

## Parable of the dutiful servant

Luke 17:7-10

### A Servant's Duty

<sup>7</sup>“Suppose one of you has a servant who is ploughing or looking after the sheep; When he comes in from the field, do you tell him to hurry along and eat his meal? <sup>8</sup>Of course not! Instead, you say to him, ‘Get my supper ready, then put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may have your meal.’ <sup>9</sup>The servant does not deserve thanks for obeying orders, does he? <sup>10</sup>It is the same with you; when you have done all you have been told to do, say, ‘We are ordinary servants; we have only done our duty.’

## Romans 6:15-23

New International Version (NIV)

### Slaves to Righteousness

<sup>15</sup>What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! <sup>16</sup>Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? <sup>17</sup>But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. <sup>18</sup>You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

<sup>19</sup>I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. <sup>20</sup>When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. <sup>21</sup>What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! <sup>22</sup>But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. <sup>23</sup>For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in <sup>[a]</sup> Christ Jesus our Lord.

Luke 17v7-10

<sup>7</sup>“Suppose one of you has a servant who is ploughing or looking after the sheep; When he comes in from the field, do you tell him to hurry along and eat his meal? <sup>8</sup>Of course not! Instead, you say to him, ‘Get my supper ready, then put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may have your meal.’ <sup>9</sup>The servant does not deserve thanks for obeying orders, does he? <sup>10</sup>It is the same with you; when you have done all you have been told to do, say, ‘We are ordinary servants; we have only done our duty

### The Talk:

What image do you put in your mind, when I say .... Slave. – Paint a picture in your head.

Now - What image do you put in your mind, when I say .... Servant.

*Any of your images positive ones? No*

For slave, who picture black Africans, perhaps in an old slave galley. Who pictured sex traffickers.

*For servant, was the picture more or less severe than that of a slave? Less severe.*

Today we are going to look at an important but much ignored parable, the parable of the dutiful servant.

### A tough parable.

This is a mostly ignored parable because it is a tough one for us to understand. There are three things that make it so tough. The first is our own cultural understanding of slavery as opposed to that in first century Middle East. The second and third reasons are mistranslations of two Greek words, ‘charin’ mistranslated as ‘thanks’ and the work ‘achreios’ which is mistranslated as either ‘ordinary’ or ‘useless’. With those barriers in place, it has been hard to understand

what the scripture is saying, let alone interpret its meaning against the rest of scripture. It is no wonder it is so often cast aside. Nobody has this parable in their top ten! But we should, because its importance is so profound to our relationship with Jesus Christ. Today we will shine 'old light' on this parable, understand what its really saying, then interpret its meaning to us in the context of the whole gospel message.

### Disciple's life of obedience

It is thought that Jesus is talking to his **disciples** here. In the first century Middle East the disciple of a Rabbi lived with and served the Rabbi. He took his turn in preparing the common meals and catering for the general needs of the group. He would run personal errands for his Master, and he would be a respectful, loving, and humble companion to him. He was clearly subservient to his Rabbi Master, and would greet him with a kiss on the hand not on the cheek. You were a disciple over multiple years, but unlike a modern apprenticeship there was no formal learning agenda, you would spend much time with your Rabbi for that period, listening, debating, observing, and emulating him. [There is a story of one Rabbis disciple who was so keen to emulate the Rabbi in all things that he hid in his bedchamber to observe how he pleased his wife! A bit too fervent perhaps?!](#)

The Rabbi would frequently ask and debate with you questions on why you did things, and you would look to him in help to interpret the scriptures. He is not teaching the disciple what the scriptures say because by the time he is 13, he would have memorized most, if not all of their Hebrew Scriptures in preparation for his Bar Mitzvah. So the main purpose of a Rabbi was to interpret scriptures. Rabbis were the teachers who had been given the authoritative role to interpret God's Word for the living of a righteous life – defining what behaviour would or would not please God . The would-be disciple agreed to **totally submit** to the rabbi's authority in all areas of interpreting the Scriptures for his life. Disciples of Rabbis knew their place, they were not equals. Each disciple came to a rabbinic relationship with a desire and a willingness to do just that - surrender to the authority of God's Word as interpreted by his Rabbi's view of Scripture. So after debate which may take weeks a pronouncement would be made by the Rabbi. [E.g. on observing the Sabbath, if the question had been Can I light a candle on the Sabbath and if so how many. If the Rabbi, eventually decreed "Yes you can but no more than four", then you would be bound to that principle, never to light more than 4 candles on the Sabbath, for the rest of your life, as that would be a restriction that was deemed pleasing to God by your Rabbi.](#) So you bound yourself to the scriptures and your Rabbis interpretation of them.

