

FAITHFUL AND SLOTHFUL SERVANTS
Matthew 25:14-30

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. As we have expounded the Olivet Discourse, we have seen how the Lord has given three parables to tell the Christian how to watch and be ready for the coming of Christ. The Parable of the Faithful and Wicked Servants told us the necessity of knowing and teaching God's Word in Christ's absence. The Parable of the Ten Virgins taught us that spiritual life comes from the Holy Spirit and believers are to claim this power in their experience. Now in the Parable of the Talents Christ teaches us the necessity of serving the Lord through a life of good work as we wait for Him to return for the Church.
- B. The Parable of the Talents also teaches that the true believer should be prompt, active and efficient in promoting the interests of his Master, Jesus Christ.

II. SERVANTS PROVE THEMSELVES FALSE OR TRUE BY THEIR ACTIONS -- Matthew 25:14-18

- A. "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods." -- This parable is about a master who goes away and leaves a certain company of servants to fulfill a task until he returns. The task was to care for and use the master's goods (his property and capital) until he returns. What are the symbolic meanings in this parable?
 - 1. The "man traveling into a far country" is Christ who is absent from the Church during the period that intervenes between the first and second advents.
 - 2. The "servants" are professing Christians who give some kind of allegiance to Christ but not all are genuinely saved but are within the sphere of the visible Church but all are genuinely saved but are within the sphere of the visible Church. **NOTE:** This parable is not dealing with ultimate rewards for Christian service, but salvation is the very thing that is at stake in this parable. The last line of this parable makes this crystal clear, for it is said of the slothful servant who failed to use his talent, "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (25:30). This worthless servant really never saved at all.
 - 3. "His goods" refers to the servant's responsibility in the master's household. Christ appoints Christians to work for and serve Him faithfully.

- B. “And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several (various) ability; and straightway took his journey.”
1. The first thing that must be cleared up is that talents are not natural gifts such as endowed intelligence, athletic ability or artistic talent. This is the English meaning but it is not the Biblical meaning. The “talent” was a specific sum of money, a weight of silver worth about a thousand dollars.
 2. The second observation is that the talent represents more than money. Certainly there is the surface meaning that money is to be invested for the Lord so that it brings spiritual profit. However, there is a deeper meaning. **NOTE:** I am going to suggest that these talents represent spiritual opportunity to produce good works for God. Talents are the opportunity to prove one is a true servant of Christ by producing good works in the service of the Master. Why? The talent (money) that the master gave to the servants was to be invested so as to produce a profit. It was something that could be invested with risk, with the possibility of producing gain or loss. This is more than money. It refers to spiritual opportunity to produce good works. It is the decision of the servant to risk his life for Christ.
 3. A third observation is that there are various degrees of talents (money) given. Some were given five, others two and still others one. **NOTE:** Not all believers have the same spiritual capacity for producing good works for Christ but all are expected to use the capacity they have.
 4. The fourth observation is that these talents are not only distributed to true believers in Christ but also to unbelievers. They are for those who profess Christ and in any way recognize His authority. The real issue is not that one has talents but how he uses them. **NOTE:** Professing Christians are given spiritual opportunity to prove with their lives that they are Christians, but how they use their spiritual opportunity is a matter of life or death. A person’s whole eternal destiny hangs on what he does with these spiritual opportunities.
- B. “Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.” -- The faithful servants immediately applied themselves to their business, put their money to use and made a profit. They had something to show or prove that they had used the master’s gift well. **NOTE:** The servants of Christ are to invest their lives and make a profit of good works with the spiritual opportunities He gives them. The necessity of good works to prove or demonstrate that one is saved is spoken of all through the New Testament (James 2:26; II Peter 1:10; Eph. 2:10). **NOTE:** There is a risk that must be taken when one decides to invest his life for Christ. Decisions must be made daily. The Christian must venture forth in faith to serve his Lord.

ILLUSTRATION: Every day the Christian has spiritual opportunities to prove the reality of his faith in Christ. Will I live for self or God? Will I serve Christ or yield to the pressure of the ungodly masses? Will I step out in faith or will I play it safe and get what I can for myself? Will I risk my reputation or even my life if that is what God wants? Will I yield to the passions of my flesh or will I be true to Christ? Will I accept a promotion even though it involves some shady ethics or will I refuse it and trust God to meet my needs? Will I give time to do the Lord's work or will I take that time and belong to some social group? Will I watch T.V. or take that time for Bible study and prayer? These are just some of the decisions Christians have to make in order to demonstrate the reality of their faith.

- C. "But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money." -- The servant who had received one talent hid his money and brought forth no profit. He did not steal it, squander it or mispend it but he did nothing with his talent. **NOTE:** The professing Christian is given spiritual opportunity to produce good works but instead of actively serving his Lord, he either regresses into his old patterns of life or simply becomes a neutral in Christian things. He sets a low spiritual standard and becomes so lazy that he has no desire to live for Christ and produce spiritual works for the Lord.

