

To The Least One Of These

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October 12, 2013

Hello again. Every time we give a message, there are two or three messages in that message. So, I've kind of taken up from where I left off at the Feast. Through my own fault, I ran out of time at the Feast where there were some of the things I wanted to get out. Anyhow, I'll start again.

And just by introduction again, I'd like to begin over where I did at the Feast for the message there, over in Revelation 20 verse 6. And again, as we've pointed out many times during the Feast, this is one of the most important scriptures that we have that points to our future. And in Revelation 20:6 and again I'll be using the New King James. And again, the depth and the beauty of this verse is something that ought to impact all of our minds and impact our lives every day, but verse 6 of Revelation 20 says:

Revelation 20:6. *Blessed and holy is he [or they] who [have] part in the first resurrection. ... (NKJV)*

And it talks about death having no power over these individuals, but we'll:

6b) ... be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him [for] a thousand years. (NKJV)

And, again that should be our goal in life. That was pointed out repeatedly at the Feast that to do the changes that we need to be doing, to always be working on those things. There is just a lot for us to do. It's a whole lot more than just believing. It's a whole lot more than keeping the Sabbath, keeping the Holy Days, and doing all the basic things. Jesus Christ tells us in many places (We're going to refer to some parables later on.) that we have a responsibility and an accountability. And we're reminded of that in many places in many different ways in the way we live and conduct our lives.

The title that I've given to this sermon is

To the Least One of These

And you'll recognize that as a piece of a parable that Christ gave. Hopefully, that title will become a little clearer as I get towards the end of this sermon.

Over in Revelation 21, again as a reminder and this is our future if we do these things. We're bound, we're obligated to do God's will and that's the things that God gives us in His Word. But in Revelation 21, verses 7 and 8 it says:

Revelation 21:7. *He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. (NKJV)*

Now, that's a promise! And the very next verse talks about people who are not going to be in God's Kingdom, that don't do God's will and they're going to be in the lake of fire, which is the Second Death. Verse 8 of Revelation 21 says that:

Revelation 21:8. *But the cowardly, [the] unbelieving, [the] abominable, [the] murderers, [the] sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (NKJV)*

A whole bunch of categories there, there are seven or eight. It depends on which translation you look at. But it pretty much describes the state of the world, all of those things if you think about that. We probably live in some of the most immoral corrupt times that the world has seen for many, many years. But any of those categories are definitely ones we don't want to fall into.

It's especially noteworthy the first couple of them there where it talks about the cowardly and the unbelieving as it says in the King James. And that doesn't mean us chickens because there are some of us that are chickens in a lot of ways, but it's interesting the way Strong's characterizes that word. The idea of being fearful, the cowardly, the unbelieving kind of go together there with the thought from Strong's because they talk about that being in the spiritual sense. It's implying a faithlessness, a fear that leads to a faithlessness. In other words, a kind of "do nothing spiritual paralysis" that we can fall into. And we'll talk a little bit more about that later.

But that same verse, Revelation 21:8, from the Amplified, puts it this way:

Revelation 21:8. *But as for the cowards and the ignoble and the contemptible and the cravenly lacking in courage and the cowardly submissive, and as for the unbelieving and [the] faithless, ... (AMP)*

I won't go into the rest of that, but that does kind of amplify that a little bit and kind of agrees with the meaning from Strong's. But the implication there is that fearful attitude, that approach to our lives, especially spiritually, is a category we don't want to be in. It's a fearful attitude that stymies us and keeps us spiritually inactive. We don't do the things we should be doing. And that's an approach to Christianity we don't want to have.

Also as pointed out at the Feast and as all these scriptures do, we're either going to be changed—we're going to be in the family of God. We're going to be there if we've been an active Christian—but if we've been kind of a do-nothing one, we're going to be thrown into the lake of fire. We're just not going to be there. There are many scriptures that tell us if we don't do God's will, we're going to suffer the consequences. And we know that's a permanent death and we don't want to be there. We want to be in that first resurrection.

And, again, that's not going to be and talking about this isn't going to be because of our righteousness, anything, any great and wonderful thing that we've done or any great and wonderful thing we've been a part of, but it's because God has a purpose for us. He's called us for this purpose and He's given us the guidelines of how we should live our lives. And we know that when we are first called ... I don't know about you, but almost daily I'm thankful for the calling that God has given. All of us, and I can speak for myself. I can look in to my past and it's amazing to me that God would call me. And we're all kind of in that situation.

