

# Personal Responsibility

## Elders' Conference—2013

Roger Kendall—May 11, 2013

Good morning, everyone! It's a pleasure to see you this morning! Brethren in New England send their greetings to you. It's a pleasure to be here with you.

The message I want to bring you today deals with a parable that Jesus Christ gave to the disciples dealing with personal responsibility of stewardship. Stewardship is a principle or concept that we understand in terms of serving the master and providing for the needs of the master, and taking care of the resources that the master has given to the servant in trust that that person will be loyal and faithful in carrying out responsibilities.

Brethren, we have also a stewardship responsibility to what God gives to us. God gives to us:

- His Spirit
- His understanding of His Word
- many gifts and opportunities

*God is investing in us!* God gives to us so that we, in turn, can increase upon what God gives us so that we can turn back to Him an increase of the power of the Holy Spirit. An increase in knowledge and understanding, but also to return back to Him a more capable, educated, prepared individual; one who is going to serve in the Kingdom of God.

Let's read the parable and then we will look at the many lessons that are in this parable. It's quite profound and very beneficial for us to understand what Christ is teaching us in this *parable of the pounds*.

Luke 19:12: "Therefore, He said, 'A certain nobleman set out to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and to return. And after calling ten of his servants, he gave to them ten pounds... [one pound to each of the ten servants] ...and said to them, "Trade until I come *back*"'" (vs 12-13).

Fred used the word 'trade' in this particular verse. The *King James* uses the word 'occupy.' The word *occupy* is derived from the Greek word 'pragma' from which we derive the word *pragmatic*. So, you get to understand what this concept of trading and being one who is busy in business, investing, buying and selling, to make an increase. We see in the story here that the nobleman—representing Christ; gave to His disciples the power of the Holy Spirit to go forth and produce an increase.

Verse 15: "And it came to pass that when he returned after receiving the kingdom, he directed that those servants to whom he had given the money be called to him, **in order that he might know what each one had gained by trading.**"

In other words he was expecting the servants to produce an increase upon what he had given them.

Verse 16: "And the first one came up, saying, 'Lord, your pound has produced ten pounds.' Then he said to him, 'Well *done*, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' And the second one came, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made five pounds.' Then he also said to this one, 'And you be over five cities'" (vs 16-20).

So, you can see the fact that there is a situation where there is a challenge, but also there is judgment, and also a reward. Think of these as we go along.

Verse 20: "But another came, saying, 'Lord, behold your pound...

[I'm giving it back to you just as you gave it to me]

...which I kept laid up in a handkerchief. For I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man. You take up what you did not lay down, and you reap what you did not sow'" (vs 20-21).

This individual we see here did not produce an increase—zero! zilch!

It's not a matter of aptitude here, *it's a matter of attitude and action*. This particular servant had a really bad attitude toward his master in terms that he did not understand that the master was there to help him with the increase. He made no effort. He buried it in the ground because he was afraid.

Verse 22: "Then he said to him... [v 23] ...'Then why didn't you deposit my money in the bank, so that at my coming I might have received it with interest?'"

At least the interest, but you buried it in the ground. Of course, Christ would not be pleased.

Verse 24: "And he said to those who were standing by, 'Take the pound from him, and give *it* to the one who has ten pounds.' (And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten pounds.') For I tell you that to everyone who has, *more* shall be given; but the one who does not have, even what he has shall be taken from him" (vs 24-26).

The parable here is quite clear.

There's a lot in here, so we're going to basically study the aspect of stewardship. God gives to us so that we can gain, grow and produce growth in our spiritual lives, in character—in the mind of Christ—being prepared for rulership in the Kingdom of God. That's what God expects from us, brethren! This parable clearly points that out. We need to understand that that's what we need to be working for. The same way, God expects us to increase upon what He's given to us. We're doing that. We do that by:

- prayer and study
- growing in grace and knowledge
- putting first the Kingdom of God in our pursuit in this world

Yet, let's understand that stewardship involves working with the resources that God gives to us, so we are pleasing in doing the will of our Master Jesus Christ.

