

“THOU WICKED SERVANT”

FUTURE WORDS OF THE LORD TO ONE OF HIS OWN

By Arlen L. Chitwood

In both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, the distinguishing difference in servitude, revealed in the Householder's presence, in each instance, had to do with the servants' *proper use* or *improper use* of the Master's goods through trading and trafficking during the time of the Master's absence.

In each parable, two servants were shown to have brought forth varying amounts of increase through *a proper use* of their Master's goods, while another servant was shown to have brought forth no increase at all through *a failure to use* his Master's goods. The servant bringing forth no increase, in each parable, had stored his Master's goods for safekeeping in a place where they *could not* be used.

The servant in the parable of the talents had buried his Master's goods in the ground (Matt. 25:25), and the servant in the parable of the pounds had placed his Master's goods inside a napkin (Luke 19:20). And in each instance, no increase could be realized.

In each parable, the servant who had hidden his Master's goods for safekeeping and had not used them was called into his Master's presence to render an account. And that which was revealed, while *in his Master's presence*, resulted in *rebuke* and *loss*.

His stewardship was supposed to have been the means through which he could have success-

fully run the race of the faith, allowing him to win a crown and be elevated into a regal position in the Householder's kingdom at the time of His return. He, as a household steward in possession of a portion of the Householder's goods, through faithfulness to his calling (his particular place of responsibility in the house), was being given an opportunity to bring forth an increase (bring forth fruit). This would allow him to win a crown, qualifying him to be elevated into the position of co-heir with his Master in the kingdom (which his Master had gone away to receive).

However, *failure in his presently assigned stewardship* would mean *his future rejection as ruler*. The unfaithful steward, at the time of his Master's return, would be judged *unfit* to occupy a position with his Master in the kingdom, with chastisement following.

The Lord will not take lightly the matter of household servants, through unfaithfulness, spurning proffered positions as co-heirs with Him in the kingdom. Unfaithful servants will receive treatment of such *a harsh nature* at the hands of their Lord that many students of the Word turn completely away from the thought of saved individuals being in view. To them it is unthinkable that the Lord would extend treatment of this nature to redeemed individuals, His Own people.

This is the main reason that issues surrounding one's eternal salvation or eternal damnation are often read into the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, with the unfaithful servants in both parables being looked upon as unsaved individuals.

However, the question concerning how the Lord could extend treatment of the nature revealed in these parables to one of His Own *does not address the issue at all*. The question asked within a proper Biblical framework would have to be just the opposite: "How could the Lord be perfectly just and righteous *without* extending treatment of this nature to one of His Own?"

If faithfulness calls for commendation and reward (which it does), then unfaithfulness *must call* for rebuke and loss (which it does). *The inverse of one must be true relative to the other, else the Lord's perfect justice and righteousness could not be satisfied.*

THE SERVANTS' PLEA

The unfaithful servants in both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds are seen pleading their individual cases before the Lord in frank, open, and unrestrained manners. Nothing appears to be held back as they relate the reasons for the different courses of action which they had taken while servants in the Master's house in charge of a portion of the Master's goods.

The appeal by the servants is not that of trying to hide or cover up that which had been done. To the contrary, it is just the opposite. They both appeal to their Lord, while in His presence, in an open, almost brazen manner, relating *exactly* what had occurred.

In that coming day, nothing will be held back. All things will be "naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). Christ spoke *openly* during His earthly ministry, saying *nothing* in secret (John 18:20); and He would expect the same from His servants, though the situation is often quite different today.

However, the day is coming when *nothing* will remain hidden or be kept secret (Mark 4:22; Luke 8:17). Paul, in his message to those at Rome, stated, "...God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Rom. 2:16).

(Paul proclaimed both the gospel of grace and the gospel of glory; but the reference in Rom. 2:16 can pertain only to *the gospel of glory*, for no future judgment of the "secrets of men" awaits individuals in relation to the gospel of grace. Paul's gospel in this passage [and elsewhere in the Pauline epistles where the expressions "my gospel" or "our gospel" appear] must be looked upon as the good news concerning the coming glory of Christ ["meat in due season"], to be proclaimed *to stewards in the house* [cf. Matt. 24:45; Rom. 16:25; II Cor. 4:3, 4; Gal. 1:11, 12; Eph. 3:1-6; I Thess. 1:5; II Thess. 2:14; I Tim. 1:11; II Tim. 2:8]. This gospel deals with the message concerning present faithfulness of household servants in view of their occupying positions as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom [*e.g.*, note the context of II Tim. 2:8].)

