

The Lord is Your Reward

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We're continuing on this subject of how God rewards believers in heaven for how they served Him on earth. I'm doing this because God really wants you to understand that serving Him in this life will have a great impact on the future that He has in store for you.

First, I want to review a few important points:

1. When a person is saved, then he's given hope, and this hope is that he'll be in heaven with Jesus and other believers and in a brand-new body, and he'll receive an inheritance. And these things I am talking about are guaranteed for every single believer.

2. The Christian who faithfully serves the Lord while on this earth will be rewarded, and these rewards are in addition to the basic blessings I just mentioned about being in heaven and with Jesus, etc. So everyone will be blessed in heaven, but some will be more blessed than others, and these additional blessings are what God calls rewards. 1 Cor. 1:8, 3:8-14

3. All the blessings we receive from God, whether it's in this life, or in the future, are because of His grace. We're saved by grace because of our faith in the work of Christ. And we'll be rewarded by grace because of our work of faith for Christ.

4. Every Christian is unique. And so don't compare yourself to someone else, whether it relates to their color or sex, whether it relates to their abilities or gifts, or whether it relates to their background, experiences, or opportunities. Be thankful that you are unique, that you are special. God made you a certain way and gave you the talents, gifts, and time you need to do the work He wants you to do.

5. God doesn't reward the outcomes, the results of how you live your life, but the effort, the heart, the motives, your faithfulness. 1 Cor. 4, 2 Tim. 2, Col. 3:23, Matt. 5:21

6. The race you run in this life is not a race against others, but a race for God.

This race is your own personal race, and you are to do it for the Lord. Heb. 12:2

7. There's a direct connection between what you do in this life and what you do in the ages to come. That is, the rewards you receive from God relate to what you'll do in heaven.

8. Every Christian, no matter how they serve the Lord, no matter their failings on earth, will be fully satisfied in heaven. Everyone's glass will be full – everyone will be filled up with the love, joy, and peace of God. And everyone will have an eternal purpose.

9. God gives us several words that also describe these rewards - the word crown, the word prize, the word recompense, the word treasures, and the word blessing.

10. This truth about rewards gives meaning and value to every day of your life, and to everything you do in life. Col. 3 says *"whatever you do, do your work heartily, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance."* Whatever you do, whether it's making a meal, doing the dishes, saying a prayer, or sharing the gospel,

will be rewarded by God, if it's done for Him, if it's done with the right heart and motives.

11. God gives rewards to motivate you. People who run a race are motivated because they want to have the satisfaction of doing the best they can. So too, God wants you to not just finish the race, but to do the best you can, to run the race to win, to win the prize. And winning the prize means you've run hard for God and that He's pleased with you. *"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."* Heb. 12:1, 1 Cor. 9:24-25
And winning the prize gives glory to God, for you ran the race for Him.
12. God will reward you when Christ comes back, on the day of Christ. Rev. 22:12

I want to now share several examples from God's word about how you can get rewards.

1. Psalm 19:11 says there is a great reward for keeping God's word, for obeying God.
2. Prov. 11:18 says that sowing righteousness results in being rewarded.
3. Prov. 22:4 says that being humble results in rewards, specifically riches, honor, and life.
4. Matt. 5:12 says you'll be greatly rewarded for being persecuted.
5. Matt. 6:4 says that giving financially to the Lord results in rewards.
6. Matt. 6:6 says that praying to the Lord results in being rewarded.
7. Matt. 6:18 says that fasting for the Lord results in being rewarded.
8. Matt 10:43 says that giving a cup of cold water to a little child results in rewards.

9. Matt. 19:27-29 says those who follow the Lord and sacrifice their life are rewarded.
10. Luke 6:35 says you will be greatly rewarded for loving your enemies.
11. Luke 12:33 says that giving to those in need will result in rewards.
12. Luke 16:9 says that using your money for God's purposes will result in rewards.
13. Luke 19:17 says that you will be rewarded for being faithful in a very little thing.
14. 1 Cor. 3:8-9 says that laboring for God, working for Him, results in rewards.
15. 2 Cor. 5:10 says that doing good will result in being rewarded.
16. Col. 3:23 says that whatever you do for the Lord will be rewarded.

17. 2 Tim. 4:8 says that if you love Christ's appearing, you'll receive the crown of life
18. Hebrews 10:35 says that having great confidence, having great faith will be rewarded.
19. Hebrews 11:6 says that having faith and seeking the Lord will result in rewards.
20. Hebrews 11:24-26 says that suffering and sacrifice result in being rewarded.
21. 1 Peter 5:4 says elders who are good examples to the church receive the crown of glory.
22. Rev. 2:10 says that being faithful to death results in being rewarded.

