



His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord,” Matthew 25:21.

Prepare to Give Account

Lesson Aim: to cultivate stewardship that pleases the Lord.

L269. Date: April 1978. **Text:** Matthew 25:14-15, 19-30.

Topic: Judgment: Of Believers; Stewardship.

Jesus was concerned that Christians should know what would happen as the end of the age approached. He took the time to give an extended discussion of end-time events during His Passion Week. The primary teaching occurred within two days of His death and indicates how important He considered the subject to be. Some of the final words of Jesus dealt with what would happen in the last days.

Matthew 25 records three great parables in which Jesus relates matters concerning the end-time. (1) The parable of the virgins underscored the element of expectancy and taught watchfulness for the Lord's coming. (2) The parable of the talents underscored activity and taught diligence in service until the Lord returns. (3) The parable of the sheep and the goats underscored judgment and sets forth the basis and certainty of judgment in that day. The second of the three parables is the subject of study in this lesson.

There is a dispensational aspect to the parables of Matthew 25 which must not be overlooked. The events discussed follow the tribulation period (mentioned in Matthew 24:21) and deal in particular with the Jews living on earth at that time.

However, the principles expressed in the parable are universal. The parable has an application to Christians today. That application will be stressed in the following comments.

The parable is amazingly simple and clearly understood. A certain man

made a journey into a far country. He called his servants and divided his estate among them, giving some more than others. Each was responsible for the administration of his particular part in the absence of the owner. Some of the servants were faithful and increased their owner's wealth. One was unfaithful and did not.

The owner of the estate returned after a long period. The servants were called in to report. Those who were faithful and increased their master's estate received their master's blessing and were given places of honor over his affairs. The one who was unfaithful was condemned and cast away from his master's presence. The story is obviously clear.

Dispensationally, the master is God and the servants are the Jews. The "estate" which has been entrusted to them is the revelation given to Israel and recorded in the Scriptures. Some followed the purpose of God. (Genesis 12:1-3) and will be rewarded of God. Those who rejected the purpose of God will be condemned by Him.

What is true of Israel in her history will be particularly true of her opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, as the witnesses of God, during the years after Christians are taken away. Blessed are those who are faithful then.

Practically, the parable must be interpreted to apply to Christians today. The master is God, and the servants are believers in Jesus Christ. The "talents" (which actually represent an amount of money in New Testament times) are opportunities to serve the Lord by getting out the gospel and ministering to human needs in the name of Christ. The parable has a present as well as a future application.

I. A TRUST COMMITTED, 25:14, 15

A. The Lord shares His wealth with Christians.

That blessing was illustrated as the master divided his possessions among his servants; "He divided unto them his goods." That fact teaches several significant truths.

(1) God has absolute authority and sole sovereignty over all. He does according to His will among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth so that none can challenge His authority (Daniel 4:35). Christians take heart in that God has put all things under the feet of Christ and has given Him to be head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:22).

(2) There is a great honor and solemn responsibility on each servant of God in view of the trust He has committed. Christians must acknowledge that all they have has come from God (I Corinthians 4:7; II Peter 1:3). They

must remember that what they have received was given in order that they might use it to the glory of their Master (I Corinthians 12:7). They must use His gifts and provisions with a deep sense of stewardship (I Peter 4:10).

B. The Lord committed the trust of the gospel upon His ascension. The master in the parable was going to a “far country.” His absence was expected to be long. The condition of his affairs was dependent upon the faithful administration of his servants.

When Jesus ascended up on high, He gave gifts unto men. He placed apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers in His church. Their ministry was to mature the saints so the saints could do the work of ministering for the building up of the whole body of Christ. (See the discussion of that concept in Ephesians 4:8-16.)

He gave more than responsibility to serve. He gave a divine enabling in the person of the indwelling Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39; Acts 4:33). Everything needed for the full service of God in the dispensation of grace has been provided. The Lord Jesus made it all available upon His departure to the “far country” called heaven, and the resources remain even today.

C. The Lord commits responsibilities proportionate to the respective abilities of His servants.

Jesus pointedly stated that the master in the parable gave “**to every man according to his several ability**” (Matthew 25:15). God makes no requirement which He does not give sufficient ability to perform.

Think of it! God has entrusted you with a gift of very great value. (A “talent” was a large sum of money in New Testament times.) He has given to you according to the ability He intends to provide for you. He has given you no more than you are able to manage and no less than enough to keep you busily engaged for a lifetime. What grace!

II. FAITHFUL MANAGEMENT REQUIRED. 25:16-18

A. Some of the servants of God will serve Him faithfully and profitably.

The great goal of their lives will be to fulfill the ministry He has given them (Acts 20:22-24; 21:13).

Jesus mentioned servants in the parable who “went and traded” in obedience to their master's purpose. By diligent service, each one doubled the amount he had received.