These Rabbinic declarations were used to help interpret all questions of life and law, and many were captured in a book called the Talmud which the Jews used alongside their Scriptures.

Jesus was a Rabbi, with an exciting and fresh interpretation of the scriptures. The central issue of being a disciple of Jesus is: Will I willingly surrender, submit for a lifetime, every aspect of my life, including worldview, , career, character, ethics, desires, motivations, values, family, ego, and attitudes to the authority of Jesus Christ and His teachings? Do I enslave myself to that teaching. That was the question for the would-be disciples of Jesus in 30AD, and is still true for would-be disciples of Jesus today; you and me.

### Giving Your Life away

When we become a Christian, we make a bond with Jesus, and transfer ownership to his care. Old school evangelism was always about 'Give your life to Jesus'. But it was right. It's important that it is still part of our message today when we reach out. For some this decision is very hard, but it is the right decision to be thinking about. Too often, we instead speak of inviting Jesus into your life, which could be interpreted as being part of the mix along with the old stuff that you don't wasn't to get rid of. Or we say make a Christian commitment, which is great as long as they know that the Christian commitment means becoming a Slave (in the positive sense) to God, and not just going along to Church once a week. It is the agreeing to a life of a Christian Disciple that Jesus is looking for at that moment, that we are now subject to his teaching and guidance over every aspect of our lives, and he knows what's best for us.

### Commitment to learning

Its not so foreign a concept as you think. Observe how we develop profession qualifications, for being an architect or doctor, a counsellor or a golf pro. [In my work, a graduate comes to you after 18 years of formal education through](#)

school and university. He is enrolled on a graduate scheme for 2 years to get experience across the business. Then he will gain experience in an engineering area alongside experienced professionals. Then he may apply for a role within my process. He will have to go through training courses, and then is given a mentor and will spend a further two years under the mentorship of an experienced person, before finally being allowed to write their own safety cases that will allow our power stations to be modified. Many professional roles demand long periods of study, training, mentoring, practical experience, as well as continuing education and experience. We are accustomed to the practice of placing ourselves under the watchful mentoring oversight of others who have established proficiency in our areas of interest. Ironically, we seem to put far more passion, commitment, and dedication into becoming a disciple of someone (say a great surgeon), or something (a hobby or sport). This mirrors the effort that many Jews put in to becoming a Rabbi. Yet in comparison many of us seem to make little effort in developing and nurturing our lives as committed disciples of Jesus Christ. A life long commitment to Jesus and his teachings.

### **Handcuffed**

On clearing my Uncles flat when he died I found photos of him doing escapology, and found a straight jacket and a pair of handcuffs. However I could find no key. I later found out that there is a standard key that fits all the handcuffs in this country, but not the pair I had. So if you handcuffed yourself to some-one with this pair of handcuffs, that's it.

It's a good visual aid, because at the moment we give our lives to Jesus, in one sense it is like being handcuffed to him for life. Shackled to Jesus, we might be expected to know our place serving him, the Master. Whether we do well for him with our responses and how we live our lives, he will still care for us. For as his slaves ( in the positive sense) we are still his responsibility. Also, however badly we might do, we are still saved. His Grace and Salvation is a gift which can't be earned or paid for.

The life of a disciple is an important background for this parable, because Jesus is about to compare his relationship with his disciples to that of a master and a slave.

### **Disciples with servants**

Suppose one of you...? Jesus starts this parable by supposing the disciples have a servant. Surely not. That's worth reflecting on. Whilst Jesus is not talking solely to slave owners, by saying 'suppose that', he is not denying the possibility either, indeed we believe some of them did have their own servants. We can sometimes imagine the disciple of Jesus as being poor peasant people, perhaps amongst the poorest, yet there is no scriptural reasoning to believe this.

In England, if you have a servant, it puts you into the upper middle class bracket, but not so in the Middle East. The Talmud, this compendium of Rabbi wisdom, assumed as a matter of course, that every 'ordinary' man (perhaps average wage earner in our terms) has at least one slave.