III. FAITHFUL SERVANTS WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT TO CHRIST

-- Matthew 25:19-23

- A. "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoned with them." -- Again it is implied from this parable that there will be a very long period of time before Christ returns for His Church. It has now been 1971 years but He is coming back. And when He does, He will "reckon" with His servants. All professing stewards of Christ will one day give an account to Christ for their stewardship (I Cor. 3:13; II Cor. 5:10).
- B. "And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold I have gained beside them five talents more." -- The first faithful servant invested his talents and had a one-hundred percent return. He made full use of his spiritual opportunities, not for his own advancement but for the Lord's kingdom. He put Christ first and was blessed of God (Matt. 6:33). This faithful servant made the crucial decision about the investment of his life for Christ and in so doing risked the possibility of loss to himself. He took the leap of faith and realized that he might not have the place of prominence and power he wanted in this secular world but he was doing the will of God and producing spiritual works for Christ.
- C. "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou has been faithful over the few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." --

1. The Lord commends the servant for his life of good works and faithfulness. He did not say “good and successful” but “good and faithful” for faithfulness was at the base of this servant’s success. **NOTE:** One will never be a success in spiritual things until he learns how to be faithful. **NOTE:** At the judgment seat of Christ, each Christian should long to hear the words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” This will be reward enough for me.
 2. This servant was to be a ruler in the master’s kingdom. **NOTE:** Because the servant was faithful in a few things, Christ will make him ruler over many things in his yet future Kingdom in both its earthly and eternal forms. **NOTE:** The reward for this faithful servant is not rest but more noble employment in Christ’s kingdom. God’s people will be serving Christ through all eternity.
 3. Because of faithful service, this servant was invited to enter into the joy of the Lord. This probably refers to the joy of accomplishment arising from the doing of the will of God in one’s experience. It is the joy of having produced results for God, knowing that the heart of God has been satisfied. It may also refer to the joy of the marriage feast of the Lamb in the millennial kingdom.
- B. “He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.” -- The servant with just two talents also had a one hundred percent increase because he was operating according to his capacity. He did not have as many talents originally given to him by the master but he was equally committed to the task. **NOTE:** This servant of Christ put Christ first and risked loss to himself to produce spiritual good works for Christ.
- C. “His lord said unto him, Well done, 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.” -- This second servant was equally rewarded by Christ. There is not one bit of difference in commendation and praise between what the Lord said to the first and second servants. There is the same reward because reward is not based on amount but on faithfulness. **NOTE:** Both of these servants of Christ brought forth a spiritual profit of good works to demonstrate prove, and give evidence of real salvation. **NOTE:** These faithful servants produced works because they were saved but they did not produce works to keep saved, for that would be salvation by works. They worked because they had the Life of Christ in them.

IV. SLOTHFUL SERVANTS WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT TO CHRIST

-- Matthew 25:24-30

- A. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou

hast not strawed (scattered). And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.”

1. This slothful servant tries to blame his failure to make a profit on the character of God. The problem was not in God but in his own laziness, for he had no real desire to invest his one talent. **NOTE:** This professing servant thought Christ was a mean Master and understood nothing of His unchangeable love for all those who are the true children of God. If this lazy servant were a true child of God, he would have been motivated to serve out of love, but he confesses that he was motivated by fear. Fear not of God but fear of what might happen to him.
 2. The servant is lazy with his talent because he had no desire to use it to make a profit for the master. The servant had gained nothing because he had risked nothing. There was no increase because there was no investment. **NOTE:** As a professing Christian, this lazy servant had many opportunities to risk his life for Christ and in so doing would have proved with his works that he was a true child of God. But he would not venture forth and commit to Christ even though he had all the external veneer of being a servant of the Lord. He was afraid to put his life on the line. **NOTE:** Since he took no risk for Christ's sake he had also no spiritual power, no spiritual influence, no impact for good. His life counted for nothing. He had lived every moment of his life for self even though he called himself a believer.
- B. “His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed (scattered): Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers (bankers), and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury (interest). -- The Lord turns the argument of the slothful servant against him. If he knew that master was hard, this should have been motivation enough to at least put the money in the bank and get some interest, making some increase of his talent. **NOTE:** This lazy man never had any real intention of being a servant. He was a phony and He never really desired to do the will of Christ, for he was never saved. He was living for self and not the Lord. **NOTE:** He had many opportunities to prove that he was really a child of God but he would not venture out in faith. He would not risk his life for Christ.
- C. “Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.” -- The lazy servant had his talent taken from him and it was given to the servants who had put their talents to work. **NOTE:** Christ gives every professing Christian spiritual opportunity as a good Master but reserves the right to take away all opportunity as a Judge if there is no fruit evidenced in the life. The principle is plain: those who are doing the will of God shall be given more grace to do it. But those who

profess Christ but show no desire to live for him, God will remove that opportunity for spiritual service and the servant shall be proven to be reprobate.

- D. “And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” -- Eternal judgment is the end of the hypocrite who with his lips calls Christ the Lord but his heart is far from him and he has no desire to do the will of God. This useless, unproductive servant is cast into outer darkness which speaks of complete and eternal separation from Christ. In the dark, no man can work for Christ. Part of the punishment of the slothful servant is that opportunity for eternal service to Christ is taken away. In this place of eternal punishment is “weeping and gnashing of teeth” which speaks of great vexation and indignation. This is the just reward for the faithless servant who failed to take advantage of spiritual opportunity to back up his profession of faith in Christ with spiritual works.

V. CONCLUSION

- A. To The Christian: Christ is telling the person who professes faith in Christ to step out! Risk! Live dangerously! To prove that one is a true Christian he must take chances and put his life on the line. One should never try to hang on to his own life, for, in so doing, he will lose it. The true Christian will surrender himself to Christ again and again so as to demonstrate with his life that Christ lives in him.
- B. To the Non-Christian: It is possible to be a professing Christian and not be saved. It is possible to be a good church member but really have no desire to please Christ. You are not really saved until you have invested your life for Christ, until you have invested your life for Christ, until you have risked your soul into Christ's hands. Salvation is trusting Christ to completely save you from your sin and the judgment to come. And after having trusted in Christ, salvation is proven to be a reality by one's commitment to Christ with a genuine desire to do the will of God.