday you are to talk about Heaven. I am interested in that land, because I have held a clear title to a bit of property there for more than fifty-five years, I did not buy it. It was given to me "without money and without price." But the donor purchased it for me at a tremendous sacrifice. I am not holding it for speculation, since the title is not transferable. It is not a vacant lot.

For more than half a century I have been sending materials, out of which the Great Architect and Builder of the Universe has been building a home for me, a home which will never be remodeled nor repaired, because it will suit me perfectly, individually and will never grow old. Termites can never undermine its foundations, for they rest upon the Rock of Ages. Fire cannot destroy it. Floods cannot wash it away. No locks nor bolts will ever be placed on its doors, for no vicious person can ever enter that Land where my dwelling stands, now almost completed and almost ready for me to enter in and abide in peace eternally, without fear of being ejected.

There is a valley of deep shadows between the place where I live in California and that to which I shall journey in a very short time. I cannot reach my home in that city of gold without passing through this dark valley of shadows; but I am not afraid, because the best Friend I ever had went through the same valley long, long, ago and drove away all its gloom. He has stuck by me through thick and thin since we first became acquainted fifty-five years ago, and I hold His promise in printed form that He will never forsake me nor leave me alone. He will be with me as I walk through the valley of shadows, and I shall not lose my way when He is with me.

In six masterful strokes the eternal author etches his character and sufficiency toward us.

- The divine teacher: God's care that totally transforms
- The divine witness: God's testimony absolutely trustworthy
- The divine directions: God's statutes giving directions to only secure place in the universe
- The divine decrees: God's commands giving a clear portrait of God's non-optional absolutes
- The divine condition: fearing God, lovingly acknowledging by my actions God sees me
- The divine decisions: God's judgments, His final word on everything! Non-negotiable living
 - o God's final word "the judgments of the Lord"
 - o God's faithful word "is true" (*absolutely true, never false*)
 - o God's firm word "and righteous altogether" (*mutual parts explain and defend one another*)

God's Warnings

In the garden God warned Adam and Eve [Genesis 2:16-17](#) And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (NKJV). There was God's warning. Did they heed and obey? Of course we are painfully aware of the deadly results of their disobedience.

Before the Flood God warned the people through a mighty prophet who preached unflinchingly against the whole world! Jude 14-15 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 "to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (NKJV) There was God's warning. Did they heed and obey? Of course we are painfully aware of the deadly results of their disobedience.

At the Flood God warned [Genesis 6:3](#), 5 And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he [is] indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years 5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man [was] great in the earth, and [that] every intent of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil continually. (NKJV). There was God's warning. Did they heed and obey? Of course we are painfully aware of the deadly results of their disobedience.

Two thousand years later the Lord Himself came down and warned a family to get away from a city named Sodom, whose name now stands for wretchedness. [Genesis 19:14-26](#) So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking. 15 When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city." 16 And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. 17 So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed." 24 Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. 25 So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. 26 But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. (NKJV) There was God's warning. Did they heed and obey? Of course we are painfully aware of the deadly results of their disobedience.

Should we listen to the Word of the Lord this morning? Yes. [Psalm 19:10-11](#) More to be desired [are they] than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, [And] in keeping them [there is] great reward. (NKJV)

As the writer of Hebrews said: [Hebrews 2:1-3](#) Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard [Him,] (NKJV)

In the Old Testament the word for warn is *zahar* 'teach, warn, shine, lighten' in 5 places:

- God's warnings are based upon His Word [Exodus 18:20](#) And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. (KJV)
- God's warnings have to do with how we live our daily life. Second [Chronicles 19:10](#) "Whatever case comes to you from your brethren who dwell in their cities, whether of bloodshed or offenses against law or commandment, against statutes or ordinances, you shall warn them, lest they trespass against the LORD and wrath come upon you and your brethren. Do this, and you will not be guilty. (NKJV)
- God's warnings flow from the Divine Word which teaches, witnesses and directs our lives [Psalm 19:11](#) Moreover by them is thy servant warned: [and] in keeping of them [there is] great reward. (KJV)
- God's warnings ignored are the path to destruction [Ecclesiastes 4:13](#) Better [is] a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished. (KJV)
- God's warnings are simple to follow [Ecclesiastes 12:12](#) And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books [there is] no end; and much study [is] a weariness of the flesh. (KJV)