Paul talked over in 1 Corinthians 15 as a reference about our change, looking forward to our change. And we're going through this process looking forward to that, but there is a whole lot we have to do. There is a lot of living that we have to do. Paul talked about that a little bit more over in Romans 6. He talked about the process that we are called into, the process that we embark on whenever God does call us and we begin that change. I mentioned this a little bit at the Feast—kind of a little bit of review here. In Romans 6 beginning in verse 3, Paul points out:

Romans 6:3. *Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? (NKJV)*

So before we have to change, we have to begin that process. And the important thing about the baptismal process where symbolically we suffer a death, we go down into the water and we're buried and we're raised up to newness of life, which scripture tells us, but we literally die at that point.

What was that old Gary Cooper movie? "The Hanging Tree." There was a theme song and that is that "To really live you have to die, you have to almost die" is the way the song goes.

And that's kind of the situation we're in whenever we're called, whenever we're baptized. As it goes on to say here in verse 4:

Romans 6:4. *... [we're] buried with Him through baptism into death, ... (NKJV)*

We experience a death in that sense.

4b) *... that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, ... (NKJV)*

And that's the reason that we go through this process the way we do because we have to do it God's way. We can't do anything that isn't God's way. We will not achieve salvation any other way than the way that God has prescribed for us to do that. We can't do anything physical. We can't be part of anything that will help us do that. It's just not going to work that way.

But continuing the verse there, it says, “Even so” and because of these facts:

4 continued) ... we also should walk in newness of life. (NKJV)

Or live in a new way, a different way and we embark on that when we are changed when that conversion process is initiated through the baptism, through the laying on of hands where we're given God's spirit.

Verse 5:

Romans 6:5. *For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, ... (NKJV)*

And in a sense, we were. We weren't united to anything else. We weren't associated with anything else. We did it because that's what we had to do. That's what scripture told us. That's what Christ told us we had to do. But it goes on there in verse 5:

5b) ... certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, (NKJV)

We'll be changed into spirit beings. Verse 6:

Romans 6:6. *knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. (NKJV)*

Or in other words, enslaved by our carnality without God.

So the key, then again, and this was pointed out at the Feast: Eternal life begins with God's spirit being in us.

We go through the baptismal ceremony to have our past sins forgiven. We have the laying on of hands, the whole process where we have to retain that spirit. And that's key to our eternal life. We can't grieve that. We can't do anything—quench that. We have to actively use God's spirit in our lives.

Romans 8:12 continuing:

Romans 8:12. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—... (NKJV)*

And we are. Every time we think about the calling and we're thankful to God for that, we have a debt. We have an obligation. But it goes on to say here:

12b) ... we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. (NKJV)

But we commit to change as it talks about in Luke 14 whenever we count the cost before we even initiate that process.

It's kind of interesting that Paul would be giving this information to the Romans. One commentator says that the Book of Romans... And it actually is not the way we have it in our order. It's not the way of the original order. It came after several of the other books. But he says it's the nearest thing to a theological treatise that Paul gives in all of his letters. He just lays out in detail the path that we should be on, the path to grow in character, to grow in Godly righteousness, to practice that faith, to grow in that faith. And it's just a practical application of what we've been called into.

And we know, too, in Romans, from past studies that we've done, that's a mixed environment that the brethren are in, in that Church there. There are Gentiles. There are Jews. And remember, too, that in chapter 1, I believe it's about the last two-thirds of chapter 1, verses 18-32, the end of the chapter, where it talks about the state of the world. And there are a lot of those things that were mentioned back there in that verse in Revelation about an immoral society, a perverted society. The environment they were in and the state of the world then was not too much different than it is today. The saying back then was and today is "All roads led to Rome." In other words, it was the leading metropolis of that entire area and this is what these brethren were a part of.

If you put that together, that whole thought together with Revelation 17 and 18, what is God going to destroy at the very end? It's going to be that Babylon, that system, that city and all of that.

If you think about, too, the city of Pompeii— Paul wrote Romans according to the scholars and historians somewhere in 59-60 A.D. And in 79 A.D. Mount Vesuvius blew its top and covered the town of Pompeii, buried that Italian town. It's not too far from Naples now. I didn't actually look it up on the map, but you can look it up in Wikipedia or somewhere. But when you think of that, I think of Sodom and Gomorrah. That whole city was destroyed. They get like 2-1/2 million visitors, tourists there a year and they actually took some of the bodies where the lava covered them and they made plaster casts. Somehow they did that from the lava or something. And they're still laying in the street and everywhere.

Anyhow that's the whole context and that's the environment of this letter to the Romans. It's a hedonistic, narcissistic, carnal environment. And that's where Paul tells them in verse 13:

Romans 8:13. *For if you live according to the flesh ... (NKJV)*

And just like us, if they lived according to the environment they were in, the way of the society around them, the same for us (I'm sure human nature has never changed. I'm sure they made carnally bad decisions, bad choices, which we can do, too.), but it goes on to say here.... Well, let me start at the beginning of verse 13 again of Romans 8.

Romans 8:13. *For if you live according to the flesh you will die; ... (NKJV)*

You will not be given eternal life.

