

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

MOTIVATIONAL LESSONS

“Reward for Service”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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

Being a Christian requires diligent service on the part of the child of God. Colossians 1:10 teaches us that to walk worthy of the Lord, we must be fruitful in every good work. The Thessalonians were highly complemented because they had a “work of faith and a labor of love.” Jesus said of the blind man in John 9:4, “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.” Yes, being a Christian requires that we give God due service, and that we work hard in the kingdom of God. Think about James 1:25 as it relates to this. James said, “But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” James says that as we look into God’s Word, we must learn to be “doers of the work.” There is something that we must **do** as Christians. We have a service that we can offer to God and to man. We must be diligent workers for the cause of Christ. Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:10, “To this end we both labor and suffer reproach because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men.” Jesus said to almost every one of the seven churches that He addressed in Revelation, “I know your works” (Rev. 2:2) or “I know your labor” (2:19). God expects His people and His congregations to be working diligently in His cause. Mark 10:45 illustrates how Jesus was a great servant in the kingdom when it says, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

However, along with the service that we offer comes the blessing that we receive. Jesus spoke of this reward in Matthew 11:28-30 when He said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Jesus promised us that if we are willing to come to Him and take His yoke upon ourselves, then we will have a blessing that is beyond imagination. That blessing is eternal life. The text of 1 John 2:25 says, “This is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.” Hebrews 4:9 teaches us, “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.” What reward do we receive as Christians? We have a promised blessing of eternal life. We have the promise of the reward of being with God in that eternal rest. Hebrews 7:25 teaches us that we have salvation as our promised blessing because Jesus “is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” John 14 describes the blessing that Christians have when it says that Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us, and that He will come again and receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. Think of the words of Revelation 21:3-4, which describe a place where sin, sorrow, and death no longer plague man. John 5:28-29 describes a day in which “all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life.” Thus, we long for the reward that Christians have been promised. The reward described by Jesus in Matthew 25:26 is the fact that the righteous shall go away into eternal life.

But not only must we offer service, and not only will we receive a reward, but we need to know as well that where faithful service has been rendered, there is no assurance of a reward. But where faithful service has been rendered, and when God's children do faithfully follow Him, they will receive their reward. One day we will all stand before God to give an account for the things that we have done in this life. The text of 2 Corinthians 5:10 teaches us that if we have done well, then we will receive the victory that has been promised to us as Christians. Our works will follow us to our reward (Rev. 14:13). Thus, we must say, as Paul did, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). But as we think about reward for service, we need to ask, "What service must one offer to God? What service must we offer to the cause of Christ, and what must Christians do in this life for God?"

First, we must give **ourselves** in service to God. Romans 12:1 teaches us that we are to be a living sacrifice to God. Every day, when we start our day, we must be reminded that our lives are sacrifices to God and His cause. Jesus said in Luke 9:23, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." We learn from the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 that we are not our own, but that we were "bought at price." Therefore, we must glorify God in our body and our spirit, which are His. Someone paid the price for us. That Someone is Jesus, Who gave His life as a sacrifice on Calvary so that we could have the hope of eternal life. Therefore, the service we offer to God must begin by us offering ourselves. In Revelation 2:10, we are told, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give unto you the crown of life." As we think about all that Jesus did for us—like His sacrifice and the love He showed toward us—we must be willing to respond properly to that. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." The love of God demands that we give our lives in service to the cause of Christ.

