

# OpenTheo

## Matthew 10:40 - 10:42



### Gospel of Matthew - Steve Gregg

In this discussion of Matthew 10, Steve Gregg explains that receiving Jesus is equivalent to receiving God. Rejecting Christ means rejecting His authority, not just His teachings. Gregg suggests that different rewards exist for different levels of service, but it is not our place to judge who will receive more. Ultimately, we should serve others in the same way a disciple would, following the teachings of Christ.

### Transcript

For several of our sessions now, we've been looking at Matthew chapter 10, which is one, or it is, at least in Matthew it appears to be, one extended discourse of Christ, given to His disciples, the Twelve, when He sent them out on a mission to preach the kingdom of God in many villages. This was not their ultimate mission that was later commissioned after His resurrection. This was a short-term ministry, where the disciples were to go out and to visit villages, preach the gospel, and then move along.

And they were not establishing churches at this point, as they later did in the times of the book of Acts. But, it would seem that Matthew may have included in this discourse some material that goes beyond what Jesus said on that occasion, but which Jesus said on other occasions. Because Matthew appears to gather the sayings of Jesus into collections around topics.

That seems to be the way that He wrote His gospel. And so, much of the material that is found here in Matthew 10, which is reported in this context, does not have its parallel in the same context in Luke. But, it does have its parallel in other passages in Luke or elsewhere.

Now, this chapter we've been working on for a few weeks, actually. But, we come now to the last section of Matthew chapter 10. This is verses 40 through 42.

And Jesus said, He who receives you receives Me. And He who receives Me receives him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward.

And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And 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. Now, these are some rather interesting statements, are they not? Receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet grants you a prophet's reward.

What's that mean? And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple will not lose his reward. Let's consider what Jesus is talking about here. Now, He begins by saying to His disciples, these are actually the twelve apostles, He says, He who receives you receives Me.

And He who receives Me receives him who sent Me. This same general concept is stated in almost the same words, but slightly differently, a little more generically, actually, by Jesus in the upper room in John chapter 13 and verse 20. In John 13 20, Jesus said, most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me.

And he who receives Me receives him who sent Me. Now, what Jesus is pointing out here is that authority can be delegated. If you are a king and you have a person that you have appointed to do a certain thing, let's say to collect taxes, and you have really sent that person to collect taxes, and they come to the citizenry.

If the citizenry reject that tax collector, they are rejecting the king, because that tax collector was sent by the king. Now, if I would just start going door-to-door without any commission from the king and start trying to collect taxes, people could easily reject me because I have no authority. I am not in a position to demand that they pay me taxes because I was not authorized.

I have no authority. I have not been commissioned for that. But if the king commissions a person to go out and collect taxes, then the rejection of that person and the refusal to do what that person requires in paying taxes is a refusal of the king's own authority.

This should be understood without any difficulty. People who have authority can delegate authority, and when they do, that delegated authority is authority. It's real authority.

It says over in Romans chapter 13 that Christians ought to be subject to the ruling authorities because he said there's no authority but of God, and the authorities that exist are those that God has ordained. And to resist the authorities that God has ordained is to resist God Himself, His ordinance. So, Jesus says, if a person receives me, he receives the person who sent me.

Well, God the Father sent Jesus, and to receive Jesus is to receive God. And, of course, the flip side of that, to reject Jesus is to reject God. If somebody is sent officially, then your acceptance or rejection of them is officially your rejection or acceptance of the one

who sent them.

Now, Jesus was sent by the Father, and therefore he's making it clear that one cannot really be right with God unless they accept the one whom God sent. Now, this may help to answer questions that rattle around in our minds many times about persons of other religions who seem to honor God, maybe even seem to honor the same God. After all, the Jewish religion honors God, or at least that's the object of the Jewish religion, is to honor the God of the Old Testament, the God of the Bible.

And yet, of course, the Jewish people generally do not follow Jesus Christ and do not recognize Him as the Messiah. Likewise, there are other groups, Muslims and others, that worship one God. And some have argued that it's the same God as is worshipped by the Jews and the Christians.

But, once again, the Muslim faith does not recognize Jesus Christ as anything more than a prophet, whereas He claimed to be far more than that. And so we have here various religions that seek to honor God. But here is a case where that God has sent His Son, has sent His representative to represent Him, and has authorized Him to speak on His behalf.

And sometimes people of these religions reject the authority of that messenger, of that Son. In fact, in Jesus' own day, most of the Jewish people did not receive Christ. Now, some did, of course.

All of those who did receive Christ when He was here were Jewish, too. Jesus' disciples were all Jewish, and Jesus Himself was Jewish. It has nothing to do with race.

It has to do with religion. The disciples were Jewish by race just as much as the Pharisees were. But the disciples changed beliefs.

They put their faith in Jesus Christ. The Pharisees rejected Jesus Christ. Now, that being so, although the Pharisees were seeking to honor God, they could not honor Him when they rejected the One whom He had sent.

It is only as those who receive Christ do so, recognizing that He is God's messenger, that they can really receive God Himself. Now, Jesus states that as a starting point, as a given. He extends that concept another step.

