

What's the Message – Lesson 100

In our lesson today, Jesus teaches us about our responsibilities and blessings as a child of God.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. We pray, Lord, that You would help us to see new opportunities for us to be a blessing to others, and that we always do so for the right reason. Help us to do our good works to all our neighbors, not that we should get recognition and honor, but that Your name might be praised and glorified for Your unbounded mercy to all of Your children. Amen.

In our last five lessons we have been looking at Jesus as our Great Teacher, and what He has to teach us about such things as legalism in our religion; about the abuse of the concept of separation; about God, His nature and will for us; and the kind of relationship we should have with our heavenly Father. Today we look at one more major subject that Jesus taught us about: our responsibilities and blessings as a child of God.

Let's approach this topic with a simple definition of what our responsibilities include: basically it is God's will and covenant that we should be a blessing to others. Now, that's our definition, but how do we do that? The best model we have to follow is the life of Jesus. And the logical conclusion is that we should be imitators of Jesus. Naturally, it can never be a complete imitation, and ideally, this will be done during the normal course of our daily lives, with no intent for self-glory.

Theologians may talk of the Doctrine of Sanctification, or of doing good works, but Jesus spoke in plain and simple language about the proper motivation we should have.

Dale, please read Matthew 23: 5-7.

(The scribes and Pharisees) do all their deeds to be seen by men; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the market places, and by being called "rabbi" by men. To put it bluntly, Teacher, their motivation is wrong because it is self-serving.

Right you are, Dale.

And this reminds me of what you said back in Lesson 50, when Moses was speaking to the children of Israel. There you said: “God first loved us, and because of His love He has done so much for us that our natural response to Him should be motivated by our love to Him. We should want to do His will.” Then you added, “God wants our obedience, not because it will earn His forgiveness for us, but as the natural response to His many acts of love for us.”

And this is the proper motivation for us throughout our lives – we must become oblivious of self. With this motivation we can now turn to our responsibilities. We can group those responsibilities into four broad aspects of the Christian life.

- To put God’s will before self-will (Mark 14:36)
- To take up a cross (Matt. 16:24 – 25)
- To be a servant (Matt. 20:25 – 28)
- To be His witnesses to the world (Matt. 28:18 – 20)

As Rev. Harley Swiggum expressed it: “True sons of the Father, said Jesus, do not love just to be loved. They invest their blessings in others, even if there is no return on their investment. They do not trade service for service or good deed for good deed. They mount the outlook towers, not to look for blessings, but to search for opportunities to be a blessing.”

And that brings us right back to God’s covenant with Abraham. God blessed Abraham and his descendants with material riches for a purpose – to be a blessing – and that as one of Abraham’s spiritual children, we also might be a blessing to the world.

And that brings us to the second part of our topic today, the blessings that followers of God receive. In John 10:10 Jesus says that He has come in order for His followers to have an abundant life. What does this mean to you? One thing it does not mean is a certainty of prosperity. On the contrary, we are told that we must suffer from the powers of Satan in this world. But the promises that Jesus offers are of an eternal nature, promises that no one else could make.

And they include the promise of the Holy Spirit to counsel and comfort us (John 14:25 – 27); the forgiveness of our sins (Luke 5:20 – 24); victory over death (John 8:51); and the promise of eternal life (John 3:16, 5:24). These are the blessings of the righteous children of God.

Sounds mighty good, you say? But then you ask, how do I get these benefits and make them personally mine? Jesus told us the one-word answer to that question many times. On numerous occasions, as He healed a person of some infirmity, He would say to them: *your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease* (Mark 5:34). Jesus went so far as to say that without faith, nothing is possible; but with faith, anything is possible through God (see Matt. 21:18 – 22).

As we saw in our Old Testament studies, God had to continually teach the Children of Israel to trust and obey Him. We also, need to learn that the promises of God are certain because He has shown that He keeps them, and we can absolutely count on them and trust Him completely. Then in the Study Aid for Lesson 85, we said that the Old Testament words “trust and obedience” have become “faith and sanctification” in the New testament. But the idea is the same, and what Jesus was teaching was based precisely on what had been taught for centuries. It is an old message, but one that is still first and foremost for us today, for as St. Paul says: *We walk by faith, not by sight* (2 Cor. 5:7).

Next time we will dig deeper into what it means to be a servant, and a witness for Jesus.