

## EXPECTATIONS

In any relationship between two people or a person and a group, there are certain expectations that each party has of the other person or group. This is true if you are talking about two friends, business partners, husbands and wives, parents and children, individuals and civic clubs, and even individuals and God.

When expectations are not properly understood, then conflict, disappointment and even estrangement can be the outcome. The Bible is a book about relationships. We find in the historical accounts and in the doctrinal teachings how relationships are to work and this should help us clarify and come to a mutual understand of the expectations we should have when we are involved with and dealing with others. The examples cover the gamut from God's relationship with people, people's relationship to God, people to people relationships, and even the relationship we have with ourselves.

The Scripture passage we are focusing on gives an example of a relationship between a slave and master, but the implication has broader applications in that a principle is presented that can be applied to whatever we do.

*Luke 17:7-10*

*7 "Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'?*

*8 Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'?*

*9 Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do?*

*10 So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"*

So, what was the point of Jesus introducing this story for the disciples' consideration at this time. Recall that Luke is thought to be the most accurate of the four Gospels in the chronology of the events presented. Let's put this passage in the overall context of what else has been going on as recorded in Chapter 17. Jesus had just told them that they would be persecuted by others (offences would come, stumbling blocks would be put in their way, they would have opposition) and when that happened to them, they were not to take matters into their own hands but trust God to take care of what needed to be done. Also, they were to pay attention to their own actions that they were to neither give nor take offense.

Many of the problems we experience come from sources close to us - it is not necessarily the stranger that hurts us but those closest to us. When that happens and the offending parties are repentant then we are to forgive them. They (the disciples) were thinking: "That is so hard to do. (Lord, increase our faith.) However, I'm sure that we will get a big reward from God by living in such a way."

Is this not the way we still think? Somebody hurts us and we don't strike back, we don't hold a grudge, we don't retaliate, or whatever and we think that something good will happen to compensate for such good behavior on our part when we have been so poorly treated. If we don't see the results now, then eventually we will. Some may even ascribe to the idea that life is just a mixture of good and bad, and it all balances out. That is the erroneous conclusion of Taoism.

It is very likely that such thoughts were going through the minds of the disciples at this point. We need to remember that Jesus was a mind reader - He knew their thoughts. That is the

context in which the story was related by Jesus. (Let read it again and this time from a paraphrase version.)

"Suppose one of you has a servant who comes in from plowing the field or tending the sheep. Would you take his coat, set the table, and say, 'Sit down and eat'? Wouldn't you be more likely to say, 'Prepare dinner; change your clothes and wait table for me until I've finished my coffee; then go to the kitchen and have your supper'? Does the servant get special thanks for doing what's expected of him? It's the same with you. When you've done everything expected of you, be matter-of-fact and say, 'The work is done. What we were told to do, we did.'" (The Message)

We've lost touch with the real meaning of the word slave or bond servant. The servants we know about work for wages and you'd better be nice to them or they won't come back. It was not that way in Jesus' time. The word translated "servant" in this passage is (in the Greek) *doulos*. This word is similar in meaning to the Hebrew word *ebid*. Both these refer to slaves or what has been translated "servants" or "bond servants." A slave was owned by the master. He was the property of the owner and he lost his identity. If his master said he had to get up at 6:00 a.m., then he did. Same situation would prevail even if the time were midnight.

When Jesus told the story about a master inviting his bond servant (or slave) to eat before he was served, the disciples probably laughed. It was inconceivable that a slave might think of himself before his master. Only after the master had been served could the servant consider his own needs. This was the norm.

It doesn't take a whole lot of thought to figure out how this applies to us. Consider what Paul shared with the church at Corinth as we read in 1 Corinthians 6:17-20

"But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body."

