

## The Disciple's Duty pt 2

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**Bible Text:** Luke 17:1-10

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Luke 17. We're in verses 1 through 10. If you are visiting with us today, we're going straight through the Gospel of Luke and we are continually amazed and we marvel over and we repent again about how Jesus is not who you think he is. If you're new here, our approach to the pulpit has been the approach of our forefathers and I'd include the Puritans in that and I'd include Augustine in there, all the way back to the first centuries of Christianity, and that is: you take a text and you interpret it in its grammatical and historical context. You get the understanding of the original author to his day and then you make application for us in our day. We're not free to make this text mean what we think it ought to mean or what might be a blessing to folks or whatever. We are to take the text, draw from the text the truth as it would apply to the people that it was originally written to or spoken to and then we make application for our day.

As we go through the Gospel of Luke, here I am 35 years into preaching now and all of that here. I wasn't preaching when I first came here, I was just a college kid, but I soon was and I'm still marveling over Christ. He's still shocking me. He's still bursting out of the little box of understanding I would put him in and, once again, in this text, publicly Jesus is giving and in this case an indirect but a clear rebuke to the Pharisees of his day. You see, the religious establishment of the day had radically turned truth upside down and Jesus' preaching and teaching begins to straighten things out and get it back right side up. But things were so ingrained into the people's thinking of what was truth and righteousness that when Jesus dismantled that and set it right back up, they found it terribly difficult to grasp.

Now, first of all, the great majority of the religious authorities of the day hated him for it and even had come together to kill him because of it and eventually they did put him on a cross. But even his devoted followers who loved him and believed in him found themselves struggling and wrestling with how radically new his teaching was and this is one of those cases. He's rebuking the Pharisees but he's instructing his disciples all at one time here.

Now, I don't do many two-parters anymore but this one required me so we did the first half last Sunday. I'll review some of that and then we'll pick up some new material. But first let's just read the text. Luke 17, 1 through 10.

1 He said to His disciples, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! 2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble. 3 Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 4 And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him." 5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 6 And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you. 7 Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? 8 But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'? 9 He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? 10 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.'"

Now, I entitled this "The Disciple's Duty." He's giving us here the duties we have as true disciples of Jesus Christ and I might add, now listen to me: if you're not truly regenerate, truly born again, if you've just gone through the motions of walking down to the front and parroting a prayer and that's all you've done, these duties are impossible. But if you're of the Spirit of God, God has birthed in you a new creation as the Bible calls it and that's evidenced by a new repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ, then these things not only are possible but they are commanded as your duties.

I talked with you about how we live in a culture today that seems to have lost all sense of duty. Have you noticed that? That everything that everyone is supposed to do, you've got to show them how there's something in it for them. How you're really thinking about them and how they are going to get served equally and cared for equally with everybody else. Well, I'm sorry, God doesn't do things that way. God says, "You have some duties as a disciple." In our culture today, for example, wives don't want to hear about the duty God has given them to love their husbands and be keepers of their homes. "If you are going to push us back into the stone ages, why, we want to be equal with men." God is not challenging whether or not you're equal with men, as a matter of fact, you're superior to men in most ways. It's just that you have a duty that God has ordained. Men don't want to hear about the duty God has given them to provide for and protect their families. If you've got to work 2 jobs, sir, you work 2 jobs but you provide for your family. It's your duty to do so. Amen? Stop all of this whining around for a handout from somebody else. You stay busy and do all you can and you'll find the people of God will help you. Amen? Well, we've got a whole generation that don't want to hear about their duty to do those things: to love their wife like Christ loved the church. It doesn't have anything to do with what she does. That's your duty.

