



PERSONAL MOTIVATION: THE BIBLE ON REWARDS

TO: LEGISLATORS

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Years ago in my own spiritual pilgrimage, I was profoundly affected by the biblical truths that are contained in this study regarding how God's future rewards will be determined today by my faithfulness and obedience to His precepts and purposes. One passage that has always hit me over the head is found in Jesus's Sermon on the Mount:

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal....

This passage has served to guide me into continually asking sobering questions such as "How can I have the maximum impact on the maximum amount of people for all of eternity?" My friend, that kind of thinking is what leads to eternal rewards from God.

Too many American Christians are now focused on personal security and laying up for themselves a large retirement account, oblivious to the idea of storing up treasures in heaven. I pray that what follows will sharpen, if not arrest you. Study the profound truths regarding the believer's ultimate focus that follow.

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WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT REWARDS

I. INTRODUCTION

The apostle Paul wrote 2Corinthians 5:10 to the believers at the church in Corinth saying,

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

In straightforward language Paul is communicating that every believer will undergo a judgment – not to determine if one will go to heaven or hell (*The Great White Throne Judgment* is different and is for unbelievers and takes place at the end of the Millennial Kingdom; cf. Rev. 20:12) but rather to determine the believer's rewards and the breadth of their reign during the coming 1,000 period in world history known biblically as the Millennial Kingdom. This judgment is termed *The Bema Seat Judgment* and is specifically for believers; it will occur after the rapture of the Church and prior to Christ's Second Coming, wherein He will return with His saints and set up His throne in Jerusalem and reign with His bride, the Church and redeemed Israel. At the end of Revelation 20:4, the Apostle John states in regards to this,

...and [the believers] reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Most interestingly, the word here for **reigned** *ebasileusan* is the verbal form (herein a 3rd person plural, Aorist tense) of the noun *Basileus* which translated means, "King." Kings and reigning go together. In the Greek the literal idea is that Kings (noun) "king" (verb), whereas in English we say Kings (nouns) reign. We do say that gardeners garden and bakers bake, but we don't say Kings "king" as did the ancients. The passage goes on to declare in 20:6 that all believers in the future...

...shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Implicit in the context, and borne out by other passages, is that believers will be judged and recompensed by Jesus Christ directly in accordance to their faithfulness and obedience to Scripture in this life, and that their reward – specifically the breadth of their reign as Kings under the King of Kings in the Millennium – will be directly proportional. Take heed: this should inform you as to how you best invest your time, talent and treasure in preparation for your eternal life. Romans 14:12 is crystal clear regarding the believer at the Bema Seat Judgment:

So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

Properly focus your energies and attention in this temporal life: don't spend your wad on the wrong kinds of things; rather invest your life with an eye toward your everlasting, eternal destiny. God rewards that kind of purposefulness.

II. THE DEGREES OF REWARDS

At the Bema Seat Judgment there will be various degrees of rewards. Paul makes this evident in 1Corinthians 3:12-15:

Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

This passage is overflowing with truths related to the doctrine of eternal rewards. Whereas **foundation** is a reference to the Body of Christ, the Church (cf. Eph. 2:20) **Gold, silver and precious stones** represent dedicated spiritual



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service aimed at advancing it, aka God's Kingdom into new territories – i.e. building up, both quantitatively and qualitatively the body of Christ here and now on the earth. **Wood, hay and straw** on the other hand represent shallow activities, or a life that pursues worthless (a word Jesus uses) things with no eternal value or significance, i.e., selfish saints whose concern is inward. To illustrate, you and I know believers who scoff at the demise of America and even judge the effectiveness of ministries such as Capitol Ministries, ministries that are attempting to impact the nation's leaders with the Gospel by building ministries in DC, State Capitols and Local Government. Instead of joining the effort, they sit back with their critical spirits while they enjoy the wealth the country. They take everything this country has afforded them and do nothing to advance His Kingdom. Therein is a life described by this passage as **wood, hay and straw**.

