



Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”**

—Proverbs 18:10

We Are Unworthy Slaves

Read this challenging parable from Jesus in Luke 17:7–10,

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”? 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”? He does not thank the slave because he 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.”

I don’t know about you, but sometimes I become infected by a certain kind of spiritual pride that says I am indispensable to the Lord. A pride that pats itself on the back thinking that my sacrifices, my decisions, my attention to worship, and my devotion to righteous behavior is worthy of special commendation. God really owes me. I’m really special to God, right up there with Daniel and Noah!

Lake Wales
Church of Christ
463 N. Buck Moore Rd.
Lake Wales, FL 33898
www.lakewalescoc.com
(863) 676-4114

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That kind of pride needs to die quickly. First of all, how silly for any of us to think that our sacrifices have come anywhere close to the kinds of sacrifices made by some of the people we read about in the Bible! Truly, we have “not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood” (Heb. 12:4). We have not suffered the loss of loved ones, the loss of homes, the loss of freedom, the loss of life or limb. The most we have suffered thus far is, perhaps, not being invited to a particular party.

But there’s another reason why any sort of religious pride needs to die quickly. It is uncalled for. I doubt that even those people we read about, the Daniels and Noahs and Moseses, had that kind of silly pride. They would have been the first to admit that their deeds deserved no special attention.

Now, it is certainly true that God appreciates our love and obedience. “God is not so unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name” (Heb. 6:10). The Scriptures are literally chock full of passages in which God promises a reward for righteousness. For just a few examples:

- “When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you” (Matt. 6:3–4).
- “Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master” (Matt. 25:21).
- “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat...” (Matt. 25:34–35).
- “When you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind ... for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:14).
- “Be always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).
- “You have done well to share with me in my affliction ... Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account” (Phil. 4:14–17).

- “We have as our ambition to be pleasing to Him ... for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:9–10).
- “I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done” (Rev. 22:12).

But, counterbalancing that, are the words of Jesus, which remind us to be humble. We are called to be holy and generous because God is holy and generous. He is not asking of His children anything that He has not already done. Furthermore, He is not asking of us anything out of the ordinary, but only that which is in keeping with God’s benevolent plan for mankind. We were created for this end.

If we give our lives to preach the gospel, we are doing no more than what we ought to do, according to our ability.

If we think not of material possessions and instead focus on the kingdom of God, we are doing no more than what God expects of us.

If we sacrifice our idols and repent of our sins, we are not heroic, we are faithfully serving the Christ who gave His life on the cross to secure for us eternal life.

At the end of the day, the human master does not treat the human slave to dinner. Neither should we go looking for special recognition for obeying the commandments of our Master. Once one project is done, there is another to do. We will not be released from our duties until life is complete. But, we certainly can and should look forward to the day when our Father will do far and above when any human master could do, and grant us the mansion in the heavens! Jesus says in a different place, Luke 12:37 (see also John 15:15),

Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them.

What a glorious day that will be! Meanwhile, to the work!—*J. Guzzetta*

The Way Back to the Father's House

From time to time, members of the church drift away. The causes are many—discouragement, sickness, depression, sin, boredom. But there is always a way back. Here is what wayward Christians can count on:

Your leaders will look for you. “Seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken, and strengthen the sick” (Ezek. 34:16). “What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying?” (Matt. 18:12).

Your brothers will long for you. “Do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thess. 3:15). “My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19–20).

Your Lord will wait for you. “If we endure, we shall reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:12–13). “While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). “Return to me, declares the Lord of hosts, that I may return to you” (Zech. 1:3).

What an amazing thing to have someone who loves you so much they will not abandon you even when you demand it, hoping and praying and working that you will come to your senses. —*John Guzzetta*

Quote of the Week:

“Come, let us return to the Lord.
For He has torn us, but He will heal us;
He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.
He will revive us after two days;
He will raise us up on the third day
That we may live before Him” (Hosea 6:1–2).