

# The attitude of a slave

When we come into the kingdom of God as sons, the Lord requires us to empty ourselves to become slaves in the administration of His house. We know that Jesus Christ emptied Himself to become the slave of the Father and we need to have this same mind and attitude. Jesus identified the attitude and faith that a slave must possess when the disciples asked Him to increase their faith. We note that there is no greater faith than the faith of a slave. Jesus described a slave who worked in the field all day and then came into the house to prepare a meal and serve his master at night, before sitting down to eat his own meal. The master did not need to thank the slave because he did the things that he was commanded to do. Jesus said, 'So you too, when you do all the things commanded you, say, "We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done".'

If we have this attitude of a slave, the Lord will give us a work to do in His house. In the first case, He will ask us to be faithful in that which belongs to another's work and mandate. If we are willing to be faithful in that which belongs to another, the Lord will be able to entrust us with the work that belongs to our own name as a stewardship. However, we never graduate beyond being a slave of Christ. Jesus said, 'From everyone who has been given much, much will be required'. The Greek word that is translated 'required' in this verse can equally be translated 'demanded'. This makes a strong practical point regarding our participation in the kingdom of God. Having received a gift from Christ as a resource for generating increase in the kingdom, He demands that we exercise faithful stewardship.

## References:

Php 2:7

Luk 17:5-10

Luk 12:48

Php 3:8-9

1Co 15:10

1Co 9:16-17

Further Study: Philippians 2

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 6

## Paul - an apostle and slave

Paul was comfortable that he had been appointed by Jesus Christ to be an apostle to the Gentiles. He said plainly to Timothy, 'I was appointed a preacher and an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth'. However, he also readily introduced himself as a slave of Jesus Christ. In his letter to the Corinthians, he referred to himself as a 'nobody', even though he was not in any way inferior to the most eminent apostles. Paul understood the need to maintain the attitude and humility of a slave so that he could be useful and fruitful in the work that had been given to him by Jesus Christ. And he understood the importance of being faithful in that which is 'little' and that which is 'least'. He testified to Timothy, 'I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service'. The word 'service' is more accurately translated 'deaconing'.

It is only those who maintain the attitude of a slave who are 'useful' in the administration of Christ. In this regard, we are reminded of Paul's testimony concerning Onesimus. He had previously run away from his master, Philemon, but it is evident that he became a son of God and a slave of Christ after meeting Paul while he was in prison. Paul wrote to Philemon, saying, 'I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, who is now *useful* both to you and to me. I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart.' This is an amazing testimony. Onesimus had come under the burden of Paul's ministry to such an extent that his preoccupation was aligned to Paul's very own heart! It is the goal of every Christian to be 'of one heart and mind' with all those who serve in the administration of Christ.

### References:

Act 2:46      2Co 12:11  
 Act 4:32      Phm 1:10-12  
 1Ti 2:7      1Co 15:10

### Further Study:

1 Timothy 1

### Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 7

# The work of deaconing

The apostle Paul called himself the deacon of Jesus Christ. As the personal deacon of Jesus Christ, Paul was a nobleman who had been given the task of imparting spiritual gifts to slaves of Christ in the form of minas and talents. When we receive a mina, we are given the opportunity to begin the work of *deaconing* in the administration of Christ. It is important to recognise that deaconing is not a position; it is a work. The work of deaconing is to ensure that the priesthood and offering of another's faith is effective. For this reason, it is likened to the effect of the drink offering that was poured on the burnt offering to ensure a soothing aroma ascended before the Lord. Paul wrote to the Philippians, 'If I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all'.

Paul's commitment to the work of deaconing was not limited to preaching, teaching and imparting spiritual gifts. He was equally committed to raising an offering from all of the Gentile churches to ensure that the needs of the saints in Jerusalem were being met. He established an entire administration of faithful deacons who helped receive this offering from the Gentiles, transport it to Jerusalem, and distribute it to the saints who needed it. In his letter to the Corinthians, he testified that the Macedonians willingly participated in raising an offering for Jerusalem. They gave according to their ability and even beyond their ability. However, a number of the Macedonians were evidently not content in raising the offering only. They begged Paul for the favour of participating in the deaconing of the saints as well. They gave themselves to the Lord and then they gave themselves to Paul and his administration so that they could receive a mina and begin the work of deaconing.

