

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, THE CHURCH LIFE, THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE,
AND THE COMING OF THE LORD, Week 4**

**Being Faithful in Service in the Lord's Commission and in His Gifts
for His Second and Imminent Coming**

Scripture Reading: Matt. 24:45-51; 25:14-30

- Matthew 24:45 Who then is the **faithful and prudent slave**, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time?
- Matthew 24:46 Blessed is that slave whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.
- Matthew 24:47 Truly I say to you that he will **set him over all his possessions**.
- Matthew 24:48 But if that **evil slave** says in his heart, My **master delays**,
- Matthew 24:49 And begins to **beat his fellow slaves** and **eats and drinks with the drunken**,
- Matthew 24:50 The master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know,
- Matthew 24:51 And will **cut him asunder** and appoint his portion with the **hypocrites**. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.
- Matthew 25:14 For the kingdom of the heavens is just like a man about to go abroad, who called his own slaves and delivered to them his possessions.
- Matthew 25:15 To one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability. And he went abroad.
- Matthew 25:16 Immediately he who had received the five talents **went and traded with them and gained another five**.
- Matthew 25:17 Similarly, he who had received the two **gained another two**.
- Matthew 25:18 But he who had received the one **went off and dug in the earth and hid his master's money**.
- Matthew 25:19 Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.
- Matthew 25:20 And he who had received the five talents came and brought another five talents, saying, Master, you delivered to me five talents; behold, I have gained another five talents.
- Matthew 25:21 His master said to him, Well done, **good and faithful slave**. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. **Enter into the joy of your master**.
- Matthew 25:22 And he who had received the two talents also came and said, Master, you delivered to me two talents; behold, I have gained another two talents.
- Matthew 25:23 His master said to him, Well done, **good and faithful slave**. You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. **Enter into the joy of your master**.
- Matthew 25:24 Then he who had received the one talent also came and said, Master, I knew about you, that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow.
- Matthew 25:25 And I was afraid and **went off and hid your talent in the earth**; behold, you have what is yours.
- Matthew 25:26 And his master answered and said to him, **Evil and slothful slave**, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not winnow.
- Matthew 25:27 Therefore you should have deposited my money with the money changers; and when I came, I would have recovered what is mine with interest.
- Matthew 25:28 Take away therefore the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.
- Matthew 25:29 For to every one who has, more shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him who does not have, even that which he has shall be **taken away from him**.
- Matthew 25:30 And **cast out the useless slave into the outer darkness**. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

The Danger and Loss of Not Using Our Gift

Matthew 25 tells us that some have five talents, some have two talents, and others have one talent. At the very least, we are the one-talented ones. A saint cannot say that he has not received a talent. We have to strongly stress this one thing. We have to convince every saint among us that they cannot say that they do not have any gift and cannot do anything. This is a lie. According to the biblical truth, **every believer has a gift**. You may have the smallest gift, but you still have a gift. **Everyone is talented; everyone is gifted**.

...Ephesians 4:11 speaks of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. The gifted persons mentioned here are those who have been endowed with a special gift. But verse 7 says, "*To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*" Each one includes every member of the Body of Christ, each of whom has received a general gift. This shows that everyone is a gifted person and is responsible to use his gift. The Brethren did not like to use the title elders, so they used the term responsible. This is a wrong term because every believer is responsible. Who is not a responsible brother or sister? We have to be careful not to use the term responsible, because **all of us are gifted and are responsible before the Lord to use our gifts for the building up of the Body of Christ**. (*Excerpt from the Basic Lessons on Service, Chapter 13, Section 2*)

Day 1

I. Matthew 24:45-51 reveals that we must be faithful in service in the Lord's commission to give God as food to the members of His household so that we may win Christ as our reward in the coming kingdom:

- A. God has a household and a household administration, an economy, to dispense Himself as food to the members of His household for His expression-1 Tim. 1:4; 3:15; Eph. 2:19.
- B. God has set faithful and prudent slaves over His household as household administrators, stewards, channels of supply, to give His people food at the proper time-Matt. 24:45; 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:10; Phil. 1:25.
- C. Give them food refers to ministering the word of God and Christ as the life supply to the believers in the church; Christ as the life-giving Spirit is our food, embodied and realized in the word of life-Matt. 24:45; John 6:57, 63, 68; Acts 5:20; 1 John 5:16:
 1. In order to enjoy the Lord as our spiritual food so that we can feed others, we must pray over and muse on His word, tasting and enjoying it through careful consideration-Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:15; Ezek. 3:1-4.
 2. We must devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word-Acts 6:4; 2 Cor. 3:6, 8; John 7:37-39; cf. Heb. 7:25; 8:2.

