



SERIES: Spiritual Fitness: Christian Living

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Thursday April 29, 2021

Scripture: Matthew 13:41-42; Rev. 20:12-13

TITLE: Reward or Punishment? It's Up To You!

Do you remember the “Teflon Don”? In the 1980s and early ‘90s, John Gotti was a crime boss who was nicknamed the Teflon Don, because nothing he was accused of stuck. But everyone knew he was guilty of his actions. People were simply waiting for justice to be served. Well, in 1992, John was finally charged and convicted on multiple accounts of illegal gambling, tax evasion, and loansharking. Justice was mostly served. He would die in 2002 of cancer. Now he awaits that final and unending judgment.

There are plenty of moments in this life where we cry, “That’s unfair.” Either people get away with sin, or people aren’t properly rewarded for their actions. But in the future, the good and perfect judge will make all things right. All punishment due will be delivered. All rewards gained will be given. How so? Let’s turn back to the Bible to understand more.

According to the Bible, Jesus is the gateway to eternal life with God in Heaven (Matt. 7:13-14). We are all guilty of sin and therefore just in deserving eternal punishment in Hell. However, God provided an alternative through Jesus Christ. This alternative is Good News, because it is forgiveness by grace. This Good News is the Gospel.

However, not everyone will respond in faith to this good news. Those who reject Jesus’s Gospel will spend eternity in Hell, separated from God. Jesus said, “[The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will remove from his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² And the angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth](#)” (Matthew 13:41-42, NLT). When the unsaved die, they proceed immediately into judgment, with no opportunity for a second chance at saving faith (Luke 16:24-26; Heb. 9:27).

And according to Revelation 20, the dead will be judged according to their actions. When a believer dies, though his body remains on the Earth, his soul is united with Christ (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23). When Christ returns, the soul and the body will be reunited in glorious fashion (Rom. 8:23-24; 1 Cor. 15:40-58). Also for them, instead of being punished based on their actions, those saved will be rewarded for their actions. Revelation 20 says, “[I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God’s throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds](#)” (Rev. 20:12-13). Regardless of our reward, we will rule with Christ forever (2 Tim. 2:11-13).

That's a lot to take in. But simply put, for the believer, there is reward and eternity with God. For the unsaved, it's punishment and separation from God forever.

So here's my challenge for you today: live like eternity depends on it. Oh wait, it does. No, we don't live to earn or keep our salvation, but our rewards do hinge on our actions. And the souls of our friends, family members, and neighbors depend on the grace of God through the delivery of His Word. So today, deliver the message and live with intentionality. When we win the day according to Bible, we can be prepared to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."