

# Rewards & Discipline

We firmly believe that salvation is a gift of God, apart from works. What many struggle to understand is what relationship works play in the life of a believer. Perhaps you've heard this question ***before "If faith is all that is required for eternal life, why not go out and live however you want?"***

God understands our hearts. While salvation is a gift, there are rewards given for faithfulness in the Christian life, as well as the prospect of loss of rewards for unfaithfulness. Some struggle with this concept, as they feel it suggests "merit" instead of "grace," and are quick to point out that we should serve the Lord out of love. *We should* serve the Lord out of love, and understanding the nature of rewards helps us to do just that.

## **I Am A Christian, Now What? The Judgment Seat (Bema)**

Both Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 speak of the "judgment seat." This is a translation of the Greek word "**Bema**." The word was taken from the Greek Isthmian games where the contestants would compete for a prize under the scrutiny of a judge or judges. The victor would appear before the Bema, where he would receive his reward.

The scriptures often refer to the Christian life as a sort of "spiritual contest"--see 2 Tim. 2:5, 2 Tim. 4:7, 1 Cor. 9:24-25, Heb. ch. 12, Phil. 3:14. How we've "performed" in that contest determines the results we see at the Bema:

### *1 Corinthians 3:11–15*

*11. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13. 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. 14. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

At this point, the Judge (Jesus) will evaluate the quality of every believer's work, whether it is worthy of reward or not. All sinful deeds, thoughts or motives will be like wood, hay, or straw--burning up with nothing left. All good deeds, right motives and thoughts, are portrayed as gold, silver and precious stones--things that withstand judgment and refinement.

Notice--salvation is never in question here. In verse 15, Paul gives us the extreme example of a believer who has no works worthy of reward, ".yet he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." That example seems to bring us back to the question from earlier-"why not live however you want?"

## **The Present Consequences of Sin**

Sin in the life of a believer is no small issue. God the Father loves His children, and as a loving father, He uses discipline to train and develop His children:

### *Hebrews 12:5–11*

*5. and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN*

*YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; 6. FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.” 7. It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8. But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10. For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. 11. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*

God's discipline in our lives can take many forms:

- 1. Loss of Fellowship with the Lord.** Known sin in one's life is often followed by a loss of joy and peace. (see Ps. 32:3-4 for an example of this)
- 2. Various trials and testing.** God uses trials to grow us and strengthen our trust in Him. (James 1:2-4, Gal. 6:7)
- 3. Loss of physical health or life.** Not all sickness is a direct result of sin, but when we reach a point where we are causing more damage than good to the cause of Christ, God may deem it necessary to remove us from the fight. (1 Cor. 11:30, 1 John 5:16-17)
- 4. Loss of Reward/ the opportunity to Reign.** One of the rewards God has in store for His children is the opportunity to "inherit the kingdom" or to "reign with Him." While all believers will enter the kingdom, not all will be given positions of importance in it. (1 Cor. 6:9-10, 2 Tim. 2:12)

### **Putting It All Together**

Back to our original question "If faith is all that is required for eternal life, why not go out and live however you want?" Why not be a drunken adulterer? Why bother exercising any self-control? Hopefully, our study has revealed a few answers to those questions:

- 1. *Because I don't want to lose the joy of an intimate relationship with the Lord.***
- 2. *Because life is difficult enough without inviting more trials in to it. I don't want to reap any more, thank you.***
- 3. *All those promises about reward for faithfulness sound pretty cool, I want in on that.***
- 4. *Though He doesn't need anything from me, I want the opportunity to lay something at the feet of my Lord.***

We are to love, because He first loved us. Rewards are an opportunity to show our love to our Lord.

*John 14:15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.*