You know, it used to be we had a cultural consensus conviction, if you will. We kind of held to these biblical duties as right and best for the culture but we are in a post-Christian era today. We no longer believe these things. Our government, for example, how often have you heard our government lately challenge the citizens, "Do your duties. Provide for your own. Take care of yourself. Work hard." We don't hear that anymore. We hear excuse after excuse after excuse why you should get a handout. Now, from the time your child is born through 2 years of college some are proposing that everything be taken care of. By the way, most of the meals would be taken care of. What happened to parents assuming the duty of sacrificing for their children if necessary? We've lost that today. Now, I'm not against helping and caring for those who have legitimate need. You know better than that but you have to have just a slight amount of observation and intelligence to come to the conclusion we've lost the sense of duty.

As I was driving into Chattanooga, I told you a while back, there was a billboard and there was a Marine pictured there on that billboard. I mean, he was crisp and tailored. He had his uniform on and he had a countenance of commitment and resolve. You would just look at that guy and say, "Boy, I'd like for that to be my son." He looked good. Underneath that picture it had: "Commit to something greater than yourself." That's the idea behind duty. It's not about me. It's not about how I feel. There's something bigger than me at stake here. Our God has given us duties as his people, something bigger than us going on here. It's not about me.

So the Lord here takes it down, maybe I should say higher to now he's talking about true, genuine believers and the duties they have. Once again, as he gives these duties to his believers, it is a real rebuke and conflict with what the Pharisees, their present Jewish religious leaders had been teaching and practicing and it's a challenge to these disciples. Now, I told you before that these are like Proverbs. The Lord is just giving some general understanding. There are a lot of sub-points, a lot of balancing things that will come into play. We'll touch on a few of those. We just don't have time to get to them, though. We're just going to kind of deal with these general parable, if you will, duties, or parables about duties that we are to observe in our lives.

First of all, we talked about the duty to live a good example. He says, "Woe to you if you're a stumbling block." That means, "Make sure you live in such a way that you encourage others," listen, "to honor and obey God by your life." That's not if it's convenient. Jesus is saying, "You've got a duty to do that if you're my disciple." How are you a stumbling block? You're a stumbling block when your life encourages people to dishonor and disobey God. We went through that there are various degrees here. There are those out-and-out rebels; those out-and-out antichrist, anti-God individuals who just hate us and want to destroy our faith. Then there are even committed Christians who inadvertently, that's not the purpose of their life ever, but maybe leave a stumbling stone. And so there is a warning here for all of us whether you're that out-and-out persecutor of the church or you're a committed Christian who gets careless. We challenged parents. Parents, you can be a stumbling stone to your children. Make sure you are leading your children. By the way, dads, God didn't call you to get spiritual guidance from your children, he called you to lead your children spiritually. We see all this silly nonsense

going on in churches today because children now run the church. Most church worship services look like something we do back in vacation Bible school. We need to raise our boys to be young men, not to be silly little boys. So dads, let's be better than a stumbling block. Let's lead our children in righteousness and to love truth. By the way, young people respond to truth if they believe you believe it. If they believe you to believe it, they'll respond to it.

We've got to be careful that we're not a stumbling block to our peers, that we live around others in a way that would encourage them to honor and obey God not dishonor and disobey God. Never get caught in that fleshly wickedness of "you scratch my sin and I'll scratch yours." Let's don't help each other sin, let's help each other be righteous.

Well, that's the duty of being a good example. Now also he said, secondly, there's the duty of correcting and restoring the sinning. I put the sinning here because we all sin and we don't go around correcting every sin we see but there are those who sin against us or get in patterns or ruts of sin and we have, listen, the duty, the Lord says, to rebuke them. He says very clearly here in our text in verse 3, "If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him." Now, he uses the word "rebuke" and that's the strongest word used when confronting someone who is yet unrepentant. Someone said, "Now wait a minute, the church is a place for sinners." Wrong. The church is a home for repenting sinners. There's a big difference between someone who walks in their sin but is not broken over it. They are not troubled by it. They are not humbled about it and they don't want help with it. That's a willful sinner. There's another man who stumbles and falls in sins but he's humble about it and he wants help with it and he confesses it as wickedness and he wants to do better. That's the place. That's the kind of place the church is for those kind of repenting sinners. Aren't you glad when we get home to heaven and we'll be done with us, our old flesh, and we'll stop sinning forever? But until we get there, for the repenting sinners, we've got a place called the church to help each other.

