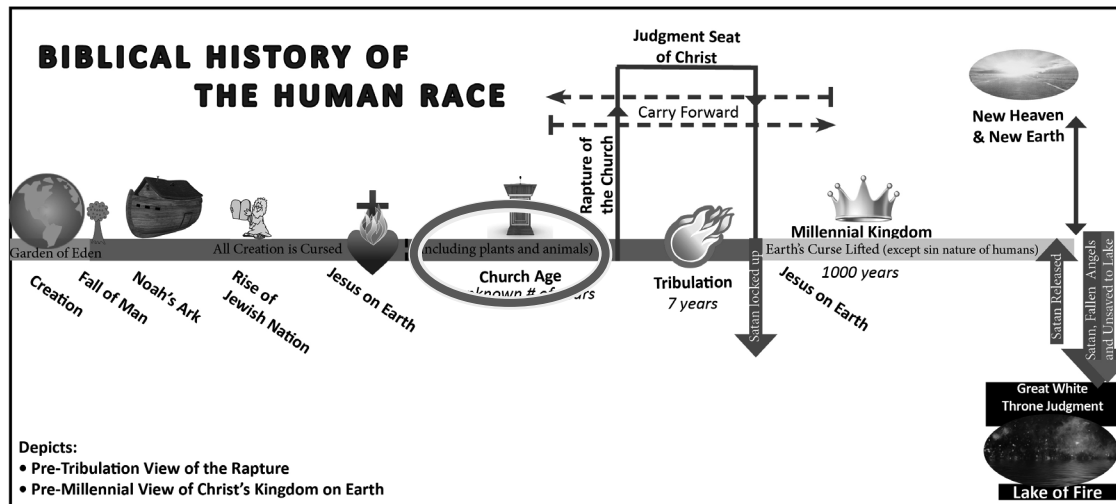


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SOMETHING LOST, SOMETHING GAINED

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See page 183 toolbox for full-page image.

SOMETHING LOST, SOMETHING GAINED

CAN REWARDS BE LOST OR FORFEITED?

It seems clear the answer to that question is "yes."

⁸ _____ that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be **rewarded fully**. 2 John 1:8 --- the Apostle John says yes.

²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be **disqualified for the prize**. 1 Corinthians 9:27 --- the Apostle Paul says yes, even Paul was concerned about his own.

¹¹ I am coming soon. _____ to what you have, so that no one will **take your crown**. Revelation 3:11 --- Jesus confirms it.

These are just three verses that confirm that possibility, there are others.

As I carefully read Scriptures related to this, I am not fully convinced that He will **"take back" something he deems fully earned** - although He certainly has that

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right. He makes the rules for how and why rewards are earned and/or forfeited. His decisions are always good, perfect, complete and just. And they are not arbitrary.

However, it seems more likely that we will **forfeit rewards** we could have earned because of **disqualifying sin or incomplete work.** And this will make us “sad” on that day when we see what “could have been” for all of eternity.

*¹⁰I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from your commands.*

*¹¹I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.*

Psalm 119:10-11

Yes, this is “Old Testament” and yes, **Jesus paid the penalty for all of our sins (providing judicial righteousness).** None-the-less we, as believers, continue to sin and have been given a “remedy” - a way to confess our sins (1 John 1:9) and be experientially cleansed and made righteous once again. By virtue of this provision, it makes perfect sense to expect that it has been **provided for a reason and should not be ignored.**

FORFEITING REWARDS

In 1 Corinthians 10:6-11 we see four specific disqualifying sins (reasons why we might forfeit rewards we could have otherwise earned). They are:

- **Idolatry:** Don’t make the mistake of thinking this is only about little wooden statues, it can include a myriad of things - even our own children or grandchildren, our career, our pleasures, ourselves. It is making anything or anyone more important than seeking and obeying God.
- **Sexual immorality (fornication, adultery, pornography, lustful intent or thoughts):** Again, many kinds - we are easily self-deceived. Consider Galatians 5:19, Revelation 21:8, Hebrews 13:4, 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Romans 1:32 even warns against “approving of those who practice them” - could this

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extend to watching TV shows or movies portraying and glorifying sexual sin? **Yikes! We must be very careful in this regard.** Hollywood is not our friend here.