Another way that we can offer acceptable service to God is by being studying His Word and being good students of it. We must study God's Word diligently. I love the words of Job in Job 23:12 when he said, "I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food." Job saw the Word of God as more important than even the food he needed to sustain himself in this life. Christians who want to give appropriate service to God must be good students of the Scriptures. Paul told Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). I am reminded of those noble Bereans in Acts 17:11 who, when the Word of God was brought to them, received it "with all readiness." Then what did they do? They "searched the Scriptures daily to see if what they were being told was true to God's Word. In Matthew 5:6, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." How did Jesus overcome the temptations that Satan hurled at Him? The answer to that is found in Matthew 4:4-11 when Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." How is it that we can triumph in our struggle against Satan, sin, and self? We do not survive by bread alone. Rather, we survive by knowing the Word of God. Think of 1 Peter 3:15, where Christians are told, "Be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Are we good enough students of the Scriptures that when someone asks us about salvation, we can tell them from the Word of God what they must do to be saved? Jeremiah 37:17 asks, "Is there any word from the Lord?" Christians need to know what God has said, and we must be able to tell others about the hope that we have through Jesus Christ.

Another service that we can offer as Christians is to faithfully follow Christ's teachings. We must follow Jesus and His teachings in every way. James 1:22-25 teaches us that we must be not just good **hearers** of the Word, but also **doers** of the Word. The one who is blessed is the one who hears the Word and then does the works that the Word tells him to do. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that if we are not willing to follow the teachings of Jesus, then we cannot be pleasing to the Father. Hebrews 5:9 teaches us that Jesus is the Author of eternal salvation "to all who obey Him." Think about what Jesus said in Matthew 7:21. Some had done many good works, and they were wondering about salvation and what they needed to do. Jesus said, however, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." Just saying that we are Christians is not enough. Just doing certain good works is not enough. Rather, we must follow faithfully **all** the teachings of Jesus if we are going to be pleasing to God. This is why Jesus asked in Luke 6:46, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" Jesus' point was this. We cannot call Him "Lord," but then ignore His teachings. If Jesus teaches us to do it, then we must be willing to carry out His commandments in order to offer faithful service to God.

Another service that we can offer is to continue to be soul winners for Jesus. This is why Jesus came to the Earth. We learn from Luke 19:10 about why Jesus came. He came "to seek and to save that which is lost." If we are going to offer service to God, then we are going to follow in the footsteps of Jesus (1 Pet. 2:21). We will be good examples to the world around us and be a shining light (Mt. 5:16). To do that, we must say something about Jesus to our friends and neighbors. We must tell them about the hope we have as Christians. Paul said in Colossians 1:28, "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." We must teach people what God has said. Jesus commissioned His followers to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). Thus, if we today are going to be good servants and offer appropriate service to God in His kingdom, then we must speak to our friends and neighbors about the hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

But not only must we offer service to God. We also must realize that when we **do** offer such service, there **will** be a reward. What reward can the Christian expect? What reward will we receive for our service to God? We can know that in the here and now, there is a reward for following Jesus. Jesus promises us the best life in the here and now. In John 10:10, Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." What reward do we receive as a child of God? We have been promised the abundant life in the here and now. But we also have the hope of life with God in eternity. Christ teaches us that the life we have now is the best life possible. The Bible tells us that when we follow its guidelines, then we will have a blessed life. The text of 2 Peter 1:3 says that God has given unto us "all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue." We can know how to have the best life now, and know how to be a godly person, by following the principles set forth in Scripture. In 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22, Paul wrote, "Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." Think about the reward you have already been given by not being caught up in the problems that arise. Think of the things that you have avoided by following the Christian lifestyle. Christians learn that there is only one reason for divorce, and that we are supposed to remain married for life if we intend to please God. Think about how your marriage has been blessed by knowing that teaching. Christians learn that alcohol, drugs, and tobacco are things that we should not use because they harm the body. According to the Bible, we are not to be "drunken with wine, wherein is dissipation" (Eph. 5:18). Think about all the physical problems that you have avoided in this life by following that teaching and that principle. Christians learn that to serve God, we must give our best.

And when we do, we can know that the best life possible has been afforded to us. John said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Christians can rest assured that they are living the best life possible, and that they can have true happiness here and now.

