

## Eternal Rewards Are Gained By Our Works On Earth

'God has sent redemption to His people. He has ordained His covenant forever. His name is holy and awesome! The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. All those who do His work have good understanding. His praise endures forever!' (Psalm 111:9 & 10).

This Bible study is not about how to gain salvation through the blood of Jesus, this study is directed at people who are already saved by grace and faith. This Bible study is about what God means by 'good works' and 'good words'. Firstly, the Lord sent the gift of salvation by faith then He established good works for us to do. Only by His grace and mercy, we are saved. We cannot be saved by works nor can we 'buy' our way into heaven. We cannot save ourselves. 'By grace you have been saved through faith and that is not of yourselves. Salvation is the gift of God. Not by works so no one can boast' (Ephesians 2:8 & 9). 'Where is the boasting? It is excluded. What manner of law? Of works? No, by a law of faith. A person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law' (Romans 3:27 & 28).

Once our salvation has been established, God expects us to serve Him in various ways. 'Our Lord Jesus Himself and God our Father, Who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good work and word' (2 Thessalonians 2:16 & 17). 'God is able to make all grace abound to you so you will always have all sufficiency in everything and may abound to every good work' (2 Corinthians 9:8). 'Every Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and for instruction in righteousness so the man (or woman) of God may be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Timothy 3:16 & 17). Good works can mean direct service to God according to His will but good works can also mean general, righteous actions like showing mercy, being kind and forgiving, speaking kindly to people, being just and being humble. 'God has shown you what is good. What does God require of you but to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God?' (Micah 6:8). 'At Joppa, there was a disciple named Tabitha Dorcas who was full of good works and acts of mercy' (Acts 9:36). Our actions and behaviour are all being written down in God's heavenly books and we will be judged according to our service to God, our actions, our behaviour and the things we say. 'The good man out of his good treasure does and says good things. The evil man out of his evil treasure does and says evil things. I tell you, on the Day of Judgment people will give account of every idle word they speak. By your own words you will be justified and by your own words you will be condemned' (Matthew 12:35 to 37).

We receive eternity with God by salvation, but we receive eternal rewards by doing His will, serving Him and doing good, holy works. 'We are his workmanship, created in Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand so we would walk in them' (Ephesians 2:10). 'Jesus gave Himself for us so He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works' (Titus 2:14). 'It is not only the children of the flesh (Gentiles) who are children of God, but also the children of the promise (Abraham's descendents) ... People not yet born, not having done anything good or bad so the purpose of God according to His choice might stand, not of good works but of Him who calls us' (Romans 9:8 & 11).

We were created to work for God. That principle was established with Adam. The scripture says Adam was alone but before the Lord would create his companion Eve, Adam had to first obey and serve God by naming every animal God had created. Only after Adam had completed the task, did the Lord create Eve. 'God said, "It is not good for the man (Adam) to be alone. I will make him a companion suitable for him." Out of the ground God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. Whatever Adam called every living creature, that was its name. Adam gave names to all livestock, to the birds of the sky and to every animal of the field but for Adam, there was not found a companion suitable for him. God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam and as he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. From the rib God had taken from Adam, He made into a woman (Eve) and brought her to the man' (Genesis 2:18 to 22).

The Lord calls our good works, fruit. 'Walk worthily of the Lord to please Him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God' (Colossians 1:10). There are many thousands of ways we can serve God and do good. Mary Magdalene poured the expensive perfume on Jesus' feet and head, which He said was a good thing. Jesus said to them, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble the woman? She has done a good work for Me" (Mark 14:6). We should encourage people to do God's will, to do good things for others, which in turn brings peace, it pleases God and brings Him glory. 'Let us consider how to encourage one another to love and do good works ... May the God of peace Who brought back from the dead the Great Shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus to Whom be the glory forever and ever, Amen' (Hebrews 10:24 & 13:20 & 21).

Obedying civil authorities, not criticising others, not being argumentative, being gentle and humble, continually doing good things, giving to those in need are all considered good works. 'Be in subjection to magistrates, rulers and to authorities, be obedient, be ready for every good work, speak evil of no one, do not be contentious, be gentle, showing all humility toward all people ... When the kindness of God our Saviour and His love toward mankind appeared, not by works of righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy, He saved us through the cleansing or our rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, Whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus our Saviour. Being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This saying is faithful and concerning these things ... those who have believed God, be careful to maintain good works ... Let our people learn to continue to do good works for the community so they may be fruitful' (Titus 3:1 to 8 & 14). 'If you have two coats, give one to the person who has none. If you have food, share it with a person who has none ... Take no more than what is appointed to you ... Be content with your wages' (Luke 3:11, 13 & 14). 'If anyone asks to take away your coat, let him have your cloak also. Whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to those who ask you and do not turn away from those who desire to borrow from you' (Matthew 5:40 to 42).

