

# Luke 17:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

## Analysis

**Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.** Jesus concludes the parable with a rhetorical question: **Doth he thank that servant** (μὴ ἔχει χάριν τῷ δούλῳ, *mē echei charin tō doulō*—literally "Does he have gratitude toward the servant?"). The expected answer is negative. The phrase **because he did the things that were commanded him** (ὅτι ἐποίησεν τὰ διαταχθέντα, *hoti epoiēsen ta diatachthenta*) emphasizes the commanded nature of the work—these weren't voluntary extras but assigned duties.

**I trow not** (οὐ δοκῶ, *ou dokō*—"I think not") is Jesus' assessment, though some manuscripts omit this phrase, leaving the rhetorical question to stand alone. The point is clear: masters don't owe special thanks for servants doing exactly what they're supposed to do. Obedience to commands is baseline expectation, not extraordinary achievement deserving bonus reward.

Applied spiritually (v. 10): when believers obey God's commands, we've done only our duty. We cannot earn salvation through obedience (Ephesians 2:8-9) nor claim special divine favors for doing what God requires. This demolishes works-righteousness and religious pride. Our best obedience is **unprofitable**—we've given God nothing He wasn't already owed. Yet Scripture also promises rewards for faithful service (Matthew 25:21, 1 Corinthians 3:12-15)—not as wages earned but as grace gifts from a generous Master who delights to honor His servants beyond what justice requires.

## Historical Context

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In the Greco-Roman world, slaves who performed assigned duties received no special recognition—obedience was mandatory, not meritorious. Masters might choose to reward exceptional service, but servants had no legal claim to such rewards. Jesus' Jewish audience would understand this clearly. The parable confronts Pharisaic theology that treated Torah obedience as merit earning divine reward. The rabbis debated whether righteous deeds created 'treasury of merit' before God. Jesus rejects this framework entirely: we're servants who owe everything and earn nothing. Paul later develops this theme systematically (Romans 3:20, 4:4-5, 11:35-36)—salvation is grace, not wages; God is never our debtor. This teaching was revolutionary in first-century Judaism and remains countercultural in every era of self-congratulatory religion.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. How does the truth that perfect obedience is merely our duty (not meritorious achievement) shatter religious pride?
2. What's the difference between serving God to earn rewards versus serving faithfully while trusting His gracious generosity?
3. How should understanding yourself as an unprofitable servant affect your response to criticism or lack of recognition in ministry?

## Interlinear Text

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μὴ	χάριν	ἔχει	τῷ	δούλῳ	ἐκείνῳ,	ὅτι	ἐποίησεν	τὰ
G3361	<b>thank</b>	<b>Doth he</b>	G3588	<b>servant</b>	<b>that</b>	<b>because</b>	<b>he did</b>	G3588
	G5485	G2192		G1401	G1565	G3754	G4160	
διαταχθέντα				αὐτῷ	οὐ	δοκῶ		
<b>the things that were commanded</b>				<b>him</b>	<b>not</b>	<b>I trow</b>		
G1299				G846	G3756	G1380		

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