## References:

Php 2:17      2Ti 4:6  
Num 15:7, 10      Eph 3:7  
Php 4:18      Col 1:23-25

**Further Study:** 2 Corinthians 8

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 8

# According to ability

The Gospel of Matthew records the parable of the talents. We read, 'A man about to go on a journey called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. 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.' In today's society, the word 'talent' is often used to describe a person's natural ability. However, from a biblical perspective, there is a big difference between a person's ability and a talent that has been given to them by Jesus Christ. A talent is a clearly definable work and mandate within the kingdom of God.

The parable teaches us that talents are given according to each slave's ability. This does not mean that talents are given to a person based on their skills or qualifications. A person's skills may simply be the outcome of the way they have invested their time and effort during their lifetime. They may have little or no relevance to the ability that the Father has given them according to their name.

Our ability to receive a talent will be the outcome of two things. Firstly, it will be the outcome of the Father strengthening us in the inner man by His Spirit and power. We know that the Father strengthens us in our humanity, so that Christ can dwell in our hearts by faith. This strengthening work of the Father is essential before we are able to receive a stewardship in the administration of Christ. Secondly, our ability to receive a talent is the outcome of the 'test of the mina'. This is simply the test of whether or not we are faithful in that which is 'little' and 'the least'. If we are faithful in that which is little, it proves that we have the willingness and capacity to be faithful in that which is 'much'.

## References:

Mat 25:14-15    Luk 19:17  
Eph 3:16-17    1Ch 29:14  
Luk 16:10-12

## Further Study:

Philemon 1

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 9

# What is a talent?

A mina was the equivalent of one hundred days wages or resources. In contrast, a talent was the equivalent of fifteen to twenty years wages or resources. For this reason, a mina is likened to that which is 'little' and a talent is likened to that which is 'much'. In contrast to the distribution of minas, we note that slaves receive different quantities of talents. In the parable, the master gave one slave five talents, another two, and another one. The distribution of talents is always based on a slave's ability. Talents are given according to the name of each slave and according to their proven diligence and willingness to be faithful in that which is least and that which belongs to another.

In practical terms, a talent will not be a vague 'feeling' or ambiguous idea. When a slave in the kingdom receives a talent, it will be a clearly definable work and mandate with a long tenure. In his letter to the Romans, Paul identified seven major areas of talents when he said, 'Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each one of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if deaconing, in his deaconing; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness'. Two talents are not necessarily two quotas of the same thing. They may be two separate areas of stewardship. We recall the words of King Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes, 'It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other; for the one who fears God comes forth with both of them'. These words describe the person with multiple talents.

## References:

Rom 12:3, 6-8      Act 21:8-9  
 Ecc 7:18            1Co 12:28-31  
 Act 13:1            1Pe 4:10-11

**Further Study:** 1 Corinthians 2

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 10

# Faithful stewards

Jesus said, 'He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much'. Once we have proven ourselves to be faithful in that which is little and least, we are able to receive a talent to steward. A talent represents the manifold grace of God that is given to slaves as specific resources for a particular work and mandate. A mina gives us the opportunity to begin the work of deaconing, whereas a talent gives us a stewardship. The stewardship of talents is the work of king-priests in the administration of Christ. While talents belong to the apostolic administration, individual slaves are given the custody of talents so they can work and labour to bring forth increase and multiplication for the kingdom of God. We recall the words of Peter, 'As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God'.

Paul testified, 'If I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.' Paul was not in any way suggesting that he was an unwilling nobleman and messenger. He was simply acknowledging the obligation that was upon him once Christ had given him talents. Every slave who has received talents to steward will be asked to give an account regarding their stewardship. Christ expects every slave to bring the fruit of their increase to the communion table and present it as tangible offering. This is because the initial 'investment' of talents, and the increase they bring forth, remain the possession of His administration.