One of the great rewards that we receive today as Christians is the joy and peace that fill our lives because we became Christians. Think of the joy that we have now. The Bible says in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" The blessing that we receive is one that we enjoy in the here and now because we know that our sins have been washed away. We know that we have a second chance in this life. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." We not only have joy, but we also have great peace in this life. Jesus came to this world to bring peace. Isaiah 9:6 describes Him as "the Prince of peace." When He came into the world, the angels sang, "Peace on earth, and good will toward men" (Lk. 2:15). Today, we have access to that joy and peace. We can sing and be happy because we have the Christian principles in our lives. In Acts 16:25, Paul and Silas were in prison. We might think that they would be downtrodden, thinking that God had abandoned them. But that is not the case at all. They were singing and praying to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Today, we can rejoice even in the midst of trials. Acts 5 provides the perfect example of this. Peter and John had just been beaten because they had spoken in the name of Jesus when they had been told not to. But Acts 5:41 says, "They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." Christians can do that same type of thing today. James said, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (Jas. 1:2-3). We can count it a joy when we have trials because those trials can make our faith stronger.

One reward that means the most to us today is our triumph over death. What reward does the Christian have after this life is over? We can know that when we die, death is not the end and that death will take us home to God. Revelation 14:13 teaches us, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.'" How does the Christian view death? It is not viewed as something bad or evil. Instead, it is to be viewed as a blessing. The Bible describes death as a blessing (1 Cor. 15:55-57) when it teaches us that death no longer holds a sting or stranglehold over us. Why? It is because Jesus has defeated death. So, we today can also defeat death. Think of the words of Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." How does God view death? It is something precious because when one of His children comes home, He rejoices. Today, we can rejoice even in our deaths. John 5:28-29 teaches us, "The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." Do you remember the words of Jesus in John 11:25-26? Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." Jesus said that we would never really die because through Him, we could have the hope of the resurrection.

Another reward that the Christian has been promised is the eternal bliss of Heaven. There is no greater reward than to know that after this life, we can leave and go to be with the Father. We can live with Him in Heaven—that wonderful place of bliss that is described as a place of rest (Heb. 4:9). It is not like the rest in the land of Canaan that came to an end or the rest that God took on the seventh day after He had completed His activities of creation. There remains a rest today for God's people—Heaven itself. The text of 1 Thessa-

1 Corinthians 4:13-18 describes how that one day Christ will come back to claim His own. We will be caught up into the air with Him, and we will always be with Him. Thus, we have every reason to rejoice. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1 that we do not look for earthly treasures, but that we instead focus on eternal things—the “heavenly home” that we have been promised. So, today we have the promised reward of living with God throughout eternity in Heaven itself.

But how can we make sure that we do not lose this reward? Yes, we **have** been given a reward. If service has been offered, then there **is** a reward to be received. But we can **lose** that reward. What can we do to ensure that we do not lose our heavenly reward? The first thing we can do is to realize that if we are not careful we can lose our reward even if we have offered years of service. Someone might be a Christian for 20, 30, or 40 years, but by sinning they can lose their reward at the end of their life. Knowing that we can lose the reward ought to help us remain faithful. It is not the case that Christians cannot fall from grace. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that we **can** fall from grace. Paul said in Galatians 5:4 of those Christians who had been severed from Christ, “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” In the exact terminology that some people use today to say that we cannot fall from grace, Paul said that some Christians (Gal. 1:1-2) **had** fallen from grace by trying to return to the Old Law. Thus, we can lose our reward if we are not careful. The text of 1 Corinthians 10:12 says, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” Perhaps the best example of a person losing his reward can be found in Acts 8:22. Simon had just obeyed the Gospel, after having formerly been a magician. Of course, his magic was fake (tricks to the eye) because he had no real magic. But when he saw the apostles perform real miracles, he tried to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money. Peter told him that he was in the “bond of iniquity,” and that his money would perish with him. Simon was in danger of losing his soul along with his money. If he did not repent as Peter told him to do, he would be lost for all eternity. So today, if people are not careful they can lose their salvation and their reward. How can we make sure that we do not lose our reward? We need to be sure that we do not get “the retirement mentality.” We must make sure that we stay faithful all the days of our lives. Revelation 2:10 says, “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” We must make sure that we continue to follow Jesus every day of our lives. Jesus said that this is our daily responsibility. In Luke 9:23, Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” Every day of our lives, we must strive diligently to live for Jesus and to give our best for Him and His cause.