And he says, "When a brother or sister is in sin and they don't seem to be repentant about it, your duty, not because it's convenient or easy or comfortable, your duty is to call them to repentance." Now again, there are 1,001 sub-points and we've talked thoroughly on this at Grace Life. You know we practice biblical church discipline. I don't have time for all the sub-points but I always point this out: if you are confronting someone about their sin, first of all, you ought to be totally humble yourself considering that you yourself could be in worse sin tomorrow except for the grace of God. Amen? And if you rebuke them, you do it with loving, absolute, total confidentiality. Nobody else is to get in on it, period. But it is your duty. Now that's why small group ministry is so important at Grace Life and that's why we've worked as hard I believe as you can work to have active, loving, caring, encouraging small group ministries because in that setting you get to know each other well enough that there is a freedom to rebuke and correct if necessary.

Well, it's a duty God has called us to be a part of. He says, "If your brother sins, rebuke him." Now we get to new material, III. The duty of forgiving the offender. Now, this actually really connects closely to II. It's one package but I've broken it out just for amplification and illustration purposes. He says in verse 3 again, "If your brother sins,

rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him." The duty you have, now look, again, I didn't say if you feel like doing it. I didn't say if you were over your hurting because of what they did to you. No, your duty is to forgive. Child of God, listen to me: your emotions are not Lord, Jesus is Lord. You have to command your heart and your thinking to get in line with truth. Now, that's a battle we're all in but I expect you and I expect Brother Jeff, I expect us to be in the battle and when we slip back up and because we are hurt, we get back into unforgiveness and bitterness, then we repent and say, "I'm not allowed to do this. My Master has commanded me that it's my duty to forgive. So emotions get back in line and get over it. I choose to forgive." Now you're understanding why if you are not truly regenerate you can't get this. You don't have the capacity if the Spirit of God is not in you to be able to do this. It's a duty.

In this context of all that he said, this also involves, includes, restoring the fellowship with that one who is sinning because the moment you begin to sin and you're not repentant, then you've broken fellowship with God and with God's church and God's children. The moment you repent and say, "Yes, help me. I want to do better," you're back in restored fellowship. Amen? Isn't that sweet? Isn't that good? We have experienced dozens and dozens of people who have come back into the fellowship after they've even been removed, not for their sin but for their refusal to even try to repent of their sin and then they go out into the world and they get a full taste of wickedness and God like the prodigal son brings them to the end of themselves and they come back and say, "We want to be forgiven and restored to the church." And what a beautiful, blessed thing and I have to commend you, Grace Life, because you're bigger on the love and restore end than you are on the rebuke end. You put more energy there than the other place and I appreciate your spirit there.

Verse 4, "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' then you forgive him." Now, we know the other Gospel writers, they record the Lord giving an amplified version of this teaching where he says, "Even if he sins 70×7 you are to forgive him." Again, this was a real harsh rebuke to the Pharisees of the day who had everything calculated out into cold, mathematical formulas. If he did this, this and this, you've got to forgive but if he went past this point, then you could get him back. Jesus said, "No, I'm going to turn that teaching upside down. Actually, I'm going to get it right side up. You're to forgive 7 times. You're to forgive 70×7." What he's saying here is that we carry within us, within our individual hearts and within our church families collectively, a culture of forgiveness. Forgiveness is part and parcel of what we are. We are continually repenters and we are continually forgivers one of another. Having a continual process primarily in the small group bonding fellowship of repenting and forgiving is normal, every day Christianity. Don't make this some, "Boy, they're serious down at Grace Life. They actually confront each other and call each other to repentance and that's just..." Do you know what you just said? We're just normal Christians. Nothing to commend us about. We're just barely normal. It's not our fault that everybody is so sub-normal that normal looks abnormal. By the way, we haven't arrived either, amen? We've got to keep doing better at being repenters continually and forgivers continually.

