

Pastor's LETTER

What Is Our Eternal Reward?

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Bible does speak of a reward, but should that reward be viewed as a prize given as a response for our diligent performance of deeds, then our reward would not be by grace through faith, but of works. According to the gospel of Jesus Christ **a measured reward we receive on the basis of our own efforts cannot be the reward the biblical writers have in mind.** The New Testament is clear and absolute: **our eternal reward is given, rather than earned.** Everything we as Christ-followers are able to produce by ourselves here in this temporal life is physical and has a shelf life. Nothing we can produce, apart from God, is worthy, nor is it sufficient, for God to respond by giving an eternal reward.

Eternal, immortal rewards for efforts extended by mortal humans are not possible. If I go to the grocery store here in the United States and try to purchase goods with the currency of China, Mexico or Russia, my purchase will be refused. I must use the currency "of the realm." **The currency of the realm of the kingdom of God is grace, and grace alone can produce eternal rewards.** The very best rewards we can earn, apart from God's grace, are short-lived, and perish with the end of our earthly sojourn.

First of all, let us realize that no "reward" following the gift of eternal life stands on its own. That is, if we are not given eternal life by God's grace, then we will not be able to receive any reward, however one might think of a reward.

In addition, following the biblical metaphor of winning our race by God's grace, some might think of "extra" rewards being due to the fact that they ran the race. That is true, but once again, there are no rewards that do not ultimately owe their existence to God's grace. No one runs the race on their own. ALL is based on God's grace!

So for those who feel there will be special recognition given to those who, after winning the race by God's grace, are given "extra" rewards on the basis of how diligently they ran the race, I would say that any and all righteous accomplishments that any of us can ever produce in this life are the *workmanship* and *handiwork* of God. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:10, *"We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do."*

Larry