

Will there be eternal heavenly rewards?

There are three basic positions on this:

YES! NO!

I DON'T KNOW!

Will there be eternal heavenly rewards?

What is meant by the phrase “eternal heavenly rewards?”

Christians will receive different levels or degrees of rewards in heaven based on their faithfulness in this life. These rewards will be experienced as a part of eternal life.

James 1

⁹ Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰ and ^rthe rich in his humiliation, because ^slike a flower of the grass³ he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with its scorching heat and ^twithers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

¹² ^uBlessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test **he will receive ^vthe crown of life, ^wwhich God has promised to those who love him.** ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire ^xwhen it has conceived gives birth to sin, and ^ysin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷ ^zEvery good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from ^athe Father of lights, ^bwith whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.⁴ ¹⁸ ^cOf his own will he ^dbrought us forth by the word of truth, ^ethat we should be a kind of ^ffirstfruits of his creatures.

Revelation 2

To the Church in Smyrna

⁸ “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of ^tthe first and the last, ^uwho died and came to life.

⁹ “ ‘I know your tribulation and ^vyour poverty (^vbut you are rich) and the slander^t of ^wthose who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, ^wthat you may be tested, and for ^xten days ^yyou will have tribulation. **^zBe faithful ^aunto death, and I will give you ^bthe crown of life.** ¹¹ ^cHe who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. ^cThe one who conquers will not be hurt by ^dthe second death.’

1. Crown of Life *James 1:2; Rev. 2:10*

Believers who maintain their love for Christ **while triumphing over persecution, temptation,** and even martyrdom, receive this crown. Many people will receive this crown because they gave their life for their faith, but there will be others wearing this crown too. Any believer who has kept the faith when it was costly to do so—anyone who has suffered, endured, persevered, and encouraged others—will receive the Crown of Life.

- *davidjeremiah.blog*

Although not all believers always respond properly to God or to trials, all do so sometimes. In the larger context of James it seems clear that such predicates **refer to all Christians, not just to some specific category of them.**

- *C L Blomberg*

1 Thessalonians 2

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives ^sthe prize? So ^trun that you may obtain it. ²⁵ Every ^uathlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we ^van imperishable. ²⁶ So I do not run aimlessly; I ^wdo not box as one ^xbeating the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and ^ykeep it under control,^z lest after preaching to others ^zI myself should be ^adisqualified.

2. The Victor's Crown *1 Cor. 9:25-27*

Self-discipline requires the ability to say “No” when necessary—and not just to things that are sinful. As the saying goes, “The good is the enemy of the best.” Serving God involves narrowing our focus to those things with the highest eternal value. Life is full of good things that take our focus off the best Christ has to offer. It is up to us to identify them and choose accordingly. **Those who exercise such discipline** will receive the Victor's Crown.

- *davidjeremiah.blog*

Paul compares our perseverance to the athlete striving after an Olympic crown. But unlike a race on a track in which there can be only one winner, "we" [Christians] all should compete for "the crown that will last forever." This "crown" is the same as the "prize" of vv. 24, 27, which one fails to receive if one is "disqualified" Paul is not concerned to compare first place with second or third **but to contrast finishing the race with not finishing at all.**

- *C L Blomberg*

1 Thessalonians 2

¹³ And ^jwe also thank God constantly⁴ for this, that when you received ^kthe word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it ^lnot as the word of men⁵ but as what it really is, the word of God, ^mwhich is at work in you believers. ¹⁴ For you, brothers, ⁿbecame imitators of ^othe churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For ^pyou suffered the same things from your own countrymen ^qas they did from the Jews,⁶ ¹⁵ ^rwho killed both the Lord Jesus and ^sthe prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and ^toppose all mankind ¹⁶ ^uby hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always ^vto fill up the measure of their sins. But ^wwrath has come upon them at last!⁷

Paul's Longing to See Them Again

¹⁷ But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, ^xin person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire ^yto see you face to face, ¹⁸ because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan ^zhindered us. ¹⁹ For what is our hope or ^ajoy or crown of boasting ^bbefore our Lord Jesus at his ^ccoming? Is it not you? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

3. The crown of Rejoicing *1 Thess. 2:19*

This crown is awarded to **those who bring others to Christ**. It's often called the Soul-Winner's Crown, and it's the reward given to those who reach out beyond themselves and lead others to heaven.

