

# The Lord Rewards His Faithful Saints

by Zac Poonen

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**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 3:11, Luke 14:29, Matthew 25:37, Revelation 19:7, 2 Timothy 4:7

**Topics:** "Foundation in Christ", "Quality of Works"

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## Description

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## Transcript

One of the things that Jesus spoke about and the Holy Spirit speaks about in the Epistles is the fact of our life going to be evaluated when we finally end our life and move out of this earth. And that's not something that we should ignore because if the Bible speaks about something, all scriptures inspired by God is very important. So let me begin with 1 Corinthians 3. 1 Corinthians chapter three and verse 11.

No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. That speaks of our basic forgiveness and being declared righteous by God. We cannot lay a foundation of our good works that is sand.

We have to build on Christ having died for us. Number one, even if you committed only one sin in your life, you need the death of Christ and his resurrection and Christ clothing us with himself as our righteousness and clothed with Christ as my righteousness. That is the foundation.

There is no other foundation that anybody can lay. There's no other way. Jesus said, no man comes to the father but by me.

So that's the beginning. And I think perhaps all of you who listen to me have laid that foundation. And now after that, it says, we've got to build on this foundation.

Jesus spoke about in Luke 14 about a man who only laid a foundation and never built anything else because he found the cost was too much. Oh, this is gonna be far more expensive. So I'll just lay a foundation.

There Jesus was speaking about believers who only think of, I've accepted Christ. I'm on my way to heaven. I'm okay.

I'm part of a good church. I've laid a foundation. And Jesus called such a person in Luke 14, a fool.

He's foolish. Having only laid a foundation, it says, even all the people who look at him will laugh at him saying, see this man just laid a foundation and he did not do anything further. That's in Luke chapter 14 and verse 29.

So here in 1 Corinthians 3, it speaks about what we build on the foundation. And on this foundation, we can build, it says with verse 12 with gold, silver, and precious stones or wood, hay, and straw, it's picture language. But it says, whatever you build with, one day it'll be tested by fire.

Now, if you have a thousand dollars and you have a choice to buy gold, silver, and precious stones, or wood, hay, and straw, you'll get just a handful, not even in one hand. I don't know the price of these things, but I think you'll only get very, very little of gold, silver, and precious stones with a thousand dollars. But if you use that thousand dollars to go and buy wood, hay, and straw, cheap wood, hay, and straw, you can get a huge pile.

So the contrast there is between quality and quantity. Quality is wood, gold, silver, precious stones. Quantity is wood, hay, and straw.

And the thousand dollars I spoke about is your life, your whole life, after you're converted, after Christ has become your residence, what are you gonna do with the life God's given you? Are you gonna look for quality in your work or quantity? And now, after a life is over, it says here that our life will be tested by fire. And listen to this, if a man's work remains, he will receive a reward. Jesus often spoke about rewards.

In fact, in the last book of the Bible, the last chapter, one of the last things that Jesus says is, I'm gonna come quickly, Revelation 22, verse 12. I'm coming quickly, and my reward is with me to render to every man according as his work shall be, according to what he has done, not according to whether he received me as his savior. What you have done with your life, after you received Christ as your savior, is that important? Very important.

We say in Christianity, we say in the gospel, your works then do not count for anything. Your works, righteousness is like filthy rags. That is for laying the foundation.

You can't put windows and doors in a foundation, no. But there are place for windows and doors in the building. So that's the point here.

You can't put your own works in the foundation. That is filthy righteousness, filthy rags. You gotta trust in Christ, but here it's speaking about according to the work you have done, the righteous deeds you have done.

And we read about the marriage of the Lamb in Revelation and chapter 19. And in Revelation 19, it says, hallelujah, the marriage of the Lamb has come, verse seven, and the bride has been given a dress. Now

the only dress we can think of is the righteousness of Christ.

Christ himself has our righteousness. I stand before God, accepted by God as in Christ. I cannot produce one act of mine to be accepted by God as far as my life is concerned.

But there is another dress spoken of here. The bride has made herself ready, Revelation 19, seven, and Revelation 19, eight. The dress of the bride is the righteous acts, not of Jesus, but the righteous acts of the saints.

You know what your dress is gonna be in the final day, you're first accepted in Christ. That's one thing, that's the foundation. But then there is another dress which is called the dress of the bride.

And those are your righteous acts that you did, the righteous acts of the saints. How much are you gonna have of that? That is what is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 3, where it says, your work will be tested by fire. There are different illustrations and the man's work will be burnt up.

Now the question is, when we get there, and supposing you've just lived for yourself after you've got converted, and you somehow scrape into heaven, will you say, ah, I'll go to heaven. Now what does it matter? I'm not worried that somebody else gets a greater reward than me, let him have his reward. I'm here and he's here and we're all here.

Well, the question is, are you gonna have any regret in that day? I have preached all these years that you're going to have regret in heaven. Now many people don't agree with me. They say, no, Jesus is gonna wipe away all the tears from our eyes.

It's all very good. But I believe scripture that people are gonna have a regret when they look back over their life, even though they're in heaven, over how they lived for the one who gave his life for them. The regret is not going to be that I didn't get a reward.

