

## Using Our Talents

'For we must all appear before the judgement seat of our Messiah, so that each one may receive (his wages), according to what he has done in the body whether good or bad, therefore knowing the terror of the Lord, we seek to persuade them' (2 Corinthians 5:10 & 11).

'Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving praise to God the Father through Him' (Colossians 3:17).

'For the Kingdom of heaven is like a man who was about to take a long journey and he called his servants together and entrusted them with his property. To one he gave five talents, to another he gave two talents, to another, one talent – each in proportion to his own personal ability, then he left the country. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them and he gained five talents more, and likewise he who had received the two talents – he also gained two more, but he who had received the one talent went and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. He who had received the five talents came and brought him five more ... His master said to him, "Well done, you good and faithful servant! ... Enter into the joy of the Lord." He who had the two talents came forward ... "Here I have gained two talents more." His master said to him, "Well done, you good and faithful servant! ... Enter into the joy of the Lord." He who had received one talent also came forward saying, "Master, I knew you to be a hard man ... so I was afraid and I went and hid your talent. Here you have what is your own." But his master answered him, "You wicked, idle and lazy servant! ... You should have invested my money with the bankers and at my coming I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent away from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have will be taken away, and throw the good-for-nothing servant into outer darkness; there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth"' (Matthew 25:14 to 30).

There are a few important facts in this parable. Notice that God entrusts us with His property ... our talents are His property! Notice that God allots talents according to our personal ability to use them. Notice that God is going to settle His accounts with each one of us individually. There is a principle in this parable; it is not the amount of talent God gives us, but the amount of the increase we return to Him that He is interested in. He does not ask more from us than what we are able to produce, but He does trust us to use what He has given us. It is not unscriptural to receive interest. If your brother or sister is in need, do not ask interest, but if we are investing in a business venture, we are entitled to our share of the interest. The man with the one talent believed God was hard – too hard to judge righteously. We must remember that God is the Righteous Judge (Acts 17:31). Mr 'One-Talent' was so afraid of what he believed would be an unjust judgement, he did nothing with his talents, but he buried them. God considers those who refuse to use their talents as wicked and lazy. Being fearful is no excuse.

We can see in church, where the talented people who choose to use their talents receive more, and they increase their talents; whereas the ones who do nothing, lose even what they have. We can see in this parable, that the third man was a servant, but he had acted with laziness and therefore wickedness. However, even as a servant of the Lord, or in our day he would be called a Christian, he was thrown into hell because he was lazy and did not use his talents. That may seem very harsh, but it is scriptural. Some Christians will lose their salvation on Judgement Day. This 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew speaks of three completely different types of believers who were totally rejected by the Lord – and yes they were all believers and they were all shut out of heaven. The first were the five foolish virgins who did not take enough oil. The oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. This parable is inferring, those who refuse to be filled with the Holy Spirit will be rejected. To refuse is foolishness. The Holy Spirit is a wonderful gift and we are expressly told several times to be filled with or receive Him (Acts 1:8; 2:38; 8:15; 9:17; 19:2 & 6; Ephesians 5:18). If we refuse, then that is an act of deliberate defiance, and the penalty will be a lost soul – lost for eternity. In this parable, Jesus stated that He had never known the servants who were not filled with the Holy Spirit, even though they were so close to being involved in the marriage feast. All they needed was the ‘Oil’ of the Holy Spirit to be allowed in through the door, and without the oil, they were shut out. If you are not filled with the Holy Spirit, then when Judgement Day comes, you are risking having Jesus say that He never knew you. The second rejected believer in Matthew 25 is the servant with the one talent, and the third were the ‘goat’ nations who refused to support Jesus’ brothers, or His people – the Jews and Israel – when they were in need. We may think that ignoring Israel is a small thing, but it could cost you your soul. What did all those people have in common? What caused them to be rejected? They all did nothing with what they had; they were lazy, complacent and disobedient.

When we study that phrase; weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth, which was used several times by Jesus, it was always used in connection with someone who was a believer with every opportunity but did not use it. That phrase was never used for a sinner who had never been confronted with the Gospel. Only servants of the Lord, who have known the whole truth of the Gospel, had it all offered to them and rejected it, will have that experience. We can see by this parable that it is possible to be saved and still be cast into outer darkness because of laziness, complacency or disobedience. This is a very significant fact. Paul stated that fact very clearly. ‘I buffet my body and subdue it, for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel and things relating to it, I myself should become unfit and be rejected’ (1 Corinthians 9:27).

We need to regard the ‘one talent’ person just as importantly as the multi-talented people. Not everybody is multi-talented, although some are. Often musicians can play several instruments and sing. Often though, the one-talent person thinks they don’t have much to offer; they cannot have their own ministry or build a church, so they quietly bury their talent, sit in church, smile and leave early. The greatest danger is for the one talent people. If we do not have our own ministry, any great spiritual gifts, if we keep feeling unimportant

and feel we cannot make a difference, that God isn't asking much, and we feel safer doing nothing, that can cost us our soul. We could be lost eternally just for that. Often they feel, that because they can't sing or preach, then they are not worth much, so they do nothing with the one small talent they do have. That is so wrong because once they begin to use that one talent, then God will give them more! He said so. God has given everybody at least one talent, so He classes the inactive servant as lazy and wicked.

This is an appeal to all the 'one-talenter' out there who feel they can't do much. Don't sit there while your salvation slips away. Make up your mind to become active while you still have a chance. If that applies to you, in your quiet moment with God, ask Him to show you what you can do. The reality is, a 'one-talenter' can do many things, but usually they don't because the fact is, they probably are a little lazy (I really can't be bothered), or maybe they are a little selfish (I really want time to myself), or too proud (why should I?).

If the one-talent person cannot do business for themselves, then they could 'give the talent to the bankers'. What would that mean? If you are genuinely at a loss as to what you can do, here are some simple ideas to help get you get started. You can invest your talent in someone else's ministry; but choose a ministry that is producing fruit. One of the hardest things for leaders to find, is loyal staff who will serve the Lord with gladness. We all must be willing to be servants to one degree or another. It does not matter if people do not know your name – God knows who you are and it is He Who rewards you. When we serve faithfully, we receive the same rewards as the person we serve.

To serve God within the church; you could help with young children in the church; help the disabled in the church; help a busy mother give her baby a bottle; shake hands with people as they come into church; help clean the church; pray for the church leaders and others in the church; visit the sick; visit people in prison or write them encouraging letters; take charge of the 'birthday roster' in your church so those having birthdays always receive a card or a mention; help with after service tea and coffee; take a cuppa to a person in a wheelchair; speak to people who are new to your church; offer to drive people to and from church; offer free haircuts to the elderly, disabled or financially struggling young parents; start a recycled clothes fund for the children within the church. When one child grows out of their clothes, the parents can go to your fund and swap the small clothes for larger clothes, then the smaller clothes can be passed onto smaller children; learn sign language so you can interpret the sermon for the deaf; draw the cover for the weekly newsletter; offer to type up the sermon for the pastor; serve communion; take up the offering or change the message on the notice board. There are so many other tasks that need doing, it would fill a whole page just listing them. There is plenty that a 'one-talenter' can do, so if you take up the challenge, you would find yourself so busy, you would wonder why you ever felt you couldn't make a difference. Every person has their place in the Kingdom of God – it is just a matter of finding it.

Amen and God bless you.

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