- **Trying or challenging the Lord:** Testing His patience, questioning His purposes for what He brings to us, or exploiting His goodness - liberty and license are not the same thing. It is one thing to ask, "What do you want me to learn from this?" and quite another to say, "Why are you doing this to me!?"
- **Grumbling and complaining:** This is especially easy to do, be sure not to make it a habit! Sometimes we fool ourselves into thinking we are "just making a comment" but the Lord takes it personally.

This is not a complete list by any means but for now let's focus on a few of the most common ones in the modern church.

A WAGGING TONGUE

Before we address *Grumbling and Complaining*, please allow me to say a few things about another major malady in the modern church - a wagging tongue.

³⁶But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. ³⁷For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." Matthew 12:36-37

Recounting stories (even if they are true) about other people is never a good idea. All too often the purpose for telling the "story" is to elevate ourselves and put the other person down. Truthfully, this is slander. We have gotten so good at it that we don't even recognize it when we are doing it it has all the appearance of just being a "funny or interesting story" about something we saw, did, experienced, etc. (Look back at Dr. Rhodes comment on page 87.)

In my opinion, if we do this, we may as well not pray for the person. We can't talk badly about someone,

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then turn around and ask the Lord's favor on them.

¹¹Can both fresh water and saltwater flow from the same spring? ¹²My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce freshwater. James 3:11-12

Before we begin to talk about anyone else, we would do well to ask ourselves this question: Does this story speak favorably or unfavorably about the other person? As my mother and grandmother used to say, **"If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all."** **Not bad advice.**

Wagging tongues have even gotten into our "prayer chains" as a way to gossip about each other. We don't need to hear every sorted detail about the lives of people we don't even know. Heaven forbid! And, in my opinion, God is not moved by 1,000 half-hearted "bullet prayers" nearly as much as a single heart-felt sincere request of one of His children. We should think about this before we start sending out mass prayer requests. And the person involved should certainly have a say in it - perhaps they don't want to be on some stranger's prayer list. I know I don't. Just my opinion once again.



Pray for one another - absolutely! But prayer is an important, sacred thing. We should handle it carefully and treat it accordingly.

GRUMBLING AND COMPLAINING

We might be surprised to see grumbling or complaining in the 1 Corinthians list, but the "wilderness generation" turned grumbling into an outdoor sport and so do we today. We do it so frequently it's as if we actually enjoy complaining. **Grumbling is a serious spiritual malady that manifests a heart of ingratitude.** "Make no mistake – a grouching, grumbling, griping spirit will get you benched. The danger of disqualification is real.

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The context of the word “benched” here is one of athletes on the sidelines of a game. If we are “benched” – nothing we do is adding to the Kingdom work. Nothing that an athlete does adds to the score of the team if he/she is not on the field. Therefore, becoming spiritually “benched” means that no matter what we do – rewards that we would have otherwise earned will be burned up and disqualified.¹

In the stories of the Israelites in the desert, we see a repeated pattern of complaining against God and His plans for them:

² *In the desert the whole community _____ against Moses and Aaron.
Exodus 16:2*

This reflects a common pattern of dissatisfaction with the current situation and a lack of trust in God’s provision.

