

Does He Thank That Servant?

by Gary Carpenter

Luke 17:5-10 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. (6) And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you. (7) But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? (8) And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? (9) **Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.** (10) So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, **We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.**

In Luke 17:9, Jesus plainly says that a man would not "thank" his servant because he had done the things that were commanded him. However, just two chapters later when Jesus tells the parable of the man who entrusted the ten pounds to the ten servants, He reveals the Master's attitude toward a faithful servant;

Luke 19:17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

Even though the Master did not actually use the words "thank you," he was most certainly commending this good servant, and gave him a promotion in his stewardship.

We are wanting to understand the heart of the Master toward his faithful servants and what Jesus desires in the hearts of "first class servants." Why did Jesus make a point of being a first class servant in Luke chapter 17? That is the question. The conclusion that Jesus came to in Luke chapter 17 was,

Luke 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, **We are unprofitable servants:** we have done that which was our duty to do.

As we have shown before, by saying "unprofitable," Jesus does not mean "of no value, or worth, or benefit" to the kingdom of God. After all, Jesus is trying to make

them disciples like unto Himself, the "Son who serves" by reaping a harvest of souls for the Father. Jesus, the "Serving Son," was most certainly profitable to the kingdom of God as He served the Father.

A second proof is Matthew's account of the man who was unwilling to trade his talent. Jesus called him unprofitable in the sense of not being of value, worth, nor benefit to the kingdom.

Mat 25:30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Most certainly Jesus did not intend for His disciples to "make confession" that they would be "unprofitable" like that wicked servant. So, what did Jesus mean by "say we are unprofitable servants" in Luke chapter 17?

He meant we are to say, "We do not serve for personal profit. We are not hirelings. We are bond slaves by our own free choice. We serve for love's sake alone, not for personal profit."

The parable of the ten talents gives us a second witness that this is the attitude the Master wants His servants to have. Notice that he commended the faithful servants who had traded their pound and gathered increase. Notice also that He increased the scope of their stewardship to now also include authority over cities instead of merely over money. But notice also that HE DID NOT "PAY" THEM FOR THEIR SERVICE!

THAT is the attitude of heart that Jesus is trying to reveal to His disciples in Luke chapter 17 when He says the Master does not "thank" his servant for doing what is commanded him. As servants, we are not to expect our Master to say something like, "You obeyed Me? You served Me today? How unexpected! I am surprised at your unanticipated attitude that you would obey your Master's commands. Please, accept this payment as My 'thanks' for your most gracious behavior."

Bond slaves do not expect, nor desire, payment for their service to the Master. They chose to be His slave of their own free will, for love's sake alone. They do not have the attitude of hirelings, nor do they expect "payment" for their labors to serve Him whom they love. Bond slaves who are "first class servants" only desire that the needs of their Master be met FIRST. When that is accomplished, their heart is already full. They require no payment. They require no personal "profit" for their labor of love for Him.

Again, the best analogy to help me understand this is the way my grandfather's farm operated. When his sons came in from the fields after serving all day, grandfather was not "surprised" that they had done the things that he assigned for them to do, neither was his provision for them at the dinner table prorated to each son based on his performance in the field. He did not "thank them" as if their service was something unexpected. Neither did they expect him to "pay them" as though they were employees.

They did what "serving sons" do ... they served! Once the day's labors had been accomplished and that day's increase had been gathered into grandfather's barns, THEN they came to dine at the family dinner table because they were sons, not because of their service!

Again, grandfather did not line them up and "pay" them separately each day as though they were employees. These were sons who served. Their service in the field had nothing to do with their provision at the family dinner table.

Luke 17:9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.

For many years I did not fully understand why Jesus said that the Master did not thank the servant for doing the things that were commanded him. I know it is not "required" of a Master to do so, but it just seemed a little ungracious to me. One day while I was meditating on this passage, I heard the Holy Spirit ask me a simple question, "*When was the last time you thanked your hand for obeying your mind?*" I thought to myself, "I don't thank my hand for obeying my mind. My hand is part of me."

