

The Reward for Faithfulness

“A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.”
—Luke 19:12

IN THIS PARABLE, OUR

Lord Jesus was the ‘nobleman’ who went to receive a kingdom, and to prepare a home for his faithful followers. He also promised that he would return to receive them and to accompany them to their new home. In his farewell discourse, Jesus further told them, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”—John 14:2,3

THE NOBLEMAN’S GIFT

Before the nobleman left on his journey, he gave his servants a sum of money that they were commanded to use wisely. From Luke’s account, we read, “Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten pounds, and said to them, ‘Trade with these till I come.’ But his citizens hated him and sent an

embassy after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' When he returned, having received the kingdom, he commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading."—Luke 19:13-15, *Revised Standard Version*

THE SERVANTS' RESPONSIBILITY

Jesus was teaching his disciples that he would be returning to his Heavenly Father when he had finished his earthly ministry and work of redemption on behalf of the human creation. He would present himself to the Father and receive commission from him to establish his kingdom. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."—Heb. 9:24

In the parable, Jesus' followers were the servants who would be entrusted to use the money given them wisely during his absence. Those who were not willing to accept his rule over them represented the careless and indifferent, and those who are in opposition to our Lord's teachings and the ways of Truth and righteousness. His command to them was to make a profit with the money which he had given them, and to give an account of their endeavors when he returned. This illustrates the zeal and attention that the Lord's followers demonstrate in their desire to know and serve the Lord. They use their talents and the tools at hand to study the Scriptures and to give diligence in making their calling and election sure.

THE NOBLEMAN'S RETURN

We learn in verse 15 that the time had come for the nobleman's promised return. He had received the Heavenly Father's special commission for him to establish the kingdom, but it was not yet set up. We believe that this marks the time of our Lord's Second Presence at the end of this present Gospel Age.

The journey had been a long one and to a very distant place. Our Lord was teaching his disciples that the kingdom would not be soon established. In his absence, he had entrusted his servants with important responsibilities. They were to make careful use of a sum of money which he had given them, and he expected them to bring an increase. Their faithfulness, zeal, and loyalty as his servants would thus be tested. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."—II Cor. 5:10

THE FAITHFUL SERVANTS

The nobleman asked his servants for an accounting. "The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made ten pounds more.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made five pounds.' And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.'" (Luke 19:16-19, *RSV*) Each of the two faithful servants gave their accounting and each was awarded according to their diligence to make a profit. In the

spiritual sense, this points to the growth and development of the New Creature in Christ Jesus.

THE UNFAITHFUL SERVANT

When the third servant came to give his accounting to the nobleman, he revealed that he had not served his Master well. From the scriptural account, we read, “Then another came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your pound, which I kept laid away in a napkin; for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man; you take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow.’ He said to him, ‘I will condemn you out of your own mouth, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money into the bank, and at my coming I should have collected it with interest?’ And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the pound from him, and give it to him who has the ten pounds.’ (And they said to him, ‘Lord, he has ten pounds!’)” I tell you, that to every one who has will more be given; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”—vss. 20-26, *RSV*

This servant represents the unfaithful Christians who do not strive diligently and use their talents wisely. They have neglected the principles of God’s Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit to grow in grace and knowledge. He was unwilling to surrender his life to God as an acceptable sacrifice. The Apostle Paul explained, “Deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Heb. 2:15) They are unworthy for the high calling in Christ Jesus, and their blessings

concerning the New Creature will be given to someone else. “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”—I Cor. 4:1,2

THE REWARD FOR FAITHFULNESS

Jesus knew that during his earthly ministry it would be necessary for him to suffer for righteousness and he accepted his walk uncomplainingly. After his death, he was raised by his loving Heavenly Father to the divine nature far above every name that is named. “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”—Eph. 1:17-23

What has been true of our Lord Jesus will also be true of the faithful members of his body—the Christ. “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the

body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”—Rom. 8:13-18

FAITHFUL ENDURANCE

In his letter to Timothy, Paul wrote about the principle of suffering and faithful endurance that is acceptable to God. He said, “I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.”—II Tim. 2:10-12

The faithful members of the Christ share joint experiences with our Lord and are thus part of God’s heavenly family. In the apostle’s letter to the Hebrew brethren, he explains, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he

that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”—Heb. 2:9-12

We have named the name of Christ Jesus and he is not ashamed of us because we are his brethren and share the same Heavenly Father. What a wonderful privilege to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, to experience, first, the suffering, and, afterward, the glory that follows. The disciplines and trials that come to us are part of our training as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. They are for our good that we might eventually share our Lord’s holiness and receive the glorious change that is reserved for his faithful brethren.

Let us keep the prospect of our marvelous inheritance uppermost in our minds. “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”—II Cor. 4:17,18

OUR LEGACY

The night before Jesus was crucified he addressed his Father concerning his followers. He said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through

their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.”—John 17:17-22

THE CROWN OF LIFE

Let us strive more diligently to be faithful so that at the end of our course we, like the faithful ones in the parable who used their pounds wisely, might hear the Master say well done my good servant. Let us hold fast our faith until the end of the way. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”—James 1:12 ■