

### **Receiving God's promised reward by faith. Hebrews 11:32 - 40**

“There is a prize for the first member of the class to finish this assignment!” Have you ever witnessed a teacher using this technique to inspire students to do their work? A good reward can be an effective motivator. In fact, can you imagine what would happen if all incentives for doing our daily labour were taken away? The failure to motivate workers with fulfilling rewards for their assigned tasks is often cited as the reason why most of the world's communist governments have failed.

Hebrews 11 concludes by telling us that many of the great Biblical people of faith did not receive what God had promised them by the end of their lives here on earth. Nonetheless, by faith they continued to look forward to God's eternal blessing.

As Christians we might feel uncomfortable about the idea of following Christ in order to get a blessing. But we need to understand the difference between earning a reward from God through our own merit and pursuing by faith what God has already promised to us. In Romans 6:23 the Apostle Paul makes it clear that the only wage that our sin can earn is death. However, God's gracious gift to us is eternal life in Jesus our Lord. And in 1 Corinthians 15:9, Paul declares, *“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all people.”* Therefore there is nothing wrong with being inspired by the knowledge that God has graciously promised us an eternal prize that is better than anything we can earn here on earth. Furthermore, in the wisdom of God he has planned his great heavenly awards ceremony in such a way that we will receive our blessing at the same time and place as the faithful ones (named in Hebrews 11) who have gone before us, and also with those who will come after us.

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1. Pick a person that you're familiar with from the list of faithful ones in Hebrews 11:32. Briefly give an example of this person's faith in action.
  2. Hebrews 11:33 – 38 gives us some examples of the highs and lows of living by faith. Are there any of these examples that you find especially inspiring or challenging? Explain why.
  3. What does 11:38 mean when it says, “the world was not worthy of them”?
  4. In what sense is it true that none of the people of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 actually received what God had promised them? (11:39)
  5. Explain what verse 11:40 means.
  6. Meditate on or share with your group one thing that you have learned through our ‘By Faith’ series.