

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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Rewards

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Introduction

A few days ago someone asked me if I had any teaching lessons that speak of our rewards. They were having a discussion with another person whose doctrinal position that they had been taught was that our reward was heaven and, other than that, there were no rewards. Of course, even a cursory reading of the New Testament Scriptures reveal that a lot is said about rewards. I told them that my teaching about this subject was all integrated with the teachings on resurrection or on eternal judgment and that I didn't have anything separate that specifically dealt with rewards. After some consideration, I decided that maybe a teaching letter about that would be appropriate.

First Things First

First we need to make it very clear that rewards are above and beyond salvation. We are saved by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus. This is a free gift from God that only requires us to repent and receive. There is nothing that we can do in and of ourselves that can earn salvation. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins so that man can be restored to God in righteousness. Without Christ we are condemned to death; but, in Him we receive eternal life. I don't want anyone to be confused about this as we continue our discussion of rewards

Jesus Speaks of Rewards

While Jesus spoke of general rewards several times, He got specific about them in some of the parables that He told. In the Parable of the Talents (*Matthew 25:14-30*) Jesus emphasizes being faithful with what He has given us. In the parable each one was given an amount that corresponded with their ability to manage it (v. 15). All except one had increased the amount that they had received and received a reward of ruling over many things because they had been faithful in a few things. This reward was based on *faithfulness* and *percentage of increase* not amounts.

In the Parable of the Pounds or Minas (*Luke 19:11-27*) Jesus emphasizes *faithfulness* and *diligence*. Each one received the same amount [*they must have had equal ability*] and when the

accounting time came each presented the results of their work. They returned varying amounts back to the Master even though they had each received the same investment amount. Their rewards varied based on the amount of return. One received the reward of rule over 10 cities and another received rule over 5 cities. While they may have had equal ability, they were not equally diligent in their stewardship and received a reward based on the results of their diligence.

Notice that the context of the Parable of the Pounds was the Kingdom of God (*Luke 19:11*). This implies to me that the time of rewards comes when He returns to establish His 1000 year reign of the Kingdom of God on earth. This is also the context of the parable itself, the master going away to receive a kingdom and then returning to deal with his subjects as his kingdom is established.

Rewards and Works

Throughout the Scriptures it is clear that rewards are related to the works that are done. Paul speaks plainly of this in Corinthians and makes it clear that the reward has nothing to do with salvation.

According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 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. (1 Corinthians 3:10-15 NASB)

Paul is saying that the foundation of Jesus Christ has been laid and that each of us is building on it. As we build, we can work with various materials. Some will stand the test of fire and some won't. The quality of our work will be [*not might be*] tested by fire. If we build with quality materials it won't burn and we will receive a reward. If we build with inferior materials it will be burned and we suffer the loss of our reward, yet the foundation remains and we are saved. We only lose our reward not our salvation.

In a verse prior to this Paul says:

Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. (1 Corinthians 3:8 NASB)

This tells us that while we are one body we have different jobs such as planting or watering. Each job has its own reward and it is based on our own work doing the job. This definitely ties work and reward together. You can't have one without the other.

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. (Colossians 3:23-24 NASB)

Just as we can build upon the foundation with inferior materials we can also lose part of our reward by not being diligent about discernment. It is in the context of false teachers that John tells us :

Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. (2 John 1:8 NASB)

There is a time coming of judgment and of reward. This is a predestined time in the purposes of God.

"And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time *came* for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward 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." (Revelation 11:18 NASB)

Jesus speaks prophetically through John in the Book of Revelation:

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done." (Revelation 22:12 NASB)

Jesus is bringing the reward with Him when He comes. He will then give an accounting to every man that is according to what he has done.

Our reward is not heaven. Heaven has been achieved for us through Christ Jesus and the forgiveness of our sins. We simply repent and receive. Our reward is based on our work, what we have done. Have we been faithful and diligent concerning the requirements, the gifts, and the enabling of the Lord for the work that He prepared beforehand for us (*Ephesians 2:10*)?

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