Why so? The poorest of the poor let their children out as servants in order that they could be fed, and people of very little means would have had servants in their house. Peter, James and John with their fishing business must surely have had servants, as would Matthew the Tax collector.

In this parable, the picture is of the master having just one slave. He is out either plowing a field, or watching the sheep during the day and then comes back and prepares the masters meal. He is not necessarily a landowner this could be a rented field. So we have a picture here of normal life, that the disciples will either be a part of, or at least know well.

### **v7&8 - Which of you?**

The KJV has an accurate start to this parable, in translating the opening phrase (one only used by Jesus), as 'which of you'? Whenever Jesus used this phrase there was an implied expectation of a resounding negative answer – None, No Way; Not possible, It would never happen!

Which of you when your servant comes in from the field, would say to him, you go ahead and eat first, before getting me my meal? – No, No Jesus of course not, that doesn't happen.

Aren't they being a bit harsh? Well not really because its late afternoon. Your workers knocked off about 3pm. This is a late afternoon meal not a late evening one. He does his work in the field for a few hours, then comes in and knocks up some nosh for you, then the rest of the day is his, whilst you probably have other affairs to see too. These are the expectations of a normal days work, not long arduous hours imposed by a heartless Master. It wasn't totally unheard of, but was very rare that a Master would eat with his servant, the cultural expectations were that they would eat separately. Even today, if you went say to the Palace where the kitchen staff were knocking up a meal for some visiting foreign dignitaries you would **not** expect staff to bring the food up, then sit down with the royal line-up, and start eating, look up and say "Don't mind me – do tuck in!". Doesn't happen.

### **v.9 Deserving of thanks/Special Merit?**

Verse 9 is key to understanding this passage. *The servant does not deserve thanks for obeying orders, does he?*

The servant does not deserve thanks for obeying orders, does he? The important word is what many of our translations have as 'thanks'. The word though is not the greek word that Luke normally uses for thanks, but this is the word 'Charin' which is the common New Testament word for Grace or Favour. The literal translation is 'Does he have any grace (or favour) for the servant?'. Is there any particular grace or favour that has been earned by the servant for putting in his normal shift. It's the same word for 'favour' that the Archangel Gabriel is quoted as using when saying to the maid servant Mary 'You have found favour with God'. Why, because of the love and effort she has shown in her commitment to God. She has gone above and beyond, and her reward is that she has been chosen to be the Mother of her Messiah.

Where I work, we have a Reward & Recognitions scheme, for staff that have gone above and beyond the call of duty. They may have offered to cancel a holiday in order to help on an urgent issue, or worked a number of weekends to deliver a troublesome project to time. They are then rewarded with money say to take their partner out for a slap-up meal. It's not often used. At the end of a normal days work, I thank each of my team members for their effort, and they go on their way. Another day done. I don't go up to each one of them at the end of each normal day, with a Rewards & Recognition package. There is no special merit earned, that warrant this extra gift. They don't expect it and they don't get it. I am their boss, they do a days work doing the jobs that I give them, and I'll sign their time sheet on Fridays so they get their contracted rate, and they are happy. I am their boss, they are my contractors. It doesn't stop me being thankful, buying them coffees, or showing them extra acts of kindness, but this is the accepted routine not just by me but by all line managers, and their contractors.

The question in this parable is not.. 'Has my servant done a good job for which I am thankful?', but has something happened that has left me indebted to that person. That slave, servant or contractor has done something important, above and beyond the call of duty, which has really helped me, and left me feeling indebted to them. She has earned special merit.

The Master-servant relationship, is very similar in this sense to today's hiring manager and his contract staff. The days work and preparing the meal is all part of the expected package on both sides in the first century Middle East. The Master may still say thankyou, and smile encouragingly, but there is no extra favour or merit earned from the servant carrying out his normal duties.

### **Same on you**

*V10 It is the same with you; when you have done all you have been told to do, say, 'We are ordinary servants; we have only done our duty.'*

Having clearly reminded the disciples of how it is between Master and servant, Jesus places himself and his disciples clearly into this same model. Don't forget boys and girls, I AM the Master, and you are my servants. In one sense he has remained them here of the subservient bond that they entered into as a disciple of Rabbi Jesus.