The Faithful and Prudent Slave Giving Food to the Lord's Household at the Appointed Time

Verses 45 through 51 are concerned with faithfulness and prudence. Verse 45 says, "Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the appointed time?" Faithfulness is toward the Lord, whereas prudence is toward the believers. Watchfulness is for rapture into the Lord's presence, but faithfulness is for reigning in the kingdom.

The household spoken of in verse 45 refers to the believers, who are the church. To give them food is to minister the Word of God with Christ as the life supply to the believers in the church. We all must learn how to minister the life supply to the household of the Lord at the appointed time.

Verses 46 and 47 say, "Blessed is that slave whom his master when he comes shall find so doing. Truly I say to you, that he will set him over all his possessions." To be blessed here is to be rewarded with ruling authority in the manifestation of the kingdom. The faithful slave of the Lord will be set over all His possessions as a reward in the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens. (Excerpt from the Life-Study of Matthew, chapter 63, section 4)

Day 2

- D. To say in our heart that our Master delays is to love the present evil age and not to love the Lord's appearing-Matt. 24:48; 2 Tim. 4:8, 10; cf. Acts 26:16:
 1. We must beware of covetousness, not storing up treasure for ourselves but being rich toward God-Luke 12:16-21; 2 Cor. 6:10; Eph. 3:8.
 2. "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32) means that we should not love and treasure the evil world that God is going to judge and utterly destroy; this is a solemn warning to the world-loving believers-vv. 28-32; cf. Rom. 1:21, 25.
 3. We must be watchful and beseeching so that the day of the Lord's coming would not come upon us suddenly as a snare-Luke 21:34-36; cf. Matt. 2:3.
- E. To beat our fellow slaves is to mistreat fellow believers-24:49a; Acts 9:4:
 1. We must not judge and condemn our fellow believers but be kind to them, tenderhearted, forgiving them, even as God in Christ forgave us-Luke 6:37; Eph. 4:31-32; cf. 1 Thes. 5:14.
 2. We must not revile or criticize our brothers but consider them more excellent than ourselves-2 Tim. 3:1-2; 1 Pet. 3:8-10; Jude 10; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Phil. 2:2-4, 29; Rom. 12:3:
 - a. Reviling is when we cause the saints to inwardly suffer pain or to be inwardly wounded by assailing and criticizing them harshly with abusive language.
 - b. The Lord's way is to bind up our wounds (healing us) and to pour oil and wine on our wounds (giving us the Holy Spirit and the divine life)-Luke 10:33-34.
 - c. One of the reasons the church is divided and damaged is that there are reviling words; those who take in reviling words bear the same responsibility as those who speak reviling words; in order for the church to maintain the oneness, we have to withstand reviling words.
 - d. The consciousness of sin comes from knowing God; in the same way, the consciousness of reviling words comes from the knowledge of the Body; reviling words are opposed to the testimony of the Body.
 - e. The Lord warns us that revilers will not inherit the kingdom of God in the next age as a reward to the overcoming saints-1 Cor. 6:10.
 3. We must not lord it over our fellow believers but serve them as slaves to feed them with the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit-1 Pet. 5:3; Matt. 20:25-28; cf. Num. 17:8.

Not Beating Our Fellow Slaves

All of us should be those who are **feeding the Lord's people at the proper time and using the Lord's talents in full**. On the negative side, we should not be those **beating our fellow slaves**. You may not do your duty to perform your service, but instead you are **criticizing** and sometimes even strongly **opposing** the brothers. You are not doing the work but beating the fellow slaves. Some of the sisters are always busy on the telephone. When they hear something good about the brothers, they are not interested in letting anyone know. When they hear something bad about certain brothers, especially the elders, they become busy on the telephone. This is why many of the elders in the local churches are afraid to do anything wrong. Once they do something wrong, nearly everyone knows through the use of the telephone. These telephone calls are all beatings. Many of the saints are beating the elders.