## References:

Luk 16:10      Col 1:25  
1Pe 4:10      1Ti 1:11-13  
Eph 3:2      1Th 2:4

**Further Study:** 1 Corinthians 9

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 13

# Giving minas and talents

We know that we do not receive minas and talents from Christ *personally*, because He has ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father in heaven. When Christ ascended on high, He gave gifts to men and established an administration that has the authority and capacity to give minas and talents to His slaves in every generation of the church. In the first case, this is the work of apostles and prophets who have been appointed by Christ as 'noblemen'. Paul declared, 'Let a man regard us in this manner as under-oarsmen to Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God'.

The stewardship of Christ's possessions has not been given to apostles and prophets for their own sake. It has been given to them for the express purpose of equipping the entire body of Christ for the work of deaconing. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul called himself a prisoner of Jesus Christ *for the sake of the Gentiles*. He referred to the stewardship of God's grace which had been given to him for the sake of the Gentile churches in every place. Paul had been given the grace and authority to impart spiritual gifts in the form of minas and talents.

Of course, apostles and prophets will not be *personally* giving minas and talents to every slave, in every place. Their primary work is to find and appoint faithful and wise overseers in every lampstand church. A faithful and wise steward is able to be appointed with authority over multiple congregations or cities. Overseers receive authority from an ascension-gift administration, and in turn, it is their work to impart minas and talents to the slaves of Christ who are in their care. We read in the Gospel of Luke, 'Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?'

## References:

Luk 12:42      1Pe 4:10  
 ICo 4:1        Col 4:3  
 Eph 3:1        2Ti 2:10

Further Study:      Acts 13:1-41

Daily Proverb:      Proverbs 14

# Labour, increase and reward

We observe in the parable of the talents that the wise slaves immediately 'went and traded' with their talents to gain more. The word 'traded' can be better understood as 'laboured'. Minas and talents are given to us as opportunities and resources. In the case of the minas, the Scripture identifies that we should produce increase by a ratio of one to five, or one to ten. In any case, the calculated value of the mina and its increase is not a significant amount. The real value of the fruit of the mina is the confidence that each slave gains in the work of the Lord and the authority that each slave is given to do the work that belongs to their name. Each slave receives a mandate to exercise authority in their work that is commensurate with the obedience and diligence they have demonstrated with their minas.

In the case of the talents, every steward should be aware of the value and nature of the talents given to them. A good steward will know how to manage increase, and potential loss, during the season of their stewardship. We recall that a talent is a definable tenure of work for fifteen years or more. A steward will experience many successes and failures over such a long time. However, the evidence that a slave has been faithful and wise will be the fact that, at the end of the season, an increase will have been generated for the Lord. When a steward generates increase, it is given to the Lord by offering, recognising that all things belong to Him. However, once it has been given to Him, the Lord returns the fruit to each steward as the resources to equip them for the next season. It is also given to them as wages and fruit for eternal life. Jesus said, 'Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal'.

**References:**

Mat 25:16-17    Rom 1:13  
Joh 4:36        1Th 2:19  
1Ch 29:14      2Ti 4:7-8

**Further Study:** 1 Corinthians 3**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 15

# The wise and foolish virgins

Jesus used the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins to teach us how churches need to prepare for His coming. We note that this parable refers to the bridegroom, not a nobleman or a rich man. The bridegroom is Christ Himself. At the midnight hour, there was a declaration, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' The apostle Paul referred to this parable when he said to the Corinthians, 'I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin'. It is significant that Paul used the term 'virgin' to describe an entire congregation or group of congregations. Unlike the individual slaves who received minas and talents, the ten virgins represent lampstand churches. The 'lamps' represent the overseeing messengers of each lampstand church.

