

Commitment 4: The Parable of the Talents**9702**

In thinking about commitment, it might be interesting to look at the parable of the talents (Luke 19) in a little different light. If you remember, a lord gave to his ten servants various quantities of money over which to be stewards. He told them to 'trade with these until I come', and then he left and went to a far country. Upon his return, he called the servants and asked them what they had gained by trading. At least two came forward and showed that by working very diligently in the market they had made a great profit for their lord. But then one came and told him that he had hidden the money away in the earth. It had gained no profit at all, but it was returned intact. The lord was very angry and condemned this servant saying, 'Why then did you not put my money into the bank, and at my coming I should have collected it with interest?'

The question that I want to ask is, 'How pleased would the lord have been if this man had indeed simply put the money in the bank to collect interest'. Think about this for a minute. Obviously, he would have been more pleased. But I believe that the lord was more interested in how hard his servants worked; how strong their commitment to him was than merely in the return on his money. He was developing stewards so that he could delegate responsibility to them. We suppose that the last servant was a man who decided that he didn't want to work at all; he hid the money but with just as little effort he could have put the money in the bank.

Sometimes we are in the same kind of situation in our spiritual lives. We put our money in the bank, so to speak, and we don't have to worry about the daily details of earning money. We want to be able to put off our responsibilities so that we can be free to pursue our own interests, instead of actively trading on the market. We want to be coasting instead of pursuing. We don't want to have to make a real commitment in our lives to any one but ourselves.

Once I received a receipt from Herald of Truth that provoked some of this thinking. On that receipt was printed 'You are personally involved in teaching lost souls'. Well, that is true in a way, for I had personally selected that particular work to receive my money. But I saw in that notice a tremendous salve for the conscience, a way to believe that I was doing the same thing as actually talking to someone about Christ. I know that it bothered me because I felt guilty about 'putting my money into the bank so that I wouldn't have to worry about it anymore.' We must be personally involved, that is true. But it must not be something that simply passes the burden on to someone else. We all need to try to improve on that score.

The main point is that we must make a commitment. We must not be lukewarm, as Christ says in Revelation, but we must become hot. I don't want to define what each of us must be doing to serve the Lord, or that you must be doing everything. So many times I have been discouraged when hearing a lesson like this because it gave me the impression that I needed to be involved in everything at once. I felt guilty when any work was mentioned that I was not a part of. And so I usually did not begin any work at all. What I would like to do is to encourage each of us to set some kind of particular goal, some kind of particular work that is our work, our service, our job. When Nehemiah went back to oversee the finishing of the building of the wall of Jerusalem, the different families each took a piece of the problem and so they solved it in record time. We are all building a building, too, and this one is also for God. Let us read 1 Corinthians 3.10-15:

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

Let us so involve ourselves that we can point to some part of the building and say, 'I helped build that part right there'. We must turn our thought into action, as we read in 1 John 3.18, 'little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.' We all need to make that kind of commitment.

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