

FAITHFULNESS TO OPPORTUNITIES

– *JULY 26.* – *LUKE 19:11-27.* –

"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.

WE ARE NOT to confound the Parable of the Pounds with the Parable of the Talents. They teach totally different lessons. In the case of the talents, the amount given to each of the servants differed. In the case of the pounds, it was the same – each servant received one pound – approximately sixteen dollars. This parable, therefore, deals with something that is common to all of the class to which reference is made.

The object in the giving of the parable is stated in the lesson. The Lord and His disciples were approaching Jerusalem, where shortly He was to be crucified. The disciples had supposed, on the contrary, that the Messianic Kingdom would immediately be established in power and great honor. This parable was intended to inform them that a considerable period of time would elapse before the Kingdom would be established.

The disciples knew that the kings of Palestine were appointed by the Roman Emperor, and they had recently had an experience along this line, when one of the Herods went to Rome, seeking an appointment to a kingdom. Some who hated him sent a message to Rome, discrediting him and declaring their preference for another king. Jesus seized this circumstance as an illustration in His own case. He was the Appointee for the Messianic Kingdom of the world; but He would go to Heaven itself and there appear in the presence of the Heavenly Father, the great Overlord or Emperor of the Universe. He would be invested by the Father with the ruling authority, and later return to earth and exercise His dominion.

This is exactly the presentation of the matter given us prophetically. (Psalm 2:8.) The Divine regulation is that Messiah, after finishing His work, shall in Heaven itself make application for a Kingdom which Divine providence has already arranged for and which Divine prophecy has already foretold. "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession."

"OCCUPY TILL I COME"

During the interim of the Master's absence – in Heaven, waiting for Divine investiture with the government of earth – He has committed to His disciples, His servants, otherwise styled His brethren, one pound each. He has left them with full liberty to use their best judgment and to show their love and their zeal in His service. At His return, all these servants will be reckoned with, and the degree of their zeal and efficiency as servants will be manifested by the results; and the rewards given them will be proportionate.

The parable distinguishes between these consecrated servants of God and the masses of the people. It shows that nothing is committed to the masses of the people; and that no judgment, reward, is made in their case at **[R5492 : page 203]** the return of the Master as King. Only to His servants did He give the pounds – only His servants had the responsibility of those pounds, and only those servants will be reckoned with or held responsible, either for reward or for punishment in respect to the matter.

In considering what is signified, or symbolized, by the pound, we must keep in memory the fact that as the same amount was given to each, the fulfilment must show some blessing or responsibility given in each case alike to all of God's consecrated people – all who are His servants. There is but one thing that we can think of that is given to all of the Lord's people in exactly the same measure. They have not talents and opportunities alike, but, on the contrary, very unlike. Some have more and some less wealth; some more and some

less mental capacity; some more and some less of favorable or unfavorable environment. None of these varied talents belong to this Parable of the Pounds.

The pound is the same to all; it represents *justification*. The one thing which the Redeemer does for all who become His followers is to justify them freely from all things. This leaves them all on exactly an even footing; for justification makes up to each individual in proportion as he is deficient – in proportion as he by nature is short of perfection, the Divine standard.

"BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH"

All who in the present time become children of God, servants of God, followers of Christ, must receive from the Lord, as a basis for this relationship, the pound – the free forgiveness of sins – justification. On this basis he has a standing with God, and whatever he may do or endeavor to do will be to his credit. Because all are alike qualified by justification, the results will show the degree of loving zeal controlling each servant. Those who love much will serve much. Those who love little will neglect to use their opportunities. As one in the parable gained ten pounds, so such noble characters as St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John and others, sacrificed themselves over and over again in the Divine service. In their zeal they counted all earthly things but as loss and dross, that they might be pleasing to their Master, the coming King.

These, and such as these, who have gladly spent themselves zealously in the service of the Lord, are to have the highest rewards, as represented by the Lord's words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Because thou wast faithful in a very little have thou authority over ten cities." In the parable another came, reporting a gain of five pounds. He had not done so well as did the first, but he had done well. He received the same commendation: he had been faithful, although less faithful than the first. He received his master's "Well done," however; but the reward was less – dominion over five

cities. This will mean a less influential place in the Messianic Kingdom.

Then came a servant saying, "Lord, here is the pound that you gave me; I have kept it carefully laid up in a napkin." This represents a class that say, "I endeavored to maintain my justification. I endeavored to live justly and honorably, but I did not sacrifice myself. I am glad to be able to say that I have lost nothing. I was really afraid to use my opportunity, to use my privilege; for I realized that You would be expecting considerable return [R5493 : page 203] from the amount which You gave me."

The master in the parable addresses this one still as a servant, but a wicked servant, who knew his master's will, who had undertaken his service, but who had been found unfaithful in respect to it. Had he not professed to be a servant, he would have received no pound and would have had no responsibility for it. He should have made use of his privilege and opportunity. He should have lived for his master. If not so actively and so directly as did the others, he should have made at least some use of the pound entrusted to him, so that he would have had some results to show.

We may assume that this one represents a considerable class of those who have entered into a covenant with the Lord to be His servants, and who have received justification at His hands, but who have neglected to comply with their engagements for self-sacrifice in His service. This neglect indicates their lack of loving zeal; and all this means that they will not be fit for a share in the Kingdom. This class is referred to on several occasions by the Lord: for instance, they are represented in the foolish virgins, who failed to enter in to the wedding; and so these will fail to become members of the Bride, the Lamb's Wife.

