



Daily Verse and Comment

Hebrews 11:5-7

(5) By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, *"and was not found, because God had taken him"*; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (6) But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (7) By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

New King James Version

The objection people have regarding [Hebrews 11:5-7](#) is that the mention of works and reward in the same breath suggests legalism and working for salvation. Is that so, or is it a misconception on their part? The latter. They misunderstand the salvation process because they do not allow the Bible to interpret itself.

[God](#) says in [Genesis 15:1](#), "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." His encouragement applies to us as well as to him. God Himself is the reward of those who seek Him. "Those who seek Him" is limited to those God invites to approach Him and who believe enough to take advantage of the opportunity and thus stir themselves up to draw near. The invitation itself is an aspect of God's grace.

[Romans 4:4](#) makes it clear that earning access to God is impossible because it would put God in man's debt. No, access to Him is the result of freely given grace. The pairing of grace and reward is no more inconsistent than God's almighty sovereignty and man's responsibility being linked, or [Jesus](#) being both our Lord and our Servant. There would be no reward if God did not first give grace.

Another pairing we need to consider is found in [Colossians 3:23-24](#): "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." Is not salvation a free gift? Yes, but as servants of Christ, we work, and our reward is eternal entrance into God's Kingdom. Add to this the idea found in [Isaiah 55:1](#), that we are to "buy . . . without money." Salvation, then, is both a gift and a reward.

It should be clear that, in terms of salvation, gifts and works are nothing more than opposite sides of the same coin. Both are involved in the same process—salvation—but they are seen from different perspectives.

One thing is certain: There will be no lazy, neglectful people in the [Kingdom of God](#) ([Matthew 25:26-30](#)). Why? Because God is preparing us for living with Him eternally, so we must be created in the character image of Him and His Son, or we absolutely will not fit in. We would live in absolute, eternal misery. Jesus stresses that diligent work is part of His character when He says in [John 5:17](#), "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." Creators work!

[Luke 13:24](#) adds strength to this point: "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able." The Greek word translated "strive" is actually the source of the English word "agonize." In addition, Jesus urges us in [John 6:27](#) to labor "for the food which endures to everlasting life." God chooses to reward such strenuous efforts, not because they earn us a place in His presence, but because He deems it fitting to recognize and bless them. The Bible shows salvation as a reward, not because people earn it, but because God wants to emphasize the character of those who will be in His Kingdom and encourage others to be like them. The citizens of that Kingdom are workers like the Father and Son.

A second reason why reward and salvation are linked is because salvation, like payment for a person's labor, comes after the job is finished. Among the apostles, nobody worked harder for God than Paul did. At the end of his life, he writes:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the [faith](#). Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. ([II Timothy 4:7-8](#))

Just as wages for work performed are paid after a job is done, God's major blessings are not given completely until our course is finished.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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