

REWARDED FOR SERVING

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We all understand that God wants us to live for Him - He wants us to love Him and obey Him, He wants us to love others and serve them. And He wants you to know that how you live your life for Him on this earth will result in rewards in heaven. And that God wants to eternally reward you for everything you do or say for Him is a powerful truth, and will truly revolutionize how you live your life for God.

I want to talk about how God uses different words to describe how He wants to bless you:

- First, there is the word crown. 2 Tim. 4:8 - *“In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day... and to all who have loved His appearing.”* In the 1st century, crowns were the wreaths awarded to winning athletes at the Olympic games. Receiving a crown from God means that you ran the race He gave you to run, you competed according to the rules, you persevered, and you were victorious, and that God is very pleased with what you did for Him. Rev. 2:17

- Another word similar to this word crown is the word prize. Ph. 3:14 says, *“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”* The word prize has to do with the fact that God Himself is the righteous Judge, that He Himself rightly decides the prize you will receive for your labor of love for Him. 1 Cor. 9:24-27

Second, there's the word reward. Rev. 22:12 says, *“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what He has done.”*

The word *“reward”* is also translated as wage. For example, John 4:36 says, *“Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal.”*

God will reward you when you work for Him for its what's due you, it's what you earned. 1 Cor. 3:8 says each Christian *“will receive his own reward according to his own labor.”* All Christians will be in heaven with Jesus and in a new glorified body, but each of you'll be rewarded differently, according to how you, by God's grace, specifically obeyed Him.

Third, there's the word recompense. Col. 3:23-24 says, *“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the recompense.”* This word recompense literally means *“a giving back in return.”*

- It's truly amazing, and encouraging, that God will graciously and generously give to you because you served Him, whether it's cooking a meal, cleaning your house, working at a job, serving someone, praying for someone, raising your child, sharing the gospel, etc. Luke 14:14 tells you when this will happen, that *“you will be repaid, (be recompensed) at the resurrection of the righteous,”* which is on the day of Christ.

Fourth, there's the word treasure. Matt. 6:19-21, 24 - *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth...store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also...You cannot serve God and mammon."*

Most of you have earthly treasures, things we call valuables, and they're referred to here as mammon, and this is money, possessions, things you can see and hold. But your goal is not to be accumulating these things on earth, is not to be storing them up for yourself.

You need to see yourself as a steward, as God's servant, and this means you're to use the earthly treasures He's given you, this earthly mammon, to do the work He wants you to do. This means you're investing your money wisely, you're using your possessions, your house, your car, your earthly goods for God's purposes, and when you do that, you are storing up for yourself treasures in heaven, you will be rewarded by God. And yes, you can set aside money for your earthly "retirement," but most importantly, you are to serve God on earth and store up for yourself treasures in heaven. Matt. 6:33

Fifth, there's the word inheritance. 1 Pet. 1:3-4 says God caused you to be born again to *"obtain an inheritance which is imperishable, and undefiled... reserved in heaven for you."* The word inheritance is a general word, and what we've already talked about, crowns, rewards, recompense, and treasures, are part of this inheritance. Now this word inheritance causes us to think about the giver, and that is God Himself. God wants to really bless you and all His children with that which is infinitely and eternally valuable. And all Christians, no matter what they do, will receive an inheritance, but the exact nature and full extent of this inheritance relates to how you live for God on this earth.

I want to now look at some more vss. that talk about these rewards.

- Matt. 5:5 says, *"Blessed are the gentle for they shall inherit the earth"* I believe some of the inheritance you'll receive relates to how God will bless you on this restored earth in the millennial kingdom, and some of it to how He'll bless you in the eternal kingdom. And one condition for receiving an inheritance is being gentle, is being humble and meek.
- Matt. 5:11 - Being insulted, slandered, and persecuted results in great rewards in heaven.
- Matt. 5:43-45. Luke 6:35. You will be rewarded when you love your enemies, when you love those who hate you, when you're kind to them and give to them.

Matt. 6:1. We've talked about these vss. before, but let's look at them again. In this world, people want to be noticed, recognized, and applauded by other people. Lk. 6:26, Pharisees
- Now Matt. 6:1 says there are 2 keys to being rewarded in heaven: #1, by doing what is right, and #2, by doing what is right in the eyes of God. You care about what God thinks, not what man thinks. It's being humble, it's wanting God to see what you are doing.

Jesus gives 3 examples of this. Matt. 6:4, 6, 18 talk about how God sees you when you give in secret, pray in secret, and fast in secret, and for all these, God will reward you. God wants to reward every aspect of your life. But it's not a matter of you letting people know what you're doing for God, but just doing it humbly, quietly, secretly, and God will see it, and He will then reward you in heaven.

