

## ***Rewarded for Being Faithful in Small Things (Mt. 25)***

### **I. THE CERTAINTY OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE OPPORTUNITY FOR REWARDS**

- A. Each believer will give an account of their life to God at the judgment seat of Christ and receive rewards for their obedience and diligence (Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10).

***<sup>10</sup>For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...<sup>12</sup>So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. (Rom 14:10-12)***

***<sup>8</sup>Each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor...<sup>11</sup>No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.<sup>12</sup>If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,<sup>13</sup>each one's work...will be revealed by fire...<sup>14</sup>If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.<sup>15</sup>If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Cor. 3:8-15)***

- B. Believing that God rewards His people is a foundational kingdom principle. There are over 50 references to Jesus teaching on eternal rewards—making it one of His most emphasized themes. (Mt. 5:5, 12, 19; 6:4, 6, 18, 20; 10:41-42; 16:27; 18:4; 19:21, 28, 30; 20:26-27; 23:12; 25:21, 23; Mk. 9:41; 10:21, 43-44; Lk. 6:23, 35; 9:48; 12:8; 21, 33; 14:11; 16:11; 18:14, 22; 19:17, 19; 22:30; Jn. 12:26; Rev. 2:7, 10-11, 17, 26-27; 3:4-5, 11-12, 18, 21; 16:15; 19:7-8; 20:4, 6; 22:5, 12).

***<sup>6</sup>...for he who comes to God must believe...He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6)***

### **II. THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS (MT. 25:14-23): FAITHFULNESS AND JOY**

- A. The parable of the talents reveals how generously God rewards the small things that His people do in serving Him (Mt. 25:14-30). Jesus highlighted similar truths in Luke 12:34-48 and 19:12-29. The Lord entrusts His servants with a stewardship that they must give account for (Mt. 25:14-19).

***<sup>14</sup>"The kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his servants and delivered his goods to them.<sup>15</sup>And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one...<sup>16</sup>Then he who had received the five talents...traded with them, and made another five talents.<sup>17</sup>And likewise he who had received two gained two more also.<sup>18</sup>But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.<sup>19</sup>After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them." (Mt. 25:14-19)***

1. ***Delivered his goods (25:14)***: God has entrusted to each person opportunities and abilities—physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, and in their life and family circumstances.
2. ***Settled accounts (25:19)***: Each will be evaluated at the judgment seat of Christ.

- B. The man with five talents and the man with two talents each received the same affirmation for their faithfulness and the same eternal reward of being made “a ruler over many things” (Mt. 25:21, 23). The man with two talents was entrusted with less abilities, gifts, increase, impact, and recognition than the man with five talents, yet they both received the same affirmation and reward.

<sup>20</sup>“So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents... <sup>21</sup>His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ <sup>22</sup>He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘...look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ <sup>23</sup>His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’” (Mt. 25:20-23).

- C. **#1 Well done:** Jesus will affirm faithful believers before the Father and the angels (Rev. 3:5).

<sup>5</sup>He who overcomes...I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” (Rev. 3:5)

- D. **#2 Good and faithful servant:** Note three affirmations that Jesus will declare over His people.

1. **Good** points to godly motivations with sincere intentions to do God’s will.
2. **Faithful** highlights diligence and follow-through of our intentions to do good in the face of pressure, obstacles, mundaneness, and temptation. Steadiness over years is emphasized here.
3. **Servant** speaks of being willing to sacrifice our comfort, honor, and personal agenda.

- E. **#3 Few things:** Most people have a small “assignment” (sphere of responsibility and influence). Some believe that their work only matters if it impacts many people. Our life assignment may be small in man’s eyes, but it is so important in God’s eyes that He greatly rewards those who are faithful in it. “Faithfulness in little things is a great thing” (Hudson Taylor).

- F. **#4 I will make you ruler over many things:** Jesus’ generosity is seen here in that He rewards our “few things” with “many things.” The sphere in which saints will reign with Jesus in the age to come is related to their faithfulness in this age (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6; 22:5; cf. Mt. 19:28; 20:21-23; Lk. 19:17-19; 22:29-30; Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12). Jesus made this point in another parable while in Jericho: being faithful in “very little” leads to having authority over “ten cities” (Lk. 19:17). These promises find their fulfillment in the millennial kingdom.

<sup>1</sup>“Well done...you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.” (Lk. 19:17)

- G. **#5 Enter into the joy (25:21):** We have joy in knowing that He values our efforts to serve and that our choices matter to Him. We can enter into some of the joy that we will have in fullness when Jesus openly declares His affirmation of the “few things” or “very little” things we did.

- H. The saints will have great joy ruling in partnership with Jesus. Our joy in being rewarded is to be with Him where He is and do what He is doing—that is, to be involved in the things He calls precious and work closely with the One we love in ruling the nations. We can receive tokens even now of the joy of Jesus saying “well done” to us.