When something negative happens to any of the saints, some can never retain it. **Passing on the news of this negative situation is a kind of beating**. Sometimes you may have a subtle way of praying in the prayer meeting for a saint who is in a negative situation. You may not expose him at other times, but you **expose** him through your prayers. God knows your heart. The intention in your heart and in your prayer is **not so pure**. You may **pretend** to be so spiritual, not criticizing or judging people. You pray for people, but about ten percent of your prayer is a kind of judging. This is **beating**. The elders in one location may criticize the elders in another location. This is also beating the fellow slaves. *(Excerpt from The Way to Practice the Lord's Present Move, Chapter 10, Section 2)*

Day 3

- F. To eat and drink with the drunken is to **keep company with worldly people**, who are drunk with worldly things-Matt. 24:49b; cf. Eph. 5:18:
 1. Because of their divine nature and holy standing, the **believers should not be yoked together with the unbelievers**; this should be applied to all intimate relationships between believers and unbelievers, not only to marriage and business-2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Cor. 15:33; cf. Prov. 13:20.
 2. We must flee youthful lusts and **pursue the all-inclusive Christ** with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart-2 Tim. 2:22.
- G. The **faithful and prudent** slave will be **rewarded** with the authority to rule in the manifestation of the kingdom, whereas the **evil slave** will be **cut off** from the glorious Christ, from the glory of His kingdom, and from His glorious presence in His kingdom-Matt. 24:47, 51.

Not Eating and Drinking with the Drunken

Furthermore, we should not be one who *"eats and drinks with the drunken"* (v. 49). This is to drift away further, a further fall from beating the fellow slaves. You have fallen away to the world and have become a **world lover**. The worldly people are **drunk and even drugged with worldly things**. They are stupefied with the present age. To eat and drink with them is to enjoy what they enjoy. In a good sense, when you are beating the saints, you are still interested in the church life. If you were not interested in the church life, you would never criticize the elders. Because you are so "burdened for the church" and so interested in the church life, you criticize the brothers and the sisters. Once you make the decision to forget about the church, to have no interest in the church, you enter into the loving of the world, and you **keep company** with worldly people who are always being stupefied by this age. A saint who loves the world has no heart to talk about what elders are good or bad. He may once have been beating his fellow slaves, but now he is fully occupied with worldly enjoyment. He is now eating and drinking with the drunken. Nearly every day may be a happy day to him, and nearly every weekend a pleasant weekend, because he is **enjoying the stupefying of the worldly things**. *(Excerpt from The Way to Practice the Lord's Present Move, Chapter 10, Section 2)*

Day 4

II. Matthew 25:14-30 reveals that we must be **faithful in service in the Lord's gifts** to make a profit for Him so that we may **enter into the joy of the Lord in the coming kingdom**:

- A. The Lord likened Himself to a man going abroad (into the heavens) and delivering to his slaves his possessions; his possessions signifies the church (Eph. 1:18) with all the believers, who constitute God's household (Mat t. 24:45).
- B. To one of his slaves the master gave five talents, to another two, and to another one-to each according to his own ability-25:15:
 1. **Talents** signify **spiritual gifts** (spiritual skills and abilities) - Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4; 1 Pet. 4:10; 2 Tim. 1:6.
 2. **All** the members of the Body of Christ **are gifted**, and **all are gifts**-Rom. 12:6a; Eph. 4:7-8.
 3. **Own ability** signifies our **natural ability**, which is **constituted of God's creation and our learning**-Matt. 25:15; cf. Acts 7:22:
 - a. The natural strength and ability become **useful in resurrection for our service** to the Lord in order to make us both pillars and pillar builders for the fulfilling of God's eternal purpose-1 Cor. 15:10, 58; cf. 2 Cor. 6:1-2; 1 Kings 7:13-22 with foot- notes; Eph. 4:8, 11-12, 16; Gal. 2:9; Rev. 3:12 .
 - b. Moses, Peter, and Paul's natural ability **passed through the cross** and came up in resurrection to be used by the Lord for the building up of His Body-Acts 7:22-36; Luke 22:32-33; 1 Pet. 5:5-6; Acts 22:3; Phil. 3:5-8, 14; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 4:10-12; 2 Tim. 2:11.

