

### Jesus Promised Rewards For Service

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to speak boldly for Jesus so that we do not deny Him either in our hearts or by the words that we speak. In this topic, we see that Jesus promised rewards to disciples if they would be faithful in speaking for Him.

Before speaking about rewards to His disciples, Jesus warned that His message would bring conflict. Matthew 10:34-36 says, “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’” In Luke 2:14, we see that the angels praised God at the birth of Jesus by saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” Here, we see that Jesus said just the opposite. Jesus had to defeat Satan before that peace could come. All who come to Christ in repentance and faith can experience the peace of God in their hearts; however, until Satan is sent to judgment, there will continue to be conflict on the earth.

Jesus said that this conflict will be in a person’s own family. We have an illustration of one such conflict in John 9 when Jesus healed a blind man. John 9:20-22 says, “His parents answered them and said, ‘We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself.’ His parents said these *things* because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed *that* He *was* Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue.” Here, we see that the parents chose to show a lack of respect to their son because of their fear of being put out of the synagogue. That was just a very early picture of much greater conflicts that would happen in families in the future because of the eternal life that Jesus offers. Jesus warned of much greater suffering from family members during the time of the tribulation. Luke 21:16-17 says, “You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put *some* of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake.” In these verses, we see that Jesus explained to the disciples that in the time of the tribulation, many would be betrayed even by their own households.

Jesus went on to explain, in Matthew 10:37-39, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.” The word translated “love” in these verses is the word for “family love”. In contrast, Matthew 22:37-40 says, “Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” In these verses, the word used for “love” is the word that speaks of God’s love for us. Family love

involves commitment. Godly love is pictured by the fact that Christ loved us so much that He gave His life to pay the penalty for our sins on the cross. This is total sacrifice and not just commitment and is eternal and not just for this world.

In 1 John 4:18-21, we read, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.” By taking all of these verses together, we see that we respond to God’s love because He loved us first. That love was shown by the fact that Jesus gave His life to pay the penalty for our sins. His love is much greater than any human love because it is eternal. As a result, our response to that love will cause us to love God even more than we love any member of our family. Jesus said that otherwise we are not worthy of Him.

Then, Jesus said that a person who does not take his cross and follow after Jesus is not worthy of Him. Matthew 16:24-26 says, “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?’” In these verses, we see that Jesus explained that those who put the things of the world first in their lives have not denied themselves. They have kept the world and the things of the world as the love of their life, instead of responding to the love and sacrifice that Christ made to save their lives.

Jesus explained to His disciples what it means to love Him as He talked to them the night before He was crucified. First, Jesus said that to love Him means to be obedient to His commandments. John 15:10 says, “‘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.’” In Matthew 22:37-40, quoted in a previous paragraph, we see that Jesus summarized all of the Old Testament commandments in just two commandments: Love God with our whole heart, soul and mind and love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Second, Jesus said that to love Him means to love one another as He loves us. John 15:12 says, “‘This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.’” Third, Jesus said that to love Him means to lay down our life for Him and for others. We see that to take up the cross of Jesus means that we are willing to lay down our lives for Him. Then, John 15:13-14 says, “‘Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.’” Galatians 5:13 tells us one key way to lay down our lives for others. That verse says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” When we love Jesus more than we love our family, it will actually cause them to experience the love of Christ flowing through us, which means that we will love them with an eternal love that causes us to pray for their salvation if they are not Christians. If they are Christians, that eternal love will help them grow

and become more like Christ.

Then, Jesus went on to promise the disciples rewards for faithful service. Matthew 10:40-42 says, ““He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold *water* in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” The word translated “receive” means *to take with the hand, to give hospitality or to receive instruction*.

Jesus said that those who received the disciples as they went out to share the message of the kingdom of God would actually be receiving Christ, which meant that they would also receive the Father who sent Him. Jesus said that the people who received the disciples would also receive rewards. Jesus said that the one who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet would receive a prophet’s reward. Jesus was sending His disciples out two by two throughout Galilee. There would be many who received them in the various cities and villages. If they received them as prophets of God, they would be rewarded just as the prophets are rewarded by God. If those people received the disciples as righteous men in the name of the One who is truly righteous, they would receive a righteous man’s reward. Romans 3:21-22a says, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.” Here, we see that the first reward for all who receive Jesus is that they receive the righteousness of God.

Jesus went on to show that He is very eager to give rewards. Jesus said that any person who gives even a little child a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple will by no means lose his reward. The word translated “lose” means *to be destroyed*. This word is used about Satan in John 10:10 where we read, ““The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.” Satan came to destroy, but Jesus came to give life and, as we see from this verse, to also give rewards. In that chapter, Jesus also explained one reward that all who become His disciples will receive. John 10:28 says, ““And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” All of those who serve Jesus because they are His disciples will never perish because Jesus said no one is able to take them out of His hand.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus will reward them as they love and serve Him. No service that they give, because they are true followers of Christ, will go unrewarded. Christ is our foundation. Jesus led Paul to write, in 1 Corinthians 3:14, what happens if we build on that foundation. “If anyone’s work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.” We want to help our children understand why it is important to choose to do those things that have eternal value, so that they can receive the rewards that the Lord desires to give to them. They will be able to experience eternal joy when they receive those rewards. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the rewards that come from serving Christ.