Luke 12:42—Christ, in a situation, gave the picture of what stewardship is about:

"And the Lord said, 'Who then is the wise and faithful steward...'"

This is what God is looking for; what Christ is looking for, in us: Are we going to be a faithful steward of what God gives to us?

"...whom the lord shall put in charge of his household, to give *to each one* the portion of food in season? Blessed *is* that servant whom the lord, when he comes, shall find so doing" (vs 42-43).

In other words, there are blessings to *a wise and faithful steward* who is doing the will of the master.

Verse 45: "But if that servant shall say in his heart, 'My lord delays *his* coming,' and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidservants, and to be gluttonous and become drunk, the lord of that servant will come in a day that he does not expect, and in an hour that he does not know, and will cut him asunder, and will appoint his portion with the unbelievers" (vs 45-46).

Brethren, there are consequences if we do not grow and gain in increase for God. He expects it. So many have gone back into the world after receiving the pound—the Holy Spirit—and have not grown any fruit or increase for God. God is not well-pleased with those individuals as we're going to see in the parable.

Verse 48: "But the one who did not know, and did *things* worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For **to whomever much has been given...**

[this is the point that we need to understand]

**...from him shall much be required;** and to whom much has been committed, from him they will demand the more."

Brethren, this shows personal responsibility we have before God with our calling. We know that we have to be working and accomplishing God's will. This is the key, we've got to be ready to prepare an increase for God when He returns.

I'd like to give you four key principles about stewardship before we go back and look at the parable; this will help us understand the context in a more broad aspect of what stewardship is about.

#### **Four key principles about stewardship:**

- A good steward produces the maximum, not the minimum of growth and increase

In other words, that servant who is a good steward

1. will apply maximum effort
2. will be a hard worker
3. will be diligent

4. will be growing and increasing the very fruit in his life as we serve our Master

One other situation is, if indeed we are doing the minimum—in terms of doing God's will—what does Christ say, 'You are *an unprofitable steward* or servant' if you are doing the minimum. So, #1 is a good steward is doing the maximum of service to his Master.

- Stewards are given specific instructions or work to do for their Master

An important principle regarding *works*, Eph. 2. We know in the modern vernacular that many in the world believe that salvation is by faith only and not by works. This is not true, the Bible does not teach that.

Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this *especially* is not of your own selves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, so that no one may boast" (vs 8-9).

Brethren, we understand that the gift of salvation is not by works, it is by the gift of God.

But, v 10: "For we are His workmanship..."

[God is creating in us His mind and His nature in us. That's the workmanship]:

...created in Christ **Jesus unto *the* good works that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them."**

These are *God's* works; these are not our works. These are the good works that God gives us to do:

- prayer and study
- keep the commandments
- keep the Sabbath and Holy Days
- walk in the way of God
  - so that we can *develop character*
  - so that we can *develop the mind of Christ*
  - so that we then will be a *profitable servant* of God in the Kingdom

Let's realize that this is so important for us to know.

- Faithful servants work to produce a profit or an increase for their Lord and Master

That is on the holding and the resources that God gives. In other words we are to produce an increase upon what God gives to us.

In the *sower of the seed* it shows that we need to produce an increase. The background of this parable is the seed—the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit—that enters into good ground. The good ground is *a heart that has been prepared through repentance and through service to God*. In other words, the soil is the heart in which fruit can be produced, showing the fact that we need to be actively producing an increase.

Matthew 13:23 "But the one who was sown on good ground, this is the one who hears the Word and understands, who indeed brings forth fruit and produces—one a hundred-fold, another sixty-fold *and* another thirty-fold."

John 15:5—Christ said that if we are connected to the vine, connected to Jesus Christ, God expects us to produce fruit.

"I am the vine, *and* you *are* the branches. The one who is dwelling in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; because apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not dwell in Me, he is cast out as a branch, and is dried up; and men gather them and cast *them* into a fire, and they are burned" (vs 5-6).

So, the consequences of producing no fruit is a dire penalty. We're going to see that that is the case; we must be producing fruit.

