

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

MOTIVATIONAL LESSONS **“The High Cost of a Free Gift”**

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, James Gravelle.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). Welcome to *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*. Thank you for taking the time to view this program. We hope that you will find this lesson beneficial and encouraging. Perhaps you have heard it said that “the best things in life are free.” This is especially true when you consider that the best thing in this life is a gift. As Romans 6:23 tells us, that gift is the very special gift that God gives to all—eternal life. It is truly a gift from God. Even though eternal life is a gift, a high cost was paid for it so that God could offer that gift. And, a high cost must be paid to receive it. You may ask, “A **high cost** for a **free** gift?! How can that be?” This paradox can sometimes be difficult to comprehend. However, the teachings of Jesus are often found in the form of a paradox. Notice, for example, the Beatitudes. Jesus said in Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” In verse four He said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” In verse five He said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. In verse six He said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Upon a closer examination, such paradoxes are not really contradictions, but are instead expressions of important spiritual truths. In this lesson, we will consider how a free gift—this free gift from God, the gift of salvation—can be so costly.

Many have a wrong concept about how salvation is obtained. They think that salvation is **earned** by the good works they do. Consider this statement by a devout Muslim: “All my life I have obeyed the Koran and have worshiped Allah faithfully. If, after death, I find that there is no Paradise, and that there is no houris with which a man may be comforted, as the Koran promises, I shall feel that I have been miserably cheated.” This houris is a group of women (a harem), said to be virgins, who will be awaiting the Muslim when he crosses over the portal of death and finds himself in Allah’s Heaven. We see from his statement, however, that his “good life” has somehow **merited** such favor from Allah. Many professing Christians have a similar concept of “attaining Heaven,” and believe that their reward is received because of their “good life.” Have you ever been to a funeral after someone has passed away, and the things that were said about the person expounded upon the “good life” that the person had lived, and how that he had been good to his wife, how he was a good father, how he had reared his children well, how he had never cheated on his income taxes, etc., etc. Because of this, the fact that he had lived a good life would somehow “merit him” an eternal home in Heaven. Others may think that their monetary generosity might open the way for them to go to Heaven. Others may believe that their faithful attendance at church is the key to going to Heaven. But salvation is God’s gift to **undeserving** people. Consider the state of man when God first offered salvation to him. Paul said in Romans 5:6-8,

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Jesus gave His life—while we were yet sinners—to save us from our sins. This is not because we loved God or because we had somehow “merited His favor.” Rather, it was because **He first loved us**. John wrote in 1 John 4:9-10, “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” The word “propitiation” means “that which covers the cost.” Jesus, in shedding His blood on the cruel cross of Calvary, covered the cost of our sins. Notice that this wonderful gift is offered to all who will receive it. John records this conversation with Jesus: “And He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts’” (Rev. 21:6). Revelation also records for these words: “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). Notice in these passages how that this wonderful gift of God truly is provided freely to all people. Salvation is offered freely. But does that mean that it costs nothing? Not at all! In fact, we shall see that nothing in the Universe has ever cost the recipients so much.

Now, let’s look at the high cost of providing the gift. First, what has it cost the Father? In John 3:16 we read, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Imagine God the Father giving the greatest possible gift He could ever give. Consider having to pay for something with the life of your only child. But because God paid the price, Paul was able to say in Romans 8:32, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” It cost God the life of His only begotten Son. He did not spare His Son. The price had to be paid to save us from our sins.

Second, let’s look at the great cost that the Son had to pay. In Philippians 2:5-8, Paul said,

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

It cost Christ the price of renouncing the glory and majesty that He possessed with the Father before coming to this world. It cost Him the humiliation of servitude, even to the point of suffering and finally dying by crucifixion for our sins. When we consider all that Jesus gave up by coming to this world, and by taking on Himself a human form, the tremendous cost becomes even clearer. He took the form of human body, and now He has that human body for eternity. Stop to think about that point for just a moment. Jesus, Who is God, gave up that which made Him God, came into this world, and took upon Himself a human body. When He died, that body was placed in a tomb. But three days later God raised Him from the dead. When He was raised from the dead, He was still in a body. It was a different body than our human body is now. It was a body that was fit for eternity. But it was the same type of body that we will have in eternity. Jesus gave up the freedom that He had as God to be encased in a human body for all eternity. That, in and of itself, is a sacrifice that is beyond our ability to comprehend.