He says, He who receives you, or over in John 13 20 says, He who receives whoever I send, in this case the Apostles, receives me. Now, just as accepting Christ is a necessary part of accepting God, because God sent Him, so also accepting the Apostles that Jesus has sent is a necessary part of accepting Christ. You see, the word Apostle, and Jesus applied this to 12 men, the 12 men of whom we've been reading here, the term Apostle, the Greek word means one who is sent, meaning one who is officially sent, one who is authorized and commissioned with a mission from somebody in authority.

And so, those who are sent, the Apostles, are sent by Christ in an official capacity. And to reject their testimony is really to reject the authority of Christ Himself. This may not be understood by the person who's rejecting it, but that's something we need to be aware of.

You know, I've heard people say, well, I accept what Jesus said, but that Paul, I don't think he was right on. I reject his authority. Well, you can't really reject Paul's authority without rejecting Christ's authority, because Christ sent him.

Christ authorized him. Christ commissioned him to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. And if you're a Gentile, as I am, then you must accept that one that Jesus has sent, or else you cannot accept Jesus.

It is not possible to say, well, I'm a follower of Jesus, but this Paul who he sent to give all these teachings and instructions, I don't accept those. Well, if you reject the one that Jesus sent in his name, you are rejecting Christ. You're rejecting his authority.

We have to remember that rejecting Christ is a matter of rejecting authority of Christ. We sometimes use the terms today, accept Jesus or reject Jesus, in a very vague way. A lot of people don't even know what it means when we say to accept Jesus.

In fact, a lot of Christians or people who call themselves Christians don't even know what it means. If I said to you, what does it mean that you accepted Christ? Most people, I think, would say, well, I asked Jesus into my heart. Well, isn't that a strange thing? The Bible nowhere even talks about accepting Jesus into your heart.

To receive Christ or to accept Christ means that you take him at his word and receive his authority. You receive him as a Lord. God sent him to be the Lord, the ruler, and to accept him means that you acknowledge him as your ruler, and you don't reject his rule.

You don't reject his authority. To accept Christ is to bring yourself under his authority and to recognize that he is indeed Christ, which means the Anointed One, the King. And if you bring yourself under the authority of the King, that is what it means to receive Christ, to accept Christ.

To reject Christ is simply to reject his authority, to say, well, I don't care what he said. I'm not going to do it. Now, if Jesus has sent the Apostles, the Twelve and others, Paul also was later sent as an apostle.

If Jesus sends the Apostles and says, I'm sending you, and whoever receives you receives me, then it's quite clear that when the Apostles say, this is what must be done, it is as if Jesus himself is saying, this is what must be done. And to reject their authority is nothing less than rejecting the authority of Christ himself. Which is why Christians accept the books of the New Testament as authoritative.

They were written by, in most cases, by Apostles. In a few cases, they were written by men who had the approval of the Apostles to write what they did. But in any case, the books of the New Testament were written with what we could call apostolic authority, the authority of Apostles.

And the authority of an Apostle is nothing less than the authority of Christ who sent them. And this is what Jesus says here. He who receives you receives me.

He who receives me receives him who sent me. So in that chain, you receive the one that Jesus sent, and by doing so, you're receiving Christ and the one who sent Christ. You receive God by receiving the testimony of the Apostles.

Now, Jesus expands on this a little bit and brings it down to some practical terms. He says, he who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

Now, what I understand this to suggest is that there are different rewards that come to people who have special service that they perform. A prophet is an unusual calling. A righteous man, every Christian should be a righteous person, but some people are, you know, exceptionally just and righteous.

They're reputed, they have a great greater reputation than most for being men of high caliber and character and admired by all as one who is just and righteous. Now, such people, we expect them to get some kind of a reward. They are serving God in an extraordinary way.

But Jesus is saying, even if one is not a prophet, and even if one is not one of these exceptionally righteous types, it is possible for them to share in the same reward if they receive that prophet. That is, if a prophet comes and he speaks the Word of God, and you receive him and his message, then the same reward he will receive from God for being a prophet, the person who receives his message will receive from God the same reward. If a righteous man like the Apostle comes to town and he preaches the gospel or he establishes a church or he begins to give instructions that Jesus has authorized him to give, that person who receives those instructions receives the same reward.

In other words, you don't have to be a prophet or an apostle in order to receive the highest possible rewards from God. It's not your fault, really. If you're not called to be an apostle, if you're not called to be a prophet, then you can't really, you know, you can't really be one just by self-appointment.

However, you don't have to miss out on the highest rewards available. All you have to do is to be receptive. To what the prophets and the apostles have said.

By the way, the prophets and the apostles, today there are prophets, and I don't know if

there's apostles or not, but I'm sure there is the gift of prophecy today, but there's also false prophecy, and there's also false apostles, and I would be, I would warn my listeners not to receive everyone who claims to be a prophet. Just because Jesus said a person who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward doesn't mean that that reward will come to you if you receive a false prophet, because we are told to judge and to beware of false prophets. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7? He said, beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they're ravenous wolves.

