

Eternal Rewards

Chad Cogburn

29 Jan 2023

Outline

- Fundamentals
- Inheritance vs. rewards
- Judgment seat of Christ
- Biblical ground for gaining rewards
- Can rewards be lost?
- Is striving for eternal rewards wrong or selfish?
- Summary / questions to consider

Rewards Fundamental to Faith

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV) But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

- 2 Basics of Faith
 - Believe that God exists
 - Believe that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him

Jesus' Treasure Truth

Matthew 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- Treasures on earth decay and disappear (2nd law of thermodynamics)
 - Nathan: "more modern version: software bugs and dead batteries"
 - Why on earth do people aim to accumulate valuables? (expensive firewood)
- Treasures sent on ahead to heaven are eternal.
- Treasure=heart!
- Jesus introduces an alternate monetary system...Oh, And the exchange rate!
- God repeatedly teaches this truth. Focus on the temporal world forfeits the eternal.

Luke 17:33 Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.

Inheritance vs. Reward

- Inheritance: property received (given) as an heir (a person legally entitled to the property or rank of another on that person's death)
- Rewards: a thing given in recognition of one's service, effort, or achievements.
 - Reward: G3408 *misthós*; gen. *misthoú*, masc. noun. Wages, hire, reward. (29x)
 - G3405 *misthapodosía*; fem. noun from *misthapodóteēs* (G3406), rewarder. A recompense, whether a reward (Heb 10:35; Heb 11:26) or a punishment (Heb 2:2).
 - G3406: *misthapodóteēs*; masc. noun from *misthós* (G3408), a reward, and *apodídōmi* (G591), to render. A recompenser, rewarder (Heb_11:6). The reward for good or evil is *misthapodosía* (G3405).

Inheritance vs. Reward

Hebrews 9:15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

- The eternal inheritance refers to entrance into God's presence for eternity; Salvation!
- Inheritance is given, not earned. Based on being an heir of the King.
- Salvation is by grace through faith
- Rewards are by faithfulness
- One slightly difficult verse...

Col 3:24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

Judgment Seat of Christ

2 Corinthians 5:9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (G2556 also wrong, bad, or worthless)

Romans 14:10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11 For it is written: "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL CONFESS TO GOD." 12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

- At the judgment seat of Christ, each Christian's life will be closely examined. Rewards gained or lost based on how faithful they were on earth.
- Rewards an indicator how pleasing a person was to God (2 Cor 5:9)

Judgment Seat of Christ (assumed)

1 Corinthians 4:1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4 For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

- Even men's hearts will be exposed. Thoughts, intentions, motives...Yikes!

Work Tested With Fire

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. 11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

- Vs 11. Foundation is Christ: this subject only applies to Christians.
- Building analogy; every Christian is building their spiritual structure
- The materials each one used will be revealed at the judgment
 - Gold, silver, precious stones: work that has eternal value
 - Wood, hay, straw: work that has no eternal value
- Vs 15. If a person's work does not survive the fire, the person will suffer loss (no rewards?), but still be saved. "Well done good and faithful servant?" No.

Before



After



Judgment of Faithfulness

- “Well done good and faithful servant”

Matthew 25:19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' 21 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

- Rewards are given for faithfulness with what God has entrusted to each one
- Goal: to hear “well done...”
- Not all being admitted into heaven will be hearing “well done”
- Notice the contrast “few things” vs “many things”

Judgment According to Responsibility

Luke 12:48 But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

- To whom much is entrusted, much is required.

Do Not Throw Away Confidence

Hebrews 10:32 But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, 33 sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. 34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. 35 Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.

Biblical Grounds for Rewards

This list is not comprehensive!

- Joyful Persecution for Christ
- Generosity
- Faithfulness in your vocation
- Kindness and Hospitality
- Loving the unlovable
- Evangelism

Biblical Grounds for Rewards

- Joyful Persecution for Christ

Matthew 5:10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- Generosity (and not to receive praise)

Matthew 6:1 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. 2 "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Biblical Grounds for Rewards

- Faithfulness in your vocation

Ephesians 6:5 Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; 6 not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. 9 And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Colossians 3:23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

Biblical Grounds for Rewards

- Kindness and Hospitality toward the poor

Luke 14:12 He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. 13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

- Kindness and Hospitality toward Christians

Matthew 10:40 "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. 41 The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. 42 And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."

Biblical Grounds for Rewards

- Loving the unlovable

Luke 6:35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. 36 Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

- Evangelism

1 Corinthians 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 8 He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

Losing Rewards

- Showing off righteousness

Matthew 6:1 "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

- Deception

2 John 1:7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.

What Then Will We Have?

- Not an abundance of scriptures on this topic, but...

Matthew 19:27 Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" 28 Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Luke 12:42 And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 44 Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.

Matthew 25:21 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

Luke 19:17 And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'

- Rewards may determine our place, responsibilities and/or authority in the heavenly kingdom.

Crowns (victory wreath)

- Imperishable crown - 1 Cor 9:25
- Crown of rejoicing - 1 Thess 2:19
- Crown of righteousness - 2 Tim 4:8
- Crown of life - James 1:12, Rev 2:10
- Crown of glory - 1 Pet 5:4
- All seem to refer to rewards for faithfulness and endurance

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Exchange Rate

- Consider for a moment the value of the trade...

Matthew 19:29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.

Luke 16:11 If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

- Whatever the rewards are, they are abundantly greater in value than the works accomplished on earth!
- Implies all treasures on earth are counterfeit wealth!

Is Striving for Eternal Rewards Selfish?

- God given desires good in the right context: sex, food, wealth
- Rewards are a common topic in the bible. God wants all people to know that He rewards those who are faithful. (and fundamental to faith!)
- If rewards indicate the level we pleased God, that's Win-Win
- Moses looked to the reward.

Hebrews 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

- Paul was also fully expecting rewards

2 Tim 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness,

But Shouldn't Love Compel Us?

- Shouldn't people serve God and others because we love Him?
- Isn't the main purpose of man's existence God's glory?
- Yes and Yes!
- Love for God and His Glory should always be the main motivation! We should never lose sight of that.

2 Corinthians 5:14 For the love of Christ compels us...

- However, one of God's attributes is a rewarder. We look forward to that day!
- Why we serve God boils down to:
 - Our Faith in God (he exists and is rewarder)
 - Our Hope in future glory
 - Our Love for Christ
- And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is Love! (1 Cor 13:13)

Summary

- Inheritance (salvation) is by grace. Rewards are by faithfulness.
 - Works do not merit salvation. Only by grace through faith in Christ!
- God is a rewarder
- At the judgment seat of Christ, all will be revealed and tested with “fire”: Deeds, words, motives
- Works with eternal value are rewarded. Works with no eternal value are burned up and lost.
- We will be accountable to Christ on how faithful we were with what he gave us.
- How we live now has a HUGE impact for how we live in the new heaven and earth.
- Substance of the rewards not fully understood, but likely include positions of authority
- The rewards for faithful service are disproportionately generous for our accomplishments
 - (“Our” accomplishments were enabled by God in the first place! Phil 2:13)
- Love is the greatest motive to serve God.

3 Questions to Consider?

1. What gifts has God entrusted to you?
2. How faithful are you in using those gifts?
3. Will you hear “Well done good and faithful servant”?