

Part 27d Talents continued:

The One Talent

The man who received the one talent “went and digged in the earth, and hid his LORD's money.”

It was the one with the smallest gift who left his talent unimproved. In this is given a warning to all who feel that the smallness of their endowments excuses them from service for Christ. If they could do some great thing, how gladly would they undertake it; but because they can serve only in little things, they think themselves justified in doing nothing. In this they err. The LORD in His distribution of gifts is testing character. The man who neglected to improve his talent proved himself an unfaithful servant. Had he received five talents, he would have buried them as he buried the one. His misuse of the one talent showed that he despised the gifts of heaven.

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.” Luke 16:10. The importance of the little things is often underrated because they are small; but they supply much of the actual discipline of life. There are really no nonessentials in the Christian's life. Our character building will be full of peril while we underrate the importance of the little things.

“He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.” By unfaithfulness in even the smallest duties, man robs his Maker of the service which is His due. This unfaithfulness reacts upon himself. He fails of gaining the grace, the power, the force of character, which may be received through an unreserved surrender to God. Living apart from Christ he is subject to Satan's temptations, and he makes mistakes in his work for the Master. Because he is not guided by right principles in little things, he fails to obey God in the great matters which he regards as his special work. The defects cherished in dealing with life's minor details pass into more important affairs. He acts on the principles to which he has accustomed himself. Thus actions repeated form habits, habits form character, and by the character our destiny for time and for eternity is decided.

Only by faithfulness in the little things can the soul be trained to act with fidelity under larger responsibilities. God brought Daniel and his fellows into connection with the great men of Babylon, that these heathen men might become acquainted with the principles of true religion. In the midst of a nation of idolaters, Daniel was to represent the character of God. How did he become fitted for a position of so great trust and honour? It was his faithfulness in the little things that gave complexion to his whole life. He

honoured God in the smallest duties, and the LORD co-operated with him. To Daniel and his companions God gave “knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” Daniel 1:17.

As God called Daniel to witness for Him in Babylon, so He calls us to be His witnesses in the world today. In the smallest as well as the largest affairs of life He desires us to reveal to men the principles of His kingdom.

Christ in His life on earth taught the lesson of careful attention to the little things. The great work of redemption weighed continually upon His soul. As He was teaching and healing, all the energies of mind and body were taxed to the utmost; yet He noticed the most simple things in life and in nature. His most instructive lessons were those in which by the simple things of nature He illustrated the great truths of the kingdom of God. He did not overlook the necessities of the humblest of His servants. His ear heard every cry of need. He was awake to the touch of the afflicted woman in the crowd; the very slightest touch of faith brought a response. When He raised from the dead the daughter of Jairus, He reminded her parents that she must have something to eat. When by His own mighty power He rose from the tomb, He did not disdain to fold and put carefully in the proper place the graveclothes in which He had been laid away.

The work to which as Christians we are called is to co-operate with Christ for the salvation of souls. This work we have entered into covenant with Him to do. To neglect the work is to prove disloyal to Christ. But in order to accomplish this work we must follow His example of faithful, conscientious attention to the little things. This is the secret of success in every line of Christian effort and influence.

The LORD desires His people to reach the highest round of the ladder that they may glorify Him by possessing the ability He is willing to bestow. Through the grace of God every provision has been made for us to reveal that we act upon better plans than those upon which the world acts. We are to show a superiority in intellect, in understanding, in skill and knowledge, because we believe in God and in His power to work upon human hearts.

But those who have not a large endowment of gifts need not become discouraged. Let them use what they have, faithfully guarding every weak point in their characters, seeking by divine grace to make it strong. Into every action of life we are to weave faithfulness and loyalty, cultivating the attributes that will enable us to accomplish the work.

Habits of negligence should be resolutely overcome.

Many think it a sufficient excuse for the grossest errors to plead forgetfulness. But do they not, as well as others, possess intellectual faculties? Then they should discipline their minds to be retentive. It is a sin to forget, a sin to be negligent. If you form a habit of negligence, you may neglect your own soul's salvation and at last find that you are unready for the kingdom of God.

Great truths must be brought into little things. Practical religion is to be carried into the lowly duties of daily life. The greatest qualification for any man is to obey implicitly the word of the LORD.