The **fire** connotes God's discerning judgment regarding the aforementioned. What **endures** equates to that which survives God's scrutiny – those efforts by the believer that have been accomplished in His power for His glory in strict accordance with His purposes (cf. Matt. 25:21, 23; 2Cor. 5:9; Phil. 3:13, 14; 1Thes. 2:19, 20; 2Tim. 4:7, 8; James 1:12; 1Peter 5:4; Rev. 22:12). This is an incredibly informative and sobering passage! Note again by the inference of the last stanza **but he himself with be saved, yet so as though fire** that the believer's eternal security is not what is in question at the Bema Seat; this is about what a believer needs to do to properly prepare for the maximum reward.

Jesus speaks about the various degrees of rewards and the breadth of reign that a believer can acquire, or fail to acquire, through the use of a parable in Luke 19:11-27. Note specifically verses 17-23:

And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.' 'The second came, saying,

'Your mina, master, has made five minas.' 'And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.' 'Another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I kept, put away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.' 'He said to him, 'By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? 'Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?'

This is a profound parable containing many insights into the mind of God on this subject. He has great expectations regarding His chosen ones, His called out saints. Save explaining the whole of the parable, it is quite easy to capture the concept that Jesus meant to communicate....

THERE ARE VARYING DEGREES OF REWARDS BESTOWED BY GOD IN DIRECT RELATIONSHIP TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF HIS SERVANTS

In saving you, He paid a tremendously expensive price: the death of His own Son; so guess what? He now expects a return from His investment my friend! You are not getting off easy! Every believer needs to realize that *Christ owns him or her*, and that it is biblically correct to say that we are His *slaves*. That is precisely how God sees the matter! You have been chosen by the Master to be His slave! Many English Bible translations sugarcoat the underlying Greek word here, *doulos*, translating it in a more palatable way, using instead the English word "servant." But that is inaccurate to the meaning: You have no choice but to be obedient to the one who bought you; it is not as if you can quit your employment contract. Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* strongly supports this



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understanding of *doulos*. Note what this leading Greek dictionary says about this word:

All the words in this group serve either to describe the status of a slave or an attitude corresponding to that of a slave. *δοῦλος* is a “slave,” *δοῦλη* a “female slave,” *δουλεύω* “to be a slave,” “to stand in the relationship of a slave,” *δουλεία* “slavery,” *σύνδουλος* a “fellow-slave,” the adj. *δοῦλος-η-ον* “enslaved” or “performing the service of a slave.” The meaning is so unequivocal and self-contained that it is superfluous to give examples of the individual terms or to trace the history of the group. Distinction from synonymous words and groups is made possible by the fact that the emphasis here is always on “serving as a slave.” Hence we have a service which is not a matter of choice for the one who renders it, which he has to perform whether he likes or not, because he is subject as a slave to an alien will, to the will of his owner. (Kittel, *TDNT*, Volume 2, p. 261).

Bought with His blood, now owned by Him, He expects us to labor for Him tirelessly and without emotion or equivocation relative to what He specifically demands for us to accomplish while on earth – versus turning out to be a **worthless** investment! (The word “servant” perhaps connotes the idea that a believer could choose not to serve another’s employment, whereas the word “slave” removes that option from the table). Paul describes this positional truth in yet another way to the Galatians (2:20):

I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live...

These profound and theologically accurate pictures of speech should serve to greatly motivate us to serve Him! Make no mistake here: this understanding of how God views those whom He has redeemed is both critical and foundational to a proper understanding of the attitude and mindset of the one who will receive bountiful eternal rewards.

It is not a far-fetched conclusion to take the idea of you ruling over cities as being a King in a literal sense – given the previously made connection between the words **reign** and **King** in the book of Revelation and here in Luke’s gospel. The **reigning** of Christians as Kings is the definitively literal meaning; keep in mind that Jesus is the similar author in both the parable as recorded by Luke and, as recorded by John from Christ via an angel (cf. Rev. 1:1-2) in the book of Revelation. In both places He speaks about believers reigning over cities in concert with degrees of rewards. I therefore need ask you...

PERTINENT APPLICABLE QUESTIONS

What will your Master say at your judgment?

What kind of reward will He allocate to you?

Are you in maximum preparation to reign?

What will be the breadth of your reign?

The answers to all of these questions directly relate to your faithfulness to the living and written Word while here on earth.