*13b) ... but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the [flesh] you will live.
(NKJV)*

You'll be changed and that's what we're looking forward to.

So, Paul's telling them the basics. He's telling them that their thinking, their lives must be changed in order to live up to the things of the conversion process that they've been called into. No matter what the environment, no matter what the circumstances that we find ourselves in and sometimes they aren't very pleasant as we all know. So, in simple clear language here, Paul is saying that our lives have to be changed by this process. We have to use God's spirit to overcome the deeds of the body, the works of the flesh, all these things mentioned here. And he knew the way that's put. We just have to use that. And that's expressed how? By our behaviors and by our conduct. So this is a definite responsibility that we have and that we're going to be held accountable for.

Let's be turning over to, if you would please, over to Luke 19. Jesus Christ spelled this out clearly in a couple of His parables. And in Luke 19 beginning in verse 12, this is kind of a timely parable here because historically what is going on here is that Herod has died, his son is going to Caesar in Rome to petition for his kingship over that particular territory, the Galilean Territory and all of that. He was claiming that. Meanwhile the people were sending delegations to Caesar saying, "We don't want this man to rule over us. He's not fit." In fact, I think later on in history they did actually give him that authority, that kingship and he was removed in a very short time because he was much worse than Herod was. So they removed him.

Anyway, Christ is telling that. Kind of in the same context of that, He's telling this in this parable. He's telling the same story in a veiled way. So in Luke 19 beginning in verse 12, He said:

Luke 19:12. *Therefore He said [breaking in on the context]: "A certain nobleman went into a far country [due] to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.
(NKJV)*

And we know that's representing Christ there.

Luke 19:13. *So he called ten of his servants [disciples], delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'
(NKJV)*

Some translations have this parable as the parable of the pounds. But, again, that's just representing a value. Christ is teaching a lesson here. He gives us something valuable in the sense that we need to use it. And if we use, we can gain from that if we use it the correct way, if we do God's will in our lives, apply those things. And what we're gaining for value for God is the fruits that we produce, fruit of that holy spirit.

But verse 14:

Luke 19:14. *But his citizens hated him, [they] sent a delegation after him, ... (NKJV)*

Very much like what was actually going on then.

14b) ... *'We will not have this man to reign over us.'*
15) *And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money [that valuable quantity], to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. (NKJV)*

Or by using it.

Luke 19:16. *Then came the first, ... (NKJV)*

And we know the story. The first came that he had given a mina. He had earned ten minas. So, this nobleman said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Then the second came and he had gained five minas with the mina that he had. And likewise he told him, "You can be over five cities." He's giving them authority. And, again, we have a picture here of the Millennium because we're going to have these responsibilities too as priests of Christ.

"Then another came," verse 20.

Luke 19:20b. ... *saying, 'Master, here is your mina, ... (NKJV)*

"I kept it. I didn't do anything with it. I kept it because:"

Luke 19:21. ... *I feared you, because you are an austere man [a hard man]. You collect what you [don't] deposit, and [you] reap what you [don't] sow.*
22) *And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant.... (NKJV)*

Out of his own mouth, he admitted he didn't do anything, didn't do anything with it. There's a picture there for us.

22b) *You knew that I was an austere man, collecting ... and reaping what I [didn't] sow.*
23) *Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that [it could have gained some] interest? (NKJV)*

He could have done something with it. Something! He didn't do anything with it. And we look at that today if we put something in the bank, you don't get much interest off of it for savings.

Verse 25:

Luke 19:25. *(But they said to him ... (NKJV)*

The people standing there. This is a rhetorical statement. He's taking that mina and giving it to the one that has ten. And they're saying, "Well, this guy already has ten. He's already gained. Why would you give him anymore?" But this is up to the nobleman.

Luke 19:26. *'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. (NKJV)*

And then He goes on in verse 27 in telling that He does have that authority. He is God and He can do what He wants. His enemies are going to be brought before Him and He's going to destroy them.

So anyway you slice this parable (And we're going to look at another one similar to it.), Jesus Christ is pushing that personal responsibility we have to use what He's given us.

And going back to just looking at the individual there in verse 21, he just held that mina real close to his chest. He didn't want to let it go and he said that he feared the nobleman because he was a hard man. If you look up that word "fear" there, it's from the Greek "phobos" where we get our word "phobia." It's just an irrational fear.

And if we know God, if we really know God, we're called to the true God and we worship God. If we know Him, we don't fear Him. We don't have that kind of a fear where we're so stymied and paralyzed that we can't do anything spiritually. We wouldn't do that. It says over in Luke 12 verse 32 "Fear not, little flock. It's God's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." It's God's pleasure, in other words, for us to reach that goal, that we have that I talked about—being priests with Christ for a thousand years.