- *davidjeremiah.blog*

(This crown) appears in synonymous parallelism with the "hope" and "joy" of eternal life itself, the pleasure of unending fellowship with other believers whom we have played some role in helping to nurture. **All true believers will experience some such exultation**, no doubt in varying ways, but the passage says nothing of different crowns for different quantities of joy.

- *C L Blomberg*

2 Timothy 4

Preach the Word

4 ^hI charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, ⁱwho is to judge the living and the dead, and by ^jhis appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; ^kreprove, rebuke, and ^lexhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ ^mFor the time is coming when people will not endure ⁿsound¹ teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and ^owill turn away from listening to the truth and ^pwander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, ^qalways be sober-minded, ^rendure suffering, do the work of ^san evangelist, ^tfulfill your ministry.

⁶ For ^uI am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my ^vdeparture has come. ⁷ ^wI have fought the good fight, ^xI have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth there is ^ylaid up for me ^zthe crown of righteousness, which the Lord, ^athe righteous judge, will award to me on ^bthat day, and not only to me but also to all ^cwho have loved his appearing.

4. The crown of Righteousness *2 Tim. 4:8*

Many Christians become so caught up with earthly activities that they forget heaven is their true home. This crown is not for those believers. **It is for those who long for heaven, their true home, who long to see the face of their Savior** when He comes for them in the clouds.

- *davidjeremiah.blog*

(This crown) can hardly be a reward that distinguishes one believer from another, in view of the conclusion of the verse: "which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." **Surely one who has never wished for Christ's return cannot have truly been his disciple.**

- *C L Blomberg*

1 Peter 5

5 So I exhort the elders among you, ^mas a fellow elder and ⁿa witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ²^oshepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, ¹ ^pnot under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; ² ^qnot for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not ^rdomineering over those in your charge, but ^sbeing examples to the flock. ⁴ And when ^tthe chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the ^uunfading ^vcrown of glory. ⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. ^wClothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ^x“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

5. The crown of glory *1 Peter 5:4*

This crown is given **to faithful shepherds of God's people**—pastors, elders, deacons, Sunday school teachers, ministry team leaders, and more. It will reward those who answer the call of leadership.

- *davidjeremiah.blog*

In view of the recurring pattern in the previous four passages it is probably most natural to take this crown too as metaphor for eternal life. Every other reference to believers' "glory" in 1 Peter confirms this presumption (1:7; 4:13-14; 5:10), so that the elders' crown is nothing other than that which **"all who share in the Christian hope"** can expect.

- *C L Blomberg*

1 Corinthians 3

¹⁰ ^rAccording to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled² master builder I laid a ^sfoundation, and ^tsomeone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a ^ufoundation other ^vthan that which is laid, ^wwhich is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ ^xeach one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed ^yby fire, and ^zthe fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, ^ahe will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, ^bbut only as through fire.

1 Corinthians 3:12-15

Paul clearly proclaims rewards are waiting for us as saved Christians. But he is also clear about the fact **some of us will receive more reward than others**. Some will work here on earth to create something persevering and as a result **will obtain an enduring reward in Heaven**.

Others will not produce enduring work here on earth, and while they will still be saved, their reward in heaven will be nothing more than Salvation (“he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire”).

- *coldcasechristianity.com*

While there is absolutely no disputing the uniqueness of every believer's personal encounter with Christ on judgment day, nothing in the text says anything about these distinctions among believers' experiences **persisting for all time**.