In 1 John chapter 4, verse 1, it says, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets have entered into the world. There are false prophets as well as true, and it is important not to receive the words of everyone who claims to be a prophet, but rather when somebody is perceived to be speaking the words of truth, the words of God, to receive their word from God, will entitle you, Jesus said, to the same reward they are going to get, even if you never are a prophet yourself. Now what he's saying here is that you don't have to hold the highest office of ministry in the church in order to have the greatest reward.

It may be that you think an evangelist like Billy Graham should receive far more rewards than the average Christian janitor in the church, or that maybe the pastor should receive greater rewards. Well, that depends on many factors, but I will say this, Jesus seems to be saying that if you are faithful in receiving his message from the messengers, then your reward will be no less than the reward of those who brought the message. Even if you don't, maybe you can't preach your way out of a paper bag, and you'll never lead anyone to Christ because of your, you know, your slowness of speech or whatever, but if you are receptive to God's message through his messengers, and you receive what Christ has for you through them, then your reward will not be a bit lower or inferior to the reward that they will receive.

That, I understand to be what Jesus is saying here. Now, this verse 44, Jesus says, And 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. I want to say, first of all, that when Jesus says one of these little ones, there's a couple of ways to understand that.

Sometimes there were children around when Jesus spoke, and there are times, for example, in Matthew 18, that he took one of these children on his lap and told the disciples to be careful not to despise one of these little ones. A little one, like in Matthew 18 10, he says, Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father. Now, a little one, of course, most naturally would mean a child, but there are times when Jesus speaks of his adult disciples in terms as if they were children.

You may remember in John chapter 21 when the seven apostles, seven of them, were out fishing on the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus was on the shore, and they didn't recognize him, but he shouts out to them, he says, Children, have you caught anything? He calls them little children. Now, I wonder how weird that sounded to their ears. They were grown men, and here's a man on the shore.

They don't recognize him initially. That's Jesus. He's calling them children.

But you see, Jesus, as the Father coming to us in the person of Jesus, we are not only his brothers, we are his children. And Jesus can speak of his disciples, even though they're grown men, as if they are children. And it's possible that here he's not talking about little children necessarily, although he may be.

He may be talking about any disciple. He says, whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple. Now, that means that because they are a disciple, you minister to their need just even in such a small way as to give them a cup of cold water.

He says, there will be a reward for you that will not be lost. Now, giving a cup of cold water to a disciple is... There's more to it than meets the eye. Because in Matthew chapter 25, Jesus said that on the day of judgment, there will be a class of people to whom he says, I was hungry and you gave me food.

I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was naked and you clothed me. I was in prison and you visited me.

And they'll say, when did we see you in these conditions and do these things for you? We don't remember. And he will say to them, in as much as you did it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, you've done it unto me. In other words, when something is done to a disciple of Jesus, it is done to Jesus.

If somebody helps a Christian who is in need, that person is helping Jesus as directly as if it was Jesus the man himself there. If you see a Christian who cannot pay his rent, a Christian who needs a ride someplace, a Christian who has difficulty feeding or clothing his children or himself, and you help that person out in a tangible way, it is just as much as if you had seen Jesus himself there and done the same for him. That's what Jesus said.

He said, in as much as you've done it to one of the least of these, my brethren, you've done it unto me. And so it is that when something is done to somebody in the name of a disciple of Jesus, that is, because they are a disciple and they are recognized as a disciple of Jesus, and you do something for them because they are a disciple of Jesus, then there will be a reward in it because you're actually doing it to Jesus. Now, Jesus is not saying here that everyone who does something kind to a Christian will be rewarded if they do it not knowing you're a Christian.

I mean, someone who just does a kind deed and the person they do it to happens to be a Christian is not necessarily the situation he's talking about. He says anyone who gives a cup of cold water to a little one in the name of a disciple, that means recognizing them as a disciple and serving them because they are a disciple. This suggests, of course, that the person who's doing the kind deed, giving a cup of cold water or whatever else is involved, that person is doing it in order to support the mission of Christ.

They're doing it because this person is a disciple. They're not doing it just out of human charity generally. They are doing it because this person belongs to Christ and because he is Christ's, they want to help him.

Because that person is a follower of Christ, they want to help along the mission of Christ. So the act that is spoken of here, giving a cup of cold water to a little one in the name of a disciple, is actually an act that is self-consciously done by the doer, an act of service to Christ. It is done out of reverence to Christ and because of it, Jesus says, you will not lose your reward.

Certainly the Christian life requires that we receive those that he sent. And when Jesus has sent somebody to our life, it might be even a child who comes and we can tell that that person, that child has something to say, that God has given them to say. I mean you can tell after they've spoken.

I have heard children say things to me that I knew were from God. And to receive the word through the messenger, to receive the messenger because you recognize that it is God who sent them, is to receive God himself. We need to be open to receiving messages from God through unexpected channels, through unexpected messengers.

Children, even in the Bible, once a donkey spoke. God opened its mouth so that it could speak. So you never know who the messenger might be.

The question is, what is the message? If it is a message from God, then it should be received regardless of how surprising the messenger might be. Well, we're out of time for this broadcast. So I hope you'll tune in next time as we continue our studies in the life of Christ going through the gospel of Matthew.