

Without a Wedding Garment

Many of the parables of Jesus are concerned with the judgment. There are three in particular which contain solemn warnings against perverting the great truth of Christ's imputed righteousness. These parables are the wedding garment, the ten virgins, and the talents. Let us consider the first one:

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."--Matt. 22:11-14.

The man without the wedding garment is not among that class who openly make light of the invitation to come to the marriage, nor is he among those who took the King's servants and entreated them spitefully (see verses 5, 6). But he represents those who professedly accept the invitation to receive the final atonement, but who neglect "the needful preparation."--Early Writings, p. 71.

The man without the wedding garment must have thought that he had complied with the conditions of entering the marriage, because when the King came in he was speechless.

Jesus Christ came into this world to give us an existence out of Himself, to make us partakers of the divine nature (see 2 Peter 1:4). The gospel offers men life. "He that hath the Son hath life." The faith that lays hold of the imputed gift of Christ's righteousness will work by love and purify the soul. (Gal. 5:6; 1 Peter 1:22). Genuine faith will always work by righteousness imparted. "Through faith in His name, He imputes unto us His righteousness, and it becomes a living principle in our life."--Christ Our Righteousness, p. 98. To accept Christ as our righteousness means to accept His life, to unite our life to His life, our weakness to His strength, choosing to live Christ's life with all the obligations it imposes. Righteousness is only imputed to those who choose to live Christ's life and walk in the way of all His commandments without reservation. "His righteousness is imputed only to the obedient."--S.D.A. Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1072.

That faith which is counted for righteousness avails to bring the believer into vital connection with Christ, even as the branch is united to the vine. This union with Him will bring forth much fruit--it cannot be otherwise. Again, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."--Gal. 3:27.

Putting on Christ is not giving a nod of assent to a doctrine of righteousness by faith, but it means to put on the life of Jesus so that it may be said, "Christ liveth in me."--Gal.2:20.

The man without the wedding garment had doubtless thought that he could trust in Christ's death to save him, that it was a wonderful provision to have righteousness imputed to him because he "believed" the message of salvation. He had extolled the riches of free grace, but had refused to live Christ's self-sacrificing life (see Christ's Object Lessons, p. 316). The imputed righteousness which he thought he had accepted was this make-believe type of thing that people today think that imputed righteousness is, and hence it had not become a living principle in his life. His faith did not work by love, leading him to overcome his hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong-doing. He was destitute of the imparted life of Christ, not because he was abiding in Christ and trusting in His merits, but because he had tried to borrow the livery of heaven to hide his defects of character. Every man is judged by his works. This man's works showed that he was not a fruitful branch, thereby proving that he had no connection with the vine.

The man without the wedding garment had accepted the form of the truth, but had denied the power thereof. If he had truly accepted the imputed gift of heaven, his old nature would have been broken up, he would have felt true contrition for sin, and his need of complete transformation of character. If he had indeed been abiding in Christ, Christ would have been abiding in him. But when the King comes in, examination proves that there is no imparted life, and his works are evidence that he does not have that saving faith which gives the title to heaven.

Those who truly accept Jesus as their righteousness will thereby unite their lives to Him, they will surrender their lives to the principle of self-renouncing love, they will walk in the way of God's commandments, they will have fellowship with Christ in His sufferings--in short, they will actually live Christ's life. The man without the wedding garment had the profession, but he had not the life. "He that hath the Son hath life."

The Oil.

A similar lesson is given in the parable of the ten virgins. The foolish, having no oil in their vessels with their lamps, are in the same condition as the man without the wedding garment. Yet the foolish virgins profess to believe present truth, they have lamps, and are in company with the wise. But they lack the oil--the Holy Spirit (see Zech. 4:1-4; Christ's Object Lessons, p. 407).

We have no liberty to examine our brother to see whether he is a "foolish virgin," but we are commanded to examine our

own selves. Far better to find out that we have not the oil now while we have time to buy it, than to discover our lack when the Bridegroom comes. How might we know whether or not we have the oil in our vessels with our lamps?