The regret is going to be when I see the tremendous love that Jesus had for me, and the miserly way in which I lived for him. By miserly, I don't mean in terms of money, but the selfish, self-centered way where I only thought about myself and my family, I, me, and my family. It's all I thought of.

I'm gonna have such tremendous regret. And I think that regret will probably last for all eternity. Can you think of that? And people don't agree with me, I know that.

It doesn't matter. I believe the Bible. And I want to ask you, think of this picture.

Think of you standing before the Lord, and the Lord said, okay, you're accepted in Christ. You did not trust in your own righteousness. You received my son, Jesus as your savior, God says, and you are clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

You have come to heaven. You didn't go to hell. Now I'm gonna evaluate your work.

How you lived after you were born again. I gave you 35, 40 years after you were born again. And here is a video of your entire life.

Can you see how you live for yourself? Every day, you only thought about yourself and your family, and that's all. And you never thought about me and my kingdom, even though I taught you to pray, our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done. First of all, you never

prayed that.

And second, even if you did pray, it was a ritual. You never took it seriously. You only prayed, give us this day our daily bread.

Give me a house, give me this, that, and the other. And heal me of my sickness. Heal my children of my sickness.

Oh, okay, you prayed all that, and I granted all that for you. But look at the result of your life, what you lived for. All burnt up.

Your entire life burnt up. You've got 50 years to show your gratitude to Jesus, and all wasted. Tell me, my brother, sister, are you gonna feel sorry in that day? Are you gonna have regret? Tell me, how can you say you won't have regret? I mean, I think of that, I put myself there, and I say, Lord, if I see myself there, after you did all that for me, gave your life for me, sacrificed, went to hell for three hours for me, for eternity you experienced hell, just to bring me into heaven, and here I spent my life just thinking of myself, Lord, I'll be terribly sorry.

I'll have such a regret, I don't think, any amount you wipe the tears from my eyes, I don't think I'll ever get over that regret in all eternity because I don't have another opportunity to show my love for you. I had only one life in which I could show my gratitude for what you did for me, and I wasted that life living for myself. So think about that.

I believe there'll be regret in the hearts of believers when they see the Lord face to face. So I wanna just look at Matthew 25 now where Jesus spoke about in relation to second coming. There were three parables he spoke.

Two of them are a parable, two of them are parables, and one is a picture of the future. The first parable is about the wise virgins and the foolish virgins, the story is very simple. The wise virgins only had a lamp, which is their external life, let your light shine before men, what people can see of your life, which is good, but they didn't have a hidden vessel full of oil, which is a picture of your hidden life, the work of the Holy Spirit, the oil in your heart.

In other words, your inner life. The two lives we have, our outer life and inner life, which is like the two parts of a house. The hidden part is the foundation.

The other thing is the superstructure, but here the illustration is different. Here our hidden life is just as important as our external life. Is your light burning? Good, before men.

What about your hidden life? You have the Holy Spirit and a vessel of oil inside, that is what is determined, whether you'll be ready for the coming of the Lord. That's the first thing. The second parable in Matthew 25, the first is from verses one to 13.

The second is from verse 14 to 30, where the Lord called some of his servants and we read of three of them here. He gave five talents to one and two talents to another and one to another person. Now, in a similar parable in Luke's gospel, chapter 19, it's slightly different.

So I want you to see that. In Luke 19, Jesus spoke about a parable where he called 10 servants. There he gave them five, two, and one, showing that God has given different gifts to different believers.

And if God has given one person five, he has to produce five. He gave you only two, he produced two. Both of them, you read in Matthew 25, got the same reward.

But in Luke 19, it's a little different. Luke 19 is speaking about 10 servants and each of them he gave one mina, Luke 19, verse 13. 10 servants, I give you one mina each.

They all got equal. This is not talking about gifts. Matthew 25 speaks about gifts.

Some had more, some had less. Here it's speaking about something that all believers have equal, where you cannot say that person has more than me. No, you've got the same as him.

This is speaking about life. That is speaking about service. So life, 10 people have the same.

And one person, he used that one mina, traded it, verse 16, and produced 10, verse 16. Another person had one mina. He was not so wholehearted.

He produced five. Another person did not produce anything extra. What is the lesson here? There are two things in which all of us are equal.

You can't say somebody has got more than me. Number one, time. We all have 24 hours a day.

Nobody has more than, nobody's got 25, nobody's got 23. Equal, one mina to everyone. And the other area where we all are equal is the lusts in our flesh, man or woman, old or young.

The number of lusts in our flesh are exactly the same from the day of Adam till now, every descendant of Adam. And the question is, how much have we conquered of those lusts in our flesh? Some more, some less. Some produce 10 minas, some produce only five, and some do nothing about it.

So that is very important. And in the final day, it's gonna be evaluated what you did with your life. How much did you battle your lusts? How much did you use your time for the glory of God? And the last parable in Matthew 25 is of the day when Christ comes again, and he's gonna separate some on the right side and some on the left side.

