

Why Faithfulness Matters

Matthew 25:14-30

Morning reading: 1 Peter 4:10-11

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Main point: Waiting for Christ's return and being ready for His return are not passive matters.

Introduction:

Charles Spurgeon once said, "The fact that Jesus Christ is to come again is not a reason for star-gazing, but working in the power of the Holy Spirit." And in our text today, Jesus will set before us the *spiritual* and *eternal* motivation for laboring faithfully until He returns. Would you give me your attention for a few moments this morning? I invite you to discover with me *Why Faithfulness Matters*.

This parable takes up the question left unanswered in the Parable of the Ten Virgins, and that is: *what constitutes readiness?* As I said last week, in the first parable we are taught to BE READY. In this second parable, we are taught to BE FAITHFUL. That's what readiness is...*readiness is being faithful to the Master and His mission.*

Now all three parables in chapter 25 make a similar point, but the culminative effect is strong. Jesus is about to go to the cross. His disciples will see Him no more. But He reminds them that the day is coming when He will return as the Judge of all men; and it will result in one of two experiences: either *joy* or *sorrow*, *glory* or *tragedy*, or *blessing* or *judgment*. Now, the fact that JESUS WILL COME is beyond question, if we take the Lord Jesus seriously. The question is: will you be found *ready* and *faithful* when He comes?

The Parable of the Talents is a masterful story that Jesus told of a wealthy man who was about to go away on a journey. He entrusted some riches to his three servants. Recognizing the difference in potential and giftedness among them, he gives to one *five talents*, to another *two*, and to another *one*. They are all charged to use it *wisely* until He returns. But upon His return after a long journey, there is a day of reckoning to settle accounts (*Matt.25:19*). He finds that two of his servants have been *faithful* and one has not. To those who have been faithful, they are blessed to share in their master's joy. But for the one who was unfaithful, he is *surprised*, *startled*, and *shocked* as he is cast out into outer darkness where there are inconsolable grief and eternal regret. What a sobering story! How can we unpack this parable so that we clearly understand the lessons Jesus intends to teach each one of us today?

Key Thought

There is one golden key that will help us NOT to misinterpret the "heart" of this parable. It is found by understanding that a "**talent**" (talanton) was not an *ability* nor a *coin*, but *a measure of weight*. It probably meant a weight of precious metal of some kind, so the heavier the weight, the more value it had. It is here that we must resist the contemporary application of thinking of "talents" as *talented* people. When we think of talents today, we usually imagine someone with natural abilities like a talented *pianist*, *artist*, or *athlete*. We have a church full of very talented people. But the "talents" spoken of in this parable has to do with *something that has been entrusted by a master to be used for his benefit*.

Now if you will receive this, then it is easy to see that Jesus is NOT seeking to teach us about the talent level of individuals or money, but rather, about the responsibility that we all have to be a faithful steward of what God has entrusted to us. So, what has God entrusted to us?

Bishop J.C. Ryle explains that a talent is “anything that we have whereby we may glorify God. Our gifts, our influence, our money, our knowledge, our health, our strength, our time, our senses, our reason, our intellect, our memory, our affections, our privileges as members of Christ’s church, our advantages as possessors of the Bible—all, all are talents.”¹

The emphasis of the parable is not on the *number* of talents given, but the *diligence* or *faithfulness* with which the servants discharged their responsibility given by the Master. The language is the language of investment and stewardship. As we shall see, what we do with them reveals if we love the Master, if we belong the Master, and if we will have a share in His kingdom. As we come to the text, I want you to notice three truths to transform our lives:

- A. The Master’s Endowment (vv.14-15)
- B. The Servant’s Employment (vv.16-18)
- C. The Master’s Evaluation (vv.19-30)

Transition

Why should faithfulness matter to you and me? Well, first of all, because of...

Exposition:

A. The Master’s Endowment (vv.14-15)

¹⁴ “For *it* is just like a man *about* to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them.