Because they are not connected with some directly religious work, many feel that their lives are useless; that they are doing nothing for the advancement of God's kingdom. But this is a mistake. If their work is that which someone must do, they should not accuse themselves of uselessness in the great household of God. The humblest duties are not to be ignored. Any honest work is a blessing, and faithfulness in it may prove a training for higher trusts.

However lowly, any work done for God with a full surrender of self is as acceptable to Him as the highest service. No offering is small that is given with true-heartedness and gladness of soul.

Wherever we may be, Christ bids us take up the duty that presents itself. If this is in the home, take hold willingly and earnestly to make home a pleasant place. If you are a mother, train your children for Christ. This is as verily a work for God as is that of the minister in the pulpit. If your duty is in the kitchen, seek to be a perfect cook. Prepare food that will be healthful, nourishing, and appetizing. And as you employ the best ingredients in preparing food remember that you are to give your mind the best thoughts. If it is your work to till the soil or to engage in any other trade or occupation, make a success of the present duty. Put your mind on what you are doing. In all your work represent Christ. Do as He would do in your place.

However small your talent, God has a place for it. That one talent, wisely used, will accomplish its appointed work. By faithfulness in little duties, we are to work on the plan of addition, and God will work for us on the plan of multiplication. These littles will become the most precious influences in His work.

Let a living faith run like threads of gold through the performance of even the smallest duties. Then all the daily work will promote Christian growth. There will be a continual looking to Jesus. Love for Him will give vital force

to everything that is undertaken. Thus through the right use of our talents, we may link ourselves by a golden chain to the higher world. This is true sanctification; for sanctification consists in the cheerful performance of daily duties in perfect obedience to the will of God.

But many Christians are waiting for some great work to be brought to them. Because they cannot find a place large enough to satisfy their ambition, they fail to perform faithfully the common duties of life. These seem to them uninteresting. Day by day they let slip opportunities for showing their faithfulness to God. While they are waiting for some great work, life passes away, its purposes unfulfilled, its work unaccomplished.

The Talents Returned

“After a long time the LORD of those servants comes, and reckoneth with them.” When the LORD takes account of His servants, the return from every talent will be scrutinized. The work done reveals the character of the worker.

Those who have received the five and the two talents return to the LORD the entrusted gifts with their increase. In doing this they claim no merit for themselves. Their talents are those that have been delivered to them; they have gained other talents, but there could have been no gain without the deposit. They see that they have done only their duty. The capital was the LORD's; the improvement is His. Had not the Saviour bestowed upon them His love and grace, they would have been bankrupt for eternity.

But when the Master receives the talents, He approves and rewards the workers as though the merit were all their own. His countenance is full of joy and satisfaction. He is filled with delight that He can bestow blessings upon them. For every service and every sacrifice He requites them, not because it is a debt He owes, but because His heart is overflowing with love and tenderness.

“Well done, you good and faithful servant,” He says; “you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things; enter you into the joy of your LORD.”

It is the faithfulness, the loyalty to God, the loving service, that wins the divine approval. Every impulse of the Holy Spirit leading men to goodness and to God, is noted in the books of heaven, and in the day of God the workers through whom He has wrought will be commended.

They will enter into the joy of the LORD as they see in His kingdom those who have been redeemed through their instrumentality. And they are privileged to participate in His work there, because they have gained a fitness for it by participation in His work here. What we shall be in heaven is the reflection of what we are now in character and holy service. Christ said of Himself, "The Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister." Matthew 20:28. This, His work on earth, is His work in heaven. And our reward for working with Christ in this world is the greater power and wider privilege of working with Him in the world to come.

"Then he which had received the one talent came and said, LORD, I knew you that you are an hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not sowed; and I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth; lo, there you have that is your."

Thus men excuse their neglect of God's gifts. They look upon God as severe and tyrannical, as watching to spy out their mistakes and visit them with judgments. They charge Him with demanding what He has never given, with reaping where He has not sown.

There are many who in their hearts charge God with being a hard master because He claims their possessions and their service. But we can bring to God nothing that is not already His. "All things come of You," said King David; "and of Your own have we given You." 1 Chronicles 29:14. All things are God's, not only by creation, but by redemption. All the blessings of this life and of the life to come are delivered to us stamped with the cross of Calvary. Therefore the charge that God is a hard master, reaping where He has not sown, is false.

