There is a difference between salvation and rewards. The Lord offers to the lost, salvation, according to Ephesians 2:8-10 completely apart from works. You don’t deserve it and you can’t earn it. To the believer the Lord promises rewards (1 Cor 2:9). The New Testament speaks in the passage we are going to looking at tonight (1 Cor. 3:9-15) of the judgment at which the believers will be examined in order to determine what those rewards will be. The term that the Lord uses to describe these rewards is crowns, in fact the Bible describes five of these crowns and how to earn them.

First, **Make Sure You Are Building on a Solid Foundation (vv. 9-11)**

“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. (10) According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. (11) For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Paul portrays the church at Corinth as a building. Paul stresses that they should strive for quality in every aspect of constructing their spiritual lives. He begins in verse ten with laying the foundation, through the actual construction and ending with final inspection.

Paul says that there is no other foundation on which one can safely build their life other than that of “Jesus Christ” (v. 11)

“Tourist stand in wondering admiration before some of the great buildings of the ancient world that have endured more than a thousand years without a crack or a seam. The Pantheon at Rome stands just as it did well over two thousand years ago. That is the secret, this would be impossible had not its foundation been right. The Rialto Bridge that spans the Grand Canal in Venice was built in 1588. It has stood as it now stands for over four centuries, but the bridge rest on twelve thousand piling driven deep into the soil. What is true of buildings is also true of life. God cannot and will not build Christian virtues into your life or fill you with the Holy Spirit for service, until the proper foundation of receiving Christ as your personal Lord and Savior is made!”

**Not Only Are We T Make Sure We Are Building On A Solid Foundation but..,**

**Secondly, Make Sure You Use the Right Materials. (v. 12)**

“Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw.”
Paul tells us that there are ways to build upon the foundation that are acceptable and ways that are unacceptable. He lists six categories of materials we may use in building our lives; wood, hay, stubble, gold, silver, precious stones. Wood, hay and stubble are perishable; gold, silver, precious stones are permanent. We are to build our lives on those things which are permanent, those things which will last, not those things which will be destroyed when we stand before the Lord.

**Not Only Are We to Make Sure We Use the Right Materials but...**

*Third, Make Sure Your Life Is Ready For Inspection (vv. 13-15)*

“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.”

Before we discuss the rewards we need to avoid some confusion by clarifying between two very important, yet very different judgments.

First, there is the “Judgment Seat of Christ” (Bema Seat Judgment) (1 Cor. 3:13). “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.” And in 2 Cor. 5:10 we read, “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.” The Bema was a “rewards platform” in sporting contests. Because of this meaning, some claim the “bema” is only a place for rewards—not judgment.

“It is Christians only who are in view here. All that we have hidden shall be revealed. The things we have done in the body will come back to us, whether good or bad. Every pious thought, and every thought of sin; every secret prayer, and every secret curse; every unknown deed of charity, and every hidden deed of selfishness; we will see them all again, and though we have not remembered them for years, and perhaps have forgotten them altogether, we shall have to acknowledge that they are our own.” [James Denney, 1856 - www.bible.org/illus./judgement seat of Christ]

Secondly, there is the judgment referred to as the “White Throne Judgment” (Rev 20:11-15). The White Throne judgment will take place a thousand year after the Judgment Seat of Christ. The White Throne Judgment is for the unsaved, living and dead, where they will hear “depart from me, I never knew you.” It is the answer to everyone who has ever said, “I just want my good works weighted against my bad works.” No one will ever enter heaven that way! There will be no saved people at the white Throne Judgment and no lost people present at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

*What are the Crowns?*
1. Incorruptible Crown (1 Cor. 9:25)

“And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”

This crown is earned through self-control.

2. The Crown of Life (James 1:12)

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

This crown is earned by faithfulness to God in times of testing.

3. The Crown of Righteousness (2 Tim. 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.”

We win this crown of righteousness by right living in light of His appearing. No other single truth as more potential to produce right living. 1 John 3:3 says, “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

4. The Crown of Rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19-20). This crown is earned by winning others to faith in the Lord and therefore is sometimes called “the soul winner’s crown.”

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? (20) For you are our glory and joy.”

5. The Crown of Glory. Sometimes called the pastor’s crown. (1 Peter 5:4)

“and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

What Are We Going To Do With Our Crowns?

There is a clue in Rev 4:10-11, “The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: (11) “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”

This verse seems to imply that we will cast our crowns before Jesus in worship. This leads to the thought that there may be an even more solemn moment than just standing before
the judgment seat of Christ and not receiving a crown. That is the moment that pass before the throne of Jesus and having nothing to cast at His feet in worship!

There was a young minister who sat by the bed of a friend who was dying. As they talked of his going to be with the Lord, tears filled the eyes of his dying friend. The young minister thought he was afraid to die and attempted to speak encouraging words to him. But his friend replied, "I am not afraid to die; I am ashamed to die." He went on to say that although Christ was his Savior, he had lived for himself, and he now had to meet the Lord empty-handed. His life was "wood, hay, and straw."

This may seem like a tragic situation, but it’s not all that unusual. Sadly, there are many who are destined to meet their Lord empty-handed. Perhaps they are described in 1 John 2:28, "And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming." There are some who will be ashamed to meet the Lord, because of so little that they did for Him while they were here. They’ll be saved, but there will be no reward.