"SAVED SO AS BY FIRE"

The same class seems to be pictured by St. Paul when, speaking of the same testing of the Church in the end of this Age, he declares,

"The fire of that Day shall try every man's work of what sort it is." He proceeds to say that those who build with gold, silver and precious stones will suffer no loss, but will receive a full reward; while others building upon the same Rock, Christ Jesus – the same justification by faith – will suffer the loss of all their time and opportunity. He adds, however, that they themselves shall be saved, yet so as by fire.

This we understand to mean that this class of servants who maintain their justification, seeking to live harmless, honest lives, but who fail to sacrifice as they have covenanted to do, will not be *lost*, in the worst sense of that word. They will indeed lose the great prize – the highest blessing – the Kingdom; but because they still remain servants and have a love for righteousness they will be saved so as by fire; that is, through tribulations. They will ultimately gain everlasting life on the spirit plane, but will be quite inferior to the Bride class. They seem to be represented in the Scriptures as the virgins, the Bride's companions, who follow her. – Psalm 45:14.

These seem again to be pictured in Revelation, Chapters 14 and 7. Here the elect Church are referred to as 144,000, who will stand on Mount Zion, because they followed the Lamb whithersoever He went. Then a great multitude is pictured as coming through great tribulation, washing their robes and attaining a place before the Throne, instead of on the Throne. To these are given palm branches, instead of crowns. They are victors, but not "more than conquerors." In this respect they are not wholly copies of God's dear Son, and are not esteemed worthy of being members of His Bride class, who are to share with Him the honors and glories and services in His Kingdom, as set forth in this parable.

The fear expressed by this servant, saying, "For I feared thee," reminds us of the Apostle's words respecting this same class. He declares that Christ at His Second Coming will deliver those who all their lifetime were subject to bondage through fear of death. The consecration of the Lord's servants is unto death, and those who fear

death are fearful of performing their covenant vow. They will not be worthy of the Lord's approval as faithful servants. Nevertheless, there are many vessels in the house of the King – some to more honor and some to less honor. – 2 Timothy 2:20,21.

"THOSE MINE ENEMIES"

Not until first He shall have finished dealing with His own servants at His Second Coming will the glorious Messiah begin to deal with the world, and especially with His enemies. This is the statement of the parable, and it is borne out by numerous Scriptures. When Jesus prayed **[R5493 : page 204]** on the night before His crucifixion, He said: "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; word." (John 17:9,20.) Thus we see the work of the Gospel Age outlined by our Lord. It is merely for the selection of His servants, and the testing and proving of these. It is with a view to determining which of them will be found worthy of association with Himself in the great Millennial Kingdom which God has decreed, and whose work will be for the blessing and uplifting of the whole world of mankind.

So the Second Psalm points out that the Redeemer will not pray for, ask for, the world until, at His Second Advent, He is ready to establish His Kingdom, His Church having first been gathered to glory. Then He will ask for the heathen. By the term heathen, or Gentile, is signified all out of fellowship with God, "enemies through wicked works." The Psalm proceeds to say that Messiah will deal rudely with the heathen. "He will dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel," etc. This, interpreted by other Scriptures, means that the inauguration of Messiah's Kingdom will bring a great Time of Trouble, symbolically styled fire, or fiery judgments. "He shall be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance." Everything appertaining to present institutions contrary to the Divine standards of justice will be rudely shaken and eventually destroyed.

However, the Lord wounds that He may heal. The lessons of the Time of Trouble will be salutary; as we read, "When the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." These judgments will not in any sense continue upon all throughout the thousand years of Messiah's Kingdom, but will be inflicted only upon those deserving them. Hence the judgments will be especially severe at the beginning. All who learn righteousness will thereby deliver themselves; and as they come into harmony with the King of kings and Lord of lords, blessings will be their portion, uplifting them gradually to human perfection.

"SLAY THEM BEFORE ME"

At first thought, we might gather that these words signify that the King of Glory will be implacable, ferocious, unsympathetic, with His enemies. We might wonder how this shows sympathy! He admonishes us to love our enemies and to do good to them that despitefully use us. Gradually we come to see that this will indeed be the policy which the great King will pursue. He will be doing the greatest good for His enemies in bringing upon them punishments for their wrong course – shame, publicity, contempt. These things will be necessary to arouse them to an appreciation of their true condition and show them their privileges.

We are not to forget that during this Age the Lord's dealings with His faithful servants has been in permitting fiery trials to try them and to instruct them. It should not be a wonder to us therefore that fiery judgments upon the world are the Master's design, not for the world's injury, but for its blessing. We read that as a result of St. Peter's preaching at Pentecost the truths struck home to the hearts of his hearers – "They were cut to the heart." But we realize that this was a great blessing, in that it prepared them for the Message of Divine Mercy. So here we read of the Lord's slaying His enemies; they will be cut to the heart. A picture of this slaughter is given us in Revelation, where the Lord is represented in glorious majesty,

with a sword proceeding out of His mouth, that with it He should smite the nations. (Revelation 19:15.) Blessed smiting! The sooner it begins, the better for the world, we might say; and yet we remember that God's time is best for everything.

Another similar picture of the progress of Messiah's Kingdom is given us in figurative language, as follows: "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou Most Mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things. Thine arrows shall be sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies; whereby the people shall fall under Thee." – Psalm 45:3-5.

Here the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom with power, great glory and majesty, is presented in pictorial imagery; and the sharp arrows of Divine Truth are represented as slaughtering the hosts of error. This terrible carnage will mean a great blessing; for the Lord smites to heal, and when His Word cuts to the heart the effect is to destroy the enemy. Unless the enemies of the Lord be thus brought into subjection to Him, nothing will remain for them but the final extinction mentioned by St. Peter: "It shall come to pass that the soul that will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from amongst the people." – Acts 3:23.

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