Explained: The word “**For**” is the connecting preposition which links this parable to the last one. “**For it is just like...**” what is the “it” just like? The “it” is the kingdom of God (*Matt.25:1*). The coming kingdom of Christ is just like “*a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them.*”

The word “**journey**” suggests that this man has only gone away for a season, and when he has accomplished the purpose for his journey, he will return. Just as the bridegroom *came* in the first parable (*Matt.25:6*) and the Son of Man will come in the last analogy (*Matt.25:31*), the master on the journey will return according to verse 19, “*after a long time...and settle(d) accounts with them.*” It is not hard to see that the man in the story who goes away on a journey and returns to settle accounts, is none other than *the Lord Jesus Christ*.

But notice carefully, that before this man left, he “**called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them.**” Right from the start of the parable, we are struck with the reality of...

¹ John Charles Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: St Matthew*, Cambridge: James Clarke, 1974, pp.336-37

1. *The Lord's ownership (v.14)*

Here Jesus brings us face to face with the undeniable fact that He is the owner of it all. Notice the emphasis on the fact that the servants were "*his own slaves*," and that which was entrusted to them was "*his possessions*."

Keep in mind that in the New Testament day, servants were *owned* by their masters. They were *his possession*. They were *his property*. The master was responsible for their *means* or *resources* and their *well-being*. The master was responsible for their *provisions* and their *protection*, for their *family* and their *future*. The servants in that day had *no rights* of their own. They were *purchased* by the master, so everything that they were *given* was not their own, but it was a gift of stewardship from their master.

Now, this is one of the key elements in the story as we shall see it played out. *The master owned it all* and he entrusted some of his riches to these servants. Now resist judging this parable by some American mindset! Resist thinking that they were being mistreated, held against their will, and abused in some way. No! In this story and in this context, these servants were made custodians of large sums of wealth! If we compare Scripture with Scripture, we see the forecasting of the ascension of Christ and the giving of gifts to His church (Cf. Eph.4:7-8).

Just how great was the investment? In the margins of your Bibles, some of you may see a cross-reference note that a single talent was worth wages of about 15 years of a laborer. Some say it would have taken a worker 20 years to earn one talent. No one really knows how much a talent would be worth in our day. Some say this is generational wealth or millions! We do not know for sure, but it was *substantial*! And here is the key: not one penny, not one ounce of what was given to them, belonged to them.

This is a fact concerning our lives that the Lord Jesus wants us to see on the outset of this parable: everything that we are and everything that we have is on loan from God Himself.

- **1 Corinthians 4:7**—For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?
- **Psalms 50:10-12**—For every beast of the forest is Mine,
The cattle on a thousand hills.
¹¹ I know every bird of the mountains,
And everything that moves in the field is Mine.
¹² If I were hungry I would not tell you,
For the world is Mine, and all it contains.
- **Ezekiel 18:4**—Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die.
- **Job 33:4**—The Spirit of God has made me,
And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

- **Romans 14:8**—for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.
- **Acts 17:25**—nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;

We are like hired men, set upon this earth to do our Maker's will. And our *breath*, our *blood*, our *souls*, our *days*, our *talents*, our *abilities*, our *riches*, and our *lives* belong to Him.

Dear friends, this is not some strange or foreign teaching outside of the Scripture. It is a fact of every major doctrine in the Bible.

- **The doctrine of creation** tells us that everything we have and the very world in which we live belongs to God. *"The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it" (Psalm 24:1).*
- **The doctrine of redemption** doubles the reality of that truth by telling us that *"we are not our own, for we have been bought with a price" (1 Cor.6:19-20).*
- **The doctrine of providence** tells us that day by day, *"every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights [the goodness of God], with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow" (James 1:17).*
- Even **the doctrine of sanctification** teaches us this same truth. The hymn writer Harriet Auber put it this way, *"Every virtue we possess and every victory won, and every thought of holiness, are His alone."*²

Applied: Dear friend, have you come to that realization today? God has Creator rights in our lives. We don't belong to *ourselves*; we belong to *Him*. What we own doesn't belong to *us*, it belongs to *Him*. Are you seeking to take what is His and use it for yourself?

In addition to *God's ownership*, Jesus brings us face-to-face with...

2. ***The Lord's sovereignty (v.15)***

¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.