There was one Man who had this oil, for He was "anointed. . . . with the oil of gladness above [His] fellows."--Heb. 1:9. He testified:

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn."--Isa. 61:1,2.

Luke writes: ". . . God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. . . ."--Acts 10:38.

Those who have the Spirit of Christ will do the works of Christ, and if they have not the Spirit of Christ, they are none of His (see Rom. 8:9). When Jesus was about to return to heaven, He reminded the disciples of His works of love and mercy to a perishing world, and He promised them that the Father would send them the Comforter that they might carry on His work. He said:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father."--John 14:12.

Thus, Isaiah 61:1-3 is not only to be a description of Christ's ministry, but of all who are imbued with His Spirit. The fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah is a description of the work that will be engaged in by those who sanctify the day of atonement fast:

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"--Isa. 58:6, 7.

In the judgment, profession counts nothing. The question will be asked, "What have you done for Christ in the person of the poor, the afflicted, the needy, the distressed, the sorrowing, the hungry?" If we have not done the works of Christ, then we have not had the Spirit of Christ, and if we have not had the Spirit of Christ, we will be none of His, and the Lord will say, "I never knew you."

"All around us are heard the wails of a world's sorrow. On

every hand are the needy and distressed. It is ours to aid in relieving and softening life's hardships and misery.

"Practical work will have far more effect than mere sermonizing. We are to give food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and shelter to the homeless. And we are called to do more than this. The wants of the soul, only the love of Christ can satisfy. If Christ is abiding in us, our hearts will be full of divine sympathy. The sealed fountains of earnest, Christlike love will be unsealed.

"God calls not only for our gifts for the needy, but for our cheerful countenance, our hopeful words, our kindly hand-clasp. When Christ healed the sick, He laid His hands upon them. So should we come in close touch with those whom we seek to benefit.

"There are many from whom hope has departed. Bring back the sunshine to them. Many have lost their courage. Speak to them words of cheer. Pray for them. There are those who need the bread of life. Read to them from the Word of God. Upon many is a soul-sickness which no earthly balm can reach nor physician heal. Pray for these souls, bring them to Jesus. Tell them that there is a balm in Gilead and a physician there."--Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 417, 418.

"Christ came to the earth to suffer and die, that, through the exercise of faith in Him and the appropriation of His merits, we might become laborers together with God. It was the Saviour's purpose that after He ascended to heaven to become man's intercessor, His followers should carry on the work that He had begun. Shall the human agent show no special interest in giving the light of the gospel message to those who sit in darkness? There are some who are willing to go to the ends of the earth in order to carry the light of truth to men, but God demands that every soul who knows the truth shall seek to win others to the love of the truth. If we are not willing to make special sacrifices in order to save souls that are ready to perish, how can we be counted worthy to enter into the city of God?

"There is an individual work to be done for each one of us. I know there are many who are placing themselves in right relation to Christ, whose one thought is to bring the message of present truth before the people of the world. They stand continually ready to offer their services. But my heart aches when I see so many who are satisfied with a cheap experience, an experience that costs them but little. Their lives say that for them Christ has died in vain.

"If you do not feel that it is an honor to be a partaker of the sufferings of Christ; if you feel no burden of soul for those who are ready to perish; if you are unwilling to sacrifice that you may save means for the work that is to be done, there will be no room for you in the kingdom of God. We need

to be partakers with Christ of His sufferings and self-denial at every step. We need to have the Spirit of God resting upon us, leading us to constant self-sacrifice."--Testimonies, vol. 9, pp. 103, 104.

The Talents.

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey."--Matt. 25:14, 15.

