

## The Perks of Being a Witness

### Matthew 10:40-42

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 8-8-2010

#### **Introduction – is it biblical to be motivated by perks (v. 39)?**

The story goes that a lead singer was extremely angry, and upset, and pouting after one of her performances. And the chorus girls were kind of taken aback and were talking to each other about it. And one of them asked, “What’s burning her?” The other girl said, “She only got nine bouquets of roses thrown over the floodlights.” A third girl said, “Well, that’s pretty good isn’t it?” “Yes,” said the other, “but I heard that she paid *ten* people to throw roses.”

I tell that story because that is the ugly picture of pride that many people associate with recognition, praise, and rewards. To them it all smacks of self-serving pride. And because I am going to be preaching on the perks and rewards for witnessing today, I thought I better start by asking the question, “Is it ever Biblical to be motivated by such rewards?” Some people think not.

But I am convinced that it is a huge mistake to think that all desire for recognition and reward is sinful. Christ told us to lay up treasures in heaven. Paul said that he strove for a crown of glory that would not fade away. That reward captivated him and made him energetic. Will he cast his crown before Christ’s feet when he sees Him? Yes he will because he knows it is all of grace. But such crowns still motivated him to work hard. Christ told us that we should desire to receive God’s commendation, “**Well done, thou good and faithful servant.**” We should desire God’s approval.

But we shouldn’t think that is only the commendation of God that is allowed. We are commanded to praise our wives and to praise our children for their accomplishments. “**Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.**” That’s a good thing. Paul’s epistles are strewn with references to both praise and recognition for accomplishments. In both Old and New Testaments, it is clearly a Biblical concept to hold out honors, recognitions, and rewards. God commands us to do it on earth; He certainly is going to do it in heaven.

So what is the difference between the *Bible’s* promotion of rewards, recognition, and honor, and that chorus girl’s ugly craving for reward, recognition and honor? I think the ultimate difference is idolatry; it’s a heart

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issue. But there are several other differences. First, the girl obviously had a heavy dose of pride, whereas the Bible connects humility with these rewards. It's a very interesting thing. In fact, Colossians 2:18 says that denial of rewards can amount to a false humility.

A second difference can be seen in the difference between a bribe and an incentive. In some people's minds there is no difference; but there is a vast difference between the two. A bribe is a reward that is given to get someone to do something he doesn't want to do and otherwise has no intention of doing and as soon as the bribe is withdrawn will quit doing. Now let me ask you this: Can you think of any bribe that would be sufficient to get a person to do what verses 38-39 call him to do? - to die to self; stop pursuing self-interests. I can't think of any. There is no bribe that would be sufficient. A self-seeking person won't lay down His life and live exclusively for Jesus. He just won't. If he did, he would no longer be self-serving. So a bribe simply motivates a self-seeking person to continue to be self-seeking by temporarily doing good. In contrast, the rewards of the Bible come to those who deny themselves and sacrifice themselves. They are quite different things.

Third, these rewards are Christ centered, revolve around service but are tremendously encouraging because they assure us that our labors in the Lord are not in vain. They appeal to a person of vision, purpose, and goals. In contrast, the chorus girl was *present*-oriented and self-serving.

Fourth, Biblical rewards, recognition, and honor demonstrate a mutually beneficial system of respect and love, whereas the chorus girl was 100% self-absorbed. You could illustrate this in marriage. Is there great joy and satisfaction in marriage? Yes. But marriage can be pursued selfishly, or it can be pursued seeking the interests of the other person *ahead of our own*. When we do the latter, we interestingly end up benefiting from marriage far more. What are the happiest marriages? They are the marriages where both partners have laid down their lives and are seeking to please his or her spouse. 1Corinthians 7 says that the married woman should seek how she may please her husband, and the married man should seek how he may please his wife. In the process of doing so, there is great reward, great joy, and great satisfaction in marriage. So that would be an example of a person who is rewarded because he is not self-seeking.

