

What We Deserve

In one of his rarely correct observations, Zophar's first speech to Job contained this comment: "*Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves*" (Job 11:6b). Much of the rest of Zophar's comments served to do nothing but torment the righteous Job but, in this statement, he was quite correct. It is a fact that for our sinful actions, we deserve justice... and pray for mercy. We might echo Jeremiah's astute conclusion: "O Lord, correct me, but with justice; not in your anger, lest You bring me to nothing." Jeremiah 10:24

The historical humorist, Mark Twain, once said, "It is better to deserve honors and not have them than to have them and not deserve them." Where Christianity is concerned, we do not deserve ANY honors. Luke makes it plain in recording Jesus' lesson about a servant's place. "When you have done all those things which you are commanded, say 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'" (Luke 17:10). And, so the Latin proverb goes: "In doing what we ought we deserve no praise."

This does not advocate a total void of encouragement and edification; everyone needs that occasional slap on the back or an "Attaboy" to lift the spirits. However, in a culture that has flooded the market with "participation ribbons," there is little motivation to do anything where there are no accolades – no return, no investment. Christianity is the polar opposite.

The Christian servant is not defined by what we "deserve," perceived or pretended (Matthew 23:5). We pray in the closet, not to be seen (Matthew 6:6). We do our good deeds with discretion (Matthew 6:2-3). We help the fallen when no one is watching (Luke 10:33ff). All the while, a righteous servant of God does not found dedication to God on the praise of men. We know that we are seen of God (Psalm 139:7-12).

We are deserving of justice for we are all fatally flawed creatures and doomed apart from the mercy of a loving God. However, the mercy of God is manifested always in His patience with us and in His allowing us the opportunity to improve on our own failures (Matthew 7:1-5) as well as humbly lifting the fallen (Galatians 6:1-2, 10), knowing our reward is in Heaven. In this endeavor, we just may avoid what we deserve.