

LESSON EIGHT: THE DUTIES AND BLESSINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN

In the seven previous lessons we have seen the development of the scheme of redemption, the conditions which God has given for salvation, and the nature of the church. Because of the love of God and the sacrifice of his Son on the cross, all men may come to salvation by obedience to the gospel of Christ. Becoming a Christian, however, is not the end, but the beginning of service to God. This final lesson in this series will discuss the duties and the blessings, which derive from being a member of the Lord's church.

THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN

As suggested at the close of Lesson Seven, a Christian must live faithfully until death in order for him to go to heaven (Revelation 2:10). Sins committed after baptism will separate him from God just as those committed before baptism did (Is. 59:2), and the Bible clearly teaches that a Christian can so sin as to be lost eternally. Read carefully the following scriptures: Matthew 24:12-13; Luke 8:13; John 15:6; 1 Corinthians 3:17; 9:27; 10:1-13; Galatians 5:4; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; 4:1; Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:12-19; 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2:20-22.

All of these scriptures clearly illustrates that a Christian has obligations to fulfill as a member of Christ's church. What then are those obligations?

First, a Christian must realize that he is no longer living for himself; rather he is living for Christ. As Paul said:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

Consequently, the Christian must turn away from the sins, the goals, and the values of the world:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15).

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:2).

The Christian must put behind him, avarice, greed, hatred, envy, pride, lust, adultery, drunkenness, lying, gossiping, profanity, blasphemy, and unlawful disobedience (Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:25; 2 Timothy 3:1-4; James 5:1-6; 1 Peter 4:15; 1 John 2:16). Instead, he must be honest, diligent, chaste, modest, temperate, meek, gentle, loving, longsuffering, pure in mind and speech, merciful, kind, generous, obedient, and devoted to spiritual concerns (2 Corinthians 13:7; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:22-6:8; Colossians. 3:2; 1 Timothy 5:22; 1 Peter 3:1-6).

To accomplish such a transition may prove a formidable task, and the Christian may have many failings, especially as he is tempted by Satan (1 Peter 5:8). But in his struggle he can receive strength from God through prayer (James 1:5), help from Christ and the Holy Spirit through the word of God (Ephesians 3:14-17; Acts 20:32), and support from fellow Christians (Galatians 6:2). And, when he does fall, the blood of Christ will cleanse his sin if he will confess it and repent of it (1 John 1:9).

In addition to attaining and exemplifying these virtues of a godly life, the Christian also has duties of service to Christ and his church. One cannot please God only by avoiding doing those things that are wrong; he must also devote his life to working for the Lord and doing those things that are good and right.

As regards his own spiritual life and well being the Christian is to exercise himself spiritually and grow stronger daily in his faith and dedication (1 Timothy 4:7-8; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 1:5-8).

He may especially accomplish this growth through prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Timothy 2:8) and the study of God's word (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Further, Christians are to encourage and edify one another so that each will have the support of the others toward living righteously and serving faithfully. As you learned in Lesson Six, this is one of the ways in which the church carries out its purpose (Ephesians 4:12). If one member falls, the others are to restore him by urging him to repentance and encouraging him (Galatians 6:1-2).

An important part of Christian service is faithful attendance to the worship services of the church. On the first day of the week (Sunday) when the church assembles to observe the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), as well on every other occasion of assembly for worship, each Christian should be present (Hebrews 10:23-25).

The Christian is also to support the work of the church by giving of his means in proportion as he has prospered financially (1 Corinthians 16:2). Further, he should be in close fellowship with other Christians, encouraging and helping them spiritually, socially, and financially as needed (Read also Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37; and 1 Corinthians chapter 14).

As a disciple of Jesus each Christian is charged with the responsibility of taking the gospel to the world (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 5:42; Romans 10:13-15). He has been blessed in having the gospel taught to him, and the Lord expects him to teach the gospel to others. Consequently, he is to know the scriptures in order to be able to show men the truth (1 Peter 3:15) and in order to continue in sound doctrine and to defend the true faith against religious error (Rom. 16:17-18; Galatians 1:8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 6:3-5; Titus 1:9-13; 3:9-10; Jude 3). Parents are especially responsible for training their children in the way of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

The duties of a Christian, then, are many. Disciple-ship involves no less than complete dedication and commitment of one's whole life to the Lord (Luke 9:23-24). However, the sacrifices that God asks of us are only what we should do for our eternal good, and they are as nothing to the great sacrifice, which Christ has made for us:

For when we were yet without strength, in due Timothy Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6-8).

Further, for our brief sacrifices in his service God promises us the most marvelous of blessings.

THE BLESSINGS OF A CHRISTIAN

1. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
2. He makes me to lie down in green pastures:
3. he leads me beside the still waters.
4. He restores my soul:
5. he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
6. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;
7. thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
8. Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
9. thou anoints my head with oil;
10. my cup runs over.

11. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

12. and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever (Psalm 23).

In these memorable and beautiful words David captured the peace and joy of the child of God. Guided by the word of the Lord and sustained by divine care, the man who loves and obeys his Father lives in peace and security, his soul protected from evil and assured of an eternal home. The apostle Paul also expressed the hope and joy of the faithful:

For our light affliction, which is but a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:37-39).

Every blessing, both temporal and spiritual, which man needs and can enjoy God will provide him if he will obey. Does he need forgiveness of his sins and freedom from guilt, so that he can retire at evening conscious that all is well between him and God? Through the blood of Christ God provides forgiveness and reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Colossians. 1:12-14).

Does he need a purpose for his life and the peace of fulfillment that comes from knowing who he is and what is his reason for living? God gives the answer (Gen. 1:27; Ecclesiastes 12:13) and assures him that with this purpose all things in his life will ultimately work together for his good (Rom. 8:28).

Does he want the fellowship of those who, though they sometimes fall, are trying to obey God and are kind, loving, forgiving, and concerned for others? God affords him this fellowship in the church (Acts 2:46; 4:32).

Does he want assurance that his material needs will be supplied? God promises him what he truly needs (Matthew 6:25-34; 1 Timothy 6:8).

Most of all, does he want assurance that when this life is over he will live again? Does he want a home in heaven where he will dwell forever in joy and peace, never again to know suffering, grief, or death, and where he can glorify God in company with all the faithful throughout eternity? God in his boundless love offers that eternal rest. Jesus said:

In my Father's house are many mansions: it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:2-3).

And in Revelation 21 the apostle John gives us a description of the blessings of heaven:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:1-4).

A FINAL PLEA: All of these blessings can be yours.

God loves you and wants to save you in heaven with him. But as you have seen in these eight lessons, God's blessings are reserved only for those who obey him. No responsible person who refuses to obey the gospel of Christ will enter into heaven (1 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 21:8; 22:27).

If you have not yet obeyed the gospel by believing on Jesus, repenting of your sins, or being baptized for the remission of your sins, won't you do so now? The members of the church of Christ who have supplied you these lessons are anxious and ready to assist you in your obedience or to study further with you if you desire. Please contact us by e-mail at fpbc@coc1.com, so that you too may live the life of a Christian here on earth, and enjoy the blessings of heaven through all of eternity.

[For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life \(John 3:16\).](#)

Please feel free to read and study this lesson as many times as you wish to do so. After you are comfortable with the knowledge you have gained you may want to test yourself to learn how well you remember. Questions for review and study on this lesson may be found by going to <http://64.177.52.39/8LESSONS/8Q.htm>.

Thank you for taking your time to read and study these eight lessons. If you wish to continue your study of the Bible, we have other lesson series available at www.COC1.com.

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