Fifth, the difference can also be illustrated by looking at the difference between Spenserian free market economics and Biblical free market economics. Spenserian free market concepts flow from evolutionary ideas

that lead to a survival of the fittest, dog-eat-dog world in which ethics is thrown to the wind and people succeed at the expense of others. Of course, they found that they could only do that by forcing their way, so they got in bed with government and asked for favors to rule out the competition. The robber Barons were not truly free market. They engaged in a Fascist Spenserian system that they *called* free market. In Biblical free market economics, everyone who serves well benefits – if you want to become the greatest, Jesus says that you must serve the most. And in real life, apart from government control of the economy, which ruins servant businesses, the businesses that prosper the most are the ones that serve so well that they make themselves indispensable. Who is the salesman you like to buy from? It's the one who is looking out for your interests, right? So in Biblical Free Market economics, the one with the best servant heart and abilities always receives rewards, recognition, and benefit. And to fight against such recognition in human affairs is to promote socialism. Now I've been hitting this hard because I think some of us have been influenced by our culture on this.

And I think the key to seeing that verses 40-42 do not appeal to a person who is self-seeking is in the transition verse, verse 39. “**He who finds his life will lose it.**” He is talking here about the self-seeking person trying to find his life-pursuit by avoiding pain, sacrifice, discomfort, battle, and all of the cost that this chapter has been talking about. And what happens? Eventually his life proves to be empty and leaves him with nothing significant in time or eternity. He loses his life. But the second clause says, “**and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.**” When you relinquish your rights and embrace the costs of discipleship that Christ laid out in this chapter, far from being a loser, you end up with an incredible sense of satisfaction, joy, meaning in life, and all kinds of benefits and rewards, and power in the Holy Spirit, and people recognize that you have discovered what it means to really live.

Romans 11 wants you to be so rewarded and blessed in your sacrificial pursuit of Christ that even unbelievers become jealous of the Gospel. They want the blessings that you have. And so He is saying in these verses, “the costs are worth it.” Your labors in the Lord are not in vain. There are rewards; there are perks to being a witness. I know that was a long introduction, but this is a point that has confused many people.

## **I. The honor of union with Jesus; of representing Jesus; of union with other believers (v. 40)**

And the first perk is the honor of union with Jesus. It would be enough of an honor to have Jesus walking by your side when you went out witnessing, but this passage is promising so much more. It is saying that when you become His representative, He will actually be in you, and speaking through you, and empowering you. He will be backing up your message more than the US backs up its Ambassadors. This is a tremendous privilege. Look at verse 40. **“He who receives you receives Me and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”** When you witness, you aren’t just any ordinary representative. Jesus is in you, and is witnessing through you. And through your union with Jesus you have a union with other believers and a union with the Father. The reward of embracing the costs of this chapter is that you don’t embrace them alone. Christ promises to go through the fire and through the cost. And we will be seeing that all of the blessings of these verses flow out of our union with Christ. Let’s look at some of the practical implications.

In Jewish thought a person received greater reward if he served a greater person. And therefore an act done to a rabbi received a greater reward than an act done to a righteous man, and an act done to a righteous man received a greater reward than an act done for a child. Christ cuts through all of that by saying that anyone united to Him becomes great precisely because of that union. Your spouse is great because of Jesus in her. Your child is great because of Jesus in her. And thus, even an act that is done to a person from infancy through toddler years has incredible significance if that toddler is in the covenant. In Matthew 25 Jesus said, **“Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”**

This is an incredibly life-transforming thought. When I give so much as a cup of cold water to you in hospitality, I am doing it to Christ because of His union with you. When I hurt you, I am hurting Christ. He goes on in Matthew 24 to condemn people for failing to feed Him, for failing to visit Him in jail etc. When Saul persecuted Christians, what was Christ’s response. He said, **“Saul, Saul. Why are you persecuting Me?”** To persecute God’s people is to persecute Christ. When you go through a rough day, Christ is right there with you. The people who are hurting you, are hurting Christ.

Union with Christ therefore, motivates us to receive all whom Christ has received. Why? Because we want to share in their reward by ministering directly to Jesus. This passage not only indicates that we are to *be* received by others when we serve, but also that we are to *receive* all whom Christ receives - a prophet, a righteous man, a toddler. How do you treat the brethren? How do you treat toddlers? In verse 42 he says, **And whoever gives one of these little ones** - He must have had young children around Him when He taught. And by the way, this is one of many passages that indicate that the children were not excused for children's church. They were in the worship services as a family. Christ taught them together.