Forgiveness for the child of God is imperative. Of course, when he says 7 times he means unlimited. "Forgive them 70×7," it means unlimited. We are those who are continual sinners against our God and we have received God's continual forgiveness in Christ. Amen? We are now partakers of God's nature and that nature is rich in forgiveness so how can we who need and have received continual forgiveness not offer the same to equal fellow sinners? Unforgiveness or what I call false forgiveness, now, false forgiveness is when you say, "I forgive," but you keep beating the person up for it. You keep punishing them. You keep letting them know about it and turning the cold shoulder and those kind of things. We all are tempted there. Some of you have made it an art form and you need to repent. There's a difference between struggling there and walking in it as a lifestyle. That's not forgiveness when you keep punishing back by turning the cold shoulder or reminding them all the time of what they did or used to be like. That's false forgiveness.

You see, some of us would do well this morning to stop focusing on how deeply someone has hurt and offended you and begin to focus on how deeply your forgiveness hurts and offends the God you claim to love and serve. When you understand what God says about his very nature, unforgiveness is almost always a greater sin than whatever was done to you to start with. Are you still liking me? You see, if the Spirit of God is in you, there's something in you that says, "Ouch, but amen. That's right. Thank you, Lord, I need that. I need to walk in that." The Spirit of God is telling you, amen? That's where you need to be in your thinking. I'm preaching to Jeff this morning and you too.

Unforgiveness is simply a result of loving self. Now, think about that: loving self. It's too high of an estimate of yourself. You mean you're so precious and special that when somebody hurt you you can't forgive? It's simply a spirit of pride and self-idolatry, of exalting yourself to such a lofty place that what was done to you was such a magnanimous fault because you're so special that you can't forgive. That's where, brothers and sisters, you've got to remind yourself when you've been hurt and done wrong, whatever it is, "I ought to be in hell for how deeply I have offended my God and he sent his Son to rescue me and in that strength I can forgive others."

So, as your pastor, based on the authority of the word of God, I tell you this morning, "Get over yourself." Just get over it. That's where faithful preaching of the word helps. If you sit under faithful preaching of the word, you will almost every Sunday leave humbled. You will have gotten another glimpse of the great, infinite, matchless worth, value and holiness of God and we've gotten at least another glimpse of our willful, fallen, wicked, sinful self and we leave humbled that he would even take us or save us through the precious merits of his dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And when you walk out humbled over what God has done for you through Christ, it just makes forgiving your wife a little bit easier. It makes forgiving your husband a little bit easier. It makes forgiving that son or daughter a little bit easier.

You say, "Well Pastor, you don't know what I've been through." Well, sit down sometimes and we'll compare stories. I've got a pretty good story and I have had, by the act of the will and I'm not done, I'm still a repentor and a forgiver, but I've had by the act

of the will to call people names in my mind from 40 years ago and say, "I forgive them because I deserve worse as a sinner against my God." By the way, isn't God wise? Some of the seemingly difficult things, seemingly horrifying things I endured maybe as a child, you endured maybe as a child, make me the pastor I am today. They may have meant it for evil, God meant it for good. So I'm an unfinished product. Will you pray for me? I'll pray for you.

Now, let's think about the contrast here: the wicked with the righteous. That's the hardened unbeliever with the genuine believer. The wicked always look for payback. The wicked are always about revenge. "Vengeance is mine. I will repay," says the wicked. The Christian, the true believer, always looks for reconciliation and always is ready to forgive. The wicked glory in revenge, the Christian glories in forgiveness. The wicked pronounce and publish abroad their revenge. Do we not see that on TV today? The Christian pronounces and publishes their forgiveness. As Christians we would not go out into this world and kill in the name of Christ but we would be willing to go out into the world and be martyred for the cause of Christ.

