

What Is Our Heavenly Reward?

There is much confusion about what comprises our heavenly reward. Those who fail to rightly divide think there are mansions being built for us. This is also popular wisdom (See John 14:2). The Apostle Paul speaks of a "crown of righteousness" (II Timothy 4:8). What is this crown? The Apostle Paul also speaks of our reward. Many question how this can be. Is it right to "selfishly" work to earn a heavenly reward?

- I. Is there a heavenly reward?
 - a. The Apostle Paul speaks of a reward (Romans 2:6-7, I Corinthians 3:8, 14, II Corinthians 5:10)
 - b. The Apostle Paul speaks of his own reward (I Corinthians 9:16-18, II Timothy 4:8)
- II. How is this reward determined?
 - a. God will judge mankind (II Timothy 4:1, Revelation 20:12-13 (note, this does not mean saved will be at White Throne judgment), Romans 14:10, 2:6-10, 16)
 - b. He is not a respecter of persons; i.e. position, standing, nationality don't mean anything (Romans 2:11, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25, see also I Peter 1:17). Everyone—saved, unsaved, Jew, Gentile, etc.—will be judged by the same standard.
 - c. Everyone will fail this test (Romans 3:10, 19, 23)
- III. How are we different?
 - a. We have Christ's righteousness (Romans 3:21-26). There are many other references (Romans 8:9-10, II Corinthians 5:21, and others); we have been given Christ's righteousness—by faith, not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9).
 - b. We will be judged according to what Christ has done. Just like everyone else, we will be judged according to our works. The difference is that Christ's work has been substituted for our own (Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:9).
- IV. Can we earn a reward?
 - a. No! (Romans 9:16, Ephesians 2:8,9). We have a hard time with this; we think that once we are saved, we are sort of "cleaned up" and now can do good things for God. In ourselves, we cannot—only Christ can. We really have a hard time not thinking we are at least in some way better than others (II Corinthians 10:12)
 - b. We have nothing in ourselves to glory or boast about. We can only glory in what Christ has done (Romans 4:2-5, I Corinthians 1:28-31, 4:6-7, II Corinthians 10:17)
 - c. The Apostle Paul does not glory in himself (I Corinthians 9:16-18, 15:10, Galatians 6:14)
 - d. Spiritual gifts are instructive in this regard (I Corinthians 12). The Corinthians were boasting about their spiritual gifts. The Apostle Paul reprimands them for their pride. In the following chapter he tells them charity (love) is better. It does not seek its own.
- V. What happens at the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10)
 - a. Our work is tried (I Corinthians 3:13)
 - i. Why described as a building? (Ephesians 2:22)

- b. Whose work is it?
 - i. Christ is the foundation (I Corinthians 3:10-11)
 - ii. Christ is doing the work (Ephesians 2:9-10, Philippians 1:6, 2:13, Colossians 3:3-4). We are instructed to prove this work (but again it is Christ's work; our proving it only demonstrates how wonderful it is). (Romans 12:2, Galatians 6:4 (with 2:20 and whole context of Galatians), Consider analogy of a tree (I Corinthians 3:6-9). If you water and care for a tree, you can't take credit for the tree. While you could certainly hinder its growth, caring for it simply allows it to become what it is supposed to be.
 - c. We receive a reward (I Corinthians 3:14)
- VI. What exactly is our reward?
- a. All spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3—we already have it. See also Romans 8:32)
 - b. Glorified body (Philippians 3:20-21)
 - c. Reigning with Christ (II Timothy 2:11-12). We will have positions of authority judging angels (I Corinthians 6:1-3).
 - d. To be to the praise of HIS glory (Ephesians 1:12)
 - e. “Reward” and “Crown” examined
 - i. I Corinthians 9:17-18 (Paul's reward) Compare to Philippians 4:1 and I Thessalonians 2:19-20 (saints were his reward). In other words, the Body of Christ was his reward (which is really to Christ's glory).
 - ii. I Corinthians 3:14. What's the reward? The context of Corinthians 3 is about NOT glorying in a person, so it does not follow that it would be about a personal reward. It is a reward for Christ's work—not our own. Again I think this reward is ultimately the Body of Christ.
 - iii. II Timothy 4:7-8. The reward is for “all them that love his appearing.” He also does not say “therefore;” instead he says “henceforth.”
 - iv. God's ultimate purpose is to glorify His Son through the Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:19-23). The Body of Christ is the reward (Ephesians 5:27).
 - v. Other references to a reward (Philippians 3:14, Colossians 2:18, 3:24)
 - f. There is much I don't understand about what will happen when we get to heaven and much perhaps the Bible doesn't tell us. We certainly won't be leaving the judgment seat of Christ feeling cocky. We will be rejoicing in Christ and giving glory to Him. This is God's purpose for Christ. Consider Satan's original purpose as he was created.