

## We Are Unworthy Slaves

by Hendrik Joubert

The disciples of the Lord came to Him asking: **"Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?" (Matthew 15:12)** The Lord offended people to such an extent that they crucified Him. There are many statements in the Bible which offend people to this day. We deal with these in a variety of ways. Some will simply reject it by ignoring it, while others will discard it through *interpretation*. The proper way is to accept what the Lord teaches and to unconditionally submit to His will.

Consider the use of slavery in a discussion recorded by **Luke. (17:7-10)** Jesus, after making the observation that a slave is not to expect expressions of appreciation for doing his work, says: **"So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'" Luke 17:10.**

The idea that one cannot be saved by the works of the law is sufficiently covered by statements such as the one God makes through Paul in his letter to the **Romans: ...by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. (3:20)** To the **Galatians** he writes that the law served as their *schoolmaster*, or *tutor* to lead them to Christ. **(3:24)** The law should have convinced them that they were sinners, and therefore needed the Messiah to make atonement for them: ***Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*** **Romans 7:24-25**

The doctrine of salvation by faith alone, apart from *any* works, demonstrates a realization that man cannot earn salvation. However, it encourages, no it demands, disobedience to the simple acts which serve no other purpose than to illustrate faith in God. The initial confusion caused by the statements concerning the meritorious works of the law may be excused, but since God through **James** makes the blunt statement that faith without works is ***useless*** and ***dead***, **(2:17, 20)** the absence of acts of obedience which perfects faith **(2:22)** is inexcusable. Notice especially the stinging question: ***But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?*** **James 2:20.** Now ponder the following words: ***"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"*** **Luke 6:46**

Accepting that we are slaves who merely do what is expected of a slave is not a flattering thought in our society. Realizing that we are sinners in need of a Savior to whom we should unconditionally submit our will is an incriminating thought. The necessity of humility is obvious. Consider the significance of humility as the opening statement in the Sermon on the Mount starting in **Matthew 5.**

We have ways to make ourselves feel and seem important. We remind ourselves often that we are so *important* that the Lord died for us. We are so *important* that God sacrificed His own Son for us. Is the word *important* the proper concept to use, considering the fact that we are to realize that we are at best *unworthy slaves*? Our *importance* often causes an attitude of disobedience.

Do we deserve salvation through the simple acts of obedience, the ones which demonstrate our faith in God? We are saved by faith, and the works of obedience are merely proof of the fact that we believe. We do what God says even though there is no logical relationship between these acts and the results accomplished. That, by nature, is the characteristics of works that demonstrates faith. We *deserve* nothing by it. Yet without it faith is dead.

Attitude often determines whether the same act is righteous or sinful – we may do things with a sincere heart, or we may do it with ulterior motives. ***"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever."*** **1 Chronicles 28:9**

Living faith, and not the mere mental exercise of accepting the fact that Jesus saves as true, is a state of mind which causes submission to God no matter what He asks or what He commands. **(James 2:14-26; Hebrews 11)** It causes a spontaneous submission to God, a seeking after God **(Hebrews 11:6)** and His approval. It is a principle so simple it escapes the understanding of so many.

Faith causes repentance. Faith and repentance causes a life of confession – I live the way I do because I believe in God. Not because I happen to be a preacher, a preacher's son or daughter, or someone who was not quite as bad as other people... ***"We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done."*** **Luke 17:10.**