And here, it's not gifts. It's not the lusts of our flesh. It's not even outer life and inner life.

Here it is speaking about how we related to other needy people. So those who are on the, he calls some people and say, come, you are righteous, Matthew 25. Because verse 35, I was hungry, you gave me something to eat.

I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, you invited me in. I was naked, you clothed me.

I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. And the righteous will answer, Matthew 25, 37.

Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or just hungry? When did we see you a stranger or naked? When did we see you sick or in prison? Verse 39, listen to the answer, very, very important. The King says, in as much to the extent, verse 14, that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, and even the least of them, you did it to me. The Lord is evaluating us here by what we did for, not for the world.

There are many poor people in the world. He's not talking about them. These brothers of mine, verse 40, don't use this picture to apply to charitable work in the world or feeding the poor or sending money to places where there's famine or blankets, where there's an earthquake or fire.

No, no, he's not talking about the world. He's talking about these brothers of mine. What did you do for your fellow believers? Did you see their need and seek to help them? And the others are, the Lord says in verse 42, I was hungry, you never gave me anything to eat.

I was thirsty, you never did anything for me. And the Lord said, where did you do that? He says, no, you did not do it, verse 45, to the least of these my brothers. There are two things I want you to see here.

One, this is not referring to our helping people in the world or the homeless man on the street. Talking about brothers of Christ, that is believers. And the second thing I want you to see is the least of these brothers, not how much you help the rich people.

Oh, the world is full of people ready to help the rich. There are believers who are happy to help those who are rich and who are influential, but here it says the least of these. How did you treat the least of these? When you do something for the least of these, my brothers, you have done it unto me.

Come to the right side. These are the things that are gonna be evaluated in the final day. Oh, you know, 50 years of my ministry, 52 of years of my ministry so far has been in India, which is one of the poorest countries.

When you go into the villages of India, they're as poor as any poor country in the world. And you know, it's very difficult to plant a church in these places because a lot of poor people are very happy to come to a church where they can get money. Oh, this is a good church to join.

People will help us financially. And so we have to be very, very careful and wise that we don't draw people by the basis of money, that we have to make sure we're making disciples. So we have to be very careful and give advice to the elders as to how to deal with people you have to discern them, what is this guy coming for? Now I've noticed that that happens not only in poor countries, even in rich countries.

I've seen many churches in other countries. Now notice the difference. There are some brothers who join churches in Australia or England or America.

They come because they can get some benefit there. Like I've said many times, even in NCCL. Oh, this is a good place for my children to grow up.

What are you thinking of? You're not thinking of the glory of Christ, not at all. You're not thinking of other people. You're thinking of yourself, my children.

This is a good place for them. Oh, these are good brothers. I can be with them.

They will come and help me when I'm in need. You yourself have no desire to help anybody who is in need, but you're happy to receive help from others who can come and help you when you're in need. Now, if you don't, if you doubt me, ask yourself, every one of you is listening to me.

How many people have you helped in NCCL when they were in need? Did you even try to find out? How many times have you waited for other people in NCCL to come and help you and ask them to come and help you? Those are the two categories here in those who stand at the judgment seat of Christ. Some on

the right and some on the left. And you can decide right now which side of the throne you're going to be in that day.

Are you going to have regret? Dear brothers and sisters, the way we live on earth is going to determine what our reward will be in the final day. You say, I don't live for reward. No, we don't live for reward.

Yet the apostle Paul was a thousand times better servant of God than any of us, says this at the end of his life. I'll close with that. Second Timothy four and verse seven and eight.

I have fought a good fight. I've finished the course. I've kept the faith.

In future, the Lord is going to give me a crown of righteousness as a reward. You say, hey, Paul, are you doing things for reward? Not at all. I never did one single thing for reward.

But the Lord said he's going to do it. And I'm not going to reject what he gives me. So if the apostle Paul could see, I fought a good fight, I finished my course, I kept the faith, and I know the Lord will give me a crown of righteousness in that day, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

He says that, I say to you, my brothers and sisters, don't be super spiritual and try to be more holy than the Holy Spirit, more holy than the apostle Paul, and say, no, no, no, I'm not bothered by that. Remember, in the last chapter of the Bible, Jesus says, I'm coming quickly, and my reward is with me, according to what every man's work shall be. Remember again, that the garment of the bride is your good works, not Christ's righteousness.

We saw that in Revelation 19. And remember also that the superstructure of the building will be tested by fire, even if the foundation is firm. These are serious things that we need to think about so that we can be ready for the Lord's coming.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we know that we have, as human beings, we have a tremendous tendency to be imbalanced, to go to one extreme, forget about the other, and yet you have made balance in every area of this earth. Our bodies are balanced, this universe is balanced, grace and truth are balanced, and we believe that the righteousness of Christ that clothes us and the righteousness of the saints, which is the dress of the bride, are equally to be kept in balance.

Help us to find that balance, Lord, and not to go to this extreme or that extreme of error, not to be super spiritual, not to think that we know more than the Holy Spirit. Help us each one, we pray in Jesus' name, amen. Thank you.

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