The foremost lesson of this parable is that lampstand churches require a sufficient supply of oil to sustain them until the Bridegroom comes. The lampstand churches, depicted as wise virgins, were evidently prepared for the coming of Christ. Their lamps were lit because they had maintained a relational connection to those who were supplying the fresh oil of the word of present truth. The overseers of these churches were connected to an apostolic administration. This ensured that they had sufficient oil in their lamps. In contrast to this, the churches depicted as foolish virgins were evidently ministering by a different principle. They had not maintained connection to an apostolic administration; hence, they were not receiving a supply of fresh oil. They had embraced an alternate word and mode of ministry which had no capacity to sustain their churches in times of trial and distress. When He comes as the Bridegroom, Jesus will say to these foolish overseers, 'I do not know you'.

## References:

Mat 25:1, 6

2Co 11:2

Luk 12:47

Eph 4:4-5

Gal 1:6-8

2Ti 4:3

**Further Study:** Matthew 25:1-13

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 16

# The parable of the landowner

The theme of the 'landowner' is prominent in the parables. We read in the Gospel of Matthew, 'There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it and built a tower, and rented it out to vinegrowers and went on a journey'. It is clear that landowner established the entire enterprise. He planted the vineyard and also provided everything that was necessary to ensure it was *protected* and *productive*. In the first case, Jesus used this parable to address the leaders of the Jews. He was referring to the Father as the landowner and the nation of Israel as the vineyard. The prophet Isaiah declared, 'For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel'.

The vine-growers referred to the prophets, priests, kings and fathers who had been given the mandate by God to tend His covenant nation as a vineyard. As Jesus delivered this parable, the priests and Pharisees 'understood that He was speaking about them'. These priests and Pharisees represented generations of leaders who had rejected the word of God's messengers. Likewise, they were the religious leaders who put Jesus, the Son of God, to death on the cross.

We recognise that this parable applied to the Jewish leaders in the days of Jesus. However, we also recognise that it is applicable for us today. Jesus Christ appointed Paul to be the apostle to the 'vineyard' of the Gentiles, in the same way that Peter was the apostle to the 'vineyard' of the Jews. This explains Paul's terminology when he said to the Corinthians, 'I planted'. As a nobleman who had been sent far away to the Gentiles, Paul 'planted' many lampstand churches and then gave custody of these churches to overseers who were responsible for looking after the vineyard.

## References:

Isa 5:7      Act 7:52  
Psa 80:8    1Co 3:6-8  
Jer 2:21

**Further Study:** Matthew 21:33-46

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 17

# The wicked vinegrowers

When Jesus addressed the church in Pergamum, He said, 'I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold to the teaching of Balaam ... you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans'. The Nicolaitans exercised 'power' over their congregations. They could be likened to the wicked vinegrowers in the parable of the vineyard. They would not receive the messengers of Christ into the vineyard that belonged to Him and His administration. They would not allow an apostolic administration to speak to their congregations. These evil workers wanted to keep the fruit for themselves because they were benefactors. They were corrupt vinegrowers who wanted to derive benefit from the vine. They did not understand that the vine is Christ and His church. They were not part of the Vine, nor were they joined to the messenger administration that was coming to receive fruit.

In this regard, we recall the example of Diotrefes. The apostle John testified that he was a slave of Jesus Christ who had been sent to the Lord's vineyard. However, John observed that 'Diotrefes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church.' For the whole church age, there have been wicked vinegrowers, like Diotrefes, who rule over their congregations and do not receive the administration of Christ. This kind of wickedness will only increase as we approach the end of the age. The Lord gives all men time to repent. However, we know that once the season of repentance has passed, He brings the works of all men to judgement.

## References:

Rev 2:14-15

Mar 9:37

Rev 1:1, 4

Luk 22:24-26

3Jn 1:9-10

**Further Study:** 2 Corinthians 10

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 20

# A kingdom of priests

When John introduced the book of Revelation, he said that Jesus Christ 'has made us to be a kingdom of priests to His God and Father'. The kingdom of God on earth will not resemble a democratic or totalitarian kingdom. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of priests. When we are baptised, we are clothed with Christ and clothed with His priesthood. This means that we can present our bodies as a living sacrifice and join the fellowship of His offering.