But notice what He says here: **“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.”** We will look at the implications of losing our reward in a minute. I think there is an implication of little ones being witnesses as well. I'm not going to get into that right now. But when you make the beds for your covenant children, and wash the floors; when you change the diapers and clean up spilled milk, realize that you are directly serving Christ in those tasks. Isn't that encouraging?

Well, let's give another implication that can motivate us in the midst of persecution. This union with Christ also assures us of the Father's love and of our security. Why do I say that? It's a logical deduction from these verses. If when I receive you I am receiving Christ and in turn by receiving Christ I am receiving the Father, then the reverse must be true. When the Father receives the Son, He also receives those who are united to Son. Think about it. How can the Father love us when Scripture says He hates all workers of iniquity? Romans 8 says that nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God which is *in* Christ Jesus our Lord. God's love resides in Christ, and that is the only reason He can love us. It is because God loves the Son with an unbreakable love, that He loves all who are united to Christ with an unbreakable love. Now that's a tremendous motivation to witness as Jesus did. He was motivated by the Father's love.

But here's what blows me away. It also means that He loves us with the same intensity that He loves the Son; and this in turn means that the Son loves us with the same love that the Father loved Him. And this ought to melt your heart with love to Him. And if you have been indifferent to the Lord, this ought to break your heart. Let me give you some Scriptures. I would not dare to make this logical implication if the Scripture did not explicitly say it. Christ said, **“As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.”** (John 15:9). And the Greek word is *kathos* – “just as” the Father has

loved me, so have I loved you. There could be no greater honor in the army of the Lord than to know that the General of the Army loves you personally as much as His father loved Him.

But think of the Father's love. Christ prayed to the Father in John 17:23, "**You sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**" Wow! This is incredible. This is almost as mind-blowing as the fear of God, which we looked at last week. When you really begin thinking through what it means to be united to Christ then some of the earlier verses begin to make sense. In verses 26-31 He tells us not to be fearful of witnessing because the Father cares for you and values you. Can you see how much He values you? He loves you just like He loves His only begotten Son. You may not think much of yourself, but God does because of Christ, and if you are united to Christ, then you have every reason to have confidence, boldness, comfort and security when you go out witnessing. And by the way, this is one of the reasons why you must develop this constant sense of communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Practicing the Presence brings to your constant consciousness these concepts of God's care for you.

So we have looked at the perks involved in our union with Christ.

## **II. Reward for service (v. 41)**

But what is this *reward* for service that is spoken about? Isn't union with Christ reward enough? Verse 41 speaks of a prophet's reward and a righteous man's reward. Verse 42 speaks of a disciple's reward. In this chapter on evangelism, any of these three covenant people (prophets, righteous men, and toddlers) can all witness and can lay up rewards for witnessing or for any other form of service that you do.

Some people say there is no more reward than simply heaven. They say that the phrase, a "prophet's reward," is a euphemism for heaven. These socialists of grace [and I use that term advisedly. I'm not trying to be insulting; I'm trying to clear articulate the consequence of this idea - these socialists of grace] think that grace is not grace unless everyone receives exactly the same grace and exactly the same reward. This is nonsense. Christ created us different bodily, intellectually, monetarily and socially. Why does there have to be a leveling of distinctions in terms of reward? God is free to make rewards different.

What difference does this make? A lot. The founding fathers of America said that the French revolution destroyed liberty by mandating equality. Liberty and equality are mutually exclusive. The moment you try

to enforce equality, you will destroy liberty. The only equality we have is equal access to justice and access to grace.

The socialist dream of equality destroys motivation to excel. Why should I invent amazing products when the State gets it? Most technology in communist countries had to be stolen from the West. And in the same vein, why should I work my tail off like Paul did if I can get to heaven with the same reward doing nothing? It destroys motivation in the Christian life. It is a form of socialism.

Individual reward on the other hand can be a tremendous motivator. But if the only reward is heaven, then everyone comes out the same no matter what his actions were on earth. And I want to give several reasons why our actions in time will have a profound affect upon what rewards and responsibilities we will have in the new heavens and new earth.