We also can be sure that we do not lose our reward by realizing that our work is not in vain. The things that we have done in this life for Christ are not in vain. Those works are things that not only help us as a Christian, but that also help us get to Heaven. Think again about Revelation 14:13, where John said to suffering saints, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’” The things that we do in this life **will** follow us to Heaven itself. What we have done for Christ **has** been worthwhile. That is why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:58, “Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Job asked the question in Job 14:14, “If a man dies, shall he live again?” We learn that for Christians, the answer is “Yes!” If we die as a faithful child of God, we are going to live again with Jesus. We **are** going to live on the other side in Heaven itself. Thus, we must be “faithful unto death” so that the Lord will give us “the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

Are **you** on the Lord's side? Have you obeyed the Gospel? Are you a follower of Jesus Christ? If not, I plead with you today to become a Christian—nothing less and nothing more. Acts 11:26 tells us that they “were called Christians first in Antioch.” What must a person do to become a Christian and to receive the reward that is offered after due service? A person must listen carefully to the Word of God as found in the Bible. It is necessary to study the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15) to see what God has to say on the matter of salvation. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Once a person has heard God's Word and has studied the Scriptures, then he must believe in that message and believe that Jesus is the only way to receive salvation. Jesus has already taught us that if we are not willing to believe in Him, then we cannot be saved. He is “the Author of eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:8-9). A person also must be willing to repent and change his or her life. A person must confess Jesus as the Son of God and as Savior. And, a person must be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins. Galatians 3:27 teaches us that to get into Christ, we must be baptized into His body—which is where salvation is found (2 Tim. 1:10-11). So, yes, a person must be baptized into the body of Christ. Then, a person must offer service to God by living faithfully every day, knowing that there is a reward to come. That reward is Heaven itself. Don't you want to go to Heaven? We want you to go to Heaven. God wants you to go to Heaven. But to do so, you must give your life to God each and every day. We are praying that you will do exactly that.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “REWARD FOR SERVICE”

1. What does Colossians 1:10 teach a Christian to do?
2. What did Jesus say in John 9:4, and how does His comment apply to Christians today?
3. Why, according to Paul’s statement in 1 Timothy 4:10, do Christians work for the Lord?
4. What two things does James 1:25 admonish Christians to be?
5. According to 1 John 2:25, what is one of the rewards a Christian can expect for faithful service to God?
6. Explain the meaning of Hebrews 4:9.
7. In Matthew 25:26, what reward did Jesus promise to faithful Christians?
8. What does 2 Corinthians 5:10 teach us?
9. According to Revelation 2:10, how long must a Christian remain faithful to God?
10. What does 2 Timothy 2:15 admonish Christians to do?
11. For what were the Bereans complimented in Acts 17:11?
12. According to Luke 19:10, why did Jesus come to Earth?
13. In John 10:10, Christ promised faithful Christians something. What is that “something”?
14. What was Paul’s point when he said in Colossians 1:28, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus”?
15. What does James 1:2-3 admonish Christians to do?
16. What point was Paul making when he said in 1 Corinthians 4:16, “While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal”?
17. John 5:28-29 discusses the fate of two different groups of people. Who are the people in those groups, and what will happen to each group at the end of time?
18. In Luke 9:23, Jesus stated that faithful Christians need to be ready to do something. What is that “something”?
19. What important point does 1 Corinthians 15:58 teach us?
20. What point is found in the text of Psalm 116:15 concerning the death of those who remain faithful to God?