Again we have another tricky Greek word 'achreios' to contend with in this verse, which is the description of the servant. Our translations vary. Whilst the he Good News Bible just we are ordinary servants, the ESV, NIV and RSV all say that the servant is unworthy; the expanded bible adds worthless; the King James says he's unprofitable! So these are all

negative.. How can that be true, if you have done your days work, completed what was asked of you. With this translation, you are left searching for a reason why we should still be regarded as useless. Are we unprofitable because we don't get the extra mile – No? Are we worthless to our boss, because we expect extra Rewards – No? So some theologians have been tempted to ignore the word completely as unnecessary gloss.

However, the best fit is a more literal translation. The greek word 'achreios' can be split. The translation of the word Chreios on its own means 'need' and just like in English you can negate some words with the later 'a' prefixed. So we can say in English she is moral, but he is amoral; the opposite. In the same way a-chreios can mean 'without need'. Over time this word has obviously evolved into different meanings – such that instead of the person being the subject – the one without need, he becomes the object i.e. one you no longer have need for – Why? Because he is unprofitable and useless. Speculation, but looks a very feasible progression, over hundreds of years.

However using this very literal translation of the word, the servant becomes 'without need' rather than useless, unprofitable or just plain ordinary. This still sounds a bit strange to us, he does a day work which leaves him without need. We all have needs. However it fits perfectly into the Middle Eastern culture (from Syria to Sudan), where an exchange between a home owner and a workman after he's called by and done a very small job for him, can sound like this

Home owner: Is there any need? (meaning - Do I owe you anything?)

Workman: There is no need (meaning – You owe me nothing.)

So verse 10 is now understood to be that as servants of Jesus, we rightly do what our Lord and Saviour asks, and nothing is owed is for what we do. We are without need or warrant of any extra.

### **The Good Master - The slave's better life**

Paul starts his letter to the Romans. From Paul, a 'doulos', a slave of Christ Jesus. He clearly means it in a positive sense. Because we have no positive images of slavery, we usually soften the word to servant, it still does not sit easy with us. One story from Tony Campolo as he was about to get on a plane in the extremely poor country of Haiti, is of a lady with a baby who ran up to him and tried to make Tony take her baby off her. Why? Because she knew that this Westerner was the best chance her baby had of surviving, and not dying of ill health or starvation. Imagine you live in Capernaum at the time of Jesus, and your small business has fallen into debt you can't pay, and you face going to prison and your family being destitute. If you could clear the small debt and earn a little money digging ditches, you may be afford to feed most of your family. Even begging is not really an option as none of you are blind or partially sighted so would lose out to those beggars that are. You have exchanged wheat for fish with Zebedee before, so ask him if you can sell your oldest lad of 12 to him as a slave. It's the best option for you all, and you know that Zebedee will take his responsibility for him seriously, your lad will be protected, fed, and do a worthwhile job fishing for his keep. Jesus talked of setting the prisoners and the captives free, but he did not directly oppose the owning of slaves. Whilst some-one slaves may have been mistreated, without a welfare state, and without the support of charities, owning workers in this responsible way is not as unacceptable as we may want to think. When Jesus talks of himself in this way of being the Master over his disciples, likened to slaves. It will be the typically good and responsible Master that he is referring to, not an evil task-master.

When Paul says to the Ephesians (6v5) "Slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling; and do it with a sincere heart, as though you were serving Christ", it makes perfect sense in the first century setting, and is not condoning the wicked type of slavery that we have in our minds when we read that passage.

SO that is what the parable is telling us, but how does it stack up against the rest of the gospel message.

### **The Good Father**

Lets challenge this Slave and Master picture, with another one we have in the Bible. The Master to Slave is one picture only of our relationship with Jesus,. Other imagery has God adopting us into his family, and us being called co-heirs with Christ. We like that picture much better, so can't we dump the Master-Slave thing?