In John's vision of the most holy place, he saw a Lamb standing, as if slain, in the midst of the throne. We know that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God; but more than this, John was looking at a restored administration of offering. It is significant that he saw the altar, the place of sacrifice, *in the throne*. The throne symbolises the seat of power and authority within a kingdom. The Lamb standing in the midst of the throne signifies that priesthood and offering are the fundamental modes of the kingdom of God. When John beheld the great multitude who will be gathered for the great Day of Atonement, they were dressed in white priestly robes. They had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Our understanding of the kingdom must involve a practical commitment to offering and participation in the fellowship of giving and receiving within a local congregation. We cannot be part of a kingdom of priests without this tangible commitment. Our commitment cannot be merely an emotional or theological confession of faith. We must present our bodies as a living sacrifice, wholly and continually given to the Lord. Upon this foundation, we can then receive minas and talents that define our deaconing and priestly work within the administration of Christ.

## References:

Rev 1:6            Php 4:15  
Gal 3:27         Rom 12:1  
Rev 5:6           Rev 7:14

## Further Study:

Romans 6

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 21

# Receiving and inheriting the kingdom

Jesus said, 'Behold I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work'. In the end, the Son will judge every believer according to the work and labour that they have undertaken as slaves and stewards. Receiving an inheritance in the kingdom of God is implicitly tied to how we give an account for our stewardship of the nobleman's possessions. Minas and talents are given to us as a resource for our work as faithful slaves and stewards in the administration of Christ. When we receive minas and talents from the nobleman, we are receiving a participation in the kingdom of God. The resources that are given to us need to be multiplied through faithful labour. We labour with our minas and talents in the house of God so that increase is generated for the kingdom of God and the needs of our brethren are met.

Immediately after teaching the parable of the talents, Jesus said that the Son of Man will return to gather and judge the nations of the world. He will sit on His glorious throne and put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. He will commend the righteous, likened to sheep, for giving to and caring for the least of His brethren. He will say to them, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'. This is the blessing of our inheritance as sons of God. We begin to receive our inheritance when Jesus says, 'Well done, good and faithful slave, you were faithful with a few things; enter into the joy of your Master'. This 'joy' is the reward that we receive for our work in the various seasons of life, as well as our inheritance in the new heavens and new earth. Our inheritance is the 'fruit for life eternal' that we have gathered as good and faithful slaves in this age.

## References:

Rev 22:12      ICo 3:8, 14  
Mat 16:27      Isa 40:10  
Rom 14:12

**Further Study:** Matthew 25:31-46

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 22

# The initiative of faith

The parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven illustrate the principle of a 'little' which is associated with the mina. We read in the Gospel of Matthew, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree'. It is important to consider the mustard seed in the context of faith. Jesus said, 'If you have *faith* the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there", and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you'. When we receive the word of God as a seed, it is impregnated with faith. The parable of the mustard seed illustrates that fruit comes when we take initiative according to the faith that was given to us in the word.

Faith is not the exercise of perpetual believing. The Scripture says that even the demons believe. Faith is the *initiative* that we take upon hearing the word of God. That is why James concluded his teaching on faith saying, 'Faith without works is dead'. When we receive the word of faith, it motivates us and gives us the courage to take an initiative. Paul testified, 'I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me *faithful*, putting me into service'. The Lord considered Paul to be full of faith because, after his miraculous conversion, he 'did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God'. Paul was both obedient and full of initiative as a messenger of the administration of Christ.