I don't want to get too far off track here but there is a righteous women's movement and there is an unrighteous women's movement. There is a righteous child advocacy movement and there is an unrighteous child advocacy movement. There is a righteous labor movement and an unrighteous labor movement. In all of these areas where there has been abuse and mistreatment, there's been a good response of righteous people to help defend and guard against that kind of thing. There is some righteousness in these movements but far too often unforgiving bitterness gets in. There's a righteous civil rights movement and an unrighteous civil rights movement. I mean, God knows that it is righteous for us to stand against the evils committed against people because their skin color was dark. There's a righteousness to defend that but we see in our culture this venom of unforgiveness and bitterness that gets away from the Christian roots of the original movement and now it's just attack, attack, attack. Revenge, revenge, revenge. You can never get it right because we're not getting over it. Who does that ultimately hurt? It hurts the very people you claim to be trying to help. So we see this all over. You see, as a culture loses its Christian influence, these kind of things get larger and larger and more and more corrupt and more and more powerful until they ruin the country completely. So if you are in any of those categories, God bless you but make sure you're righteous. Righteous in defense of those who ought to be defended and helped.

Since we are the recipients of God's grace, we are the bearers of God's infinite love and this love joys in infinite forgiveness. Since we need infinite forgiveness, we ought not to limit our forgiveness to our fellow man. We are not about mathematical forgiveness but that's where the Pharisees were who were being indirectly rebuked by this teaching. They would say, "Well, bing, bing, bing, then you forgive but bing, bing, bing, you don't forgive, you can get revenge." Jesus said, "Nope, throw all of that out. I'm turning that right outside down." You don't count it up, it's unlimited.

Unforgiveness and the consequential bitterness grinds down the soul. It tears down the body. It hardens the countenance. It blinds the eyes. There is nothing more unattractive

than a senior adult with a hard, cold, ugly countenance and spirit because they've walked in unforgiveness most of their life. And what a terrible antithesis of the Spirit of Christ. Grow old sweet with a Christian beauty in your face that shows the world, "I know Christ and I walk in his grace." It's your duty to forgive and you can if you choose to. While unforgiveness grinds down the soul, tears down the body, hardens the countenance and blinds the eyes, forgiveness is like planting new seed in fertile ground. It brings a harvest of blessing and nourishment.

Now, these disciples are hearing this teaching and it's radical to them. They are thinking, "Whoa, wait a minute. Can we live this? I mean, are we capable of doing this?" Here's what they say, look at verse 5, they respond, verse 5, "The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!' We don't know that we have what it takes to do this." Now, when they say "increase our faith," they're not saying, "Lord, give us the gift of faith." Some have interpreted this that way. That's not what he's talking about. He's not talking about a special gift of faith so you can do miracles. By the way, it takes a greater miracle within the heart to forgive the way Jesus teaches to forgive than it does to have the faith to perform a miracle. Are you with me? You want to show the world the miraculous power of God? Then let's live together in the kind of forgiving love God commands of us and the world will see that kind of forgiving love and they'll say, "Wow, God must be working in your church." That's a greater sign that God is working than if we healed 12 people every Sunday. Now, I'm all for healing people and God does that sometimes, amen? But this is a greater miracle than even that.

The disciples are learning that faith is a daily faith. The disciples here are learning that faith is not about a moment but about a journey. You know, I've said this to you as a figure of speech and to make a point, don't misunderstand or misquote what I'm about to say but I've said this to you many times: there's a sense in which we pray a sinner's prayer and get saved all the time over and over again. There is a sense in which we constantly are faithing to God, "Oh God, I'm a sinner. Oh God, I've failed. Oh God, that attitude is rotten. Oh God, I'm full of pride. Oh Christ, if you don't save me I'm sunk." That's our lifestyle. That's being a repentor as you go along in life. Listen, faith is not something you did, faith is something you have become. You have become a faither. That means as a lifestyle you begin to read the word of God, study the word of God, hear the word of God preached and it's constantly, constantly, constantly pulling out motives, motives, attitudes, dispositions, behaviors that are wrong and you're constantly faithing that God's word is wiser than your heart and you're saying, "You're right, God, and I'm wrong. So God, I need saving again." Not in the sense that you lost your justification but that the power of sin gets released off of your life and you're saved from the power of sin over and over again, in a sense. These disciples are learning that as they are thinking about, "How can we rebuke those who are in sin?" That's difficult to do and, "How can we be forgiving to this degree?" he's talking about and Jesus says, "You've got to walk as a faither and continually catch yourself and repent of that unforgiveness and keep going and keep going and keep going." "Well Pastor, where does that come from?" It's the Spirit of God that came into you when you were converted and if he's there, something in you right now says, "Amen. That's the journey I'm on. I need to do better at it but that's the journey I'm on."