Numerous other passages illustrate the aspects of rewards relative to the believer’s life today...so many passages that this idea of being rewarded for faithful service is unquestionable! Take time to study the following in this regard; may God’s Word on this subject captivate, convict and control your thinking and priorities today and forever!

A. MATTHEW 6:20-21

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

B. LUKE 6:22-23



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Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. "Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

C. LUKE 12:18-21

Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

D. LUKE 12: 42-44

And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes." Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

E. 1CORINTHIANS 3:8

Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

F. GALATIANS 6:9-10

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have

opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

G. EPHESIANS 6:7-8

With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

H. COLOSSIANS 3:23-24

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

I. 1TIMOTHY 6:18-19

Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

J. 1PETER 1:4

To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

K. 2JOHN 8

Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

L. REVELATION 11:18

And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward



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Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.

M. REVELATION 22:12

Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

The renowned theologian and my personal friend, Dr. Wayne Grudem perhaps best summarizes these numerous passages on rewards,

It would be morally and spiritually beneficial for us to have a greater consciousness of this clear New Testament teaching on degrees of heavenly reward.... Moreover, in our own lives a heartfelt seeking of future heavenly reward would motivate us to work wholeheartedly for the Lord at whatever task He calls us to, whether great or small, paid or unpaid. It would also make us long for His approval rather than for wealth or success. It would motivate us to work at building up the church on the one foundation, Jesus Christ. (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 1145).

I echoed in the preamble to this week's study, that these insights from Scripture are what God used to lead me into full time ministry while in college – I couldn't resist the gravity and significance of these passages in preparation for the Bema Seat Judgment – versus spending or wasting my life on superfluous, **worthless** activities which are so often nothing but self-serving ventures.

III. THE DICTATION DESIGNATING REWARDS

Now this study gets even heavier. 1Corinthians 4:5 seems to indicate that the secret sins of believers will be revealed during the Bema Seat Judgment. Beloved, this fact in itself should provide ample motivation for godly living! Note what Paul pens to believers in this regard:

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

Every believer should know this passage by heart and ponder it when tempted to sin. Not only will one's sins be exposed, but the very motives of the heart. This is a chilling truth that should inform every follower of Christ. One's final reward will not be based solely on outward service, but on inward devotion. That is to say....

GOD WILL ACCOUNT FOR OUTWARDLY RIGHT THINGS DONE WITH INWARDLY WRONG MOTIVES. SUCH ACCRUE TO THE COLUMN OF WOOD, HAY AND STUBBLE

Wow! Such truth should drive us to our knees, "search my heart oh God!" Such need be our constant prayer as we seek to serve Him from a pure heart. It is as if God is recording all our deeds and motives as we go through life, and that He will play them back during our Bema Seat Judgment. Beware of this today!

IV. THE DELIGHT REGARDING REWARDS

Scripture is clear about the eternal security of believers, or better, the perseverance of the saints. The Bema Judgment, as stated, relates to the degrees of rewards, not the finality of salvation. The true believer should have no fear of eternal condemnation. Note John 5:24 in this regard:

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.



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States Romans 8:1 similarly,

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The Day of Judgment for believers is a day of determining rewards, whereas the Day of Judgment for unbelievers it is a day of condemnation – since they possess no imputed righteousness from Christ, and stand in deficit before their holy, perfect God. They have failed to bow the knee to His Lordship in their lives.

Romans 10:9 & 10 speak about what it means to come to Christ:

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

All that to say God delights in rewarding His saints for their service unto Him on their day of judgment; for them, eternal security is not the issue on the table. In that sense, it is a delightful day for them. On the other hand, for those who rebel against His lordship, it will be a frightful day of reckoning.

V. THE DETERMINANTS OF REWARDS

Note what the book of Proverbs teaches regarding what specifically determines God's rewards in your life:

A. OBEDIENCE DETERMINES REWARDS: PROVERBS 13:13

The one who despises the word will be in debt to it, But the one who fears the commandment will be rewarded.

This Proverb speaks about the necessity of obedience to God's Word relative to attaining rewards from the Master. There is not only a future reward relative to one's obedience to God's precepts, but as those who walk daily in obedience can attest, a present one. States Isaiah 66:2 "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." Conversely, God does not look favorably on those who are arrogant and prideful. He never has and never will, so don't be among them.

