



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## My Reward

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Paul didn't run his race didn't preach for applause. He didn't endure shipwrecks, beatings, and betrayals to build a name for himself. Paul had his eyes set on a greater reward — a prize that glittered far beyond the reach of human hands.

### Paul Modeled Sacrificial Stewardship

"My reward," he said, "is that I may offer the gospel free of charge," 1 Corinthians 9:18. Our world measures success by what we gain. Paul measured it by what he could give away. Though he had every right to claim support for his preaching, he laid it down so that nothing — not even a hint of financial obligation — would stand between a soul and the Savior. For Paul, joy was found not in what he could claim, but in what he could release.

### Paul Lived Strategically

Paul became like a Jew to win the Jews. He stepped into the shoes of the law-bound and those deemed lawless — Gentiles. He stooped low, to lift the weak. Why? "That by all means I might save some," 22. Paul adjusted his approach without altering his message. His compass never moved from true north — Christ crucified — but his shoes traveled all kinds of roads to reach weary hearts. Strategic living meant thinking less about comfort zones and more about kingdom gains.

### Paul Practiced Self-Mastery

Paul knew none of this would matter if he did not master himself first. Life is not a casual stroll; it is a race of endurance. It demands training. Focus. Sweat. "I discipline my body and keep it under control," he wrote, 27. Without self-mastery, even the most talented runner will fall short.

Paul was not shadowboxing with sin — living in vain. He fought with precision, aiming every punch at any sin that would slow him down or impede his progress in the race toward Christ.

Paul's reward was not a trophy that tarnishes or a headline that fades. His reward was the honor of a life poured out — faithful, fruitful, free.

Paul calls us to follow his pattern. Crave the reward of faithfully presenting Christ in word and deed - not the fleeting crowns of this world, but the imperishable one. Not a finish line of fame, but a Father's voice whispering, "Well done."

Maybe today we need Paul's reminder: Live with open hands. Walk with willing feet. Run with disciplined hearts. The race is never easy. The discipline is not pleasant. But the prize? The prize is worth it.

So today, practice his pattern: serve someone without expecting anything in return, adjust your approach to reach someone different from you, and choose one area where you will discipline your heart to follow Christ more closely. Keep running. Keep giving. Keep aiming for your reward.

~via Weatherly Weekly, Huntsville, Alabama

# How Much Time Is Left?

by James Cooper

A man's house was burning. At the first sign of smoke he had rushed out to buy a fire extinguisher. Before he returned, the roof and walls had collapsed, destroying all his furnishings.

A man's doctor warned him of a bad heart condition. From the doctor's office he went immediately to the insurance salesman, but he was refused in his attempts to provide financial protection for his wife and children.

A man was endowed by God with a strong, healthy body. Because his appetite was stronger than his moral convictions, he squandered his powers until dissipation brought him to weakness. Then disease struck and without a normal reserve of strength, he could not be cured by the surgeon of what would ordinarily have been a minor ailment.

A man had a Bible, knew the church was interested in him, had friends who regularly encouraged him to live more with God. With consistency, he made reasons not to, while his conscience grew fainter, and the black wrong and white right faded into medium gray. When the critical temptation came, he was only faintly aware of it, and certainly he had no moral reserve to resist it.

David said it this way: "For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him" (Psalm 124:6). Jesus said the same thing in describing the five foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-11).

When the operation begins, it is too late to take vitamin pills. When the battle begins, it's too late to train the troops. When the flood waters rise, it's too late to find a rock foundation. When Satan attacks, they can only resist who have put on their armor.

Memorize that verse now; when you need it, you won't have time. Worship God this Lord's Day; when you need that strength, you won't have time. Repent of that sin now; when Christ comes, you won't have time. Renew your broken connection with the Lord now; at your funeral, you won't have time. Become a Christian now; in the judgment day you won't have time. Don't be almost persuaded, but lost -- obey the Lord and be saved! Colledge Columbia, TN

# You're Satisfied?

By Jere E. Frost

So what? The rich man was satisfied, but God called him a fool and took his life and condemned his soul. (Luke 12:20)

The whole church at Laodicea was satisfied, but Jesus said they did not know that they were actually wretched, and miserable and poor and blind and naked (Revelation 3:16-22).

That's about how wrong a "satisfied" person can be.

Satisfied? Are you, now? The Pharisee that went into the temple to pray was satisfied with himself, and even glad he was not as the Publican (Luke 18:10-14). But Jesus said that the satisfied Pharisee was not justified like the sin-conscious Publican was!

The wise man warned: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Proverbs 14:12).