Verse 6, "And the Lord said, 'If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and be planted in the sea"; and it would obey you.'" He's not talking about literally uprooting trees and throwing them into the sea by faith. He's using a metaphor from nature. We all know the mustard seed is tiny and the tree here is quite huge and I think what the Lord is pointing out here is that faith is not a matter of quantity but of presence. In other words, do you have the true faith that comes from the regenerate heart? Do you have a particular type of faith? Now listen, there's a faith of the old, natural, fallen man that can't do this but there's a new faith that comes out of the new man when you're born again that can do this. There's an old faith in the old, natural man that would say, "That's too hard. I'd better go to church somewhere else." There is a new kind of faith that comes from the regenerate man that says, "Yes, I want to walk in this and walk in it better the longer I live."

So he says, "You need a new kind of faith and if you get the new kind, even if it's tiny as a mustard seed, you'll be able to begin to walk out this discipleship with more faithfulness as you keep going along in your Christian life." It's not a matter of quantity, it's a matter of presence. A little true or genuine faith can accomplish very, very much. You see, it's not great faith we need so much as it is faith in a great God. "God, I cannot forgive him." God says, "I never asked you to. I asked you to forgive him based on what I put in you. You've got to burn my fuel. You've got to burn what I put in you. You don't burn you, you burn me and I'm infinite." So you go to God confessing your limitation with confidence in his infinite quantity of capacity he has put in you at the new birth. These lessons are not overbearing and they're not too much if you have the new faith, if you have the new heart, if you have the new nature and that's what he's pointing out. In this context he would be implying, "If you have what your old Pharisee religious teachers and the Jewish religion have been teaching, you can't do this but if you have the new kind, even if it's a mustard seed size, you can begin to do this."

IV. The disciple's duty expanded. He's going to expand on this. He says, "Okay, I'm going to help you a little bit more here." Rhetorical questions here which implies the answer is obvious. Verse 7, he says, "Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat?'" Now, they know the answer. This is a day of slavery. They know for a fact that's not going to happen. No master is going to have his slave tending his sheep or tending his crop all day long and he's going to have the slave come in and the master say, "Oh, now you sit down and eat first. I'll take care of you." He says, "You know that's not going to happen. No, that's not going to happen." What he's saying here is, "You're a slave." Now, you didn't hear that. You don't have to be. You can come to this church today and renounce Christ and go somewhere else but if you belong to Christ, you're God's slave and what he tells you to do is your duty even if you've been working hard all day long. That's his point. You've got to understand the duties of a slave to his master because that's what you are. Paul said this of himself, Romans 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Titus 1:1, he says, "I'm a bond slave."

Verse 8, he amplifies it a little bit more, "But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me?'" That's the master speaking to the slave. "You prepare something for me and you properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink?" Of course, it's rhetorical. They are going to say, "Of course that's what would happen. Of course the slave is going to come in and the slave is going to get cleaned up and the slave is going to serve his master in the house now that he has served in the field all day." Now Jesus is not making a point for slavery, he's bringing the illustration out of the culture to illustrate a spiritual point so don't get mixed up on that.

Verse 10, "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you," that is, which are your duties as my disciples, then you "say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'" When you go to work and the worldlings at work say, "Well, I wouldn't have forgiven them. I wouldn't have been nice back to them." It may not always be appropriate to verbalize this but at least in your heart you say, "Yes, but I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ and my duty is to forgive them and my duty is to love them in return because I'm an unworthy slave. When I have done that, I've only done what I ought to have done." Amen?