In the NT the key words are *chrematizo* 'warned of God by consultation' 4 times:

- God's warnings kept Baby Jesus safe [Matthew 2:12](#) Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. (NKJV)
- God's warnings led Joseph to take his family the right direction for the Lord [Matthew 2:22](#) But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. (NKJV)
- God's warnings led Cornelius to seek the way of salvation [Acts 10:22](#) And they said, "Cornelius [the] centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." (NKJV)
- God's warnings led Noah to serve the Lord in a most wicked time on earth [Hebrews 11:7](#) By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)

And *hupodeknumi* 'show by placing before the eyes of, teach' 2 times:

- God's warnings have to do with future wrath to come! [Matthew 3:7](#) But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (NKJV)
- God's warnings have to do with future wrath to come! [Luke 3:7](#) Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (NKJV)

And finally *noutheteo* 'warn, exhort and admonish'. This is a vital part of those who serve the Lord. It is:

- God's warnings are a regular part of daily life in the body of Christ [Acts 20:31](#) "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. (NKJV)

- God's warnings are the product of spiritual maturity [Romans 15:14](#) Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. (NKJV)
- God's warnings were directed to even carnal, babyish and fleshly servants of the Lord [1 Corinthians 4:14](#) I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn [you.] (NKJV)
- God's warnings lead toward maturing us in Christ [Colossians 1:28](#) Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (NKJV)
- God's warnings flow from the Spirit-filled walk [Colossians 3:16](#) 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. (NKJV)
- God's warnings are part of a godly spiritual leader's ministry to saints [1 Thessalonians 5:12](#) And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, (NKJV)
- God's warnings are to rescue those headed toward disaster in the Christian life [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#) Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. (NKJV)
- God's warnings are to restore fallen brothers and sisters in Christ [2 Thessalonians 3:15](#) Yet do not count [him] as an enemy, but admonish [him] as a brother. (NKJV)

THE BELIEVER'S REWARD

1. Christ Sees All His Servants Clearly:

- He opens the inner thoughts of our hearts. [1 Samuel 16:7](#) But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For [the] [LORD does] not [see] as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (NKJV)
- He will correct the direction of all who ask. [Psalm 139:23-24](#) Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if [there is any] wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting. (NKJV)
- He brings all the evidence to light. [1 Corinthians 4:5](#) Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. (NKJV)
- Nothing is hidden from Him. [Hebrews 4:13](#) And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things [are] naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we [must give] account. (NKJV)

2. Christ Rewards Each Servant Differently:

- Only those servants who built to "specs" are rewarded [1 Corinthians 3:12-15](#) Now if anyone builds on this foundation [with] gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on [it] endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (NKJV)
- Jesus gives out correct rewards [2 Timothy 4:8](#) Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (NKJV)

3. Faithful Servants Get Big Rewards:

- God calls us "great" if we teach what we live. [Matthew 5:19](#) "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches [them,] he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (NKJV)
- God gives eternal joy to faithful servants. [Matthew 25:21](#) His lord said to him, 'Well [done,] good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' (NKJV)
- We can be pleasing God with our lives. [Philippians 1:10](#) that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, (NKJV)
- We can be confidently awaiting Christ. [1 Corinthians 1:6-9](#) even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end, [that you may be] blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God [is] faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (NKJV)
- Keeping the Word gets the crown [2 Timothy 2:5](#) And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. (NKJV)
- Spiritual maturity leads to boldness [1 John 4:17](#) Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. (NKJV)
- God remembers who has earned rewards [Hebrews 6:10](#) For God [is] not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, [in that] you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. (NKJV);
- God rewards us based on the big picture. [1 Corinthians 4:5](#) Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. (NKJV)
- Rewards come for missing Jesus so much you look for his return. [2 Timothy 4:8](#) Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (NKJV)
- God is only swayed by what we do for Him. [1 Peter 1:17](#) And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay [here] in fear; (NKJV)
- The reward appointments come one at a time. [2 Corinthians 5:10](#) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things [done] in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (NKJV); [Colossians 3:24-25](#) Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality. (NKJV).

