

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97440
www.cogeternal.org

The late Raymond C. Cole
Founding Pastor
Jon W. Brisby
Pastor, Director

Offices in:
United States
Philippines
Switzerland

What Is an Unprofitable Servant?

March 2005

Dear Brethren:

We definitely had our best Feast ever this past year in the Smokey Mountains of Tennessee. The fellowship was great and so were the sermons from Mr. Jon Brisby. I cannot remember when I have been so inspired.

I would like to start this letter today by asking you a question: Can you be called by God, possess His way of life, understand all His truths, but not make it into His Kingdom? The answer to that is: Yes, you can, if you are an unprofitable servant—no matter how much you know—you will not enter into God's Kingdom.

What is an unprofitable servant in God's eyes? We may think we are doing everything right, but if we are unprofitable to God, He will cast us out.

Today I would like to look at a parable found in Matthew 25:14–30. I believe I am going to start a series on all the parables of Jesus Christ to help us better understand what Christ is saying in them. I will be reading from the *New King James Bible*.

In Matthew 25, we find the parable of the talents. There is a parallel to that in Luke 19:12–27 where it is called the parable of the pounds. Let us begin in Matthew 25:14, read through the whole parable, then go back and analyze it to see what we can learn.

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country [Who is that man? The man in this parable is Jesus Christ.], who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them [What are God's goods? It is a measure of God's wealth, God's truth and His Holy Spirit. God gave each person a measure of His Spirit along with His Truth.]. "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey [That journey was to prepare a place for those who would be faithful and profitable servants. That journey was to heaven to prepare a place (John 14:2–3).] (Matthew 25:14–15).

"Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. "And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money (verses 16–18).

He hid the Lord's wealth—His Truth and a measure of His Spirit.

"After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord' (verses 19–21).

Enter into the Kingdom.

"He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' "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 into the joy of your lord.' "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown [That is an unusual statement.], and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground . . . (verses 22–25).

He hid God's Truth and the measure of God's Spirit because he was afraid.

. . . Look, there you have what is yours.' "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 'So you ought to have deposited my money [His Truth] with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 'Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. 'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (verses 25–30).

Let us go back to verse 24 and look at this again.

"Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man . . .

God expects us to invest His wealth. How do we do that? By living it even if we are persecuted for doing so. That is what this particular man was afraid of. He was afraid to live God's way of life, probably because of the persecution he would receive. So he hid the Lord's talent.

. . . reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.

Where did God not sow seed today? Do you know? If you do, then you will be able to understand this parable. Where do you sow the seed of God's way? Where does God sow seed? He sows it in your mind; in the garden of your mind is where God sows the good seed. Your mind also becomes a bank for God's Truth because that is where you store it. That is where you store the truth of God—in your mind.

So where did God not sow seed today? In the mind of the unconverted. God does not sow seed in the mind of the unconverted. Why? Because He expects *you* to sow the seed there through your good Christian behavior. You are the one who has to sow the seed if you are going to be a faithful servant. If you are not doing that, then you become an unfaithful, unprofitable servant.

Do you know, brethren, that we can hide God's Truth through our bad behavior? Just like this man hid his talent in the ground, we can hide God's Truth—that good seed—through our bad behavior. When we do, it is like burying our talent in the ground, or hiding it. Our own carnal, human nature can actually hide God's Truth. If we are afraid to live God's way of life, we become an unprofitable servant to God; because that is how the seed will be sown in the minds of the unconverted—through your good behavior.

Now when we come in contact with people, when is the best time to sow the seed in an unconverted mind? It is when they offend you—when they do harm to you. That is when you can sow good seed. If you sow good seed in that unconverted mind, that seed will eventually grow. We know that seed does not grow immediately. When a farmer plants a field, he does not go out the next day and expect to harvest. It takes a while for the seed to germinate. Some seeds can lie in the ground for seven years and not germinate. Faith comes in where we have to keep sowing the good seed in those unconverted minds with which we come in contact. Through faith, if we keep sowing the good seed, eventually that seed will germinate, take root and grow. That will be to our benefit. If we are sowing good seed and that seed germinates and grows, then we will receive good in return. But what happens if we are offended and we sow bad seed? Then eventually that seed is going to take root. That seed seems to grow much faster and will come back to haunt us.

Paul said in Galatians 6:7–10:

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

I have a note in my Bible that says God is not mocked or made fun of. God is saying, if you sow bad seed you will reap a bad harvest. If you sow good seed you will reap a good harvest.

For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption [If you sow seed out of your carnal nature, then you will reap that.], but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart (verses 8–9).

We have to keep sowing that good seed and not lose heart because it will eventually take root. Sometimes when a farmer plants seed, if the weather is not right, all of the seed rots in the ground because the conditions were not quite right. Sometimes the conditions in the unconverted mind are not right. All that good seed that you sow could die. But that means that we must sow seed again. When the farmer realizes that his seed has all died, then he sows it again and again and again and he keeps sowing. If he does not give up, eventually he gets a crop. That is what Christ is saying here.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all [that is, all people with whom we come in contact] especially to those who are of the household of faith (verse 10).

By whom are we usually offended the most? Is it not by our own family or by those we feel should know better? God is saying here to be kind and good, especially to those of the household of faith, no matter how they treat you.