Day 5

- C. **Trading with talents** signifies **using the gift** that the Lord has given us; **gaining other talents** signifies that the gift we received from the Lord **has been used to the fullest extent**, without any loss or waste-Matt. 25:16-17; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; 4:5b.
- D. In contrast to the five-talented and two-talented ones, the one-talented one **went off, dug in the earth**, and **hid his master's money**; this signifies **not using the Lord's gift** to save people and to minister His riches to them-Matt. 25:18, 27:
1. The earth signifies the world; thus, dug in the earth signifies **becoming involved in the world to bury the gift** we have received from the Lord.
 2. **Hid his master's money** signifies rendering the Lord's gift **useless**, letting it lie waste under the cloak of certain earthly excuses; to make any excuse for not using the Lord's gift is to hide the gift.

Day 6

- E. The master says to the evil and slothful slave that he should have deposited the master's money with the money changers (the bankers), and when he came, he would have recovered what was his with interest-v. 27:
1. In a sense, we may say that the **money changers** (the bankers) are all the **new ones, young ones, and backsliding ones**; the best way for us to use our talent is to **take care of others**, to become interested in others and concerned for them **in order to dispense Christ into them**.
 2. As we **spend time with the Lord** and **open to Him** regarding whom we should take care of, He will burden us; as we contact and have fellowship with others by being one with the Lord in **cherishing them with His presence** and **nourishing them with His riches**, we will spontaneously use our talent.
 3. Then when the Lord comes, **He will recover what was His with interest as the profitable result that we gain for the Lord's work by using His gift**.
- F. When the Lord comes back, He will settle accounts with us; this signifies the **Lord's judging at His judgment seat** (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10) in the air (within His parousia) where the believers' living, conduct, and work will be judged for reward or punishment (1 Cor. 4:5; Matt. 16:27; 25:19; 1 Cor. 3:13-15).
- G. The Lord's reward is not related to the size and quantity of our work but to our **faithfulness in using His gift to the fullest extent**; Christ Himself will be our crown of life, crown of righteousness, and crown of glory as a reward to us for our enjoyment in the coming kingdom-Matt. 25:23; Rev. 2:10; James 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 5:4.
- H. In the coming kingdom the Lord's gift will be **taken away from the slothful believers**, and they will be cast into outer darkness, but the **faithful believers' gift will be increased**, and they will enter into the joy of their master (Matt. 25:21, 23); to participate in the Lord's joy is the greatest reward, better than glory and position, in the kingdom- vv. 21, 30.

The Way to Be Faithful

The Lord has given talents to all His slaves. To one He gave five talents, to another two talents, and to another one talent. Everyone was required to trade, to do business, to make money for the Lord's kingdom. In order to do this, we have to **feed His people at the proper time**. Every day is a proper time, a meal time. Every office hour is a meal time. There is someone ready to eat everywhere, so we need to be those **using the Lord's talent in full**. The five-talented slave made a profit of five talents, and the two-talented slave made a profit of two talents. This indicates that they used the Lord's talent in full, without any loss or waste, so they both **received the same reward**.

Also, by His mercy and through His grace we must do the best **not to beat the fellow slaves**, the fellow believers. Do not criticize or murmur about them. Do not speak anything negative about them, because you do not have the time to do it. Your mouth was not made for criticizing but for speaking forth Christ. **To criticize the brothers is to beat the fellow slaves**. This will cause us to be punished. **We should also not go into the world to enjoy ourselves with the stupefied, drugged, and worldly people**. We have to be the **sober ones**. We should not dig into the earth to bury or hide our talent. We should have a job to maintain our living, but we should not dig into it. We are different from the worldly people. I encourage all my grandchildren to do their best to get the highest education, but I do not agree that any one of them would "dig into" their education just to become an expert. I also encouraged all the young people in the churches to get the highest education, but do not dig a hole that buries the talent the Lord gave you. **We all need to be faithful in the Lord's service**. (Excerpt from *The Way to Practice the Lord's Present Move*, chapter 10, section 4)