

# BEING "USELESS"

## The Wrong Way & the Right Way!

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- **achreios** - useless, good for nothing (Matthew 25:30; Luke 17:10)
  - **achreoo** - to make useless, render unserviceable (in reference to one's character: Romans 3:12)
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### Romans 3:12

Sin has had a horrible effect on humanity. It has destroyed us in every way. This passage (verses 10-17) is God's indictment against the human race... and also the reason that it was necessary for Jesus to die in our place. Not only are our actions sinful, but our very character and nature are totally corrupted by sin. Because of this, we are described as "useless" or "worthless" in God's sight. Thank God that, starting in verse 21, we are introduced to a righteousness that is available to us in Christ!

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[Note: In the following two verses, Jesus uses the master-slave relationship to teach two totally different (complementary, not incompatible) principles. Because of this, the actions of the servants and masters are totally different in the two passages. Don't try to combine the illustrations, or you will end-up with confusion!]

### Matthew 25:30

In many places, the Bible warns us that genuine salvation will result in genuine "fruit." After all, where the Spirit is present, so will his fruit (Galatians 5:22-23) be present! The Bible also warns us that there will be many who are "fruitless," who will have deceived themselves into thinking they were his disciples or servants, though they are not. In this parable, we see these two types of "servants." The one type is represented by the servants who were entrusted with money and who used that money to gain more for the master: they are described as "faithful." The other type is represented by the servant who did nothing profitable with the money, and then returned it with nothing gained: he is described as "worthless" or "useless." To be sure, he had plenty of excuses, but in reality, he was simply lazy and wicked (verse 26). In the end, each group receives its appropriate reward.

## Luke 17:10

We need to remember that the good we do was made possible, *only* because God gave us the ability to do it. It is easy to forget this and to develop a proud attitude similar to the Pharisee mentioned in Luke 18:9-14, who thought he was better than others. We need the attitude of truthful humility that is displayed in Luke 17:10. After we have done our duty, we need to remember that we have done nothing above and beyond what we were supposed to do in the first place. From this perspective, we have been "unworthy" or "useless" - that is, in the sense that we have *not* gone above and beyond "the call of duty."

Remember that everything we have done for God - no matter how great and mighty it may be - is nothing, in comparison to what God has done for us! The contrasting attitudes between the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46) is another illustration of the truthful (rather than pretentious) humility of those who belong to God.

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### TO THINK ABOUT:

The prophet Jeremiah reminds us: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) What is your attitude toward this verse and toward the Romans passage? Do they offend you? Or do you consider their evaluation to be correct and accurate? Why?

How can one who is by nature "worthless" (or "useless") be made "useful" in God's sight? Take some time to think about the amazing thing that happened on the cross. What an expression of kindness! Even angels long to look into these matters (1 Peter 1:12)!

God has given you numerous abilities. Even the ability to do "normal, everyday activities" is a gift from God. How have you used the things he has given you? Have you "invested" them by using them in ways that honor him? Or have you wasted the gifts he has given you? Are you "faithful" or "worthless" ("useless") in his sight?

If you have become aware that you are not what you should be, what are you going to do about it? [Hint: Don't merely make some resolution to start doing better. You will fail. Start doing something, but focus also on the attitude of your heart. Perhaps a focus on Psalm 51 would be a good place to begin. And once you do begin living more faithfully, consider the attitude explored in the questions that follow.]

When God has given you the ability to do something... and you do it, who do you give the credit to? We all have the temptation to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. (That is why Paul warns us to *not* do so - Romans 12:3, and that when we do so, we are *not* being wise - 2 Corinthians 10:12.) Consider some of the ways that giving credit to yourself is incompatible with love. If you have a problem with pride and self-love, it would be good for you to explore the Word of God, to see what it says about such an

attitude. You will also benefit from a study of the topic of humility. Since you probably won't be able to begin these studies this very moment, here are a couple verses for you to consider:

### **1 Corinthians 4:7**

For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

### **Micah 6:8**

He has showed you, O man, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.