Now if you can accept the fact that all that we have is FROM the Lord, then it is not hard to see that all that we have is to be used FOR the Lord.

- **Romans 11:36**—For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

² Harriet Auber, *Our Blesst Redeemer, Ere He Breathed*

Focus on this and never lose sight of it—it is the infinite power of the Master Himself who has sovereignly and graciously provided us *with “everything pertaining to life and godliness” (2 Pet.1:3).*

- Whom do you know that *gives* and then *rewards* those who do not deserve it?
- Whom do you know that *bestows* the capacity and then *blesses* the ability?

It is like the parent who gives the child money to buy the parent a gift with—and then rejoices just to see the child’s face light up when they give you the gift. And so, the point of the story so far is that Christ is the rich man who went on a journey, and as the owner of it all, He has *sovereignly* entrusted us with the gifts to be employed for the glory of His kingdom.

Two principles emerge from verse 15 that are too precious to ignore. They serve as guardrails to help us from falling into the pride of envious comparison.

Principle #1: Gifts are given according to one’s capacity, and God gives the capacity. This is the meaning of the phrase in the middle of verse 15, “*each according to his own ability...*” The Apostle Paul taught the Corinthians that in God’s kingdom there is a variation of gifts given to the body.

- **1 Corinthians 12:4**—Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

God has not given us the *same gifts*, nor the *same capacities*, nor even the *same opportunities*. The diversity of gifts is a part of His divine administration. However, Paul also teaches us in verse 11 that God is sovereign in the choice of them and the effects of their manifestation...

- **1 Corinthians 12:11**—But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

God is sovereign in the choice, and His choices are always *best, right, and wise*.

Principle #2: God rewards according to faithfulness, not the magnificence of the gift given. As we shall see, the master gives *the same reward* to the two-talent servant that he gives to the five-talent servant. Here is the great lesson—*diversity does not mean inferiority*. We are not to compare our gifts but employ them. God requires *fidelity. Faithfulness (1 Cor.4:2).*

Applied: Stop for a moment and think about what God has sovereignly blessed you with. Count your blessings.

*When upon life’s billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.³*

The Master’s endowment is *sovereignly* and *graciously* given to all of us. But what we do with it reveals *what we think* and *how we actually feel* about Him.

³ Johnson Oatman, *Count Your Blessings*

B. The Servant's Employment (vv.16-18)

¹⁶ Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents.

¹⁷ In the same manner the one who *had received* the two *talents* gained two more. ¹⁸ But he who received the one *talent* went away, and dug *a hole* in the ground and hid his master's money.

Explained: Now the way each servant responds reveals not only their perspective of the master but also their relationship or lack thereof.

The same description of *faithful obedience* is given for the first two servants. Both servants are said to have "**went and traded with them**" and double their return. It implies *direct action*. We are not told *how* they traded with their talents. The point is that they used what they had and gained more by using. They went to work for their master *without delay*. We are entrusted with gifts to do the same. Here are the marks of the first two servants:

- They did their work *promptly*—they did not procrastinate.
- They did their work *perseveringly*—they did not quit when they faced obstacles.
- They did their work *purposefully*—they wanted to please their master and they were ready to give an account to their master.

Likewise, we are not to sit on our gifts or to squander them—but to *promptly, perseveringly, and purposefully* use them for the Master's glory (1 Pet.4:10; 2 Tim.1:6-7).

They were like trustees who had the estate of a wealthy man committed to them, and now their role was two-fold: first, they were responsible for conserving the assets so they would not be lost, but they were also responsible for using them effectively and well so that a gain could be received. In fact, if they were to mismanage those gifts, they would be subject to legal action.

So it is with us. We are responsible for using what God has given us to advance His glory and His kingdom agenda, not our own.

Who is the one-talent servant? His description is a sad one.

- ¹⁸ But he who received the one *talent* went away, and dug *a hole* in the ground and hid his master's money.

