

Seeking a Reward

8/23/2026

Gaius Appuleius Diocles

- Highest paid athlete in history, made \$15 billion
- 2nd century Roman charioteer
- That immense reward came only after years of hard work
 - He began racing in 122 AD at 18 and didn't retire until 42, a 24-year career
 - Competed in 4,257 races... Averaged 3 races a week for 24 years
 - He won about 1/3 of those
 - While a professional chariot driver, his life would have revolved around the sport – every waking moment spent training or competing.
- Chariot-racing was an incredibly dangerous, risky sport
 - Chariots were light, cramped, flimsy, and unstable... And they rocketed along at 30-40+ mph... so drivers wrapped the reins around themselves to help them stay in place
 - During a race, chariots would often collide, and drivers, wrapped in the reins, would get thrown out, dragged behind their horses, crushed beneath other chariots
 - Drivers carried a knife to cut themselves free of the reins in case of a wreck
 - Most charioteers died in their 20s, most raced for under 10 years
 - Chariot crashes were so intense that the Romans had a special term for them (naufragium = shipwreck)
 - In a wreck, everything would be blown to smithereens
 - Turns were incredibly dangerous, with all the horses barreling toward the same small point, crashing into each other, trying to get through first... If one horse stumbles or one chariot flips, you're going down
- In order to achieve the rewards he achieved, Diocles had to train, exercise, and practice; he had to face risk and danger; and he had to keep racing for 24 years without giving up.

Two Judgments

- The Great White Throne
 - Revelation 20:11-15 – 11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.
 - The first judgment essentially determines who is a Believer and who is not, whose name is in the Book of Life and whose isn't.
- The Bema Seat
 - Bema = Greek word for the Judge's seat at the ancient games (like the Olympics), where contestants would receive awards for their performance
 - At the Bema Seat is where God hands out trophies, where all of Heaven rejoices in the good work we did for His kingdom
 - 2 Corinthians 5:10 – For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.
 - 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 – 24 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. 25 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.

- 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 – 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 27 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.
- Matthew 6:24-27 – 24 ... Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.
- Isaiah 62:11 – The Lord has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your Savior comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.'"

Areas Where God Promises a Reward

- 1. Persevering in Trials
 - James 1:12 – Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.
 - Revelation 2:9-10 – 9 I know your afflictions and your poverty – yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.
- 2. Seeking Him
 - 2 Timothy 4:8 – Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing.
 - "all who have longed for his appearing" = lit. "those who are loving his appearing"...
 - Hebrews 11:6 – And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
 - Jesus promised that "everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29)
- 3. Pouring into People
 - 1 Peter 5:2-4 – 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.
 - Jesus promised that "whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19)
 - 1 Thessalonians 2:19 – For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?
- 4. Serving the Poor and Hurting
 - The Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46)
 - Vs. 34-36 – 34 ... "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."
 - Vs. 40 – The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

- Luke 14:12-14 – 12 Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”
- Proverbs 19:17 – Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done.
 - “kind” = to be gracious, fair, kind, merciful, and generous
- 5. Working
 - Dishonesty and Cheating at the Workplace
 - 75% of employees admit to having stolen from their employers
 - Retail employees steal \$30 billion from their own stores every year
 - The average US hourly worker costs their workplace \$11,000 in time theft each year (\$550 billion of economic loss for the nation)
 - “Time theft” is where you don’t give your employer an honest day’s work
 - One statistic says that US businesses lose \$1.9 trillion every year due to simple employee laziness
 - Colossians 3:23-25 – 23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. 25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.
- 6. Giving
 - Luke 16:9-13 – 9 I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. 10 Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? 12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own? 13 No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.
 - Luke 6:38 – Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.
 - Luke 12:48 – From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

Philippians 3:7-14 – 7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.