We like the idea of belonging to God when it comes to consideration of His protection and the security we have in Him. I'm not sure how comfortable we are when we think of the total implication that we belong to Him because we were purchased like a slave in the marketplace. Whether we like it or not, we are slaves of Jesus Christ. We have been bought by Him. Paul wrote "Not one of us lives for himself and not one of us dies for himself, for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. (Rom 14:8)

Often, we are tempted to reduce the gospel message to a single thought: "Jesus died for my sins." That is the truth. While all of it is true, it is not all of the truth. Jesus died not only to save us but, in saving us, He is our Lord. Paul also wrote, "He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him Who died and rose again on their behalf." Before Jesus found us, we were lost and bound in sin – slaves to self, Satan, and the world. Many times we think when we are saved, we have unlimited freedom. Christ has set us free! That is the truth. While all of it is true, it is not all of the truth. Listen to Paul: "Having been freed from sin, you become slaves of righteousness."

What are the expectations of a slave of righteousness? Are we to plow the field, plant the crops, take care of the sheep, prepare meals for the Master? What are some of the things Jesus told His disciples they were to do? We could list such specifics as "the great commission" and find things like that in the scriptures. He told in a general sense what they were to do. Look at John 14:12.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

The work God has for us are things such as Jesus did. We could list these. He healed the sick, taught, comforted, fed people, prayed for others, cast out demons, talked about the Kingdom of

God.

Are we supposed to do such things? In doing such things do we obligate God in anyway to us? In other words, does God become a debtor to us when we do what we are supposed to do? What happens when we are actually doing what we are supposed to do and people criticize us for what we are doing or the way we are doing it?

Is not the typical response among many church workers to quit or leave the church or to get into a “snit?” How do we see ourselves in relationship to the work we do in the church? If we teach Sunday School, work in Awana, sing in the choir, work in the Nursery, mow the grass, greet people as they come to church, help out with repair work, and such things, then what do we call ourselves and other who do such work? The answer is NOT “slaves.” We are Volunteers!

Sometimes we confuse the concept of being a “volunteer” with simply being “unpaid.” What about the Apostle Paul? He did not accept payment for what he did. Would you classify him as a “volunteer” or was he “called” by God to do the work he did? Paul described himself as a slave of Jesus Christ. If he were a volunteer, then it would have been his decision to do the work he did and he could have gotten discouraged and quit whenever he wanted to.

We tend to divide people in the church into two groups: clergy and the laity. Ask yourself: Does God **call** only the clergy or does He also **call** the laity? Does the call of Jesus in the Great Commission apply to everyone? We say it does. Does God have a work for every believer to do? According to John 14:12 “we would have to say “Yes!” Since it was in reference to “those who believe on Jesus’ name. We all agree that Ephesians 2:8-9 applies to all people who believe (“For by grace are you saved . . .”). What about Ephesians 2:10 (For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.)? Does that apply just to “clergy” or to all believers? The church is often referred to as the Army of God. We say we are “soldiers of the Cross.” Is the Army of God made up of volunteers who can quit and go home when it gets uncomfortable or is it made up of the “called” and the “committed?”

If we are just volunteers, then when we come in from working in the field, then we might tell the master, “Fix your own supper. I’m tired and going home. And, by the way, I did not feed the cattle today, so (if you want that done) you’ll need to do it yourself.” That is a much **different** picture than Jesus painted! Which picture do you think applies to the kingdom of God?

Which of these two situations would you prefer? Do you want to be a volunteer or a slave? While we are considering our duties as slaves, let us remember that in belonging to Him we have available to us the power of His Kingdom. Also, we must remember that not only are we His property, but He has adopted us as His children and we are engulfed in His love and, therefore, our service can be effective (because of His power) and we can serve with gladness because of His love.

Now, what is this universal principle that we can learn from this passage? It is simply this, there are no rewards for doing only what is required. The worker who shows up everyday and does his job should not expect a merit increase at raise time. If we keep the commandments and do not go beyond their expectations, then we have nothing to brag about nor do we cause God to be indebted to us. Humility and being content with what God has given us and allowed to come our way is the path to true happiness and joy provided we have been obedient to what God has called us to do.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that we should leap for joy when people persecute us for the sake of Christ for “great is our reward in Heaven.” Notice that the reward is in Heaven and it comes not of indebtedness from God but because of His grace.