4. Fleshly Servants Get Sad Results:

- Earthly riches usually lead to spiritual poverty [Revelation 3:17](#) "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' -- and do not know that you are

wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked -- (NKJV)

- Undisciplined living always leads to spiritual disqualification [1 Corinthians 9:27](#) But I discipline my body and bring [it] into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (NKJV)
- Building for self brings heavenly loss [1 Corinthians 3:15](#) If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (NKJV)
- Fleshly servants reap an empty harvest of rewards [Galatians 6:6-8](#) Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. (NKJV)
- Some of God's servants will be ashamed of their life lived for self instead of Christ, when Jesus appears. [1 John 2:28](#) And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. (NKJV)

REWARDS

Ancient sources give a remarkably clear picture of the destruction of Ninevah. There had been rebellions in the empire for some time. Many of them were repulsed by the armies of Nineveh supported by her allies. But in the year 612 B.C. the doom of the city arrived. Combined armies of Babylonians and Scythians marched up the left bank of the Tigris River and surrounded the city. It happened in early spring at the time of the annual rainfalls. Since the rains were especially hard that year, the Tigris and other rivers flooded and apparently washed away a portion of the walls, leaving a breach for the armies to enter the city.

The Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (c. 20 B.C.) says that the river not only broke down the walls of the city, it also inundated part of it. At this point, the king, Sardanapalus, remembering an oracle to the effect that Nineveh would only fall when the river itself declared war against it, believed that the oracle was fulfilled and abandoned any hope of saving himself. He built a gigantic funeral pyre in the royal precincts, heaped up large quantities of gold and costly clothes, shut his concubines and eunuchs in a chamber he had made in the midst of the pyre, and then burned himself, his family, his concubines and eunuchs, and the palace.

Whatever had not been burned in this conflagration was destroyed by the entering armies. There was a terrible slaughter. Diodorus said, "So great was the multitude of the slain that the flowing stream, mingled with their blood, changed its color for a considerable distance ⁽⁸⁾."

There was unparalleled looting. For centuries the wealth of the ancient world had been pouring into Nineveh as a result of the Assyrian conquests. Now it poured out. Diodorus says, using a phrase which he did not employ in any other description of a city's fall, "They plundered the spoil of the city, a quantity beyond counting."

Then remember with me the passing of CT Studd. A former lean and fit athlete, now gaunt and emaciated. All his formerly gleaming white teeth now brown or long gone. Stopped, halting with each step he is surrounded by thousands of glistening black bodies. They have come to hear their beloved Bwana for the last time. He speaks after over two hours of singing. There in front of him sit 5,000 former head hunters. Now their oiled bodies, clothed in banana leaves, sit in an immense sea of white toothed smiles. With faces turned heavenward they sing of the sweet by and by and that beautiful shore they will someday see.

Passed now are the years of darkness and savagery. The former enemies sit shoulder to shoulder. No weapons of war are left, only the bond of love. This would be the last sight of this dear saintly convert Studd would see. After his message uttered between gasps for air, with every ear strained to catch each word, he is carried back to his hut. Exhausted, he rests, though only his Savior knew it was his last. In the night the Faithful Shepherd who had led him to China, then India and finally to the very heart of Africa took CT home. In the morning only the shriveled earthly tent was left. But around that hut and to the furthest reaches of the jungles and on mission stations around the world, the footprints of this giant can be found today.

CT Studd gave every thing to Christ. And in return he lost nothing. Sardanapalus kept everything to the end and dies as it was destroyed. Jim Elliot summed it up the best, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." This morning let's find what we can give up that will last forever!

1. 0.1 Swindoll,

2. Swindoll,

3. Donald McCullough, *Waking from the American Dream* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1975), 15.

4. Adapted from Swindoll, *Shedding Light*, p. 61.

5. As told by Charles R. Swindoll in *Come Before Winter . . . and Share My Hope* (Portland, Oreg.: Multnomah Press, 1985), p. 34.

6. Euripides, as quoted in *The Home Book of Quotations*, 10th ed., comp. Burton Stevenson (New York, N.Y.: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1967), p. 377.

7. *From Heaven*, by J. Oswald Sanders, p. 148-49.

8. *Maier, The Book of Nahum*, p. 127. Diodorus's work is called the *Chronicles*. The material on the fall in turn from *Persica*, a chronicle of Assyria and Persia in twenty-three books by a Greek physician named Cresias, of which only fragments survive.

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