Today is Father's day, and most modern Fathers like to be friends with our children, and regularly play with them. Dan Mealin who became a Christian through the youthwork here in 1988 now in a Church up in Stratford, had his birthday a couple of weeks ago and here is what his teenage daughter Lydia posted on his facebook . *"Happy birthday to the most marvellous and wonderful Daddy in the whole world! Thank you for every bed time story, every lullaby, every kissed owie, every waltz around the kitchen, every day trip somewhere, every tub of Hagan Daaz, for building dens, for the amount you have taught me about myself and about how I should respect myself, how I can do anything I put my mind to, for loving me even when I am unlovable, for every time you've said "I'll buy you a new one" For every hug, high five and fist bump, for the shared excitement in a new word, for teaching me how to play guitar, how to ride a bike, how to be undignified and not care and how to be strong when everything goes wrong! Daddy you are superman, I love you so much and I am so proud of you!!*

It's a great picture of a great Father. However for all that fun and interaction with his daughter, there is a bottom line of responsibility that he has. As she is growing up, he is still the adult and she is still the child. He has responsibility for her, to provide a home for security, an income for food, good educational opportunities, warmth and love etc. No matter how much fun parents have with their children, they must remember that they will always be the responsible adults. You want them to be good children, love you and do well for you, but you can not expect them to take the responsibility that should be yours. It is not their job to keep the finances in the black, or ward off any intruder in the night, It is your responsibility as parent. Similarly with Jesus, he has the responsibility for us, we may have great fun with him worshipping him, being in his presence and doing stuff, with him but we are never his equal.

In this sense the responsibility of a parent is similar to that of a Master. The fact that he might treat us like a loving Father does not change the fact that there is that Master-Slave type relationship.

### **The giver of gifts:**

Ok, so let's challenge these concepts of the master eating separately from us, and us doing our duty without any extra rewards. Didn't Jesus sit down with his disciples, and eat in the home of sinners. Didn't Jesus say ask and it shall be given? We have a loving and generous God, a super-abundant giver. Shouldn't we ask and expect good things from Him?

In today's parable, which I will now call the parable of the Good Slave, the master does not sit down and eat with him. The boundary is well drawn. The message is clear – He **is** the Master. However there is much imagery on the other side of the coin. Jesus not only eats with his disciples, he is happy to eat with tax collectors, prostitute, and other declared 'sinners'. We are told in Revelations (3v20) that Jesus stands at the door and is eager to eat with anyone that who will open the door. The disciples are called friends not servants. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, when the wayward lad returns the Father brings cultural shame on himself by running to him (shameful to run) throwing his arms around him, and throwing a banquet, although the son had spent his inheritance and returned only to be his Fathers slave – that way he wouldn't have to eat pig food or starve. We are also clearly told that we are adopted into Gods family and we are coheirs with Christ. Like the good Father he is generous to us with his time, love and provision.

Does this generous Father picture mean we are anything but subservient to Christ, is there anything in that outpouring of love and generosity of God, that means we are not his slave. No. This has to be our starting point. We need to serve him from the point of **doing our duty, not trying to earn his favour**. It does not mean we should not ask for good things, indeed we should, but we must realise that any gifts, healing, blessings etc that we are given are gifts from God, whether these are in answer to our prayers or not. They are all underserved. We can not earn any of it by doing serving him, we do that out of duty and in response to his love for us, his grace for us which is a free gift. Anything we can from him is a free gift, we can not earn any of it.

We know this stuff, we know Jesus died on the cross for us, and we could earn his forgiveness or favour. Yet you still hear people say of some-one who died of cancer "Why did it happen to her of all people, she was the most loving and generous Christian I know, always helping others. It is not fair". The argument beneath that is that the lady by doing so much for other people had earned the right to a supernatural healing of her cancer, or prevention of cancer, whereas others had not done so one of them should have died instead. The truth is she had not earned the right to that healing, because you can't earn that favour – it has to be an undeserved gift.

### **No credit and no tab:**

You may be trying to do a list of good things for God, so that you can get into credit with him. There is something big that you want to ask him for, and if you can build up some credit, you think that you are more likely to get your prayer answered. I've not got into trouble at school all week, and I stacked the dish water 3 days in a row. I would love it if you could get Tracey in my Physics class to show some interest so I can ask her out. Come on – have you never tried to bargain with God in some way like that.

I met a lively character in a friends Church. He was a steeplejack, so he made his living climbing those ridiculously steep church spires and mending them. He was a proper jack the lad, but went to Church every Sunday. I asked him how come? He said, one day he fell off a steeple and as he tumbled towards his doom, he cried out – God if you're there, let me live and I'll go to Church every Sunday. God let him, and he did. But lets be clear – God wasn't up in heaven with a calculator – if he gets a safety harness he'll have 40 years to live, so I'll give you your life, set up a tab and you owe me 2000 Sunday services. No, his heart cried out to God in his moment of need, and God in his loving Grace caught him, and gave him a chance. Last I heard, he had stopped going to Church.