We receive eternal rewards by welcoming righteous people, by giving even the smallest item to a righteous person, a child or the poor. When we welcome, accept and encourage a person as a prophet or as someone who is righteous, we receive the same rewards as they do. In the following verses, Jesus infers we have to accept a righteous child as being one of God's disciples, so just because someone is young, does not mean they are not worthy to be regarded as a disciple. Jesus said, "Out of the mouths of babes (young children) God has perfected praise" (Matthew 21:16). "From the lips of babes You have established Your strength" (Psalm 8:2). 'Whoever welcomes you, welcomes Me and those who welcome Me welcomes God who sent Me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. Whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. Whoever gives a child just a cup of cold water to drink in the name of a disciple, most certainly I tell you, they will not lose their reward' (Matthew 10:40 to 42). 'Whoever will give you a cup of water to drink in My name because you belong to Jesus, most certainly I tell you, they will not lose their reward' (Mark 9:41). 'When you make lunch or dinner, do not call your friends, nor your family, nor rich neighbours because they might return the favour and pay you back. When you make a feast, ask the poor, the maimed, the lame or the blind and you will be blessed because they do not have the ability to repay you and you will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous' (Luke 14:12 to 14).

We often see people standing in the front of their church telling the congregation all about the wonderful things they are doing for God, or they talk about their fasting, blowing their own invisible trumpet. If we do good works to gain recognition from people, we will not receive an eternal reward. If we do good works silently before God, we will gain an eternal reward even if people never see what we do. 'Be careful you do not do your charitable giving before people to be seen by them, or else you have no reward from your Father Who is in heaven. When you do merciful deeds, do not sound a trumpet before yourself as the hypocrites do in the assemblies and in the streets so they may get glory from people. Most certainly I tell you, they have received all the reward they will get. When you do merciful deeds, do not let your left hand know what your right hand does so your merciful deeds may be in secret, then your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. When you pray, do not be as the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the assemblies and in the corners of the streets so they may be seen by people. Most certainly I tell you, they have received all the reward they will get. When you pray, enter your private place and having shut your door, pray to your Father Who is in secret and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you openly ... When you fast, do not be like the hypocrites with sad faces. They disfigure their faces so they may be seen by people to be fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received all the reward they will get. When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so you are not seen by people to be fasting but by your Father Who is in secret and your Father, Who sees in secret will reward you' (Matthew 6:1 to 6; 16 to 18).

We receive eternal rewards when we suffer persecution. 'Blessed are you when people revile you, persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for great is your reward in heaven. That is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you' (Matthew 5:11 & 12). We receive eternal rewards for sharing the Gospel of salvation. One person may speak first, sowing the seed of faith while another may be the one to lead that person through to full salvation. Both people will receive an equal eternal reward. People sow the seeds of faith, others may 'water' the emerging 'seed', another may reap the 'harvest' but one is no more or less important than another. Whatever way it happens, it is the Lord Who does the work. 'Neither he who plants is important nor he who waters, but God Who gives the increase. He who plants and he who waters are the same value and each will receive his own reward according to his own labour. We are all God's fellow workers ... one lays the foundation and another builds on it but be careful how you build, for no one can lay any other foundation than what has been laid and He is Jesus' (1 Corinthians 3:7 to 11). 'Know this, from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance for you serve the Lord Jesus' (Colossians 3:24).

If righteous people are unable to do works due to disability or constraints due to an unsaved spouse or for any other reason, they can pray and are just as valuable as those who are able to do more physical good works. Their faith is accredited to them as righteousness. 'Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. To those who do good works, the reward is not counted as grace but as debt. To those who do not work but believe in God Who justifies the ungodly, their faith is accounted for righteousness. King David pronounced blessing (in Psalm 32:1) on the person to whom God counts righteousness apart from works. Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the person whom the Lord will by no means charge with sin' (Romans 4:3 to 8).

Treasures and eternal rewards are the same. If we hoard things on earth, Jesus says we are lacking, are foolish and spiritually poor. 'Do not heap up treasures for yourselves on the earth where moths and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust can destroy and where thieves cannot break in and steal. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be' (Matthew 6:19 to 21). Jesus said, "One thing you lack. Go and sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven then come, follow Me, taking up the cross" (Mark 10:21). 'God said, "You foolish man. Tonight your soul is required of you. The things you have hoarded – whose will they be?" So are they who hoard treasure for themselves on earth and are not rich toward God ... Sell what you have and give gifts to the needy. Make for yourselves (eternal) purses that do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief steals nor can moths destroy. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also' (Luke 12:20 & 21, 33 & 34).

