

Luke 17:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Jesus concludes the parable of the unprofitable servant: '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' (οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς, ὅταν ποιήσητε πάντα τὰ διαταχθέντα ὑμῖν, λέγετε ὅτι Δοῦλοι ἀχρεῖοί ἐσμεν· ὃ ὠφείλομεν ποιῆσαι πεποιήκαμεν). The term 'achreios' (ἀχρεῖοί, unprofitable) means unworthy of special merit or reward. Even perfect obedience (ποιήσητε πάντα, having done all things commanded) merits no boasting—it is simply duty (ὃ ὠφείλομεν, what we owed). This teaching crushes self-righteousness and merit-based religion, establishing that salvation is grace alone, not earned reward.

Historical Context

This parable addressed the apostles (v.5), warning against spiritual pride. First-century Judaism emphasized merit—good works earning divine favor and heavenly reward. Jesus' parable subverts this system: if perfect obedience earns nothing, no one can claim salvation by works. This prepares for Paul's doctrine of justification by faith (Romans 3:20-28, Ephesians 2:8-9). The parable's logic—servants owe complete obedience and deserve no special thanks—establishes the proper creature-Creator relationship: we owe God everything, He owes us nothing.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does understanding yourself as an unprofitable servant protect against both pride in achievement and despair over failure?
2. What would change in your spiritual life if you fully embraced that salvation is entirely grace, not earned reward?

Interlinear Text

οὕτως	καὶ	ὕμεῖς	ὅταν	πεποιήκαμεν	πάντα	τὰ
So	likewise	ye	when	to do	all	G3588
G3779	G2532	G5210	G3752	G4160	G3956	
διαταχθέντα			ὕμῖν	λέγετε	ὅτι	Δοῦλοι ἀχρεῖοί
those things which are commanded			you	say	G3754	servants unprofitable
G1299			G5213	G3004	G1401	G888
ἐσμεν	ὅτι	ὃ	ὠφείλομεν	πεποιήκαμεν	πεποιήκαμεν	
We are	G3754	that which	was our duty	to do	to do	
G2070		G3739	G3784	G4160	G4160	

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 64:6 (Parallel theme): But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Romans 11:35 (Parallel theme): Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

Romans 3:12 (Parallel theme): They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Isaiah 6:5 (Parallel theme): Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

Matthew 25:30 (Parallel theme): And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

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