First, He uses the word “reward.” And I think that ought to settle the issue right there. These people were already saved and on their way to heaven. The only issue is whether they are going to get rewards or not. You can lose rewards; you can’t lose heaven. He is not talking about heaven.

Second, verse 42 makes clear that every action no matter how insignificant receives a reward. Now if heaven were the reward, then we would fall into the error of salvation by works. It’s not our works that gain heaven. We are saved by faith apart from works. But our works clearly contribute to the reward. Matthew 16:27 says, “**then He will reward each according to his works.**” Heaven is *not* won by works, but rewards are. Again, they are quite different things.

Third, Christ is not leveling all rewards into one indistinguishable reward. He clearly distinguishes different kinds of rewards. He speaks of a prophet’s reward, a righteous man’s reward and a disciple’s reward. And of course other Scriptures speak of the reward given to an evangelist, and a crown given to martyrs, etc. 1 Corinthians 3:8 says, “**each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.**” There is no socialism here. What you do on earth limits what you will be able to have and do for all eternity in heaven. You won’t be able to get the government up there redistributing wealth and giving you bailout money. If you fail to witness, you will fail to gain witnessing rewards. Everything you do on earth contributes to the next world. This is a huge motivator.

And then fourth, going to the broader context of the whole Bible, The word “reward” occurs 101 times in the Bible, and consistently it is used as

an incentive that *our actions make a difference*. On the socialistic-spiritual interpretation, your actions here will not make a difference in heaven. There will be utter egalitarianism on their view. But that is so demotivating. In a socialistic country like Russia or China people have not been highly motivated to excellence in their work because of the leveling of distinctions. Equality of honor and reward ends up leveling *down* the quality of everyone's work to an equal and mediocre output. When people work spiritually in a socialistic worldview, much of the motivation for service is removed. But if you take these verses seriously, it will drive you to serve the Lord. All the costs and the inconvenience will be worthwhile. The sluggard will get very little. The industrious person will be laying up treasures in heaven.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 3 where Paul seeks to motivate the Corinthians with rewards. And I think you will see why this is important. 1 Corinthians 3:8,11-15: Verse 8 says, **Now he who plants and he who waters are one** [and the previous verses indicated that they are one by God's grace. But notice the rest of the verse. Paul does not jump to the conclusion that some of my friends have, that because we are all one in Christ, that there is a dissolving of unique contributions and unique rewards. He says], **and each one will receive his own reward according to his labor**. In other words, there are distinctions. This is not socialism where everybody gets rewarded the same even though one sacrificed enormously and another skated through life. Salvation is the same, but not the reward.

Now look at verse 11: **For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ**. The foundation deals with our salvation in Christ as verse 15 makes clear. And no one can lay that foundation except for Christ. You didn't put one thing into it. And that's why salvation is equal. We didn't contribute a thing. We are all equally deserving of hell. And because of Christ we are all equally deserving of heaven.

But the works wrought by God's grace flow out of salvation, and we can have a very significant part of that. So he goes on to speak of building on the foundation - and that is something we can do. Once we are saved, our actions are very significant. Verse 12: **Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest** [Notice that? "each one's work will become manifest"]; **for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a**



**reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.** In other words, he will be saved; he'll get into heaven, but he won't have what others will have. When some of you get to heaven you will have far less treasures to work with, far less responsibilities, far less recognition, and far less reward. For all of eternity it will affect the kind of dominion you can take. Now yes, you will be joyful in heaven. It will be a place of delight. But it won't be what it could have been.

Our actions after we are saved play a very significant role in our rewards. This is why John warns us that we be careful not to lose our rewards. Isn't that also what this text implies? If you do these things you will be no means lose your reward; but that implies that if you don't you *will* lose your rewards. Well, in 2 John 8 it is explicit. 2 John 8 also tells us how we may receive a full reward. Too many of us shortchange ourselves on rewards. And this is why Christ ends this commission for us to be witnesses with the promise of reward. Certainly the costs are great, but the eternal weight of glory that is being laid up in heaven makes the costs seem insignificant by comparison. Now, when you are convinced that every witnessing opportunity is setting you apart for some rewards in heaven, it suddenly takes on new meaning. Now it's true, the vision alone that we looked at three weeks ago hugely motivates me. But this gives me even more motivation. I'm investing for the future.

