

WHAT ARE YOU LIVING FOR?

Mark 4:17 ... “and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the Word’s [Christ’s] sake, immediately they stumble.”

Although in these devotionals we often speak of the promises of God and our rewards for living in obedience to him, we would not want you to live your life only for promises and rewards. The best athletes are not those who play for money, but for the joy of the sport. The money is a blessing. It should not be their goal. There are many stories of athletes who changed their focus from the sport to the money, who then suffered greatly and eventually lost everything: money, family, fame, and reputation. You can suffer, too, if you change your focus from loving and serving God, to working for rewards.

God does not dangle blessings in front of us to entice us to obey him. God does not offer us signed contracts that promise riches in heaven for serving him on earth. God also does not bless us to make us wealthy. Instead, God demands that we love, honor and serve him despite any rewards we might receive in the future. If you believe God is running a ponzi or pyramid scheme, you are worshipping the wrong god. God first and foremost, expects from us sacrifice and service without consideration of the future.

How is this possible? Why would a person be attracted to a God that promises blessings, but requires sacrifice and service? First, you must understand that the blessings you might inherit by serving God, may look very different than the blessings another believer receives. Your blessing may be good health or a warm house or successful children. Your Christian neighbor might be blessed with a car or a large house or enough money to travel. If you are expecting God to bless everyone equally, you are worshipping the wrong god. If you cannot trust God to know what he is doing, you are trusting the wrong god.

So, if you are not living for blessings and rewards, what should you live for? Why bother if your sacrifice and service does not produce wealth and comfort? I believe that Christ reveals to us the promise of blessings in this life and heaven in the afterlife for two reasons: 1) Because he is honest and truthful, and 2) he is testing our faith, loyalty and love for him. Our purposes in living obediently to Christ are to:

- Experience a personal friendship with him. You cannot buy friendship, which is lesson number one.
- Submit ourselves to the building of our character and integrity, which reflects the nature of God in us.
- Learn the character of God by watching him work in our lives, which will not happen if our motives are self-serving (seeking rewards).
- Worship Him, and Him alone.
- Share Christ with others.

Promises and blessings for believers are real, both in this life and the life to come. But that is not what God wants you to live for. He desires that you live for the training he offers and the lessons that will make you a more productive servant. If you cannot accept those terms, you will have to look for another god.