

## REWARDS

**“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb 11:6 KJV)**

This verse lists two things you MUST believe in order to please God. (1) That God is! That’s easy. (2) That God rewards those who diligently seek Him! That’s harder.

The association of diligence and “rewards”, however, is an integral part of Biblical teaching. Take, for example, the Sermon on the Mount. “Rewards” for the diligent are promised by Jesus in Matt. 5:12, 46; 6:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 16, 18). Jesus even promised that those who give only a cup of cold water to one of His disciples will certainly not lose their reward (Matt. 10:42).

Any system, whether secular or spiritual, that offers no rewards to the diligent is destined to failure. In Cuba I met an alcoholic nurse who injured her leg. Since she would receive the same meager stipend whether she worked or not, she took a 6 month vacation to heal. I was later told that she committed suicide. A system that does not reward the diligent does not work.

Since Venezuela has been recently in the news, let’s take a closer look. Hugo Chavez became President of oil rich Venezuela in 1999. He immediately started redistributing their wealth. Gasoline was priced at 2 cents per gallon and the poor got housing for free. Chavez died in 2013 and Nicolas Madura continued redistributing the wealth. Today triple digit inflation has left more than 70% of the population in poverty and the government can no longer maintain law and order. Drug traffickers run large sections of the countryside, prison gangs have obtained military-style weapons, and hungry thugs have even broken into school cafeterias to steal food.

Symbolic of this socialist utopia is the lack of toilet paper. The Atlantic (May 12, 2016) told the sad story of one businessman threatened with prison over toilet paper. (For his own protection, they did not reveal his name.) Here is his story. The businessman signed an agreement with the union promising to provide toilet paper. If he failed to do so, he was threatened with union led strikes and the possible confiscation of his business by the government. So, when toilet paper could not be purchased legally he turned to the black market. No sooner had the toilet paper arrived than the secret police swept in, seized the contraband, and claimed that the businessman was in collusion with a U.S. effort to create shortages. The entrepreneur and three top managers are facing criminal prosecution. All of this in a country with more oil than either the United States or Saudi Arabia. Cuba also has a shortage of toilet paper, but they solved the problem by using communist propaganda. The Chinese propaganda is preferred because it is softer.

Believers in Christ are not random runners or boxers beating the air. We go into diligent training because we have been promised a prize (1 Cor. 9:24 - 27). When Peter reminded Jesus that he had left all, Jesus replied: **“no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields — and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” (Mark 10:29-31)**

A government that rewards laziness is not like the government of God. The man who did nothing with the talent he was given was condemned for being “wicked and lazy” (Matt. 25:26). Paul wrote that if a man does not work, neither should he eat (2 Thess. 3:10). The writer of Hebrews congratulated believers for their “work” and encouraged others to make their hope sure by showing “this same diligence to the very end”. Then he added: **“We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.” (Heb. 6:12).**

Don’t ever forget that God is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him!