Look – that is **not** how it works. We can not earn anything from God, either by building up credit. We are slaves, we are not employees, we have no pay-slip i.e. we don't get rewards commensurate with our efforts in being good disciples. If that was the case, some of us might have times when we go very hungry!!

Neither can we by open up a tab with a promise to pay him back later. There are no Hire Purchase terms for his mercies. Everything we receive from him is a gift to us, our very lives and our very salvation are gifts from him. We don't earn it, and whilst much might be expected of us in our love response, he *demand*s nothing for it. It is all a gift. Every new opportunity we have is a gift. Every answer to prayer is a gift.

### **The freedom to stop comparing.**

This parable is good news because we are assured of the responsibility that God has for us. One in which we can fully trust in him. It also make's our role as Christians clear for us. We do our best to live under the guidance of Jesus Christ, putting it all under his authority, and just accept he will give us gifts if he wants too, and oten in response to our requests, but it is not given them out dependant on how hard we work, or in comparison with others.

So whilst I am praying for others to be healed, I can do this quite comfortably, and even see a girl healed of asthma following my prayers, even though I have had asthma from the age of 4 and God has never healed me. If he gifts me with that then great, but the important thing is that I am acting out of my duty and love for God, by praying for others to be healed, and he does not owe me my own healing in return and I am comfortable with that. I do not have to worry that my faith is not strong enough to see my own healing. If I am gifted with that healing then I will gratefully receive it.

I don't have to feel guilty, when these favours do not come to me or others who have prayed for them. If I see others being more prosperous or having more answers to prayer, I can be happy for them, I do not have to worry that I am not doing enough to earn favours myself, because none of us earn them. My faith, my works, my prayers are all good stuff, but they don't earn favours, I am just doing my duty. The favours are all undeserved gifts.

Not earning favours when you do your duty is good news. I am not going to waste time getting annoyed with God about not getting something that I don't deserve and can not possible earn. That is time wasted, when I could be using that time getting to know him and serving him.

### **Conclusion**

This parable is good news. You were far from God and in spiritual poverty, but Jesus bought you by dying on the cross, and when you accept this payment he willingly take ownership of you. He will be your Master. He will take responsibility for you. As a disciple, you are not an employee who can work and expect payment. You are a slave under Gods care, who accepts total responsibility for you, and gives you total security, in that he will never leave you now or throughout eternity. He calls you to respond to Pauls words to the Romans where he urges you 'No longer be slaves to

sin, but be slaves to righteousness, which leads to holiness'. He is your Master, he is your Rabbi, he is your Father, and you will never be his equal whatever you do. In every way, you are under his authority and his grace.

As a Christian, we become a slave (in the positive sense) not only to Jesus, but to his interpretation of the old scriptures, and to his own words. We should let his Spirit interpret the Bible for our lives, and live it. That's what being a disciple means. We are living in close proximity to our Rabbi, because he lives in us through the Holy Spirit, and we can observe him working in us and other Christians we know. The closer we get to him, the more we can emulate him. The same love that rescued the earth lives in you. The same power that conquered the grave lives in you.

You are a slave that is loved, and part of that bond is that nothing can now separate you from that love. In every way you are his possession. That's not a bad thing, that is the good life. You can not earn his favours, but he will give you them as he pleases as free gifts. There is nothing we can do to earn his favours and his blessings, instead all we do is done by our own free will in response to the love he has shown us.

Yes, pray for and enjoy the fruits of your inheritance in Christ, pray for the fruit of the Spirit, pray for the gifts of the Spirit, even pray for material blessings if you want to and think they will help you serve God better. Pray for these undeserved favours and receive those you get as gifts with a grateful heart. If your prayers are not answered, try again a few times, or pray for something else but don't feel guilty, frustrated or angry, just accept his decision. He has the bigger picture and will bless where he chooses to fulfil his purposes.

What you do is totally separate to what he gives to you. You should **obey** his promptings and teachings, and **trust** him with your prayers to answer those he chooses to do so. Work like it depends on you, and pray like it depends on him.

So you need to **trust** him with your prayers, and obey him with your actions.

An old chorus I sang as a child backs up this parable and our call to be a slave of righteousness. It tells us that this is the way to happiness in Jesus.

"Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to Trust and Obey". Amen