## References:

Mat 13:31-32

Mat 17:20

Rom 10:17

1Ti 1:12

Act 26:19-20

Further Study: James 2:14-26

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 23

# Whatever is not from faith is sin

The worthless slave in the parable of the minas said, 'I was afraid'. His fear caused him to hide the master's mina in a handkerchief. He had no faith to labour and generate increase with the mina that he had received. We are reminded of the words of Paul, 'Whatever is not from faith is sin'. There is no justification in the Scriptures for fear. Paul explained that we condemn ourselves if we harbour any doubt when we proceed with initiatives. In his second letter to Timothy, the apostle wrote, 'The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to *faithful* men who will be able to teach others also'. It is the work of messengers to proclaim the word of faith. They impart faith by distributing minas. As the word is proclaimed, faith comes to those who hear. Like the nobleman, messengers not only exhort believers to faith, they command believers to exercise initiative according to that faith.

Paul encouraged the believers in Ephesus to take faith initiatives. He told them to '*take up the shield of faith*'. He was referring to Abraham, the father of faith. The book of Genesis accounts that the Lord spoke directly to Abraham. He said, 'Do not fear, Abraham, I am a *shield to you*; your reward shall be very great'. The book of Hebrews bears witness to Abraham's faith. We read that 'by *faith* Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going'. We are not protected when the word causes faith to rise in our hearts. Rather, we are protected by the initiatives we take *because* of that faith. Peter confirmed that 'we are protected by the power of God *through faith* for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time'.

## References:

Luk 19:21      Eph 6:16  
Rom 14:23      Gen 15:1  
1Pe 1:5        Heb 11:8

**Further Study:** Matthew 7:13-29

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 24

# The expectation for fruit

How do we know if we are a faithful steward in the administration of Christ? It will be obvious if we are producing fruit that is commensurate with the talent we have received. Jesus said that a tree is known by its fruit. On another occasion, Jesus used the parable about a man who had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, to highlight the expectation that we will bring forth fruit. When the nobleman had not found any fruit on the fig tree for three years, he instructed the vine keeper to cut it down. The vine keeper asked the nobleman to allow him to fertilise it for one more year to see if it would bear any fruit. We know the Lord is merciful and grants us plenty of time to produce fruit. However, this does not change the fact that He *expects fruit* and if we fail to produce fruit, season after season, we will be removed from the kingdom of God.

Jesus said to His disciples, 'You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you'. The word 'appointed' in this verse is better translated 'laid down'. The gift of Christ is 'laid down' to us when we receive a talent to steward on behalf of the administration of Christ. It is laid down to us so that we can bring forth fruit for eternity. With this in view, Paul prayed that the Colossians would be filled with the knowledge of the Lord's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. He wanted them to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, '*bearing fruit* in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God'.

## References:

Joh 15:8, 16  
Col 1:10  
Luk 6:44

Gal 5:22-23  
2Pe 1:8  
Tit 3:14

**Further Study:** Luk 13:1-17

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 27

# Stewarding unrighteous wealth

Jesus and the writers of the New Testament had a lot to say about the use of money. We know that money has no value apart from being a measure of wealth and a means of exchange. Paul wrote to Timothy, saying, 'Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy'. Jesus told His disciples that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. He said, 'Beware, and be on guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions'.

We know that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. However, it is also clear that we are required to steward the wealth that God has given us for the sake of increase in His kingdom. Jesus said, 'Make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings'.

The Lord has given certain men and women the capacity to generate increase in the kingdom of God. This capacity has been given to them as a specific gift of Christ. Paul called this kind of talent the gift of giving, saying that 'he who gives' must do so 'with liberality'. If a person has been given this kind of 'talent', it is imperative that the issue of ownership and custody is understood. If a person has a business that has been given to them by Christ as a talent, they have custody of the business but they do not have ownership of it in the eyes of the Lord. It belongs to the administration of Christ.

## References:

Rom 12:8  
1Ti 6:9, 17  
Mat 19:23

2Co 9:8-12  
Luk 16:9-11

**Further Study:** Luke 12:15-34

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 28

# According to our means

Every Christian participates in the economy of the world. We are all engaged in some kind of gainful employment. Paul said, 'If anyone is not willing to work, neither shall he eat'. We also understand that everything belongs to God. Everything comes to us from His hand and He is the source of our provision. When Abram met Melchizedek and received the bread and the wine, he gave Him a tithe of all. Abram refused to accept even a thread or a sandal thong from the king of Sodom, so the king could not say, 'I have made Abram rich'. We bring our tithe into the Lord's storehouse in recognition that all things belong to Him and we are slaves in His house. We recognise that we belong to Him and everything that we have also belongs to Him. With this in view, we know there is a faithfulness that we must demonstrate in relation to our finances. This is part of our stewardship as slaves in the house of the Son.