About then the revelation struck me. Far from being ungracious, the real reason the Lord does not thank us for obeying Him is because He sees us as being a part of Him in precisely the same way that we see our hand as being a part of us. My understanding of the whole Master/servant relationship the Lord Jesus and myself was instantly changed. That relationship is much more intimate than I had ever realized before. Up until now I had seen Jesus as the Master and myself as His servant laboring in the fields. That is true, but when the workday was finished I saw myself going home to my slave quarters on His plantation, so to speak. In other words, I saw a separation between the Master and the servant, between Jesus and myself.

Jesus desires that we be so vitally joined together with Him that our relationship is much the same as our hand is to our own mind. We are one! My hand does not have any agenda of its own independent of my own mind. In the same way we are to be totally yielded to the mind of Christ for our lives. My hand is not in competition with my own mind. Said another way, my hand does not seek any glory at the expense of my own mind. My hand does not desire praise from people. In the same way, when we give, we are not to seek glory or praise from the people we are giving to. We are simply the hand of Christ obeying His promptings within us. All glory goes to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

How does Jesus see each of us? We are His body! We are so much a part of Him that He sees no separation between Himself and us. Without Him, we have no life within us. Without us, He has no physical body on earth. What a privilege to be so vitally useful for the Master of the universe while we live our lives on planet earth. There is a deep-seated joy that exists because of this vital union. The hand rejoices that it is used by the head. That's what a hand is for. We rejoice that the Master works through us. That's what the body of Christ is for.

Suppose you had just given some much needed money to a poor family that was desperate for help. "Thank you so very much. You are so generous. We were in such need and then you came to help us. Thank you. Thank you." That kind of a response would be appropriate ... unless ... they were saying those things to your hand instead of to you! Can you picture it? You are standing right there, yet they are holding on to your hand (the one you gave them the money with) and they are giving thanks to your hand instead of to you. They are not thanking ... you. They have their eyes focused on your hand and they are thanking your hand ... not you ... for the gift.

You would think their behavior to be most bizarre. You would be thinking, "It wasn't my hand's idea to help you. That thought originated in my mind. I'm the one that loved you and wanted to help you. I'm the one that gave the money to you. I'm the one you ought to be thanking. My hand is simply my servant. It just does what I tell it to do. I don't even thank my hand for obeying what I tell it to do. My hand is part of me."

In the same way that we consider our hands to be a part of us, Jesus considers us to be His body on earth. Jesus is alive and well. He Himself, in His glorified body, is now seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. He has no physical body on the earth except us believers. We are literally the body of Christ on earth! He

cannot lay hands on the sick unless He can get a believer to do it. He has no lips to preach with except ours. He has no hands to give with except ours.

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

While Jesus was on earth in His own human body, the Father was the vine and Jesus was the branch. The prophets spoke of the coming Messiah as being the Branch:

Isaiah 11:1-2 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: (2) And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

The Father was in Jesus (by the Father's Spirit ... the Holy Spirit), and the fruit appeared on the Branch ... Jesus ... because His was the body through which the Father could make the fruit appear. Fruit always appears on the branch, not the vine.

But when Jesus speaks of Him being the vine in John chapter fifteen, Jesus is about to be crucified, buried, resurrected and raised up in His glorified body to sit at the right hand of God. He, Himself, will no longer have a body on planet earth ... except the bodies of believers, born again Christians.

Now Christ is the vine, and we are the branches. Christ lives in us, the Father in Him (by the Holy Spirit), and the fruit appears on the branches ... us ... because we are the ones with the physical bodies on earth. We are ONE with Christ the same way our hand is one with our own mind.

There is an intimate relationship between your mind and your hand. There is instant, perfect communication between your mind and your hand at all times. You don't thank your hand for obeying you. Your hand is you. You are one.

God's plan for us is the same. There is to be an intimate relationship with us and Christ. There is to be instant, perfect communication between the mind of Christ and us at all times. Christ doesn't thank us for obeying Him. Christ sees us as being one with Him. No wonder the Spirit continues to woo us to intimacy by saying, "Come away with Me. Spend time with Me."