Unlike the first two servants, the third servant "**went and...hid his master's money.**" The description of this last servant is not one of *faithful obedience*, but *flagrant disobedience*. Alexander Maclaren was a Scottish Baptist pastor in the late 1800s. He preached a sermon, "*Why the Talent Was Buried*," in which he makes this observation:

"...the reality which the parable was meant to shadow...provides answers for...a man's actions in their true character, and the ugly motives which underlie them... Thus it becomes us to look well to the under side of our lives, the unspoken convictions and the unformulated motives which work all the

more mightily upon us because, for the most part, they work in the dark. This is Christ's explanation of...the refusal to serve Him."⁴

This is what we know for sure: the one-talent servant is the person who is ultimately cast into outer darkness, so it is evident that he was not a true believer. He was a professing believer, a professing servant, one who had been in the church, but who had no real relationship to the Lord. He is like the five foolish virgins. He had an *outward* relationship to the church and an outward testimony of faith, but not an *inward relationship* that results in *faithful works*.

Now, this is why we are taught in the New Testament that *faithful works matter*. We are not saved BY WORKS, but WITHOUT WORKS the faith we profess is a non-saving faith.

- **James 2:14**—What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?
- **James 2:17**—Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself.

There are three kinds of faith according to James: a *dead* faith, a *demonic* faith, and a *dynamic* faith. Which one do you possess? (*Rom.2:7-11*)

At this point in the parable, it is crucial that we understand what Jesus is saying. Jesus is NOT telling us this story so that we believe in *salvation by works*. Jesus is warning us against a profession with the lips that is not reflected in the life (*Ezek.33:30ff; Is.29:13; Luke 6:46*). The faithfulness and diligence of the first two servants was a simple and clear reflection of their love and loyalty to their master—not so with the third. We will drill down on why he did what he did in just a moment.

Applied: Let us stop again and apply what we are hearing to our lives. Ask yourself this question: What are the things that I am really serious about? What are the things that I take most seriously in my life? To dive down deeper into the heart of this question, let me ask another one—does the way I order my life give evidence that ultimately, the most serious issue in the world is living for the glory of God?

Now, why is it important that we think about this issue? It is because of...

C. The Master's Evaluation (vv.19-30)

¹⁹ "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.

The "**long**" delay may have tempted the servants to think that they would *never* give an account, yet they did! After a long time, the master of those slaves CAME! And this teaches us in the first place,

1. The certainty of judgment (v.19)

He "**came**"—that is *He arrived*. He was *not there*, and all seemed to be going along normally, and then all of a sudden, the hoofbeats of a thousand horses could be heard in the distance. It was no

⁴ Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture, Matthew*, ccel.org

ordinary traveler. The horsepower, the crackle of the rolling chariot wheels grew louder. To the east, dust could be seen rising, and the top of a banner flag made it clear that someone of great stature had arrived in the province! It was the master! And the day of “*settling accounts*” had come.

Oh, when that day comes, what will our response be? The day of reckoning will come for each one of us. What kind of day will it be?

It will be a day of public exposure.

- **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**—The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person. ¹⁴ For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

It will be a day of powerful revelation.

- **1 Corinthians 3:13**—each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work.

It will be a day of personal commendation.

- **1 Corinthians 4:5**—Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men’s* hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God.

In that day, God will not ask you *what your church did*—He will ask *what you did yourself*. We can get away with giving excuses to the *pastor*, the boss, or our *parents*, but it will not work with God! (*Rom.3:19*). No one knows how many years the master will be away, but all that mattered to the servants in this story was this: when the master returned, would their lives be described as *productive* years or *wasted* years?

2. The commendation of judgment (*vv.20-23*)

Now notice with the first two servants there is an *expectation* and *enthusiasm* as they came forward. They are clearly anticipating their master’s return.

- ²⁰ The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ ²¹ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ ²² Also the one who *had received* the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ ²³ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

You can almost feel the excitement of the servants. “See...see, I have gained...more.” Their eyes are sparkling, and their hands filled and arms raised with the profit! Why are they so enthusiastic? Because they have a *relationship* with their Master. They know who *he is* and *what he is about*, and they love the idea of gaining interest for him.

Both servants who are faithful hear the same identical phrases, *"Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."* The exact same repetition is given. The same reward is given to the servant with a lesser capacity and smaller gifts as given to the greater.