Matt. 10:42. God wants to reward you for anything and everything you do or say for Him, and that means even giving water to a child. This is encouraging, for God will reward you for even the littlest thing you do for Him. This truth about how God wants to reward you gives value and meaning to every thing in your life and every day of your life. Isaiah 40:10

Matt. 25:14-30. This is a great section of vss. about how you're to use the talents God gives you, and how He will then reward you. A corresponding and similar parable is found in Luke 19. Here are a number of points from these two passages:

1. The man represents Jesus Christ, and He is going on a journey, and this is referring to when He went to heaven, but it says He's coming back to establish His kingdom, and this is referring to Christ's return at the end of this age to set up His kingdom on this earth.

2. The man, the master, gives talents to his slaves, to his servants. And they're responsible to use them, not for their own good, but for the good of their master, and for His kingdom. - And the master tells the slaves - "*Do business with this until I come back*" (Luke 19:13). That is, you're to use the talents God gives you during the time you live on this earth.

3. Matt. 25:15. "*To one he gave 5 talents, to another, 2, and to another 1, each according to his own ability.*" From this we learn that God gives out different gifts, different talents, differing amounts of money to each person. We also learn that each person is different – we're not the same - we all have different abilities, with different backgrounds, different experiences, different positions, and different opportunities. We're all unique.

You all know this, but it must be stressed. There is no one else in the world like you – God made you a certain way, physically, mentally, spiritually – you are different than everyone else. And God gave you very specific talents and gifts that you're to use for Him, for His purposes, for His work, for His kingdom and glory. And so don't ever compare yourself to anyone else. Just remember, God made you the way you are – and He gave you certain gifts and abilities that you are to use for Him.

4. Matthew 25:19 – "*Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.*" And this "*long time*" is referring to this church age, and it's been going on now for close to 2000 years, but this age is coming to a close, for we're now living in the end-times. Christ will soon come back and at that time, on the day of Christ, you will give an account to Christ of how you live your life on this earth.

What did you do for Christ? How did you live your life for Him? Did you faithfully use the gifts God gave you, or did you waste them, or were you selfish, or lazy? Romans 14:12 – *“So then each one of us will give an account of Himself to God.”* This is one of the most sobering vss. in the Bible, that you’ll personally give an account to Christ of how you lived your life on earth, of how you lived for God, for Christ.

5. Matthew 25:21a. *“The master said, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave.’* This tells us the keys to living a good Christian life, to being a successful and fruitful Christian.

- First, you must see yourself as a slave of Christ, as His servant. You’re to live for God, and not for self. And you must be humble and willing to do whatever He wants you to do.
- Second, you must be a good slave, which means you are to have a good heart, a heart that loves God and wants to please Him.
- Third, you must be faithful, you must do what God wants and be continually doing what He wants. Being a solid and successful Christians means you are faithfully, day after day, week after week, serving the Lord, doing what He wants you to do.

To the best of your ability, you’re to work hard for God, that’s what’s important to Him. And Christ then rewards your effort, your work, your faithfulness. What Christ rewards then is effort, not the outcome. God does not expect us to have equal outcomes. He’s not interested in equity, but He does want each of us to give maximum effort. And God rewards our effort, our hearts, our motives, our obedience, and not the results, not what’s visible, but what’s hidden. 1 Cor. 4:15, 2 Cor. 5:10

Again, don’t ever compare yourself with someone else. It’s important that you see that God is in charge - and He knows what He’s doing when He makes a person a certain way, and gives that person certain gifts and talents. Let’s say there’s an invalid who has to stay at home, but she is a faithful prayer warrior, and then there’s this talented evangelist, but he’s not that faithful, he doesn’t work that hard, and so this lady will be rewarded more in heaven because she loved God, she was faithful, and she worked hard for Him. Paul, Anna – Luke 2, Tabitha – Acts 9

6. Matthew 25:21b. What do we learn from this?

- 1st, that Jesus will personally commend you for how you served Him, and specifically, He will commend your faithfulness, your effort, your continued service.
- 2nd, God will reward you, and some of these rewards will be seen in the responsibilities He gives you in the age to come. How you serve Christ now results in being rewarded and those rewards relate to how you’ll serve Him in the future, in the next age.
- Third, you will share your Master’s happiness. You’ll have a good and close relationship with Jesus Christ. And you’ll be with Him, and spend time with Him and enjoy Him and love Him, and have fellowship with Him. Psalm 16:11 – *“In Your presence is fullness of joy; in your right hand there are pleasures forever.”* John 14:1-3