Praise the Lord Jesus!
In this series, we're going to explore the criteria God will use to reward His people once we reach eternity. Understanding these principles can stir up our passion for serving God—just like it did for the Apostle Paul, who wrote:

> "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."
> *—Philippians 3:14 (NIV)*

We'll examine a few key passages that paint a picture of how God will distribute rewards.

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1. Some Will Do Little Work — But Receive the Same Reward as Those Who Did Much

At first glance, this may seem unfair. But Jesus addressed this directly in Matthew 20:1–16, using a parable to explain the Kingdom of Heaven. Let's look at it:

> *Matthew 20:1–16 (NIV)*

> “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard.
> He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.
> About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing.
> He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went.
> He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing.
> About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’
> ‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.
> He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’
> When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’
> The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius.
> So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius.
> When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner.
> ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

> But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius?
> Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you.
> Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money?
> Or are you envious because I am generous?’
> So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Now, who are these people who will receive the same reward as those who’ve labored long and hard in God’s work?

Take a closer look: those who came in last weren’t working anywhere else beforehand. They weren’t lazy—they simply hadn’t been given the opportunity. When the landowner asked why they had been standing around all day, they said, *“Because no one has hired us.”*

This tells us something profound: there are people who haven’t yet encountered the grace of salvation. Perhaps they’ve lived long lives in ignorance—like someone from a completely unreached people group or another religion. Maybe they’re 80

years old when they finally hear the Gospel for the first time, truly believe, and surrender their life to Christ. From that moment on, they serve God with all their heart, maybe for only one year—then they pass away.

Or maybe someone gets saved at 20 and only lives until 22. They serve faithfully for two years and then die.

Should we be surprised if they receive the same reward as a lifetime missionary or a church leader? Not at all. When grace found them, their opportunity to serve was short—but they were faithful with what they had. Had they known Christ earlier, they would have served longer. God sees the heart and the potential.

But What About You Who Know the Truth Today?

If you've heard the message of grace today but continue to take it lightly—one day walking with Christ, and the next, back in sin—you are not stable. Don't expect Christ to reward you if you die in such a spiritual condition.

Some of us were born into Christian homes. We know the truth.

We understand that without salvation, there is no eternal life. So if someone like that refuses to live faithfully, don’t expect the same reward as the pagan who just got saved and died shortly after.

Jesus said clearly:

> “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.” *—Matthew 20:16 (NIV)*

Value the Grace You’ve Been Given

We are living in the last days. Don’t waste the grace God has extended to you. If you’ve been given more time, use it well. Serve Him with all your heart, because you’ll be held accountable for how you used your time and opportunities.

Stay faithful. Be watchful. And be encouraged—God is fair, and He is good.

Be blessed.

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