Ours is a dutiful service. We are but unworthy slaves. It is right that we serve our God as a slave and that God be served and be in comfort as our Master. Now, let me give a side note that's not in the text here but we know that God though we are to consider ourselves as slaves, does something magnanimous that only he in infinite wisdom and grace would possibly think to do and that is he says, "Though you are my slave and you ought to view yourself in duty to me as a slave with a Master, I am choosing not because of your inherent value, I'm choosing in unmerited favor to take you to a lofty position and make you a joint heir with my very Son, Jesus Christ." "Well Pastor, which one is true?" Both are true. You join the exaltation he gives you but you walk with the humble dedication doing your duty as a slave.

We've raised a soft, whiny, self-indulgent, entitled, self-excusing, self-important, narcissistic generation. They expect to be praised and rewarded for breathing their first breath on the earth and they are entitled to everything after that. No sense of duty. For the smallest devotion, they expect everything to be perfect and catered to and taken care of. God is sovereign. It might be as God's child you work hard all your life 2, sometimes 3 jobs and barely pay the bills and barely get your kids in college but you're just doing your duty to your Master with the lot he has brought your way.

The truth is we are God's slaves and we deserve nothing but to do our dutiful service unto God. We should expect neither rest nor caress from our Master until our work is done. We are bound to God. Now listen to me, Joel Osteen, listen to me liberal: you're bound to God, he is not bound to you. Stop all this foolish, man-centered, unbiblical nonsense of God owes me this and God owes me that. If God gives you what you're owed, you're going to hell. You will not take one more breath, you'll go straight to hell that you might justly satisfy holy justice against you. You're bound to him, he's not bound to you. He owes us nothing, we owe him everything.

Verse 9, he continues this analogy of the slave to the master and, "He," the master, "does not thank the slave because the slave did the things which were commanded, does he? 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.'" God does not owe us gratitude. All the thanksgiving is from us to him that we get to serve him as his slave. When he says you are to consider yourself as an unworthy slave, the "unworthy" there really means "needless." We know that God could raise up rocks to praise him if he wanted to. Getting to serve him is a privilege.

Three thoughts as we strive to do our duties to God, as we strive to live a good example, that's our duty. As we strive to rebuke and restore the sinning, that's our duty. As we strive to faithfully forgive those who offend us, that's our duty. As we do those duties and many others, the Scripture points out, 3 thoughts and I'm done.

1. It was just your duty. No applause. No pat on the back. It's just your duty.
2. Everything you did right was because of grace. Without grace you would have bowed your neck, stuck out your chin, "I'm not going to serve a God like that. I don't have to go to that church and hear that stuff." It's grace that humbles you to say, "Yes, Lord." So everything you do in your duty, it was grace enabled.
3. Everything you did was imperfect and he deserved perfect. Everything you did was tainted by your fallen, sinful nature and it was imperfect. He deserved perfect.

So Jesus is walking along with his disciples and he knows what they've been taught and, once again, he lays out a weighty, hard-hitting message because do you know what he's doing? He's pruning the flock. He knows there's some weighty stuff up ahead and just a little religious indoctrination isn't going to get it. They'd better have truly changed hearts or they're not going to make it in his new enterprise he calls the church. He's going to die on the cross. He knows they are not going to make it through that bruising ordeal. Many of them are going to be martyred for their faith. He knows they are not going to make it if something real hasn't happened in here. So he might lose some followers teaching like this and, by the way, by the time he got to the cross, it's arguable that he didn't have one follower left. They all at least temporarily forsook him. What about you? What about you? What about you? What about you? Are you one of the humbled the ones that says, "Yes Lord, help me. I want strive to walk in my duties to you, my Master." Are you going to resist and say, "I want a different kind of Jesus." But there's only one kind. He's the one revealed in that book. If you know him and believe in him and honor him, you're saved forever. You resist him, you're lost forever.

Let's pray together.