



Parable of the Master and Servant

Context of the Parable

In context, this parable is being told to Jesus' disciples.

The entire section from verse 1 to 10 appears to be a group of sayings taught by Jesus.

Jesus talks about stumbling (Luke 17:1-2), forgiveness (Luke 17:3-4), faith (Luke 17:5), and then he teaches about humility by telling this parable of the master and the servant in Luke 17:7-10.

Summary of the Parable of the Master and the Servant

To begin the parable of the master and the servant, Jesus says, "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'?" (Luke 17:7)

"Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink'?" (Luke 17:8)

Jesus then makes his point: "Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded?"

So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!'" (Luke 17:9-10)

Background Information for the Parable of the Master and the Servant

During the time period this parable was told, Jesus' disciples would have been very familiar with people having slaves and servants, especially if the person was wealthy.

Even if none of the disciples had servants themselves, this concept would have been very familiar to them.

The entire letter written by Paul to Philemon is mainly about Philemon's slave named Onesimus.

Meaning of the Parable of the Master and the Servant

Jesus uses this kind of master-servant relationship to compare an aspect of our relationship with God.

God is our king, and we are his servants.

Due to the fact that God created us, saying that he technically "owns us" is an understatement.

(Now, some people may not like the idea of being owned by anyone, but that does not change the fact that everything we have, from every particle and atom in our bodies to even life itself and our existence, came from God.)

Jesus' point is essentially: Do not be boastful or prideful in doing what you should have been doing all along.

Instead, when you are doing what you should be doing, be humble and realize that you are only doing what you ought to do.

Paul teaches a similar concept about humility in Romans 9:20 "But who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, 'Why have you made me like this?'"

Paul's point is essentially that we have no right to complain or question God's decisions, just like the 'clay' has no right to question the decisions of the 'potter.'

However, as already stated, Jesus' point in this parable is that we should not become arrogant or boastful about simply doing what we should be doing.

Instead we should "know our place," so to speak, and remain humble.

(Although the phrase "know your place" may sound rude and degrading to some, because of how it is used sometimes to belittle others, it actually is really important that we know and understand who we are in relation to God.)

Also, if the phrase "We are worthless slaves," bothers you, please understand that Jesus is not calling anyone worthless.

Rather, as Jesus often does, he is using extreme words to make an important point.

We should not think highly of ourselves, as if we are better or more special for simply doing what we should be doing.

Meaning, children of God should not get "superiority complexes," because they think themselves to be children of God.

On the contrary, such a person is not a child of God if they think of themselves as better or superior to others based on their obedience to God.

We should all be obeying God, and those who repent (stop sinning and return to obeying God), are only doing what they ought to do (and for obeying, they will receive what they were intended to receive: eternal life).