

# Beware Of Faith Blockers!

by Staff

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The faith of God's people has been bombarded relentlessly in the recent past to the point that some have no idea what to believe anymore. In the past, have we seen promises in God's Word that were not really there? Has "true scholarship" proved that some of God's promises are not promises at all? Questions like these plague many of our brethren.

The recent emphasis on faith makes us realize how much we need to increase it. Jesus' disciples made just such a request of him in Luke 17:5. After an initial statement emphasizing the great power of faith (verse 6), Jesus relates what has improperly been called the "Parable of the Unprofitable Servant," for He describes a profitable servant. His description of an unprofitable servant does not appear until Luke 19:20-24.

Luke 17:10 contains the key to increased faith: the word "say." The principle boils down to working with a specific attitude. Christ tells us to do everything possible to be as profitable as this servant (verses 7-8), without expecting any recognition for it (verse 9). Then we can present the sincere, humble attitude: "We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do."

Humanly, the servant could have taken the attitude, "You owe me! Didn't I go 'above and beyond'?" No! "Above and beyond" is not applicable to our relationship with God. We could never do enough to put God in our debt.

I Corinthians 4:7 asks, "What do you have that you did not receive?" We have no room to boast that we have done anything without God's oversight (Daniel 4:28-35). I Corinthians 6:20 tells us we owe God everything, as He has redeemed us by the most precious blood of His own Son. Paul commands us not to grow weary but do good to all (Galatians 6:9-10). James echoes him: "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin (James 4:17). God has backed us into a corner. Where do we have any room for "above and beyond"?"

Jesus taught that seeking honor from men prevents faith in God. Speaking to the religious Jews who persecuted Him, Jesus said, "I do not receive [*lambanos*—take, grasp] honor from men" (John 5:41). His attitude stands in direct contrast to theirs. "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?" (verse 44). Their faith—their belief—was being blocked because they sought to please other people rather than Almighty God.

Some say that tithing is a duty and offerings are "above and beyond." But notice carefully God's words in Malachi 3:8: "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes *and offerings*."

In both the planning and action stages of works of goodness or faith, we decide how much to give, how far to go. But in hindsight, what good thing have we ever done that qualifies for "above and beyond" our duty to God? Whatever it was, the Scriptures plainly show we were commanded to do it! It was our duty because we found it in our power to do it (Proverbs 3:27). We cannot take the attitude that "We did these good things, so that makes us profitable to God." If we do, we have no basis for faith. Our faith would be in ourselves, not in God.

We need to remember that doing good works, not signs or miracles, are the true measure of faith in action. True humility, giving total glory to God, will increase our faith (James 2:17-26). We must avoid the mistake of the religious Jews of Jesus' day, whose attitude blocked their faith in God. Instead of seeking recognition for ourselves, we should give recognition to others for their growth and works. And in doing so, we will all grow together in faith.