

## "Lord, Lord, Open to Us!"

*"If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"—Luke 16:11*

### MATTHEW CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

WE are indeed privileged to have had so many things provided for us that we tend to take many of them for granted, as our daily food and our shelter for which many of us have never had to want. These are earthly and temporal necessities without which we cannot live. God truly has provided us with many things for which we should be continually thankful.

We are indeed fortunate above all to have His Word of Truth with us to this day, and to have been mercifully led to an understanding of its glorious message of life. This great privilege we should never abuse or neglect or take for granted, but thankfully and joyfully devote our lives to God's work and the study of His Word, having been called out of hopeless darkness into eternal light.

Truly we fall far short of perfection and far short of the goals that we would like to attain to, but it is only by ceaselessly bringing ourselves back to the Truth, and constantly reminding ourselves of what we are to do, and the love of God, and our true wisdom and welfare, that we will even have a chance.

The daily reading of God's Word is the only way in which we will keep up our faith. Once we let this duty slip by and become lax in our reading, our minds turn to the pleasures around us and we soon find ourselves getting farther and farther from God. Just meeting once or twice a week is not enough. It must be a daily effort on our part.

*We must be continually UPBUILDING OURSELVES in the One and only Faith.*

As we do our daily readings, we will notice how often this message is brought out. Paul tells us (1 Thess. 5:21) to—

*"Prove all things, HOLD FAST that which is good."*

And he again states in his letter to Titus how we ought to comfort and direct ourselves in our daily walk. Among the qualifications of any who would serve God and the ecclesia, he includes (1:9)—

*"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."*

\* \* \*

WE meet around the table of our absent Lord and Saviour in obedience to the command, to do this "Till he come" (1 Cor. 11:24-26). We are also refreshed each week by words of exhortation which are meant to build us up and direct us in the path of righteousness.

Exhortations are not just limited to Sunday morning. They are any words which will build up or strengthen, and can, and should, be used often in our daily conversations to anyone. In Heb. 3:13 we find—

*"But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."*

*—let us note well that sin is both HARDENING and DECEIVING. It is in God's wisdom and justice that sin weaves a continuously stronger bond of self-deception as it is repeated.*

*"For we are made partakers of Christ, IF we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."*

*If only we could always just REMEMBER to do what is right!*

When we look at what is required of us, we know that we can never live up to all that is expected. Man, at his best, is a frail creature and is always sinning. We will never be perfect in this life. God knows our frame and He remembers that we are but dust and ashes. We also have these comforting words of Paul (1 Cor. 10:13)—

"There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man;

"But God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

But we cannot do as we please and expect to be forgiven. We must in love and thanksgiving put forth a diligent effort to do what is expected of us, for we are commanded to present ourselves a "living sacrifice," which is our "reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). This is surely no light and easy thing, but complete dedication.

We know not the hour in which the Son of Man cometh. We must **always** be ready, and trying at all times to do what is right. This lesson is very graphically portrayed for us in Matt. 25, where we have Christ's parable of the Ten Virgins.

When one understands the Truth, these parables of Christ make much more sense than if we had the doctrine of the churches of the world. And to get the full import it is helpful to know a little of the customs of that, time in Israel. Jesus starts the parable—

"Then shall the Kingdom of heaven be likened unto Ten Virgins."

Just **when** does this comparison apply? He says, "Then," but we have to look back to the last verses of the previous chapter (24) to find the antecedent of the word "then"—

"The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him and in an hour that he is not aware."

*"And shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth:"*

And he goes right on (25:1)—

"THEN shall the Kingdom be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom."

Here we should review some of the customs of the land at that time, concerning marriage. Ten bridesmaids were usually chosen for that task at that time. Marriage ceremonies were very different from the world's customs today. The duty of the bridesmaids was to meet the bridegroom on his way to fetch the bride from her father's house. They had to go so far on the road and wait.

The arrival of the bridegroom was usually at night, requiring the use of lamps, and the time at which he would come was uncertain and it usually called for them waiting. If the waiting was long, the lamps were liable to go out unless they had brought a supply of oil beside what the lamps contained; and anyone with a lamp that was not lit was considered as much unfit to take part in the ceremony as someone who came inappropriately dressed to a wedding today.

"And five of them were wise and five were foolish.

"They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them;

"But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps."

*Here is the lesson that we are to get from the parable. We should be prepared and waiting, and making sure that we are not found slack when Christ comes.*

Those that were foolish or unprepared by not taking oil for their lamps probably did not do it wilfully, but just did not use enough foresight. They only prepared themselves for a short time, and when that time grew longer they drifted off and became lax.

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made. Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

"Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

"But the wise answered saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut.

"Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us! But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

Jesus made his point very clear in the parable. He does this so that no one can say that the meaning was not clear enough. There is no blurring of the edges to make it less painful and upsetting to the fleshly mind.