⁸ *Moses also said, “You will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against _____. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, _____.” Exodus 16:8*

Moses reminded them - we would do well to listen - that complaints are not against man (or nature or ...) but against God – Who brings or allows circumstances. It is imperative that we believe/understand that **God is sovereign – in control of everything! Complaint against anything is complaint against what He has permitted, therefore against His sovereignty.**

The book of Job is a powerful story of complaint, correction and restoration. **The beginning of the book makes it perfectly clear that it was God who brought the “situation” to Job** (*Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job?” Job 1:8*). Satan had just told God he was roaming about the earth but apparently hadn’t focused on Job. The “situation” went

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from bad to very bad to worse... *(So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. Job 2:7).*

At first, it seems that Job has a “good handle” on why this is happening to him. (... *Shall we accept _____ from God, and _____? Job 2:10*) As time goes on and he continues to suffer physically and emotionally he weakens and begins to defend himself against the accusations of his friends. Job speaks out of great physical and mental anguish. Despite the fact that the Lord is using this whole situation to correct a flaw in Job’s thinking (that God always blesses the righteous and afflicts the wicked) and maintains his own “innocence,” Job never renounces God. *(In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. Job 2:10)*²

We will come back to the rest of Job’s story in a bit. For now, let’s fast-forward to us today:

- It’s so hot! -- It’s so cold!
- We need rain! -- When will it stop raining?
- I need a job! -- I hate my job!
- I’m bored! -- I’m overworked!

This list could go on for pages –

The bad news is that we have been “duped” into complaining against God on a regular (daily) basis. I have heard (and probably said) multiple times, “I’m not complaining, just making a statement (of fact).” I seriously doubt that God hears it that way, the Scriptures say He doesn’t. The Scriptures say it is a personal affront to Him.



Have you ever thought of it that way?

The Israelites’ grumbling impacted the whole assembly, underscoring the need for wise speech. So, too, our complaining (even “innocent” complaining) impacts others. **For one thing it encourages others to join the chorus of complaint.**

“Let me tell you what I’m going through (or have been

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through)!" I hate the phrase, "Welcome to my world!" Have you heard someone say that when you are in the process of complaining about something? Their response may be somewhat an acknowledgment of what we say AND it's a sort of "one-upmanship" statement at the same time.

When I complain about something that is occurring or has happened to me, for the most part people aren't really listening, so I don't get the sympathy I am seeking anyway. Instead, the hearer begins immediately thinking about how many things they have to complain about that are probably worse than what I am complaining about. It starts their mind down the slippery slope of complaint; **thus, we are leading others into sin by starting the "complaint ball" rolling. Not a good idea!**

⁹Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! James 5:9

Consider that **grumbling and complaining is "friendship with the world."** This is serious stuff, my friends.

⁴You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, _____ who _____ to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. James 4:4



THE SOLUTION: Bridle and Train Our Tongues

STEP 1 – Acknowledge the truth that complaining about anything or anyone is actually a major sin against God

*²We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they **say** is perfect [mature, complete, lacking nothing], able to keep their whole body in check. James 3:2*

To stumble is to "fall short" ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23 Notice the contrast between:

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sin = falling short, stumbling

perfect = never being at fault in what they say
[mature, complete, lacking nothing]

This is important.

*⁶The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. **It corrupts the whole body**, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. James 3:6*

¹⁰Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. James 3:10

²³Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity. Proverbs 21:23

I distinctly remember a day when the Holy Spirit spoke to me personally about this. It was so clear I “almost” heard it with my ears when **He said, “You know that you would sin a lot less if you would merely shut your mouth!”**

Of course, in our flesh it simply isn't possible to do this. But it is probably a good idea to try it in our own strength so we experientially come to the truth that we can't do it alone; **we need the power of the Holy Spirit in us to accomplish this great feat.**

⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. James 3:8

STEP 2 – Ask (and keep on asking) for His Help

^{4c}You do not have _____ you do not ask God. James 4:2c

While there are several specific things mentioned in the context of this verse, it is more than diverse enough to include any request that would please the Lord. Since it is He that commands us to guard our mouths – bridle our tongue – He is delighted to and more than able to help us accomplish the momentous feat.

