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**Paul's Epistle: "Rewards"** by Paul Heil...

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"Paul, I have accepted Christ as my Savior. I'm going to heaven, as He promised. Isn't that enough?" Well, yes. That's what really matters. But why stop there? Remember that what we do on earth, even as Christians, determines our reward in heaven. That "rewards" aspect of heaven seems sometimes overlooked. Scripture indicates that even for the Christian, the extent of our rewards in heaven will be related to how we live our lives as Christians here and now. Salvation isn't just a "ticket to ride." It's a set of marching orders.

Dr. Woodrow Kroll, a former speaker on the "Back To The Bible" broadcast, in his book, "It Will Be Worth It All," writes, "There is a vast chasm between the meaning of salvation and the meaning of rewards. They are not at all the same. Salvation is appropriated to the sinner; rewards are awarded to the saint. Salvation is identical for all who by faith receive it; rewards are proportionate to one's life of service. Salvation is a gracious gift, given by God to the lost; rewards are a gracious wage paid for faithfully allowing the Lord to work through us." We see this in Revelation 22:12 where Christ says, "...behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Earlier, in Matthew 16:27, Christ made it clear: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." We are not saved by works. But our works for Christ, as Christians, affect the nature and extent of our rewards in heaven. (Of course, the "works" of the unsaved will be "rewarded," too, in a most undesirable manner.)

In Matthew 6, beginning at verse 19, Christ reminds us of an eternal perspective: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth... But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." That's practical advice for today. "Laying up treasures" certainly implies that what you do for Christ in this life is "laying up treasures," or rewards, in the life to come. This is something beyond salvation. Nothing will delight God more than to bestow an abundance of rewards on His saints, just as a father loves to lavish gifts on his obedient children. And He can do that however He wants, so we can't even speculate on specifics. We, frankly, don't know the exact nature of those rewards or the range or scope of those rewards that He is prepared to bestow on His saints. But Scripture includes a warning about all of this. Christ's parable recounted in Luke 19:11-17 recalls how a nobleman entrusted some money to each of ten servants, telling them to trade with the money and increase it until he returned from a trip. When he returned, he rewarded each of the servants in accordance with how they managed to increase the investment.

But the servant who simply hid the money away for safekeeping was strongly condemned. The warning here is that if we don't use the gifts and opportunities we are given for Christ, our "reward" in heaven will be considerably diminished. After all, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required..." (Luke 12:48.) 17th century British churchman Richard Baxter wrote this about how many Christians live: "If God had never told them what they were sent into the world to do, or what was before them in another world, then there would have been some excuse. But it is His sealed word, and they profess to believe it." If we believe it, shouldn't we act more on our beliefs? The writer of Hebrews put it this way: "For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister." (Hebrews 6:10.) God will not forget anything you do on His behalf because of your love for Him.

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Lest all of this talk about rewards sounds a bit greedy on our part, let me remind you that only our best efforts in this life for God are what is pleasing to Him. It's what He wants. That's why we do it. We want to please Him, because we love Him. No, it's not always easy. But as a result of pleasing Him, He'll shower us with rewards in heaven. And, as a bonus — just watch — He'll even provide more than our share of blessings in this life. Let this be just one more reminder and an encouragement to live for Jesus every day in every way. Paul Heil  
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