The Lord divides unto every man "according to his several ability." God judges not according to the number of talents one has, but according to the faithfulness in investing the talents in the bank of heaven. None are left out of receiving some talent. In the parable, one man went and buried his talent in the earth. As with the man without the wedding garment, and the virgins without the oil, this man finds himself cast into outer darkness, unto "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

All have some talents--mental faculties, health, strength, time, money, influence, kindly impulses and affections, speech, etc. Of nothing will the Lord require so strict an account of in the judgment than our talents. The use we have made of all will be scrutinized. God expects returns "according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."--2 Cor. 8:12.

When a believer accepts Christ as his life and righteousness, he is bought with a price. He is not his own. For to be a follower of Christ, a man must forsake all that he has, and take up his cross and follow Christ. A business man must forsake his business. A farmer must forsake his farm. A tradesman must forsake his trade. This is not to mean that he leaves his immediate employment, for Paul advises, "Let every man wherein he is called there abide." But it does mean that henceforth the believer renounces ownership and right to his own life and everything he has. It is all given to the Lord, to be used as He directs. He is merely a steward of his Lord's goods, and he is not to run the business, or the farm, or the trade as his any more, but it is to be operated as the Lord's enterprise. This is Christianity, and nothing short of this is Christianity. The apostle Paul said: "For me to live is Christ." That is the most perfect definition of Christianity given in the Word of God. A Christian must be in this world for one business--to preach the gospel to every creature--and everything else he does must be merely to pay the expenses.

Some people imagine that when they pay a tenth of their money to the Lord, and give some offerings to His cause, they are then free to use the rest as they see fit. Those who do this are not Christians. They have never been born again. They know not what Christianity is. Others imagine that when they

have devoted one day a week to the Lord, plus some other time which is deemed necessary, then they are at liberty to please themselves as to what they do in the rest of their time. This also is not Christianity. A Christian is bought with a price. Everything he is and has is Christ's, and he keeps nothing back to please himself, or to be devoted to the service of himself. A man who professes to be a Christian, yet keeps back some of his time, means, strength, or anything else over which he is steward, for his own selfish indulgence, is committing the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. These people also professed to have given all, but they kept back part of the price.

Are you keeping back part of the price? The price of heaven is Jesus, and the price of Jesus is all. He is the Pearl of Great Price. Do not insult the King of heaven by showing contempt for His salvation, by thinking that the Pearl can be obtained by any less than "selling all that [we have]". Jesus warns all those who would come after Him to first sit down and count the cost. Do not try to be a Christian without counting the cost. The cost is all.

The unfaithful steward put his talent in the earth. Have you any talent in the earth, or can you truly say that every single one is invested in the King's business? If one talent is in the earth, you are an unfaithful steward, a foolish virgin without oil, a man without a wedding garment. "We have no time now to give our energies and talents to worldly enterprises."--Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 104.

When we accept Christ, we accept the whole treasury of heaven. Everything is ours in Christ. The Father has given us an inheritance in Him, even the universe. We are invited to share and rule it with Christ for eternity. But before we can actually enter upon that inheritance, we must prove that we will be faithful owners of God's universe. So the Lord has given us just a few of His goods, placed us on probation, and has given us a chance to demonstrate that we can be entrusted with inheriting "all things". If we are faithful stewards over the few things here, God knows that we will be faithful over the "many things" hereafter--even the universe.

The judgment hour is here, when the Lord says, "Give an account of thy stewardship." Since every man will eventually pass judgment upon himself, let us honestly pass judgment upon ourselves now. Is the verdict guilty or not guilty? Have we indeed been faithful with every talent that the Lord has lent us? Have we really demonstrated that we would be faithful rulers of the universe with Christ? Christ's parable of the unjust steward is a parable to teach us how to redeem the time

"And He said also unto His disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account

of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write four-score. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" --Luke 16:1-12.

As with the unjust steward, we are about to be dispossessed of our stewardship, for we have "wasted His goods". But we may redeem the time by trading with the Lord's goods, earnestly, as with both hands. "Give, and it shall be given unto you." May we quickly dispense to others the benefits that the Lord has loaded upon us, trading every single thing under the power of our stewardship. Then will the Lord commend us with "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

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