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⁷ “Ask and it _____ to you;
seek and you will find; knock and the door
will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks
receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the
one who knocks, the door will be opened.
Matthew 7:7-8

STEP 3 – Embrace His Response to Your Request; don’t fight against His chosen method of training and grumble in the process

His response to our (sincere) request – and even if we don’t request it - will be “opportunities to practice” what He wants us to learn, what He instructs in His Word. **If we need to learn to stop grumbling, He will bring situations to us that we deem “grumble worthy.”** And He will do it over and over until we learn to stop. The Bible calls these Tests or Trials; I prefer to view them as “opportunities to practice.” This is **experiential learning**.



The adjective “experiential” describes actions, learning, or understanding that occurs through direct experience rather than theory or abstract reasoning. I can read about how to ride a bicycle, look at pictures of a bike and pictures or movies about people riding a bike, but until I get on the bike and try it – including crashing – I won’t really know how to do it.

Likewise, we can read the commands contained in Scripture and read books or watch movies about people who successfully obey, but in the long run obedience won’t become part of who we are until we experience it ourselves through the trials He chooses to bring us (for our good).

¹⁷But the wisdom that _____
_____ is first of all pure; then peace-
loving, considerate, submissive, full of
mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.
James 3:17

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Knowledge is not power. **Wisdom is power – wisdom is knowledge in practice.**

¹⁰*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. Proverbs 9:10*

⁷*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. James 4:7-10*

²*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴Let perseverance _____ so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:2-4*

STEP 4 – Consider yourself blessed, replace grumbling and complaining with thanksgiving

Oh my goodness! I'm an ingrate!

¹⁷*"Blessed is the one whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.*

¹⁸*For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal. Job 5:17-18*

¹⁶*Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray continually, ¹⁸give thanks in all _____; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

I have often focused on the word "in" of this verse. I looked it up in the Greek: it is the preposition "en." I wondered if it meant to give thanks **during a trial** or test OR to give thanks **for the trial** or test. The conclusion I have come to is it means both (during and for).

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What are your thoughts about that word as it is used here?

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The footnote to Job 42 in the Ryrie Study Bible says [note added]:

“Job repents of his pride and rebellion [including grumbling and complaining] and finds contentment in the knowledge that he has God’s fellowship [just as we have the “fellowship of the Holy Spirit]. This is the great lesson of the book: If we know God, we do not need to know why He allows us to experience what we do. He is not only in control of the universe and all its facets but also of our lives; and He loves us. Though His ways are sometimes beyond our comprehension, we should not criticize Him for his dealings with us or with others. **God is always in control of all things, even when He appears not to be.”³ And He alone knows the ultimate outcome.**

¹⁰“Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations [Gentiles], I will be exalted in the earth.”
Psalms 46:10 NASB 1995

This calls believers to stop struggling, trust in God’s sovereignty, and recognize His power, His presence and His goodness **in all circumstances**.

PAY ME NOW OR PAY ME LATER

Self-promoting motives also render our works unrewardable at the Judgment Seat (bema).

Be aware that there will be only one reward given for works, even good works. What do I mean by that? The Bible is clear that if we choose to receive our reward (honor, respect, recognition, prizes, gifts, accolades, names on buildings, etc.) here **on earth** (no matter how “good” the deed is), we won’t get another reward for that deed at the bema. **He’s not saying it is bad to get acknowledgment, but once you have received it, it is done. No double rewards.**

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I know a person who spent quite a bit of time and money making blankets, hats, gloves, etc. for homeless people. I mean literally making a hundred of them each summer and fall so she could take them to the homeless missions at the beginning of each winter. Unfortunately, she often made a big deal telling everyone that she did this and gave the “count” of how many she had made and donated. They were quite nice, and I am sure they were greatly appreciated by the recipients. **I see absolutely nothing wrong with doing this. I feel fairly certain in saying that the Lord appreciated it too.**

The only problem is that by telling everyone about it, making sure that she was noticed and appreciated **(quite a normal human trait I might add)**, she forfeited a heavenly reward for these great acts of kindness and charity. Matthew 6:1-4 is pretty clear about this. We only get one “reward” per act of service. We can decide to take it on earth with the honor of “men” or wait until we get before the Judgment Seat and receive it there.