Third, let’s talk about what it cost the Holy Spirit. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 Paul wrote,

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We see in this passage the work and responsibility of the Holy Spirit. He is in charge of the Word. In Ephesians 4:30 Paul wrote, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." We see how man's rejection of the Gospel affects the Holy Spirit. He grieves because of men. The Holy Spirit's job is a ministry through the ages of patiently wooing the stubborn hearts of sinful men through the call of the Gospel—that is, through the Word of God. He also suffers long with men who treat him ill, and is grieved when they resist Him. Each person in the triune Godhead paid dearly to make the gift of salvation possible. So, clearly, from the viewpoint of the provision of the gift, we can see its high cost.

But the acceptance of this free gift is also very costly. Let's look at the high cost of accepting this free gift. Accepting this gift costs each individual the denial of self and the renouncing of much that men hold dear. We have to give up much in order to achieve eternal life. Paul, who gladly paid that price, expressed this concept vividly in several passages. First, let's look at Galatians 2:20 where he wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." What does it mean to be "crucified with Christ"? When the Romans hung a person on the tree in the act of crucifixion, the person rarely came off that cross alive. The Romans were experts at what they did. If they were crucifying someone whom they truly disliked, they could prolong the agony of crucifixion for weeks. Or, they could make it end in as short as a day. But we know that most people who went to the cross did not live past it. When Jesus went to the cross, He died. When we are said to be "crucified with Christ," does that also not mean that we die, too? Yes, we do. We die to self. Those who enter the watery grave of baptism become dead as they are crucified with Christ. But through the power of God, they are raised to walk in newness of life. Do you see how all of this fits together so beautifully? In Philippians 3:7-8 Paul said,

"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ."

Let's go back through that again. All the things that Paul considered dear—things that he considered as "gain"—he came to count as things "lost." He was willing to trade everything for knowledge of Jesus Christ as his Lord. Those things that he once counted dear, verse 8 tells us, he came to count as rubbish so that he could gain Christ. One cannot accept the salvation (which Christ gives freely) on any lesser terms than the complete surrender of self to Christ. This is what makes the Gospel of Christ a "hard Gospel" to accept. Some may want to accept Jesus as Savior, but **not** as Lord of their lives. Imagine if you were a citizen of one of the old kingdoms about which we read in story books. There was a king, and usually a queen, and those two (with the king in charge) had complete control of the kingdom's subjects. If he said to them, "Go!," they went. If he said to them, "Stay!," they stayed. He had complete and total control over those whom he ruled. That is the way Christians also should operate. Some, however, have even suggested that accepting Jesus as "Savior" and "Lord" are two entirely different things. But, in reality, the two are inseparable. Luke explained, in Luke 2:11, "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." In Acts 2:36, Peter said, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Ten years later, Peter found himself in the house of a Gentile, where he proclaimed, not to the Jews, but to the rest of mankind, "the word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36). In Acts 10:37,43, Peter went on to say, "That word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea,

and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached...that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.” Even religious leaders today (who sometimes have led people to think otherwise) are beginning to see the error of their ways. Notice this quote:

“The church today is paralyzed at the moment of its supreme opportunity because we have committed the blasphemy that what is so costly for God shall come so easily to us. We haven’t dared face our congregations with a harder Gospel.”

That is quite an understatement. We have not been telling people that there is a cost to pay in order to accept this free gift. No man can accept Jesus as Savior of his soul without accepting Him as Lord of his life. Jesus Himself made this clear when He warned His hearers that there is a high cost for discipleship. In Luke 14:25-27 we read,

“Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.’”