The master does not deny the charge of the wicked servant, unjust as it is; but taking him on his own ground he shows that his conduct is without excuse. Ways and means had been provided whereby the talent might have been improved to the owner's profit. "You oughtest," he said, "to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury."

Our heavenly Father requires no more nor less than He has given us ability to do. He lays upon His servants no burdens that they are not able to bear. "He knows our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." Ps. 103:14. All that He claims from us we through divine grace can render.

"Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Luke 12:48. We shall individually be held responsible for doing one jot less than

we have ability to do. The LORD measures with exactness every possibility for service. The unused capabilities are as much brought into account as are those that are improved. For all that we might become through the right use of our talents God holds us responsible. We shall be judged according to what we ought to have done, but did not accomplish because we did not use our powers to glorify God. Even if we do not lose our souls, we shall realize in eternity the result of our unused talents. For all the knowledge and ability that we might have gained and did not, there will be an eternal loss.

But when we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavours. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to co-operate with One who knows no failure.

We should not talk of our own weakness and inability. This is a manifest distrust of God, a denial of His word. When we murmur because of our burdens, or refuse the responsibilities He calls upon us to bear, we are virtually saying that He is a hard master, that He requires what He has not given us power to do.

The spirit of the slothful servant we are often fain to call humility. But true humility is widely different. To be clothed with humility does not mean that we are to be dwarfs in intellect, deficient in aspiration, and cowardly in our lives, shunning burdens lest we fail to carry them successfully. Real humility fulfills God's purposes by depending upon His strength.

God works by whom He will. He sometimes selects the humblest instrument to do the greatest work, for His power is revealed through the weakness of men. We have our standard, and by it we pronounce one thing great and another small; but God does not estimate according to our rule. We are not to suppose that what is great to us must be great to God, or that what is small to us must be small to Him. It does not rest with us to pass judgment on our talents or to choose our work. We are to take up the burdens that God appoints, bearing them for His sake, and ever going to Him for rest. Whatever our work, God is honoured by wholehearted, cheerful service. He is pleased when we take up our duties with gratitude, rejoicing that we are accounted worthy to be co-laborers with Him.

The Talent Removed

Upon the slothful servant the sentence was, "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him which has ten talents." Here, as in the reward of the

faithful worker, is indicated not merely the reward at the final judgment but the gradual process of retribution in this life. As in the natural, so in the spiritual world: every power unused will weaken and decay. Activity is the law of life; idleness is death. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." 1 Corinthians 12:7. Employed to bless others, his gifts increase. Shut up to self-serving they diminish, and are finally withdrawn. He who refuses to impart that which he has received will at last find that he has nothing to give. He is consenting to a process that surely dwarfs and finally destroys the faculties of the soul.

Let none suppose that they can live a life of selfishness, and then, having served their own interests, enter into the joy of their LORD. In the joy of unselfish love they could not participate. They would not be fitted for the heavenly courts. They could not appreciate the pure atmosphere of love that pervades heaven. The voices of the angels and the music of their harps would not satisfy them. To their minds the science of heaven would be as an enigma.

In the great judgment day those who have not worked for Christ, those who have drifted along, carrying no responsibility, thinking of themselves, pleasing themselves, will be placed by the Judge of all the earth with those who did evil. They receive the same condemnation.

Many who profess to be Christians neglect the claims of God, and yet they do not feel that in this there is any wrong. They know that the blasphemer, the murderer, the adulterer, deserves punishment; but as for them, they enjoy the services of religion. They love to hear the gospel preached, and therefore they think themselves Christians. Though they have spent their lives in caring for themselves, they will be as much surprised as was the unfaithful servant in the parable to hear the sentence, "Take the talent from him." Like the Jews, they mistake the enjoyment of their blessings for the use they should make of them.

Many who excuse themselves from Christian effort plead their inability for the work. But did God make them so incapable? No, never. This inability has been produced by their own inactivity and perpetuated by their deliberate choice. Already, in their own characters, they are realizing the result of the sentence, "Take the talent from him." The continual misuse of their talents will effectually quench for them the Holy Spirit, which is the only light. The sentence, "Cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness," sets Heaven's seal to the choice which they themselves have made for eternity.

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