

Part 27a

Talents

***** (Begin quote)

Matthew 25:

¹⁴ FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered to them his goods. ¹⁵ And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several [individual] ability; and straightway took his journey.

¹⁶ Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. ¹⁷ And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

¹⁸ But he that had received one went and dug in the earth, and hid his lord's money. ¹⁹ After a long time the LORD of those servants comes, and reckoned with them. ²⁰ And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, "Lord, you delivered to me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more." ²¹ His lord said to him, "Well done, you good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your lord."

²² He also that had received two talents came and said, "Lord, you delivered to me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them." ²³ 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 you into the joy of your lord."

²⁴ Then he which had received the one talent came and said, "Lord, I knew [thought] you that you are a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not strowed [sown]: ²⁵ and I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth: lo, there you have that is yours."

²⁶ His lord answered and said to him, "You wicked and slothful servant, you knew that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strowed. ²⁷ You ought therefore to have put my money to the exchangers [bankers], and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury [interest]."

²⁸ [Then he said to some other servants] “Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him which has ten talents. ²⁹ For to every one that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that has not shall be taken away even that which he has. ³⁰ And cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

***** (End quote)

Christ on the Mount of Olives had spoken to His disciples of His second advent to the world. He had specified certain signs that were to show when His coming was near, and had bidden His disciples watch and be ready. [Matthew 24.] Again He repeated the warning, “Watch therefore; for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes.” [Matthew 25:13.]

Then He showed what it means to watch for His coming. The time is to be spent, not in idle waiting, but in diligent working. This lesson He taught in the parable of the talents.

“The kingdom of heaven,” He said, “is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered to them his goods. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.”

The man traveling into a far country represents Christ, who, when speaking this parable, was soon to depart from this earth to heaven. The “bondservants”, or slaves, of the parable, represent the followers of Christ. We are not our own. We have been “bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:20), not “with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18, 19); “that they which live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:15).

All men have been bought with this infinite price. By pouring the whole treasury of heaven into this world, by giving us in Christ all heaven, God has purchased the will, the affections, the mind, the soul, of every human being. Whether believers or unbelievers, all men are the LORD's property. All are called to do service for Him, and for the manner in which they have met this claim, all will be required to render an account at the great judgment day.

But the claims of God are not recognized by all. It is those who profess to have accepted Christ's service who in the parable are represented as His own servants.

Christ's followers have been redeemed for service. Our LORD teaches that the true object of life is ministry. Christ Himself was a worker, and to all His followers He gives the law of service – service to God and to their fellow men. Here Christ has presented to the world a higher conception of life than they had ever known. By living to minister for others, man is brought into connection with Christ. The law of service becomes the connecting link which binds us to God and to our fellow men.

To His servants Christ commits “His goods” – something to be put to use for Him. He gives “to every man his work.” Each has his place in the eternal plan of heaven. Each is to work in co-operation with Christ for the salvation of souls. Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The talents that Christ entrusts to His church represent especially the gifts and blessings imparted by the Holy Spirit. “To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these works that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.” 1 Corinthians 12:8-11. All men do not receive the same gifts, but to every servant of the Master some gift of the Spirit is promised.

Before He left His disciples, Christ “breathed on them, and said to them, Receive you the Holy Ghost.” John 20:22. Again He said, “Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you.” Luke 24:49. But not until after the ascension was the gift received in its fullness.

Not until through faith and prayer the disciples had surrendered themselves fully for His working was the outpouring of the Spirit received. Then in a special sense the goods of heaven were committed to the followers of Christ. “When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.” Ephesians 4:8. “Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ,” the Spirit “dividing to every man severally as He will.” Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 12:11.

The gifts are already ours in Christ, but their actual possession depends upon our reception of the Spirit of God.

The promise of the Spirit is not appreciated as it should be. Its fulfilment is not realised as it might be. It is the absence of the Spirit that makes the gospel ministry so powerless. Learning, talents, eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment, may be possessed; but without the presence of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner be won to Christ. On the other hand, if they are connected with Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts. God makes them the channel for the outworking of the highest influence in the universe.

Other Talents

The special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents represented in the parable. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. All are to be employed in Christ's service. In becoming His disciples, we surrender ourselves to Him with all that we are and have. These gifts He returns to us purified and ennobled, to be used for His glory in blessing our fellow men.