The believer loses the satisfaction of seeing much of his life's work count in an eternal perspective befitting kingdom priorities. (Temporary shame on the day of judgement; consider 2 Cor. 5:9-10)

- *C L Blomberg*

Matthew 20

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius¹ a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ ⁵ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶ And ^gabout the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ ⁷ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ ⁸ And ^hwhen evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his ⁱforeman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ ⁹ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰ Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, ¹² saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and ^jthe scorching heat.’ ¹³ But he replied to one of them, ^k‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take ^lwhat belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. ¹⁵ ^mAm I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or ⁿdo you begrudge my generosity?’² ¹⁶ So ^othe last will be first, and the first last.”

The Parable of the Vineyard Matt 20

When read in the context of Matthew Chapter 19, it's easy to see the parable of the vineyard is all about **the Salvation of the Gentiles**. The parable was designed to illustrate the fact the Gentiles (who actually heard the Gospel and entered the Kingdom very late compared to the Jews who possessed the scripture all along), would also enjoy the same privileges and rights as the Jews who were "chosen" and "favored".

- *coldcasechristianity.com*

Because God is so good, the principle of grace triumphs. The principle in the world is that he who works the longest receives the most pay. That is just. But in the kingdom of God **the principles of merit and ability may be set aside so that grace can prevail.**

- *S. J. Kistemaker*

Matthew 5

^{11g}“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely ^hon my account. ¹²ⁱRejoice and be glad, **for your reward is great in heaven**, for ^jso they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 6

6 “Beware of ^rpracticing your righteousness before other people in order ^sto be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

^{2t}“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may ^ube praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have ^vreceived their reward. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. **^wAnd your Father who sees in secret will reward you.**

Matthew 6

^{19x}“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where ^ymoth and rust⁵ destroy and where thieves ^zbreak in and steal, ^{20x}**but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

^{22a}“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ^{23a}but if ^byour eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

^{24c}“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and ^dmoney.⁶

The Sermon on the Mount rewards

From this one sermon it is clear there is a **“reward in heaven”** waiting for each of us who is saved. There are **“treasures in heaven” for each of us**. God has rewards waiting for us, and much of this sermon from Jesus is an admonition for us not to forsake our heavenly reward by seeking worldly rewards and acknowledgment.

- coldcasechristianity.com

The final Matthean beatitude promises a great reward in heaven to those who endure persecution (Matt 5:12), but this text simply repeats the theme of v. 10 in which the blessing for endurance is "the kingdom of heaven." **The "great reward" of v. 12 must therefore refer to the kingdom** itself rather than some special status within it...The same must be said of the other Matthean "reward" passages.

- C L Blomberg

The Sermon the Mount treasures

From this one sermon it is clear there is a “reward in heaven” waiting for each of us who is saved. There are “treasures in heaven” for each of us. God has rewards waiting for us, and much of this sermon from Jesus is an admonition for us not to forsake our heavenly reward by seeking worldly rewards and acknowledgment.

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"Treasures in heaven" (Matt 6:20; par. Luke 12:33; Matt 19:21) appears in synonymous parallelism with "getting eternal life" (Matt 19:16) and "entering the kingdom of heaven" (19:23). In 1 Tim 6:19, those who "lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age" are coterminous (equal) with **those who "take hold of the life that is truly life."**

- *C L Blomberg*

So what are we to take away from this?

Beware of the extremes...

Rewards cannot become the sole, or even primary, motivator.

Be careful “if the fear of judgement or the promise of reward can get you to do something that the love of Christ cannot...”

Absence of reward doesn't mean that God desires us to live lawlessly.

Our obedience (trusting and following God's instruction in faith, love, and thankfulness) have a heavy impact on how we experience God in this life (his blessings; peace, comfort, etc.)

So what are we to take away from this?

Beware of the distraction...

We know we are saved by grace through faith.

God wants us to have a future, eternal focus in this life.

God desires us to walk in obedience motivated by love.

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.” Philippians 1:21-23