The above vss. give all these ways, all these examples of how you can be rewarded, and some are very specific, and some are very general. And the main point is that God will reward you for whatever you do for Him. Every single day of your life, and every single thing you do for God, has eternal value, eternal importance in the eyes of God. Always remember this truth about rewards.

There's one more thing about rewards. It's that your primary reward, your foundational reward, is the Lord Jesus Himself. One overriding and important truth, is that ultimately and essentially, your reward is the Lord. Your primary reward isn't so much what, but Who. It's Jesus who loves you so much, seen in that He died for you and saved you from sin and death, and is forever your Lord, Savior, and Friend. The Lord is your life. He's everything you'll ever need and everything you'd ever want. *"The Lord is my portion"* (Ps. 119:57. *"To live is Christ."* Phil. 1:21

Your reward is the Lord, which means knowing Him, knowing His love, and having this eternal relationship with Him. Jn. 17:3 says, *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."* The definition of eternal life is knowing God and Jesus, having a relationship with Them that lasts forever and ever. This is real living, abundant life. Here are some examples - Enoch walked with God (Gen. 5:24), David beheld the Lord's beauty (Ps. 27:4), and Mary sat at Jesus' feet. Lk. 10:39. These examples all relate to the Lord being at the center of our lives.

The disciples had forsaken many things to follow Jesus & so Peter asks Him what they will get for being faithful to Him. Jesus says, *"I say to you... that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions, and in the age to come, eternal life."* Mark 10:28-30 Jesus is saying that you'll be greatly blessed in this life if you serve the Lord, and in the next age, you'll have eternal life. And this is the main point, that your reward is the Lord and having a relationship with Him that lasts forever. As a Christian, you know the Lord – you talk to Him and you walk with Him. And your relationship with Him will get better and better, and then in heaven, you will have a perfect relationship with Him.

When you think about rewards, it's not so much what you'll receive but Who you will be seeing, who you will be spending time with. Job says, *"In my flesh I will see God, I myself will see Him with my own eyes... how my heart yearns within me!"* Job 19:25-27 Paul was teaching about Christ's coming and the rapture, and says that the believers will *"meet the Lord in the air."* And then he says, *"And so we shall always be with the Lord."* You can't miss what's being said, that life is centered on our relationship with the Lord, for *"we shall always be with the Lord."* 1 Thess. 4:15-18, Ps. 17:15

Jesus was talking to His disciples and could tell they were sad, and so what did He say? He talked about hope, and said, *"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; and I go and prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."* John 14:1-3
- David said, *"Nevertheless, I am continually with You... Whom have I in heaven but You?"* Ps. 73:23-26. What's most important about the future is that you'll always be w/ the Lord.

Heb. 12:22-24. When you go to heaven, you're going to a place, to the heavenly Jerusalem. But this vs. doesn't focus on the place, but on the angels, the church, Old Testament saints, and most importantly, Jesus Christ and God the Father. Your primary reward is being in the presence of God and literally being with Jesus and seeing Their awesome glory.

- When Jesus comes back, He will take you to heaven, to your heavenly home. But heaven is much more than a place, for its focus is Jesus, the most famous and important Person in all the universe. And if you visit a friend at his house, your visit is not about the place, about the nice home, beautiful yard, comfortable couch, or the good food. It's about the person and spending time with that person - it's talking, sharing, loving, crying, and laughing. So too, your future is principally and primarily the Lord, and being with Him, knowing His love, learning from Him, and having close fellowship with Him.

Psalm 23:6 says the same thing - *"Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"* Your future is summed up as being forever in the house of the Lord, which means being with the Lord, and having a perfect and most excellent relationship with Him.

Rev. 21:3. Our reward is not just that we will be with God, but that He will be with us. God greatly desires to be with you and me, and all believers, so much so, that after the kingdom age, the new heaven and new earth will be joined together. Rev. 21:10 The holy city, the new Jerusalem, will be our eternal home, and there we will live with Jesus, and experience eternal life, eternal love, joy, peace, goodness, and eternal pleasures.

- Psalm 16:11 says it this way, *"In your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever."* And since we will have a brand-new glorified body, we will be able to fully experience the love of God and all that He has planned for us.

Yes, you'll receive rewards and crowns, all these amazing and innumerable treasures, an inheritance beyond belief, and you'll be in that wonderful house of the Lord, but most of all, you will be with the Lord. And so Jesus is your primary reward – it's being with Jesus, and it's knowing and loving and enjoying Jesus. Jesus loves you much more than you can ever imagine! When He prayed to His Father, He expressed His love for you by sharing His desire to be with you - *"Father, I desire that they whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me."* John 17:24