The issue is never the amount of money that we give. Rather, it is the diligence that we demonstrate as stewards so we can make offering. When the believers in Antioch heard that there was going to be a great famine across the world, they determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. They did this 'in the proportion that any of the disciples had means'. We know that offering is 'acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have'. Although we all participate in the economy of the world, there are some Christians who have a business for the express purpose of generating finance and resources for the kingdom of God. Paul called this kind of talent the gift of 'giving with liberality'.

## References:

Act 11:29      Gen 14:20, 23  
 2Co 8:12      Luk 16:11-12  
 2Th 3:10      Rom 12:8

## Further Study:

1 Peter 4

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 29

# The slave with ten thousand talents

Jesus said, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle accounts with his slaves, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.' Most translations of this parable provoke us to think in financial terms. However, the Greek word that is translated 'accounts' is 'logos'. The king was returning to settle the *word* with his slaves. It is fascinating to consider that a single slave was entrusted with ten thousand talents. We can only conclude that this individual slave was an ascension-gift apostle with a mandate to oversee multiple lampstand regions.

As the parable continues, we learn that this slave had squandered the king's possessions. He fell to the ground and prostrated himself before the king, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything'. The king felt compassion for the slave and released him from the debt. However, the slave proceeded to seize and choke a fellow slave who owed him a hundred denarii, saying, 'Pay back what you owe'. It is interesting to note that one hundred denarii was the equivalent of one mina. The slave who owed ten thousand talents showed no mercy to his fellow slave, and as a consequence, he was judged severely by the king.

In this parable, Jesus described the plight and judgement of a fallen apostle. He also described the characteristics and activity of a fallen administration. An administration is evidently fallen if it has squandered Christ's possessions and is characterised by the exploitation and abuse of the slaves of Christ. We are reminded of another parable where an overseer thought the master had delayed his return, so he began to beat his fellow slaves. The master came at a time that he did not expect, cut him in pieces, and assigned him a place with the hypocrites. We know the Lord is merciful, but these parables demonstrate that 'judgement is merciless to the one who shows no mercy'.

## References:

Jas 2:13

IPe 5:1-4

Luk 12:42-45

Tit 1:7

Heb 13:17

Further Study: Matthew 18:21-35

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 30

# Do not forget the Lord

The Lord said to the nation of Israel before they entered the promised land, ‘When the Lord your God brings you into the land to give you great and splendid cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied, then watch yourself, that you *do not forget the Lord*’. It is clear that God gave all of this provision to the Israelites when they entered the land of their inheritance. They *received* all that they were to possess from the hand of the Lord. It was incumbent upon them to remember this and maintain an attitude which said, ‘All things come from You and of Your own we have given’.

Further to this, the Lord said, ‘You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth ... it shall come about if you ever forget the Lord your God and go after gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish’. The greatest danger for a Christian who has received a stewardship from the Lord and become successful is to forget the Lord and say, ‘My power and the strength of my hand have made me this wealth’.

In the first case, we remember the Lord by continuing to bring the whole tithe and the firstfruits of our harvest into the Lord’s storehouse. The tithe is the sacred portion that we bring in recognition that everything we possess belongs to the Lord. We give firstfruits in recognition that *the power to generate increase* comes from the Lord, and in the faith that the Lord will continue to bless the work of our hands as we diligently labour to generate increase for His kingdom.

## References:

Deu 6:10-12

Deu 9:4

Deu 8:17

1Co 4:7

Dan 4:30

Luk 12:16-21

Further Study: 1 Chronicles 29

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 31