

Debunking the Myth of Heavenly Rewards for Good Works

Romans 14:10-12

We have seen from our text truths consistent with the doctrine of justification by grace.

- (1). The “judgment seat” of Christ is his place of authority, or throne, in the heaven.
- (2). The true believer in Christ will stand beside Christ as a coheir of God’s riches.
- (3). The ungodly shall not stand (they shall fall) in the presence of Christ’s judgment.

There are some who attempt to teach “two” future judgments. They say that the ungodly shall be judged at “The Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20” but the righteous shall be judged by Christ at “The Judgment Seat.” The ungodly are judged for their sins, but the righteous are judged for their good works. Thus, those who hold this view believe in various degrees of rewards in heaven. This teaching has many problems.

I. Heavenly rewards for good works contradicts the Biblical teaching of grace.

The Bible is quite clear that all of our good works on earth are a direct work of God.

“For it is God at work in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

(A). Everything that you have done that is good comes from God . . .

The soft heart, the compassionate deed, the bold leadership is all from God.

(B). This is why nobody can take credit for anything they do that is good . . .

An understanding of grace will keep a person humble when they succeed. Christ moved us to do that which our sinful natures would never consent to do.

II. Heavenly rewards for good works can only be for the good works of Christ.

Think about it for just a moment. God is perfect. He is holy. He demands perfection.

“Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

If we are not perfect in our works, we are in sin. It was for this reason that Christ went to the cross. That we 'could' appear before Him blameless, perfect, and without fault in all our works. The Bible says that the righteous shall be “found without fault” on judgment day (Rev. 14:5). We are without fault because God justifies us.

III. Heavenly rewards for good works confuses the believer regarding motivation.

Why do you do what you do? Why do you give? Why do you what is right?

Pastors will often seek to motivate you by threatening you with some loss of future reward or the possible shame for being saved “by the skin of your teeth.” Whereas the clear teaching of the N.T. is that we should be motivated by Christ’s great love.

“We love him because he first loved us” (I John 4:9). This is our motivation.

IV. Heavenly rewards for good works captures the world’s imagination.

I have learned that if man naturally thinks something is right it is usually wrong

God’s ways are higher than man’s ways (Isaiah 55), and God graces sinners of no merit. Does this sound a little unfair? I remind you --- He is Lord (Matthew 20:1-16).

Will Christians stand before the (judgment) seat of God? Answer: Yes. We will STAND, not fall.

“Degrees of rewards in heaven is essentially an apology for works salvation and popery” (Peter Meney).

(1). THE EVERLASTING LOVE OF GOD TO HIS ELECT. All the people of God are loved by Him with the same love. They are not loved one sooner than another for they are all loved with an everlasting love. They are not loved more than another for there are no degrees of love with God. The love He bears to His own dear people is unaltered by time and continues for all eternity.

(2). THE JUSTIFICATION OF GOD’S PEOPLE FROM ETERNITY. All the people of God are chosen together in Christ. They are not chosen one earlier than another for all are chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world.

(3). THE PRECIOUS PROMISES AND BLESSINGS OF GOD. All the people of God are equally interested in the covenant of grace. All are in it as they are chosen in Christ before the world began and all are entitled to the same exceeding great and precious promises and blessings of it.

(4). THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST. All the people of God are equally redeemed with the same price which is the precious blood of Christ (I Corinthians 6:20, I Peter 1:18,19). Though redeemed out of every tribe and nation yet it is the same blood (Revelation 5:9). The ransom price for the elect is the same for all, Christ Himself (I Timothy 2:6).

(5). THE PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST. All the people of God are justified by the same righteousness. Justification is unto all and upon all that believe. There is no difference between greater and lesser believers; great faith or little faith. No believer has more righteousness than another. Nor does the nature and object of the same precious faith differ from believer to believer.

(6). JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST. All the people of God are equally the children of God. They are predestined to the same adoption, into the same family, by the same redemption by which they receive the same rights and authority to become the children of God. They are fellow citizens with the saints, equal members of the household of God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

(7). WE ARE ALL PRIESTS UNTO GOD. All the people of God are kings and priests unto God. We are made so by Christ. We are His workmanship. Our office and dignity are alike. We were all dead once in the depravity of sin and all raised by grace from a low estate to an incorruptible inheritance

(8). THE LANGUAGE OF INHERITANCE IS SINGULAR. “Because there are no degrees of reward in heaven, our future glory and the blessings of our inheritance are invariably expressed in the singular. The inheritance of the saints is the same inheritance though the saints be many. The inheritance reserved in heaven is the same for all though reserved for many. The kingdom of our Father gives, the crown of righteousness laid up and the penny given to the laborers, though some worked all day and some worked for only a short time, speaks of equality for all.

(9). WE ARE TO REJOICE AND BE EXCEEDING GLAD NOW FOR GREAT IS OUR REWARD. Hence, we may say to every believer, as did our Lord in Matthew 5:12 that there is no need to be anxious or worry about your eternal reward, for it is great in Christ; it is yours through faith; and it is all earned by the performance of Christ.