

2 John 1:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

Analysis

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. John issues an urgent warning: "Look to yourselves" (Greek *blepete heautous*, βλέπετε ἑαυτούς), meaning "watch yourselves" or "take heed." The present imperative demands continuous vigilance. Believers must exercise constant spiritual alertness against deception, not assuming immunity from error. The reflexive pronoun emphasizes personal responsibility—each person must guard their own spiritual condition.

The concern is "that we lose not those things which we have wrought" (Greek *hina mē apolesēte ha eirgasametha*, ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέσητε ἃ εἰργασάμεθα). Some manuscripts read "you lose not what we have wrought," distinguishing between John's apostolic labor and the believers' potential loss. Either reading conveys the same essential truth: spiritual achievements can be forfeited through negligence or deception. "Wrought" suggests the hard work of evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual growth—all vulnerable to loss if believers abandon truth.

"But that we receive a full reward" (Greek *alla misthon plērē apolabēte*, ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πλήρη ἀπολάβετε) presents the positive goal. "Full reward" indicates complete recompense for faithful service. This is not salvation itself (received by grace through faith) but rewards for faithful stewardship and perseverance (1 Corinthians 3:12-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10). Believers can suffer loss of rewards while remaining saved, but John urges them to pursue complete rather than diminished

eternal compensation. Fidelity to truth results in full reward; compromise produces loss.

Historical Context

The early church understood that apostasy was a real danger. Unlike modern "once saved, always saved" formulations that sometimes minimize the need for vigilance, first-century Christians took warnings about falling away seriously. They had seen professing believers apostatize under persecution or seduction by false teaching. John's warning reflects this experiential reality: those who seemed genuine could be lost to deception.

The concept of degrees of reward was well-established in Jewish thought and Jesus' teaching (Matthew 5:12, 19, 6:1-6, Luke 19:12-27). Early Christians understood that while salvation is by grace alone, rewards in the kingdom depend on faithful service. This motivated diligent discipleship and holy living—not to earn salvation but to maximize eternal reward and Christ's commendation.

John's generation witnessed significant labor: evangelizing the Gentile world, establishing churches throughout the Roman Empire, producing New Testament writings, and training second-generation leaders. All this effort could be undermined if subsequent generations abandoned apostolic truth. False teachers threatened to destroy in one generation what the apostles had spent decades building. John's urgent appeal for vigilance reflects his pastoral concern that their labor not be in vain (Galatians 4:11, Philippians 2:16, 1 Thessalonians 3:5).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What specific practices help maintain spiritual vigilance against deception in our current cultural moment?
2. How does understanding degrees of eternal reward affect our motivation for faithful service and doctrinal fidelity?
3. In what areas might we be vulnerable to losing the fruit of past spiritual growth through current negligence or compromise?

Interlinear Text

βλέπετε	ἐαυτούς,	ἵνα	μὴ	ἀπολέσωμεν	ἃ
Look	to yourselves	G2443	G3361	we lose	those things which
G991	G1438			G622	G3739

εἰργασάμεθα	ἀλλὰ	μισθὸν	πλήρη	ἀπολάβωμεν
we have wrought	but	reward	a full	that we receive
G2038	G235	G3408	G4134	G618

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 10:35 (Parallel theme): Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

1 Corinthians 3:14 (Parallel theme): If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

Revelation 3:11 (Parallel theme): Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

1 Corinthians 3:8 (Parallel theme): Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

Mark 13:9 (Parallel theme): But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

Hebrews 12:15 (Parallel theme): Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

John 4:36 (Parallel theme): And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

Galatians 3:4 (Parallel theme): Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.

Hebrews 10:32 (Parallel theme): But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

Luke 21:8 (Parallel theme): And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.