Verse 7: "If you dwell in Me, and My words dwell in you, you shall ask whatever you desire, and it shall come to pass for you. In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples" (vs 7-8).

This is a cooperative effort. The only way that fruit can be produce in us is that we're doing our part, working with the very help that God gives us to produce that fruit.

Any fruit or crop that is being produced needs care, watering, take care of the weeds. So, the analogy here is first to understand that we have our part to play.

- Faithful servants or stewards are rewarded for their good service

God will also grant us rewards for our good service. Rewards are separate from the gift of salvation. God is prepared to give rewards to those who excel at producing an increase for Him.

Revelation 22:12—Christ tells us specifically that He is returning, but He's also bringing rewards with Him:

"And behold, I am coming quickly and My reward is with Me to render to each one **according as his work** shall be."

Brethren, we will be rewarded by Christ at His return *according to the works that we're producing in our Christian lives today!*

Note 1-Cor. 3:1-14—here we see different levels of growth that Paul spoke about. That Christ being the foundation; those who build on the foundation of Christ be aware of what you're building:

- Are you building gold, silver and precious stones?

*or*

- Are you building wood, hay or chaff?

These are works that we build upon the foundation of Christ. We have to be aware of that. Paul says, 'Those works will be tested in fire! The works, if they prevail through trial and testing, you shall receive a reward.'

What we're seeing here is that different people will produce different works, which will lead to different rewards being given. This is something we need to appreciate.

Luke 19—let's take a closer look and apply these principles to the parable. We know that Christ is the nobleman that went away at the end of His 40 days, and He told the disciples, 'I shall return.' We understand that He gave to the disciples the responsibility to preach the Gospel and to raise up disciples for Him, to do the work! That's what the disciples did through the power of the Holy Spirit that God gave.

In other words we see what this particular parable is speaking about. We also see the fact that the rewards are here; Christ rewarded according to the works. The one who increased 10 pounds receive authority over 10 cities. The one who increased 5 pounds received authority over 5 cities.

What is the reward? *Greater responsibility of service in the Kingdom of God to be under Jesus Christ, to bring God's Government to this world!*

This is perfect to understand. A person who has grown more, a person who has greater conversion, who has the greater mind of Christ, is not that person better qualified to have greater responsibility in the Kingdom of God? *Yes!*

This is the principle that is being taught here. Not all of us are going to receive the same reward. Don't let that dismay you. We're not competing among ourselves for positions in the Kingdom. I'm not bringing this message to bring this point out. We all shall receive a full reward if we apply ourselves.

The person who did not apply himself buried the talent in the ground. What happened to this individual? *This individual had the pound taken away!* If that pound represents the Holy Spirit, it was taken from this individual and given to another. What were the consequences of that individual at the time of judgment? *That person is not going to qualify or make it into the Kingdom of God!* Zero growth, zero entrance into the Kingdom of God. That's what this parable teaches us. This is profound!

Sometimes I think we think as the world thinks, just accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and that's all you have to do. *That's a big lie, brethren!* We know we have work to do:

- We need to be diligent!
- We need to be faithful!
- We need to be going forward!

Christ gives each one of us a challenge to use whatever He gives to us:

- the blessings
- the Holy Spirit
- the knowledge of His Word
  - to grow up the crop

- to grow up the fruits of the Holy Spirit

So that in turn we can use that fruit to help other people. To serve God—in this age and in the next—because that is the one thing that will carry over in the resurrection: the character that we develop in this life:

- the mind of Christ
- the qualities and characteristics of God the Father

will carry over into the resurrection. I truly believe that this is what this is telling us.

Brethren, we all are going to come under judgment before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. We need to realize that we don't need to be fearful and afraid and anxious as the one who buried his talent in the ground. If we are applying the fruit of the Holy Spirit, if we apply the way of God in our lives we shall be producing fruit; we *are* producing fruit.

The key thing is, and a necessary part of receiving eternal life, 2-Corinthians 5:9:

"Because of this, we are also laboring *so that*, whether present or absent, *we* may be well pleasing to Him."