- I. When we serve God, we act in accordance with how God designed us—He created us in His image (Gen. 1:26). A person is never so joyful, wise, or rational as when they are serving God. Serving God in this life foreshadows the joy that we will know in serving Him in the age to come.
- J. One message of this parable is that our smallest efforts will not be forgotten by a God who knows the number of hairs on our head (Mt. 10:30) and when we give a cup of water (Mt. 10:42).  
<sup>10</sup>***God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. (Heb. 6:10)***
- K. The Lord does not forget the love that we show Him in serving our family, friends, and others. He remembers every cup of cold water, and our every conversation is recorded in His book.  
<sup>16</sup>***Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD...heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD. (Mal. 3:16)***
- L. Paul encouraged believers to be diligent in knowing that the Lord watches and rewards them. By knowing that He watches us, we can serve “heartily,” with diligence. Some only serve with diligence before the people who can promote them! The Lord is our ultimate promoter.  
<sup>23</sup>***Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,*** <sup>24</sup>***knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward...for you serve the Lord Christ. (Col. 3:23-24)***

### III. PARABLE OF THE TALENTS (MT. 25:24-30): SUFFERING LOSS

- A. Jesus described the mindset of the man who responded wrongly to God’s grace (Mt. 25:24-30). In this parable, we see the tragedy of a wasted opportunity in the grace of God.  
<sup>24</sup>***“Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown...’*** <sup>25</sup>***I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’*** <sup>26</sup>***But his lord answered..., ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown...’*** <sup>27</sup>***So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.” (Mt. 25:24-27)***
1. ***I knew you to be a hard man (25:24)***: This type of person complains that Jesus’ leadership is unfair and unreasonable; they say that He requires too much, offers too little help, and does not understand how difficult their life is. Those who allow such accusations against Jesus’ leadership to take root in their heart open the door to spiritual dullness to hinder them.
  2. ***Reaping where you have not sown (25:24)***: The complaint, or accusation, against the Lord in this statement is that He requires more from His servants than He invests in them.
  3. ***I was afraid (25:25)***: This servant claimed that he buried his talent in the ground because of fear. Fear of failure, rejection, shame, difficulty, mundaneness, fatigue, loss of free time, or inconvenience leads many to refuse to seek and serve God with diligence and consistency.
  4. ***You wicked and lazy servant (25:26)***: The issue was the servant’s sinfulness and laziness. He would rather spend his time and money on his comfort and honor than on God’s purposes.

- B. The parable ends with a spiritual principle containing a promise and sober warning (Mt. 25:29-30).  
<sup>29</sup>***“For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.”*** <sup>30</sup>***And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*** (Mt. 25:29-30)
- C. ***Spiritual principle:*** “Everyone who has, more will be given, but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away”—Jesus spoke this principle five times (Mt. 13:12; 25:29; Mk. 4:25; Lk. 8:18; 19:26). ***Truth is not neutral***—it tenderizes or hardens those who hear it. *The rich get richer in their spiritual life.* We must use truth to keep from losing it—we must take new ground in our spiritual growth to keep from losing the ground we previously gained.
1. ***Everyone who has:*** This includes spiritual understanding, inspiration, a tender heart, responsiveness to God, and opportunities to grow in knowing and serving God, etc.
  2. ***More will be given—an abundance:*** All who faithfully respond to spiritual understanding, inspiration, tenderness, and opportunities to know and serve God will in due time experience an increase in their capacity to experience these aspects of grace more and more. Increased understanding leads to an enlarged capacity for even more understanding. The increase will augment, becoming “abundant” in the age to come, as in being “a ruler over much” (25:21).
  3. ***He who does not have:*** Jesus described a man who was initially stirred by God’s grace, receiving a small measure of spiritual understanding, zeal, tenderness, etc. It initially inspired him and was within his reach in the grace of God; therefore, it can be described as something that *he does not have* as well as something that *he has* (25:29). Luke described this spiritual paradox as, “what he *seems* to have” (Lk. 8:18).  
<sup>18</sup>***“...whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.”***  
***(Lk. 8:18)***
  4. ***What he has will be taken away:*** Those who fail to respond to various aspects of God’s grace will find that those aspects of grace will diminish and eventually be removed. When the Spirit gives understanding, we must respond to it in an appropriate way or our heart will slowly harden until it is eventually unmoved by the truths that deeply moved us in the past. What one *has* can diminish or be taken away by one’s lack of response to the Spirit and progressive hardening of the heart. This describes the tragedy of a wasted opportunity in God’s grace.
- D. ***Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness:*** Jesus described the most extreme scenario—a servant of God whose heart became progressively hardened until he fell away from the faith (Rom. 11:22; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 5:15; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-5; Heb. 3:12; 6:4-6; 10:26-31, 39; Jas 5:19-20; 2 Pet. 2:1-3, 20-22; 3:17). I view this servant as referring to a believer who fell away from the faith. Some view him as an unbeliever who never had a relationship with the Lord.
- E. Paul described a less extreme scenario—one whose heart grew progressively hard, but not to the point of falling away, yet suffering the loss of rewards that were within reach in grace.  
<sup>15</sup>***If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved. (1 Cor. 3:15)***