To every man God has given "according to his several ability." The talents are not apportioned capriciously. He who has ability to use five talents receives five. He who can improve but two, receives two. He who can wisely use only one, receives one. None need lament that they have not received larger gifts; for He who has apportioned to every man is equally honoured by the improvement of each trust, whether it be great or small. The one to whom five talents have been committed is to render the improvement of five; he who has but one, the improvement of one. God expects returns "according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not." 2 Corinthians 8:12.

In the parable 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 talents, however few, are to be put to use. The question that most concerns us is not, How much have I received? But, What am I doing with that which I have? The development of all our powers is the first duty we owe to God and to our fellow men. No one who is not growing daily in capability and usefulness is fulfilling the purpose of life. In making a profession of faith in Christ we pledge ourselves to become all that it is possible for us to be as

workers for the Master, and we should cultivate every faculty to the highest degree of perfection, that we may do the greatest amount of good of which we are capable.

The LORD has a great work to be done, and He will bequeath the most in the future life to those who do the most faithful, willing service in the present life.

The LORD chooses His own agents, and each day under different circumstances He gives them a trial in His plan of operation. In each true-hearted endeavour to work out His plan, He chooses His agents not because they are perfect but because, through a connection with Him, they may gain perfection.

God will accept only those who are determined to aim high. He places every human agent under obligation to do his best. Moral perfection is required of all. Never should we lower the standard of righteousness in order to accommodate inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrong-doing. We need to understand that imperfection of character is sin. All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole, and every one who receives Christ as a personal Saviour is privileged to possess these attributes.

And those who would be workers together with God must strive for perfection of every organ of the body and quality of the mind. True education is the preparation of the physical, mental, and moral powers for the performance of every duty; it is the training of body, mind, and soul for divine service. This is the education that will endure to eternal life.

Of every Christian the LORD requires growth in efficiency and capability in every line.

Christ has paid us our wages, even His own blood and suffering, to secure our willing service. He came to our world to give us an example of how we should work, and what spirit we should bring into our labour. He desires us to study how we can best advance His work and glorify His name in the world, crowning with honour, with the greatest love and devotion, the Father who “so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16.

But Christ has given us no assurance that to attain perfection of character is an easy matter. A noble, all-round character is not inherited. It does not come to us by accident. A noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ.

God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character.

It is formed by hard, stern battles with self [not with sin or with Satan!]

Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely, and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected.

Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you can not overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God.

Many whom God has qualified to do excellent work accomplish very little, because they attempt little. Thousands pass through life as if they had no definite object for which to live, no standard to reach. Such will obtain a reward proportionate to their works.

Remember that you will never reach a higher standard than you yourself set. Then set your mark high, and step by step, even though it be by painful effort, by self-denial and sacrifice, ascend the whole length of the ladder of progress. [2 Peter 1:4-11.] Let nothing hinder you. Fate has not woven its meshes about any human being so firmly that he need remain helpless and in uncertainty. Opposing circumstances should create a firm determination to overcome them. The breaking down of one barrier will give greater ability and courage to go forward. Press with determination in the right direction, and circumstances will be your helpers, not your hindrances.

Be ambitious, for the Master's glory, to cultivate every grace of character. In every phase of your character building you are to please God. This you may do; for Enoch pleased Him though living in a degenerate age. And there are Enochs in this our day.

Stand like Daniel, that faithful statesman, a man whom no temptation could corrupt. Do not disappoint Him who so loved you that He gave His own life to cancel your sins. He says, "Without Me you can do nothing." John 15:5. Remember this. If you have made mistakes, you certainly gain a victory if you see these mistakes and regard them as beacons of warning. Thus you turn defeat into victory, disappointing the enemy and honoring your Redeemer.

A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next. Those who are under the instruction of Christ in this world will take every divine attainment with them to the heavenly mansions. And in heaven we are continually to improve. How important, then, is the development of character in this life.

The heavenly intelligences will work with the human agent who seeks with determined faith that perfection of character which will reach out to perfection in action. To everyone engaged in this work Christ says, I am at your right hand to help you.

As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings.