

“Returning to God for Rewards”

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

Introduction

When runners prepare on the starting line before a race, each one envisions the prize they hope to gain at the end. Every fiber of their body is straining to achieve that end result of winning the race. “Run in such a way that you may win” (1 Corinthians 9:24). The apostle Paul encourages Christians to live like runners in a race, like athletes striving for the prize. God wants us to live our Christian with a primary goal of obtaining a reward as one of our primary aims. God rewards us because of how we love Him, serve Him and obey Him. The focus is entirely on the Lord and not on us. Therefore, seeking rewards is not selfish or greedy but rather a way to surrender our lives to God and bring Him glory. One thing we can never claim as a reward is our salvation because we did not earn it. Our salvation is a free gift from God given by His grace through our faith, but our rewards must be earned.

Our eternal rewards will be distributed at the judgment seat of Christ. During the tribulation on earth, believers who were just raptured will stand before the judgment seat of Christ in heaven. There, believers will face a comprehensive evaluation of their lives. At the evaluation, God will determine what we did that was of eternal value and what was only of temporal value; what was of high quality and what was of low quality. The answer to those questions will affect the level of reward we may receive.

Believers will gain or lose eternal rewards based on our faithful allegiance to Christ. We demonstrate faithfulness and allegiance to Christ through our ministry, mouth and motivation. Our ministry consists of the ways we serve other believers and non-believers by showing them kindness and communicating the Gospel to them. Our mouth speaks words that can either help or hurt others, and we will give an account of what we have said (Matthew 12:36-37). We can do the right thing with the wrong heart behind it, and though we may be able to fool people, we cannot fool God. He knows our motivations for our actions, so He will get to the core of what we did. Since we are working *now* for our eternal rewards, we must change course if we are headed in the wrong direction and begin pursuing God wholeheartedly. If we have been following God, we need to maximize our time by looking deeply into our hearts and asking ourselves critical questions: Are we spending our time saying and doing things of eternal value? Do our lives bring God glory?

Getting Started

1. What rewards typically motivate people? What rewards motivate you or your children?
2. How do most people respond when they lose and miss out on a reward?

Let's Get Personal

1. What new truths about eternal rewards did you learn from this message?
2. How has your ministry, mouth, and motivation been lacking in serving the Lord?

3. How much time do you spend thinking about eternity? Does the idea of eternal rewards affect your daily decisions?

Take the Next Step

1. How can you show kindness and communicate the Gospel to people this week? What other ways can you serve that will have eternal value?
2. How can you immediately begin shifting your words from hurtful to helpful and careless to careful?
3. Spend time in prayer and introspection. Ask the Lord to show you your motivations and evaluate whether they are self-serving or pure and holy.
4. Want to go deeper? Take time to look at the following passages: 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Revelation 22:12; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; 1 John 2:28; Matthew 10:40-42; 1 Corinthians 4:3-5; Romans 2:5-6; 1 Peter 2:12; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 4:7-8; 2 Peter 1:10-11; Luke 19:11-27; Matthew 25:14-30; Matthew 19:27-30; Mark 10:28-31; Matthew 12:36-37; Luke 12:2-3; 2 John 1:8.
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Renew Your Mind

"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."

1 Corinthians 3:13-14