Martin Luther may have been given greater gifts, but if we are faithful, we can receive the same reward as Luther. Spurgeon, Calvin, Edwards, and Lloyd-Jones may have been given greater capacities than we have, but if we are equal in faithfulness, we shall sit right in the midst of the greatest of them.

The Master commends the servants' *fidelity*, not their *creativity*, not their *ingenuity*, not their *intellectual capacity*. They are not praised for their *success*, but for their *faithfulness*.

What makes the first two servants *"good"*? It is not their *innate goodness* (Rom.3:9-10), but their faithfulness. The adverb *"faithful"* describes the adjective *"good."* One of the ways that we show that we are good servants and that we bear good fruit is seen in our faithfulness.

The Master's response is one of delight! Well done! Excellent! Great! *"Wonderful,"* is the reply. What a commendation. Here is the reward, *"I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."* What is the joy of the Master? In the parable of the ten virgins, the five faithful ones entered into the marriage feast, and the door was shut, and no description is given of the joy of the marriage feast. Why? Because we cannot describe the joy of the presence of the Lord.

- **Psalm 16:11**—...in Your presence is fullness of joy; [enough to satisfy the most extreme craving of the human heart.] At Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

There is an inexhaustible store. There is no way for us to explain what is going to happen when we enter the presence of the Lord. What kind of joy will it be?

Peter tries to explain it to the saints who were struggling with persecution and opposition, and he says, *"and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."* (1 Pet.1:8)

The joy of the Master is an *unbroken* joy. It is an *unshaded* joy. It is an *eternal* joy.

3. The condemnation of judgment (vv.24-30)

The condemnation of the third servant is entirely different from the first two servants. The third servant's report is both an *excuse* and an *accusation*. He excuses his unfaithfulness by saying two things: first, *that he was afraid of his master* and, second, *he disclaims any responsibility for the talent*.

Why is this man condemned? (v.24)

- a. Because of his misjudgment of the Master's character (v.24a)

²⁴ And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no *seed*.'

This servant's response and viewpoint is the total opposite of the first two servants. Notice that this servant thinks of the Master as "***a hard man***." The word means *churlish*, and not only hard, but *harsh*. He sees the Master as one who takes advantage of others. He looks at the Lord as a *legalist*. A *dictator*. A *tyrant*. A *curmudgeon* of a master—all toil and no pay. He had no clue on who His master *really* was. He does not know the gracious character of the Master at all.

Many people in the church see God the same way, and they use their knowledge to excuse their commitment to discipleship, evangelism, service, and giving. Someone has said,

"You can no more stop God from giving than you can shut up the rays of the sun within itself. To 'be' and to 'bestow' are for Him one and the same thing...He never reaps where He has not sown. Is there any place where He has not sown? Is there any heart on which there have been no seeds of goodness scattered from His rich hand?"

What was in this man's hand, should have shut his mouth! And the same could be said to us. Look at all that God has given to us! God never asks where He has not given, and He never asks until after He has given.

But this man claimed to be a part of the household and workforce of the master, yet his view and his actions demonstrated that he was *a hostile imposter* all along. He *misjudged* his master's character. He is also condemned.

b. Because of the inconsistency of pretended fear (v.25)

²⁵ And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.

The picture is of a man standing there with the unused talent in his hand. The force of the Greek text is that this man throws the talent before his Master and says, "There! You have what is Yours and nothing more!" It is insolence. Gall. Cheekiness. Impertinence. Rudeness. Bitter anger. Ill-will. Vexation. Irritation. Disrespect.

You say, "Pastor no one in the church would feel this way about God!" Dear friends, do you not realize that this is the teaching of every sinner's heart from nature? Coiled deep down in every unregenerate heart, whether one grows up in church or not, is this sleeping snake of rebellion. In some cases, it covers itself in religious tones, in other cases moral uprightness, but at the back of the unwashed, black heart is the view that God *demand*s more than He *gives*.

- **Romans 3:18**—there is no fear of God before their eyes.
- **Jeremiah 17:9**—The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick....

