

## The Highest Reward

Legalism, it is supposed, degrades virtue: men fulfill the commands in order to avoid punishment and to obtain reward. There is no goodness for its own sake. Goodness becomes a mere number of isolated deeds, and these deeds (even if they be deeds of kindness or justice) are done for the sake of profit and reward.

That may have happened in some cases. There is no religion which cannot be corrupted and caricatured. But the higher tendency of the Law acted in a precisely opposite direction. Happiness no longer meant mere length of days and outward prosperity. It meant the keeping of the Law in its study.

The very *doing* of the commands was its own reward, quite apart from all anticipation of any other. "Oh how I love Thy Law." "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste."

"Thy law is my delight; Thy testimonies are the rejoicing of my heart." The Law is also a consolation and make-weight in affliction. "Unless Thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in my affliction."

Communion with God is the highest "reward." "Thy loving-kindness is better than life." We have already heard the noble outburst: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, there is nought upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

Come what may, "God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." This is the greatest of the purely religious palliatives. No outward reflection can rob a man of God and of the joy of loving Him!

(The Old Testament and After by C. G. Montefiore, London: MacMillan and Co., 1923, 157-158, Paragraph Structure Modified)