B. RIGHTEOUSNESS DETERMINES REWARDS: PROVERBS 13:21

Adversity pursues sinners, But the righteous will be rewarded with prosperity.

This is a general Proverb expressing a recurrent biblical theme. It speaks about one's present rewards here on earth: namely, what one sows in this life they will also reap (cf. Hosea 8:7). Again, this general principle within Proverbs is replete throughout the whole of the OT. Righteousness brings blessing and reward, whereas evil exacts a divine curse. The Psalmist said, "Evil shall hunt the violent man and overthrow him." In contrast, the righteous are recipients of His grace. Proverbs 11:18 and 22:4 highlight this same principle respectively, "The wicked earns deceptive wages, But he who sows righteousness gets a true reward" and, "The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, honor and life." Gain God's reward in the here and now by doing what is right!

C. LOVING YOUR ENEMIES DETERMINES REWARDS: PROVERBS 25:21-22

If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For you will heap burning coals on his head, And the LORD will reward you.



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An ancient Egyptian custom was to carry coals on one's head (in a pan of course) in order to publicly display contrition. Why coals? They outwardly symbolized the burning pain of shame, guilt and repentance going on inside the person's mind and heart. Accordingly, when one proactively and publicly loves his enemies, it should bring shame to the offending party relative to their actions of sin and hatred. Further, Paul quotes this Proverb in Romans 12:20 in the context of repaying no one with evil for evil (12:17). "If possible" he says, "be at peace with all men" (12:18). When one possesses this level of strength of character, self-control and discipline, God will if not immediately, eventually reward them – it is a promise of Scripture! Note further that in Romans 12 God promises that He will bring His vengeance onto the offender. My experience is that when I follow this teaching, the retribution of God, by God, is much more severe and effective than anything I could have done in my power to try and get even. Left to Him, He will repay (cf. 12:19). Keep in mind too that He often uses His medium and ordination of Government (Rom. 13:4) to mete out His recompense, as it is His surrogate for this very purpose. So let the court system do your heavy lifting, versus yourself.

The Lord will reward you if you respond in outward, aggressive and deliberate love toward your opponents! Herein is a wonderful principle to meditate on and live by from the Word of God. What a wonderful truth.

These three determinants and many others will govern God's rewards, or lack thereof, in your life.

VI. SUMMARY

God is a just God and He will justly recompense everyone, both believer and unbeliever respectively. It follows then that there are just degrees of reward: To the saint who serves Christ more in his or her earthly life than does another, the former's reward and reign in the Millennium will be greater.

Slothful or naïve believers who disregard their calling in Christ – and/or all the truths of Scripture that are meant to guide everyone, layman or legislator, to an efficient and effective life of ministry, will possess no excuse for their inactions on judgment day. More pointedly, those who are so busy with their careers in the capitol, their selfish pursuits in life, who spend all their efforts on self promotion, those who have no time for Bible study, fellowship and prayer, or for ensuing effective Kingdom work, theirs is a life pattern and direction that will manifest wood, hay and stubble at the Bema Seat Judgment.

ARE YOU A FAITHFUL FOLLOWER OF CHRIST WHO IS INFORMED BY SCRIPTURAL INTAKE AND HABITUAL OBEDIENCE?

If you have received the Son, then in essence, biblically speaking, you have been called by the Son: That means you are now His slave – so get to work and fulfill your calling! Steadily persevere in your Master's personal assignment(s) no matter what the obstacles are that confront you! These truths should forever serve as your ultimate motivation! Here then is how you can avoid being worthless and instead be rewarded in eternity!

And the sinner who rejects the Son...? Those who will not bow the knee to the very one who sacrificed His life to pay the penalty for their sin, will too have a just reward based on their lack of propitiation for personal improprieties. One's active or passive rebellion toward their Creator who has revealed Himself through creation and conscience will not go unnoticed by an omniscient God.

May that not be the case with anyone who reads these Bible studies. If you are an unrepentant sinner, then you need to bow your knee to the Lord and beg for His mercy, lest in His divine, perfect justice He say to you, "Depart from Me" (Matthew 7:23). He will hear your cry.