As we produce fruit for God, for Jesus Christ, it's pleasing to God as we are living sacrifices, serving God.

Verse 10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive according to the things *done* in *his* body—what he has practiced, whether good or evil."

Brethren, we have a responsibility to grow up the crop, to fertilize through Bible study and prayer, to be able to apply in our lives the very things we are learning with one another—serving and loving one another—and growing in the very love of God.

The man who buried the talent did not know his lord and master. He was fearful! What does fear represent? *A lack of love!* He lacked love. We do not want to lack love for our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Therefore, understand that as a faithful steward we need to be producing and working for God in all aspects that we can.

The rewards that God gives to those at His return are going to be based upon the works that we do. Christ will reward us *according to our works*.

Revelation 5:10: "...and did make us unto our God kings and priests..."

We shall be given positions of authority under Jesus Christ to administer the Kingdom of God. Not all positions will be at the same level. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, others and the disciples have already been basically given assignments in the Kingdom of God, and they're going to have a much higher level of responsibility and authority.

For us we do not know what we will be doing, but, brethren, we need to be preparing, doing our part.

Revelation 2:26—regarding the churches: "...I will give authority over the nations"—according to the works that you have done.

It's kind of eye-opening to think there are going to be different rewards based upon how much we produce for God. At first this sounds like we're competing among ourselves. Are we basically working toward higher positions in the Kingdom of God? Well, *God forbid!* We don't want to put this all in a competition.

- Who gets the credit for the fruit that we're producing?
- Who gets the credit for the increase that we produce?

*We're doing the work but **God gets the credit**—not us!*

1-Corinthians 3: "I planted *and* Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. Therefore, neither is he who plants anything, nor he who waters; for *it is* God Who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, **but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor**" (vs 6-8).

Again, focusing on this element of being a good steward, doing the works that God has given to us. If we do that we shall receive a full reward.

- What should be our motivation, brethren, in serving God and doing the works that God gives us to excel in spiritual growth?
- Are we all competing for better positions in the Kingdom of God?
- Are we basically wanting one-upmanship, to try to get better cities, more authority, in the Kingdom of God?

I hope you don't get that, because the motivation we have to bring an increase for God is not getting a position, but is based upon *our love for God*. It's based upon love, not upon competition. If we love God, if that's our motivation, to give back to Him just a small portion of what He's giving to us; our motivation is:

- to love God
- to serve God with a pure heart
- to be able to do those things He wants us to do

Because we love Him, we love Jesus Christ; not a matter of just trying to get a better, bigger piece of authority in the Kingdom of God. God forbid that that's what we would think that we should be working at.

A competitive spirit is something that we have seen in this world. It's part of Satan's way. We're not competing. We want to work together. It doesn't matter if we have one village, two cities, three people. Whatever God gives us to manage and to handle in the Kingdom of God is going to be fit for you. It's going to be perfect for what you've done and what you're capable of doing. There's

going to be unity, harmony, in the Kingdom of God. We can be thankful for that. No competition. It's going to be truly serving the people.

The key thing is *do your best for God!* Do your best with love in your heart and for one another. That's what it's about. If you love God:

- you're going to be doing your best
- you're going to be striving against this world
- you're going to be growing
- you're going to be overcoming
- you're going to be doing those things that are pleasing to God

### *That is pleasing to God!*

Let's understand that we can be good stewards for God, for what He gives us; and God will be well-pleased with that.

Brethren, this is one thing we want to hear when Christ returns. We want to be good servants for Jesus Christ, good stewards, so we will hear, Matthew 25:21:

"...Well *done*, good and faithful servant! *Because* you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

Scriptural References:

- Luke 19:12-13, 15-26
- Luke 12:42-43, 45-46, 48
- Ephesians 2:8-10
- Matthew 13:23
- John 15:5-8
- Revelation 22:12
- 2 Corinthians 5:9-10
- Revelation 2:26
- 1 Corinthians 3:6-8
- Matthew 35:21

Scriptures reference, not quoted:

1 Corinthians 3:10-14

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Transcribed: 6-7-13

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