If we claim to love Jesus but ignore the needs of others, we are not, in reality, walking with God as we should and although they may claim or pretend to be saved, they are in fact, faithless and spiritually dead. 'What good is it if a man says he has faith but has no works? Can faith alone save him? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food and one of you tells them, "Go in peace, be warm and filled," and yet you do not give them the things the body needs, what good is it? Faith without works is dead' (James 2:14 to 17). When we do things for other people, especially Jewish people, God rewards us in heaven. We may not see any rewards or blessings on earth for what we do but every time we do something, whether good or bad, our actions are written down in books in heaven. Good things will be rewarded. Unrighteous actions will be burned up. When we refuse to help whenever possible, especially Jewish people, it could end our eternal life with God. When we do good things, Jesus considers our action as being done for Him. When we do not do what we can for others, Jesus regards that as not helping Him personally. When Jesus refers to, 'My brothers', He actually means His blood family, the Jewish people. Notice what Jesus said, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, He will sit on the throne of His glory. Before Him all the nations will be gathered and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will set the sheep on His right hand but the goats on the left. The King will tell those on His right hand, 'Come, blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave Me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave Me a drink. I was a stranger and you took Me in. I was naked and you clothed Me. I was sick and you visited Me. I was in prison and you came to Me.' The righteous will ask Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and gave You a drink? When did we see You as a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothed You? When did we see You sick or in prison and came to You?' The King will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, when you did these things for one of the least of these My brothers, you did it for Me.'

Then He will say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you did not give Me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink. I was a stranger and you did not take Me in. I was naked and you did not clothe Me, or sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they will ask, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison and did not help You?' Then the King will answer them, 'Most certainly I tell you, when you did not do these things for one of the least of these, you did not do it for Me.' These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:31 to 46).

Sadly, there are some Christians who think they can get away with being rude, nasty, abusive, dishonest, ignoring the plight of the poor, sick or disabled, being unkind or not showing mercy. Those Christians need to think again because everything we do is written down and recorded in books in heaven. We will all be judged by our actions and words, whether good or bad. 'A fiery stream came forth from before the Ancient of Days. Thousands of thousands ministered to Him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The judgment was set and the books were opened' (Daniel 7:10). 'I saw the dead, the great and the small standing before the throne and they (holy angels) opened books. Another book was opened which is the Book of Life. The dead were judged by the things written in the books, according to their works ... They were judged, each one according to their works' (Revelation 20:12 & 13).

It is our duty and the requirement of God, all people on earth obey the commandments of God and act accordingly. 'This is the end of the matter. All has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of mankind. God will bring every work into judgment with every hidden thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil' (Ecclesiastes 12:13 & 14). 'Each person's work will be revealed. Judgement Day will declare it because it will be revealed in fire and the fire itself will test what sort of work each person's work is. If anyone's work remains which they built up, they will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, they will suffer loss but they themselves will be saved but only as through fire' (1 Corinthians 3:13 to 15). 'We must all be revealed before the judgment seat of Jesus so each one may receive the rewards for work done while in the body, according to what they have done, whether good or bad' (2 Corinthians 5:10). 'Judgement Day of the Lord will come as suddenly as a thief in the night. The heavens will be destroyed with a great noise and the universe will be dissolved with extreme heat. The earth and all the works in it will be burned up' (2 Peter 3:10).

God hates violence and He especially hates domestic violence, that is men who harm their wives and children (Psalm 11:5; Malachi 2:16). Before the judgement of Noah's ark and the worldwide flood, the earth was filled with violence (Genesis 6:11). We are living in the age of anger and violence; road rage, racism, anti-Semitism, rape, gang against gang, ethnic group against ethnic group, hatred, gun massacres, terrorism, violent neighbourhood disputes, senseless cowardly punches resulting in death, violent drug dealers, wanton destruction and many other actions of insane fury. This is what the Bible said would happen in the last days but there is hope. Jesus will come and stop a lot of the sin that is occurring around the world by judging those who behave that way. Ultimately, violent men will not get away with their acts of brutality against women and children. They will be judged when they meet God face to face. God hates all violence and we notice it is men's anger that is especially mentioned in the following verse bringing the wrath of God. 'The nations were angry and Your wrath came, as did the time for the dead to be judged and to give Your servants the prophets their reward, as well as to the saints (all believers who have been obedient to God), those who fear Your name, to the small and the great and to destroy those who destroy the earth' (Revelation 11:18). 'Behold, I (Jesus) will come quickly (suddenly). My reward is with Me to repay to each person according to their work ... He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I will come quickly." Amen! Yes, come Lord Jesus' (Revelation 22:12 & 20).

Amen and God bless you.

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