### **III. Sharing in the reward of those we serve (v. 41)**

Point III. This passage says not only that the prophet and the righteous man and the person who gives a cup of cold water receive rewards. It also says that when we serve a prophet and a righteous man, we will share in the reward that the righteous man receives. When you help an evangelist, you will share in an evangelist's reward. This is not socialism. You share in his reward because you sacrificially invested in his ministry. Investors receive shares in the company profits, right?

This gives even more reason to be involved. Though not everyone is gifted in evangelism, when a person's house is used to help the evangelist reach out by way of hospitality, the host shares in the evangelist's reward. Did you get that? *They share in the evangelist's reward!* So it doesn't matter how ungifted or how gifted you are, it is your actions of faith; the obedience of faith that makes the difference. And a behind-the-scenes person who has very few gifts may end up having far more reward in heaven than a pastor because this person has been out and out for Jesus. Remember the widow's mite? She had almost nothing to invest. Yet Christ said that she

gave more than all the Pharisees put together. Her reward in heaven was great.

So that is even further motivation for us to be diligently involved in our service, and to help those who are involved in other ministries. Not all of you can teach a home Bible study, but most of you can host one. Not all of you can pastor, but you are sharing in our rewards by supporting Rodney, Gary, and me. And Christ says, “You’re not just going to get your own reward. You will share in the pastor’s reward.” Isn’t that great? It’s a lovely balance between the one and the many; between group dynamics and individual efforts. This is why Kathy and I love giving to God-centered ministries. It’s in part joyful because I am pleasing God, and in part it is joyful because we are sharing in their reward.

#### **IV. Being on the winning side – reward implies that we don’t lose.**

The fourth and last motivator in these verses is implied. If we are guaranteed rewards and eternal significance to what we do, it implies that we are on the winning side, right? And this brings a fitting conclusion to a chapter that is full of warfare language. If you have suffered in witnessing, you have not suffered in vain. Every effort has contributed to the final victory of Jesus in history. A soldier joins the army because he is willing to lay down his life for his nation. But no one has enthusiasm for laying down his life for a cause if it has already been determined that we are not going to win. That was what made Korea and Vietnam such tragedies. Enormous sacrifices were made for the purpose of losing. Well, Christ has no such intention. We are part of a glorious army, and any sacrifices we must make will be well worthwhile. We are on the winning side.

#### **Conclusion – four action items.**

Let me end by giving you four action items to take home with you.

1. First, be willing to take the inconvenience and risk of evangelism. This discourse on rewards is directly tied to a chapter on evangelism and being a witness. The rewards of witness are worth it.
2. Second, plan to receive someone in Christ’s name in this coming week. Verse 40 says that if you receive someone in Christ’s name, you can receive a reward. It could be having an elder over, or tucking your kids in the name of Christ, or it could be calling someone in the church and cheering them up in the name of Christ. Receive someone in the name of Jesus.

3. Third, give something sacrificially to that person. It doesn't have to be extravagant. It may be giving time. And you children can do this. You can volunteer to pick up the table for Mom and be doing it for Jesus. Think of one nice thing you can give.

4. Fourth, thank God for His union with you, and His enabling you to lay up rewards in heaven. He didn't have to do it that way. Thank Him that His grace was given in such a way as to make your labors be significant. Give Him the glory for anything you have done. When you are in heaven, if you have a crown, you will no doubt cast your crowns at Christ's feet over and over and declare that even your rewards were all of grace. Even now have the same attitude of casting your crowns before His feet and thanking Him.

As you do those four steps, I think you will find a new meaning in your service in this coming week. Let's pray.

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II. Reward for service (v. 41)

III. Sharing in the reward of those we serve (v. 41)

IV. Being on the winning side – reward implies that we don't lose.

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1. Engage in \_\_\_\_\_
2. R\_\_\_\_\_ someone (v. 40)
3. Give something to that person.
4. Thank God that His grace has purchased a way for your actions to be significant and for you to receive rewards in heaven.