Later, in Luke 14:33 Jesus said, “Likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.” The lordship of Jesus over self, life, and possessions must be acknowledged if we are to know Him as Savior. People must realize that Jesus commissions His disciples to preach repentance and remission of sins in His name (Lk. 24:47). There is no remission apart from repentance. Repentance involves a change of the whole life. In 2 Corinthians 7:10 Paul said, “Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” It is not only sorrow of the past that leads to repentance, but zeal and fervor for the future as well. These things affect how we live. Repentance is therefore the abandoning of our own selfish way so that we can walk God’s way—in obedience to, and in fellowship with, Him. “Just accept Jesus and be saved” is the false appeal of many. And great numbers of people assume that it is merely a matter of “accepting Jesus with no strings attached.” However, consider the words of Jesus Himself in John 14:21—“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” In response to a question asked by Judas (not Iscariot) in John 14:23, Jesus “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” To receive Jesus, then, requires a full surrender to the Lordship of Christ, which requires a sincere acceptance of all of His commandments. In John 15:10 Jesus said, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” That is why the gift of salvation, while offered freely, still comes with a high cost. Salvation cannot be earned or merited by any amount of good deeds. Even after a lifetime of diligent obedience, we still are unworthy servants. In Luke 17:10 Jesus said, “So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’” Even if we did everything that Jesus commands of us, we still, at that point, are unprofitable because we have done only what it was our duty to do. The lordship of Jesus rightly demands a full surrender to His authority. In Matthew 28:18-20 we read,

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

Yes, the gift of salvation is costly. It cost God more than Heaven can declare. It cost Jesus the agony and shame of the cross. Even today it costs the Holy Spirit, Who seeks to woo us through the Gospel. And, it costs everyone who truly receives it the price of total submission of self to the rightful claim of Jesus on the lives and souls of all who would be His for time and eternity.

Jesus has paid the high cost to offer you the gift of salvation. Have you paid the high cost of accepting it? In Acts 9 we find the story of the conversion of Saul, who later became the apostle Paul. Paul paid the high cost. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 Paul said,

“Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.”

Paul knew what it was like to give his all to the Lord. He continued faithful to the end of his days. The text of 2 Timothy 4:7-8 tells us about how he had fought the good fight, finished the course, and was ready to die. Jesus gives us the plan of salvation. We must hear His Word, believe it with all our heart, repent of our sins, make the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of our sins. From that point, we must live faithfully unto death. Join us again next time as we continue to preach the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE HIGH COST OF A FREE GIFT”

1. What, according to Romans 6:23, is the price of sin?
2. What, according to Romans 6:23, is the free gift of God?
3. In whom, according to Romans 6:23, is the free gift of God to be found?
4. For whom, according to Romans 5:6, did Christ die?
5. According to Romans 5:8, what was our relationship to God when He sent Christ to die for us?
6. According to 1 John 4:9-10, how did God choose to manifest His love toward humankind?
7. What does the word “propitiation” mean?
8. According to John 3:16, what did God give to buy back the souls of humanity?
9. According to Romans 8:32, whom did God not spare in His efforts to buy back the souls of humankind?
10. According to Philippians 2:5-8, Christ was obedient up to a point. What was that point?
11. According to Galatians 2:20, Paul said that he and Christ shared something. What was that “something”?
12. From Paul’s comments in Philippians 3:7-8, how should we today look upon anything that would interfere with us accepting Christ as our Lord and Savior?
13. According to Luke 2:11, who is our Savior?
14. According to Acts 2:36, Jesus is two things to us. What are those two things?
15. According to Acts 10:43, what will people receive if they believe in Christ?
16. According to John 14:21, what must we do in order to be saved?
17. According to Acts 2:38, how are a person’s sins forgiven?
18. According to the teaching found in Luke 14:33, what must a person forsake in order to become Christ’s disciple?
19. According to 2 Corinthians 7:10, what does godly sorrow produce?
20. What important point was Jesus teaching the people to whom He spoke in Luke 14:25-27?