God is concerned with productivity. Jesus gave a parable about the farmer who sowed his fields and received more harvest from one portion than from another (Matthew 13:1-8). He gave another parable about the

owner of a vineyard who told the keeper to cut down a tree because it bore no fruit (Luke 13:6-9).

He drew an analogy between the relation of the vine, its branches, and the gardener to show the relation between Himself, believers, and the Father. He pointed out that believers are “grafted” in Him in order that they might bear increasing fruit. He concludes, **“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples,”** John 15:8.

B. Some of the servants of God will neglect and abuse the privilege of serving Him. Jesus told of the servant in the parable who “hid” his lord's money rather than using it for his master's benefit. Abuse of privilege is tragic.

The requirements of the Master are reasonable. There were two methods of earning money in New Testament times. One could engage in the business of buying and selling and make profit, or one could lend the money and receive interest from the borrower. If the servant in the parable was not skilled enough for the one, he was certainly able to do the other. The Christian's Master has a right to expect an increase through the wise investments of His servants.

III. CERTAIN ACCOUNTING AHEAD, 25:19-30

All of life is a stewardship. Stewardship includes three basic principles. (1) What I have is not mine; it belongs to another who has entrusted it to me. (2) I am responsible for the use of what I have so long as I have it. (3) A time is coming when I must return it to the true owner and account to him for what happened while I had it.

Those principles of stewardship apply to your life, time, talents possessions, influence, potential, and every other aspect of your being. Stewardship involves responsibility.

God speaks repeatedly in Holy Scripture concerning the certainty of the day of accounting. The apostle Paul warns, **“We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ”** (Romans 14:10). There will be no exceptions. **“So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God,”** (Romans 14:12).

What a challenge! **“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad,”** (II Corinthians 5:9, 10). All of life must be lived in the certainty of this solemn fact: **“God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ”** (Romans

2:16).

A. The faithful servants will report.

They will come with joy. They will **“have confidence, and not be ashamed before him”** (I John 2:28). They will give a glad admission of what the Lord has done. “Lord,” they will say, “you delivered to me . . . talents.” Whether five, or two, or one talent, it all came from Him, and the servants will acknowledge it.

They will give an honest report on their use of the entrusted gift. **“Behold, I have gained beside them . . . talents more.”** Indeed, **“their works do follow them”** (Revelation 14:13).

They will hear the response of their Master. Such servants will be commended (**“well done”**), honored (**“thou good and faithful servant”**), rewarded (**“I will make thee ruler over many things”**), and thrilled (**“enter thou into the joy of thy lord”**). What an occasion of joy to hear the Master's voice.

The delay of the Master's return may be long. The responsibility may be great. But take heart. **“The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”** (I Peter 1:7).

B. The unfaithful servants will report.

They will come with fear. They will be **“ashamed before him at his coming”** (I John 2:28). Even so, they must report.

Unfaithful servants will give excuses for their neglect and unprofitableness. The one of whom Jesus spoke in the parable said, in substance, “Master, I did nothing because of what YOU are. I know you were a hard man. I was afraid. I hid your talent in the earth. It has gained nothing, but at least I have not lost it. Here is what is rightfully yours.” What a tragedy to offer excuses for lack of faithful service.

The servant in the parable is like the believer who never uses his opportunities to serve God. To him, his failure is always God's fault. God did not gift him with sufficient talents, or wealth, or opportunities.

The truth is he has the sentiments of an enemy toward God. Like the servant in the parable, he looks on God as a **“hard man”** (The carnal heart imagines many false and wicked things of God and becomes hardened toward Him.)

Like sinners of all generations, he says, **“The way of the Lord is not equal.”** To which God replies, **“Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?”** (Ezekiel 18:25). The spirit of a slave (**“I was afraid”**) will never produce the glad obedience and willing service God requires. Let the servant

of God live in the delight of love and not in the bondage of torment.

The Master's response is always appropriate. He approves, commends, and rewards the faithful. He convicts and condemns the unfaithful. His judgment is always just.

The unfaithful servant in the parable was called **“wicked and slothful”** because he had robbed his master of interest due on his money. He had condemned himself in his condemnation of his master.

With a touch of irony in his voice, the master said, “Did you really think I was guilty of reaping where I did not sow and gathering where I had not strowed? If you thought I was that kind of man, why did you not lend my money out so I could have at least had interest on it?”

The unfaithful servant was deprived of his talent and separated from his lord and his fellow servants. It was a fitting judgment.

List the lessons to be learned from the study. (1) God has given all that is necessary for life, godliness, and fruitfulness. (2) It is a privilege to be the servant of God. (3) It is wise to abound in diligent service for Him. (4) Honest effort will be accepted and rewarded, whether one's talents are "five" or “two.” (5) Honest effort will produce a harvest to the glory of God. (6) There is no excuse for fruitlessness in the Christian. Make a list of other truths you have seen as you have studied.

God has honored you by endowing you. You can be productive in the work of the Lord. You will give an account. Live under the divine commission, “Occupy until Jesus comes” (Luke 19:13).