The unfaithful servants in both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds accused their Lord of the same thing in order to justify their failure to use the goods entrusted to their care. They accused their Lord of reaping a harvest and deriving an increase through the labors of others, which was true, but viewed from a completely erroneous perspective.

They looked upon the entire matter from a carnal, humanistic viewpoint, rejecting spiritual values. They envisioned their Lord doing these things *only* for self-gain, and they gave little or no thought to the revealed reason (which they should have known) concerning why the Householder was conducting affairs in His house after this fashion.

The Householder had a relationship with His servants of this nature for a *purpose* involving far more than just self-gain, as supposed by the unfaithful servants. The Householder, *for a particular reason*, had delivered His goods to His servants and assigned them responsible positions in the house, with a view to their bringing forth an increase (bringing forth fruit).

Servitude during the present day of trials and testings would be *the means* through which the Householder could one day elevate His servants from positions in the house to positions in the kingdom. The Householder was allowing them, through faithfulness in *lesser responsibility*, to show that they were qualified to assume *greater responsibility* (cf. Matt. 25:29; Luke 16:10-12; 19:26); and upon the Householder's reception of the kingdom and His return in possession of the kingdom, those servants having shown themselves qualified could be elevated from *household servants* of their Master to *co-heirs* with their Master.

The self-gain which the Householder would eventually realize was *that of gaining co-heirs, gaining companions, to ascend the throne with Him in His kingdom*. The work in the fields was to be accomplished by the household servants, using their Master's possessions (everything belonged to the Master of the house); and the work was to be accomplished on the Master's behalf.

The Householder, *through this means*, was extending to His servants *the privilege of earning posi-*

tions with Him in the kingdom, allowing them to one day be elevated to *the highest place of honor and glory one could possibly receive* (when Christ's "greatest regal magnificence" [literal rendering of "majesty" in II Peter 1:16 from a superlative in the Greek text] will be manifested for all to behold). They would be recompensed for their labors by being elevated into positions as *co-heirs with the Householder in His kingdom*. The fruits of their labors would not only benefit the Householder but the servants as well, with the Householder and His servants *both realizing the results together*.

THE LORD'S RESPONSE

The thought of labor for the Lord during the present day in view of co-heirship with Him during that coming day is something which appears to have *completely escaped* the attention of the unfaithful servants in both parables. The unfaithful servants could not grasp at all what their Master had in mind through requiring labor on His behalf.

Ignorance of His plans and purposes for both present and future times not only led them into gross error but it caused them to govern their activities as household servants after such a fashion that they *mismanaged* the Householder's affairs, ultimately resulting in their being *rejected* for positions in the kingdom. There was *no increase for their Master*, resulting in *no advancement for them*.

The profitless servants in both parables had failed to properly conduct their affairs within the scope of delegated household responsibility. They had not used the talent/pound to bring forth an increase (Matt. 25:27; Luke 19:23 ["usury" in these verses is the translation of a Greek word meaning *interest* on money loaned or invested]).

The Lord's sharp rebuke, followed by chastisement, was occasioned by the dual ramifications resulting from the servants' disobedience. Appearing in the Lord's presence as profitless servants meant: *1) no gain for the Lord*, and *2) loss for the servants*.

Because of the servants' failure, those portions of the Lord's goods which had previously been entrusted to their care were taken from them and given

to servants who had already been judged and had been shown to have brought forth increases. Such would add to these faithful servants' possessions, which could only reflect on their positions in the kingdom. The thought can only be that servants coming into possession of *additional amounts of the Lord's goods* through this means will receive *additional responsibility in the kingdom*.

The principle governing this matter is set forth quite clearly in both parables:

"For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he shall have abundance [which can only be a reference to 'abundance in the kingdom' derived through an increase of the Lord's goods in one's possession. The faithful servant will have already been elevated into a position as co-heir with his Lord at this time, and an increase in the Lord's goods, of the nature this would produce, is shown in the parable of the pounds to be directly related to *increased responsibility in the kingdom* (Luke 19:16-19)]; but from him who has nothing, even what he has shall be taken away [which, in view of that realized by the faithful servant through a reception of the unfaithful servant's goods, can only refer to 'that which could have been his in the kingdom' through having realized the purpose for his salvation and particular calling]" (Matt. 25:29, Weymouth; cf. Luke 19:26).

Numerous positions in the kingdom which the Lord has gone away to receive *must* be filled upon His return. The failure of a servant to show himself qualified will not leave the position which could have been his unfilled. The Lord will simply assign that portion to another servant, adding to the responsibility which that servant will have already been accorded. When all factors are considered, no other meaning can really be derived from the Lord's action of taking from one servant and giving to another servant at the judgment seat.

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