¹“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have _____ from your Father in heaven. ²“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their _____. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, _____ reward you. Matthew 6:1-4

One other thing we might consider is that the “reward” of men usually only lasts a few minutes at best. One of the primary reasons charities honor major donors is to encourage others to do the same thing.

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That is to their advantage. They say how great we are, maybe put something in the church bulletin or hey, if it's "big enough," we might even get our name on a building! But even that pales in comparison to the reward in heaven. We are told that Jesus' rewards "last for eternity"- now **THAT'S a REWARD worth waiting for!**

Over and over, we are admonished that if we want to receive a reward in heaven (at the Judgment Seat of Christ) for acts of kindness and service, including prayer, they must be done "in secret." This keeps our motives pure and prevents the sin of pride from gaining a foothold. This can be tricky.

⁵"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward _____.

⁶Then your Father, who sees what is done in _____, will reward you. Matthew 6:5-6

¹⁶... to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward _____. ¹⁸... and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will _____ you. Matthew 6:16,18

I believe what is intended here is not a secret to the extent that we cannot allow anyone to see what we are doing. How could we serve in a food kitchen, yet no one be able to physically see us? **But we don't need to brag or even talk about it with people who would otherwise not know.** The Lord has admonished me more than once to just to be quiet about it – just keep it to myself.

Rather, we should make every effort to avoid calling attention to ourselves for acts of service (unlike what the Pharisees did when they dropped their "many coins" in the collection device at the temple. They did it in such a way that it caused people to stop and look to see who was giving all that money!). Don't brag,

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HINT: If you want to serve the homeless in your town/city, or widows or orphans or anyone else - GREAT!

Just do it and don't speak about it to anyone who doesn't NEED to know.

Jesus is watching and taking notes.

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tell others or in any way call attention to yourself otherwise you will receive whatever reward might be appropriate here and now – not at the bema. **You decide.**

I hope you carefully consider the various ways that the rewards you no doubt wish to earn may be forfeited (canceled) by actions that displease our Lord. Pray about the few presented here. Talk with your group about them and actions that might be taken to safeguard against this. **Consider asking someone in the group to help hold you accountable for what you decide to do.**

PS As far as I can tell, all giving must be done while we are living - we don't get rewards based on our will or money left after we have left the earth. If you think differently, take it up with the Lord.

A FEW MORE THOUGHTS ON PRAYER

That last section may have been a bit of a downer but don't ignore it for that reason. Let's follow up with an uplifting section!

In my opinion, one of the best ways to "accumulate rewards" - if those words may be used - is in the area of prayer, especially intercessory prayer. My primary sources for this section are:

- ***The Ministry of Intercession, A Plea for More Prayer***
Andrew Murray
- ***True Evangelism, Winning Souls by Prayer***, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer
- ***With Christ in the School of Prayer***, Andrew Murray

It makes sense to me that this would be one of our highest callings to earn rewards for several reasons:

1. Intercessory prayer, in and of itself, draws us closer to our Savior as **He is always interceding** for those who come to God through Him (Hebrews 7:24-25). **We can't get closer to Jesus than in true intercession.** And the closer we are to Him, the more like Him we become. He "rubs off on us" so to speak.

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2. As in the parable of the minas, **every one of us has been allotted the ability to pray for others**. No one is excluded from this “gift.”
3. Likewise, **the one commodity/gift we all have is time**. We chose how we spend our time, but we all (as long as we are alive) have 24x7x365. Even a person in a jail cell or a nursing home confined to a bed has time - sometimes it seems as if they have even more time if they have “nothing better to do” - and indeed they don’t (have anything better to do, and neither do the rest of us.)