**The warning is plain and frequent, and the issues are life and death.**

We may think, "How unmerciful to shut the door on these sincerely pleading and repentant virgins!" But the mercy lies in the present gracious call and solemn warning. Peter says—

"But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as 1000 years and 1000 years as 1 day.

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

"But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.

"The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:8-10).

*Christ is very merciful and longsuffering, and pleads with us to repent and be wise and obey him NOW.*

But if we keep putting off his commands there will come a day when it is too late and we, if we are not ready, will be standing without, knocking at the door. Solomon sums up the lesson in these words—

"Forsake the foolish and live.

"If thou shalt be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself, but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it" (Prov. 9:6-12).

\* \* \*

THE next parable Jesus spoke to them in Matt. 25 is the parable of the Talents—

"The Kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling to a far country, who called his servants and delivered to them his goods."

**The whole point of the parable is in the last 2 words of that sentence—"HIS GOODS."**

We are God's servants and everything that we possess are "His goods."

He has given us much to be thankful for, but not to use selfishly. It is how we use these goods that we will have to answer for. He has given us commands on how to conduct our lives and if we use His gifts wrongly we will have to answer for it.

Lest we forget the Source of all we have, and begin in pride to attribute anything to our own efforts or wisdom, Paul asks—

"What hast thou that thou didst not receive?  
"Why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?"

*If we are not righteous over these little things which He has given us, how will we behave with the much larger things that He has promised to entrust us with?*

Jesus brings this lesson out pointedly in the parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:10-12):

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful in that which is much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

"If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

"And if ye will not be faithful in that which is another's, who shall give you that which is your own?"

Here we can see that we have a great responsibility and trust. The use of our money and time and ability is a great trust which may seem very little now, but really has a great bearing on our salvation.

We may think that we are going out and earning our money, but it is actually being provided for us. Our job is provided for us and the health and strength and ability to do it, and so, therefore, is our money, and where much is given much is expected. We must use it wisely and faithfully and not foolishly and selfishly.

Moses warned and exhorted the proud and thoughtless in Israel in words that apply with equal force to us (Deut. 8:10-18)—

"Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God . . .

"Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein . . .

"Then thou say in thine heart, MY power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.

"But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is HE that giveth thee power to get wealth."

\* \* \*

JESUS continues (Matt. 25:19)—

"After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them."

The time of reckoning is coming soon for all of us and will we be ready at that time or will we be found to have been slack in what has been entrusted to us?

*We often find it hard to go on, but we must set a goal before us to help us in the way. This is not a crutch, but something that we can look forward to, to keep up our zeal and strength.*

Those that fall by the way, or the unfaithful, become obsessed with the little things of life. Even Christ himself needed to strengthen himself by looking steadfastly to the future joy, as we read in Heb. 12—

"Therefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,

"Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

"Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith,

**"Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."**

The unfaithful servant in the parable was called to account for this very thing. He did not set a goal for himself. He thought too much on the day to day happenings to work for the prize. When he was called to account for what he had done with his master's goods he replied (Matt. 25:24-25)—

"I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed,

"And I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine."

He had no real love or zeal for the work that his master had given him. He did not realize that his master was entrusting him with his goods to find out and test him on how he would handle future gifts.

\* \* \*

IN the final scene in Matt. 25 Jesus speaks of his coming in glory as the King, and calling all his servants before him, and in v. 34 he says—

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand,

"Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

And verse 41—

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand,

"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

There are two groups of people spoken of here in these words of Christ. One group fed, clothed and visited Christ's suffering brethren; the other did not.

*This may seem like such a little thing today, but really it is one of the most important lessons in the chapter. It is primarily a summation of the parable of the talents.*

This feeding and clothing is not just the act of doing it but the spirit behind the doing of it. Many in the world make a hobby of feeding and clothing the sick and destitute. Surely this is good, but to please God it must be done with the proper understanding, and enlightenment, and motive, and allegiance, for—

"To OBEY is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22).

And (1 Cor. 13:3)—

"Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love . . ."

—true spiritual-minded, scripturally-enlightened love of God (Rom. 8:28), and of His Truth (2 Thess. 2:10; Rev. 22:15, and of righteousness (Heb. 1:9)—

". . . I am nothing."

And Paul goes on 1 Cor. 13:4-7 to give the beautiful attributes and characteristics of the spiritual love that is vital to salvation.

We must make these things, these services for others, a **part of our lives** and do them **for Christ** and in the **spirit of Christ**, and **because he commands it**, and we must do all else that he commands as well. We must use HIS talents which he has given us faithfully.

By nature, we spend most of our work and lives on things for ourselves. This is where we need help to do better. We all fail in this but we can and must always be trying to do better. We must try to be amongst those who will hear that wonderful invitation to eternal life and joy with Christ:

"Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom."

We must examine ourselves, as Paul says—

*"For if we would judge (RV. discern) ourselves, we should not be judged." —F.J.H. 4/67*  
Berean

---