And this is really why there is no delight *in service to Him*. There is no delight *in Him*. Martin Luther wrote in his journals before his conversion, "Sometimes...I hate Him."

Oh, my heart trembles when I even say those words! God knows that I am not seeking to be irreligious and irreverent. But I am only seeking to unmask the great need that we all have of the new birth! Why is there such a disinterested love for God? What hinders a man or woman from rising in thankful and faithful service to so great a King as Jesus? It is because deep in the heart, there are some who never have been washed and changed, and you say like this third servant, "I knew you to be a hard man."

The point of the story is not that the slave was a *murderer* or *adulterer* or that he had committed some heinous crime. No, the slave was not even like the prodigal son—he didn't waste the master's money. He just did nothing. He buried it. Why?

c. Because of his wicked character (vv.26-27)

²⁶ But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. ²⁷ Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my *money* back with interest.'

He is indicted on his inconsistency. "If that was your idea of me, why then, etc, etc." The servant was wicked because of his unjustified slander, and he was lazy, which was the real reason for his zero-growth performance. James Montgomery Boice said, "By that standard, what wicked persons must there be in our churches."⁵

Laziness is a selfish trait. Why do you think that Solomon points his bony finger as it were and says, "*Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise. Which, having no chief, officer or ruler, prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest. How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?*" (Prov.6:6-9)

Laziness is a terrible sin with real consequences.

All of us, by what we *do* and *don't do*, manifest whether we have a real love and loyalty to Jesus. What are the consequences of doing nothing with the stewardship that God has given?

i. He is stripped. (vv.28-29)

²⁸ 'Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' ²⁹ For to everyone who has, *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.

He is stripped of the gift he has, which is very revealing. It shows that when one enters into eternity without the knowledge of Christ, you shall not even have there what you have here. The gifts given here are taken from you. He is stripped.

ii. He is sentenced. (v.30)

³⁰ Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol.2, The Triumph of the King*, Baker Books, 2001, p.536

His laziness and unwillingness to serve his master's purpose has made him "**worthless**." Like the salt that has become tasteless, Jesus said, *"it is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out"* (Luke 14:34-35). Where is he cast? Into "**outer darkness**.." is a place of solitary confinement.

There is no place for him in this world or in the kingdom of God. This is a place of judgment where there will be fire without light. Far from the transforming glory and brightness of Jesus. There are places where it is so dark you cannot see your hand in front of your face. This place is darker than that. It is outer or outside because it is a life without God. No hope. No joy. No love. No laughter.

In that outer darkness, there is "**weeping**" which means a loud wailing—not a silent cry or sorrow, but an open, painful, miserable, heart-wrenching cry of regret and grief. The "**gnashing of teeth**" indicates desperate regret. You do not have to go there! This is the fate of all who reject the King's offer of peace and refuse to get ready and stay ready faithfully. In this world, we have diversions, but in that place of eternal, conscious punishment for the wicked, there are no diversions. No escape. Forever falling, forever regretting, forever condemned. This is how the story ends.

Conclusion:

J.C. Ryle says this,

"Let us leave this parable with a solemn determination by God's grace, never to be content with the profession of Christianity without the practice. Let us not only talk religion, but act. Let us not only feel the importance of saving faith in Christ, but do something too. Let us beware of 'do nothing Christianity.'"

What hinders you from being sold-out for Christ? Are you trading for Christ? Are you serving the Master? Why not? Is it the fear of exposure? Is it the discomfort that you will be pressed into in the Christian pilgrimage? How many are seeking to cover shallow confidence in God with a hidden indifference? Below the thin ice of your smile, there is a deep, black pool of dread! You have tried to shake off the fear, but it is useless. Like the third servant, you are paralyzed in fear. And angry! It makes no sense. You try for a little while to serve Him, but there is no delight in Him. You quickly go back to the way you were. What is the answer for this? You are not compelled by *"the love of Christ."* (2 Cor.5:14). So, let me plead with you from the Scriptures. John says, *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love."* (1 John 4:18)

Look at the cross. Learn at the cross. Linger near the cross.

*See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

*Were the whole ream of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.⁶*

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⁶ Isaac Watts, *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*