It would seem to me that those among the saved who are bedfast or incarcerated should truly rejoice that our Savior has selected this as one way He plans to reward - see #11 on Page 150 of this study guide.

*⁶But when you **pray**, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, **will reward you**.
Matthew 6:6*

While this is true, please go back to the list to see what on the list any of us can’t do - there’s not much. He has provided ample opportunities to earn rewards for all believers no matter our circumstances.

EVANGELISM THROUGH PRAYER

In my humble opinion, some of the HIGHEST rewards fall in two of items on the list provided earlier. Turn back to pages 148-150 - look at #9 and #11 again. I believe the greatest opportunity exists when these two are **combined** and **done in the proper order**.

In his book, *True Evangelism, Winning Souls by Prayer*, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer (the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary) provides incredible insights into why our current evangelistic methods continue to produce such meager results. If I may, I’d like to present **a synopsis of his words** in bullet form:

- ALL evangelism MUST begin with prayer.

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- The reason for human intercession in the divine plan has not been fully revealed. It is, however, evidenced in John 14:14: *"You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."* among other places.
- God reserves the undertaking and accomplishment to Himself (through the power of the Holy Spirit) and **assigns** to (the righteous) man the service of prayer.
- Prayer presents the greatest opportunity for soul winning and there is precious reward promised to those who bring souls to Christ and are found to be **suffering with Him in His burden for the lost.**
- When the prayer of intercession has for any reason ceased, not only are the priceless results of the saving power of God hindered, but the individual **believer has suffered unmeasured loss in his possible reward.**
- Fundamentally, then, the personal element in true soul winning work is **more a service of pleading for souls than of a service of pleading with souls.** It is talking with God about men **from a clean heart and in the power of the Spirit**, rather than talking to men about God.
- Let no one conclude that such intercessory prayer is not a service demanding time and vitality.



Conditions for answered prayer:

^{16b} *The [fervent] prayer of a righteous person* is _____ and _____.*
James 5:16b

¹ *urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people. 1 Timothy 2:1*

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⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. 1 John 1:8-10

*The righteous person noted here is more than judicially righteous (all believers are judicially righteous based on our salvation by Jesus). This is **EXPERIENTIALLY** righteous. Also note that it says, “powerful and effective” but not guaranteed. Our requests must fit within His will and His timing. That must always be understood.

Work to maintain holiness as best you can, and discuss anything you need to confess and repent of with the Holy Spirit BEFORE you enter into intercessory prayer of any kind, especially for the lost - keep the slate clean.

THE END OF THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

I like the way Dr. Fruchtenbaum says it in his textbook, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*:

“During the time of the millennium, the most ideal conditions will exist on the earth – the best since the fall. But it will not be a perfect situation. Sin and death, though greatly reduced, will not be eliminated, and a great number of unregenerate men will be alive at the close of the Messianic Kingdom, all born during the last century of the millennium. It is after one thousand years of ideal conditions and environment that the Messianic Kingdom ends with one last test for man.”⁴

God’s fire will come down from heaven and consume the rebels. Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire. The old heaven and earth will pass away. The final judgment will take place to judge all those whose names are not written in the Book of Life. This is the Great White Throne Judgment for unbelievers with appropriate sentencing in the Lake of Fire.

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⁷When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.

⁹They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Revelation 20: 7-10



UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Did you apply anything new last week from Chapter 9? What was it, how did you apply it?

2. This chapter presents two major (and fairly easy) ways to lose or forfeit earnable rewards. Have you heard these presented this way before? _____ If yes, share what you know with the group. If no, what is your reaction to hearing this?

3. This chapter also highlights the use of prayer for evangelism as a rewardable action. Had you heard of or considered this before? _____ Do you plan to make any adjustments in your behavior toward prayer or toward evangelism as a result? If so, what?