

Rewards

by
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The word “reward” can mean: a salary for service, an award for a job well done or a compensation for sacrifice. The Bible speaks much about rewards. They are a very important part of our Christian experience. Since rewards are so important in our walk with the Lord and His plan for our life, we need to understand the biblical teaching on this subject.

The first thing we need to understand concerning what the Bible has to say about rewards is what it declares is not a reward. **Romans 4:4, 5** clearly explains what is not a reward in God's plan for our life. *“Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.” NAS* Our salvation, justification and forgiveness of sins are absolute gifts of the grace and love of our Father and His

Son Jesus Christ. What could we have possibly done to merit God's salvation? What work or sacrifice did we do to obligate Him to compensate us by forgiving our enormous debt of sin? The only thing that, we deserved was His just wrath. By faith we can simply believe and accept God's grace and love which provided for us a perfect substitute for our sins. Thank God for the unspeakable gift of His Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

After salvation, God's grace gives us the opportunity to obtain rewards for services and sacrifices rendered to Himself. Before being saved we could not offer Him any acceptable service or sacrifice, but now it is possible because we have been made acceptable in Christ. *Hebrews 10:35 - 39* tells us of the promise of reward. *“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised...” NAS* We are exhorted to patiently do the will of God until Jesus comes. Such service and sacrifice is said to have great reward. If we purpose in our heart to do the will of God, it will cost us much sacrifice and service, but we know that it will certainly be well worth it as we keep the reward in sight. *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be*

steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.” I Corinthians 15:58 NAS

What is to be the motive of our service? Is it merely to be compensated? The concept of compensation is, “I will do this for you if you do this for me.” “For every hour I work, you pay me \$10.00.” But this should not be the motivation of our service to the Lord. Nor do we run our spiritual race course on the principle of competition. It is not a question of being a better Christian than someone else. The motive of our service to the Lord must be that of love. (*I Thessalonians 1:3, 9 & 10*) This is the only kind of service that merits and that will receive a reward from God.

In *I Corinthians 9:24 - 27*, *II Timothy 4:6 - 8* and *James 1:12* we read of three crowns or rewards: the incorruptible crown, the crown of righteousness and the crown of life. Every believer will put on incorruption at the resurrection. (*I Corinthians 15:51 - 53*) Every believer has been made the righteousness of God in Christ. (*II Corinthians 5:21*) Every believer already possesses eternal life. (*John 5:24*) But here we see the crown or pinnacle of these things; the fullness of all that God has provided in Christ. Notice to whom these crowns are promised. They are reserved for

those who run, fight and win. Notice also that the reason that these faithful saints run, fight and win is because they love Jesus and look with loving anticipation for His coming.

Another important aspect of rewards that we need to understand is the fact that they can be lost. Both *Revelation 3:11* and *Colossians 2:18* warn us of this danger. Our reward is lost when we stop focusing on Jesus, our Head. There are many things that can distract us from giving Jesus our full attention and love. False doctrine, possessions, people, trials or anything else that causes us to take our eyes off of Jesus and His will for our life will rob us of our crown. Jesus must be the focus of all that we do and say.


Although there are various rewards mentioned in the Bible, there is really only one from which all the other rewards flow. *Philippians 3:7 - 14* says that Paul sacrificed everything in order to win Christ. His prize, his goal was not a thing but a person, Jesus. Since he already knew Him as Savior, Paul must have been referring to a deeper, closer place of communion with Christ. As we already mentioned, the crowns spoke of the pinnacle, the fullness of all that God had to offer. Surely Paul was striving for that pinnacle relationship with the Son of God. There is no one closer or

more honored to a man than his wife, to a king than his queen. There is no higher place offered redeemed men and women than to be presented to the Lamb of God as His bride. Such a glorious place is reserved as a reward for faithful and loving service. (*Revelation 19:7, 8*)

In the natural, a man and his wife work and sacrifice all their life to maintain a family, a house and whatever else they need in their journey through life together. They make their sacrifices and do all that they do because they love one another. Such a life together will have many rewards: a house, car, children and maybe even financial security. But when it's all said and done, especially in the twilight of their lives when they may have to give up much of those things, their true reward for their life lived for one another is not their possessions but each other. Their love and fellowship with one another is reward enough. So it will be with those saints who will make up the bride of Christ. They will be lavished about with all the splendor of heaven but their real joy and reward will be to be near the One that they have lovingly served for so long.

Hebrews 12:1, 2 encourages us to put aside everything that would hinder us and to run our race. Our example is Jesus who finished His course even though it included great suffering

and rejection. He freely offered Himself up for our sins, despising the shame, because of the joy or reward that was set before Him. Do you realize that the joy that was set before the Son of God for which He gave His all is you and me? We are His reward and He is ours! How marvelous is the grace of our God! Let us run the race set before us. Let's serve Him with all our heart that we might receive the reward of love, Jesus as our Bridegroom for eternity.



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