When, then, do we sow most effectively? When we are offended by someone who wrongs us. That is our golden opportunity to sow good seed. If we do not sow good seed, then we become unprofitable servants. If the seed is not sown, it can never germinate and produce fruit. Christ is going to return and He will want to reap the harvest. If we have sown the good seed out there, He will be able to reap a harvest.

When we are offended, how do we respond? Do we show love, mercy, forgiveness and kindness? Or do we condemn, castigate, or judge the person? What kind of seed do we sow when people offend us? Do we exalt ourselves in such cases, or do we show humility by holding our peace? Do we sow seeds of strife or seeds of peace? We will reap what we sow. If it is condemnation and hate, then that seed will germinate and come back to haunt us. If it is seeds of love and forgiveness, those will bear fruit to our benefit.

Now back to Matthew 25:26:

"But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.

Christ came back expecting to do some reaping but this unprofitable servant had not sown any good seed.

'So you ought to have deposited my money [my Truth] with the bankers . . . (verse 27).

Who are the bankers? Where do we store the Truth? Our minds are the banks where we put God's Truth. So then *you* are the bankers. If I were a profitable servant, would it not make sense that I should give God's Truth to you—by my example—and then you become the bankers who loan that Truth out to others? Now, if I were an unfaithful or unprofitable servant I could bury that talent and not give it to you. Then that Truth would never be multiplied and there would never be a harvest when Christ returns.

Christ is saying, the least that you could have done—if you did not want to live my way of life personally—is to give it to the bankers who could produce an increase. Then when I returned I would have been able to receive a harvest.

. . . and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents (verses 27–28).

In Luke 19:23, where there is a parallel account, it is written a little differently:

'Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?'

He is saying, if you had at least put my treasure in your own mind, then you could have become converted and I could have at least received one converted person into my Kingdom. But you did not even do that. You buried that talent and did not put it to use. So he was cast out.

Luke 19:24–27:

"And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the [pound] from him, and give it to him who has ten [pounds].' ("But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten

[pounds].') ' For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

Because he did not live it and give that talent to others—or invest that pound—then God took that away from him also.

'But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me' " (verse 27).

When God gives us His Truth and we live by that Truth, then we have to obey God and live His way of life. By doing so we allow our lights to shine, and when they shine, we are sowing seed in the minds of those unconverted around us. What we have to do is keep on sowing.

What will you reap from the seed you sow? Will it be enemies of God or friends? Will people glorify God because of your good behavior or curse God because of your bad behavior? It is up to you. Will God reap because of good seed you have sown? If He does, then you will have been a profitable servant. If you have not sown any good seed, then God does not need you. You become unprofitable to God. Even though you possess all of God's Truth and have had a measure of His Holy Spirit, you can lose it by not living it. We must live it and demonstrate it when we come in contact with others or we become unprofitable servants.

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 4:7–11).

Brethren, if we could only do this, we definitely would become profitable servants to God and He would be glorified by our behavior.

Matthew 19:16 shows the parable of the rich young ruler:

Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

Notice the question—what good thing shall I do to receive eternal life? Some think in this parable that Christ is only talking about physical possessions; but brethren, He is also

talking about spiritual possessions. If you gave all of your physical possessions to those who do not have any, would that earn you a way into God's Kingdom? If that were the case, you could buy your way into the Kingdom if you were rich. The Lord Jesus did not mean that this man could have been saved by selling his possessions and giving the proceeds to charity. There is only one way of salvation, and that is faith in the Lord.

So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, " 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' " The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" (verses 17–20).

He had done all these things, he had known God's way of life, and he was rich in God's Truth. What did he lack?

Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor . . . (verse 21).

What is Christ talking about here? What did this man have? He had God's law and way of life that he had kept from his youth. Then what was he to give to the poor? All these things that he kept from his youth (verse 20). In other words, give God's way of life to the poor.

let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins (James 5:20).

And when do we do that? When we are offended we give of God's way of life to those who are poor and do not have that way of life.

. . . go, sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matthew 19:21).

The treasure in heaven to which Christ was referring is souls he would influence and lead to conversion through his good Christian conduct.

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions (Matthew 19:22).

He did have great spiritual possessions, but this man's mind was on his great physical possessions that also came from God. To him, his physical possessions were more

important than his spiritual possessions, and so he went away sad because his trust and security was in the physical possessions he could not give up for faith in Christ.

Brethren, God has given us a great possession—His Truth, His Holy Spirit. We are rich. According to God, you are not rich unless you possess the Truth and His way of life. You can have all the money in the world, but to God that is just filthy lucre. All these physical treasures are going to come to naught. But what God has given us—that Truth and the measure of His Spirit—is the true wealth. God expects us to give of that to others by the way we live our lives.

If we want to be profitable servants to God, we must be willing to sow good seed where God has not yet sown seed—in the minds of the unconverted or those who are weak and poor. We do that best when we are offended by them, which is when we can sow seeds of kindness, love, peace and forgiveness. If we have faith and keep sowing, eventually they will grow and God will be able to reap more sons into His glory (His Kingdom). That is why the profitable servant is made ruler over ten cities in His Kingdom (Luke 19:16), because he was influential in bringing more sons to Christ by his good behavior, by sowing that good seed out of the treasury of God's bank—that true way of life.

So I encourage you, brethren, to become profitable servants of God and begin sowing that good seed, especially when you are offended by those who do not understand God's way of life. If you really want to experience joy, peace, happiness and a good life, sow the good seed!

Your loving servant,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard W. Litz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard W. Litz