When I think about this, I have to think back to the years that I was an instructor. I know how this fear works because as an instructor we do a lot of classroom and we do a lot of hands-on. Invariably and I would expect it. People would stand back. If you have a group of people (a group of students like I would have in a class), maybe doing a crane class, picking up a multi-ton lift, people will stand back instead of doing their part that they should be doing to learn the task. They will stand back and want somebody else to do it because it's easier that way. It's more comfortable to do it that way. And I had to watch out for that all the time and actually push people. "No, you have to do it."

We have a couple of people here that are trained EMTs and you don't learn that by not doing some hands-on. I know I was a trained first-responder at one time. You have to work on the dummy. You have to practice the bandaging and all of that. You have to do it. You just can't let someone else do it for you.

So, brethren, the point being there that we can't have that kind of fear. We can't expect someone else or somehow magically that we're going to achieve salvation by proxy, by having someone else do it for us.

It talked about the fate of the cowardly there. They became timid spiritually. They just wouldn't do anything and their faith withered and died. And the same thing will happen to us. God's spirit will just wilt.

And a lot of this is some of us have the history there. And I think you can relate to what I'm about to say. I think some of us were seduced by that intimidation, kind of an authoritarian intimidation and it kind of lulled us into a "do nothing spiritual approach to life." We thought if we supported this or supported that man or these men or this organization and did the big three (the pay, stay, obey) and all, that's all we needed to do.

We were seduced into kind of a spiritual life of having a minister make all of our decisions. I've heard some of the most ridiculous things that people have gone and asked the minister about—the color of the car. "What color car should I buy?" That's just kind of nonsense.

Jesus Christ wants us to step out and do things.

Another bad example of that: I knew someone one time that actually helped one brethren, a lady, helped some other people and I can't remember the story exactly. This family needed some help. They needed some food. They needed some other things, some transportation, some gas and all that. This individual stepped out and did that and got in trouble from the minister. Now, giving the minister at the time a little bit of a doubt, there might have been some extenuation there. I don't know, but should we be intimidated, fearful of helping someone? Scripture tells us if one of our brethren has a need, we should respond to that. So something was wrong with that. We were just; again, I think we were just seduced into being overly dependent on a system.

I think most of us have learned along the way as we change the way we think, as we change the way we live, we make some mistakes, but we should know that Jesus Christ is there to help us. His blood is there to forgive us if we make a really bad mistake and sometimes we do that. Sometimes, frankly, we just sin, but God says that He'll help us to get back up on our feet. He'll cover that sin and He'll give us the help through His holy spirit to overcome the problem.

I think God's spirit, before it's actually given to us, before we come to the point of we're baptized and we have hands laid on us and we're given God's spirit, I think God's spirit is with us. I think there actually is, second, third, fourth, and we have some fifth generation Christians in the Prosser area. And I think God's spirit is with those young people as they grow up. And it's with us, too, as we are called into this process. And what it does is it gives us a determination.

I know just again thinking of a good example of that—well, our example, which I can easily relate to. Whenever we were first called and learned about the Sabbath and the holy days, we kept the Sabbath very clumsily. Marie and I would study the booklets, the correspondence course, and all that stuff at the kitchen table into the middle of the night. And our poor kids were kind of shuffled off to the side while we struggled along trying to figure out how to do this because this was completely foreign to us. And, as you know, Marie was raised a Catholic. So, we had some things to do there.

The point being that with that help we had some determination to step out and to do something.

People might get mad at us. They might laugh at us. They might persecute us—whatever. At some point you still have to do something.

We have an individual in the Prosser Church that is struggling with that right now. He's new. He's being called. It's obvious he's being called, but his employer is really leaning on him for the Sabbath. It's so blatant. I keep encouraging him to go talk to an attorney because the employer is breaking the law, but that's up to him. That's only a suggestion. That's up to him, but he's trying very hard to keep the Sabbath. He's determined to do that and I think God's helping him. Sometimes it just takes some courage to do that.

But we don't want to happen to us what happened to this guy here in Luke 19. Verse 22 again, where the nobleman said, "Out of your own mouth I will judge you ... because he [the servant] knew he [the nobleman] was a hard man." And if we look that up, that word up, "austere" as some translations put it, it just means *severe*; it means *tough and hard*.

Every time I read that verse when I think about a "hard" man, I always think about back in the years when I worked construction. I was working on a dam outside of Libby, Montana. And I was a certified welder and I was welding for the Boilermakers. And I welded for this old Boilermaker. He was something else because he'd run around and he would basically crack the whip on everybody. And we were using a semi-automatic process of welding where you have a spool of wire. And I ran out and I stopped. I raised my hood and he tapped me on the shoulder.

He said, "What are you doing? What did you stop for?"

I said, "I ran out of wire. The machine won't work."

He said, "Well, get it filled and get back to work."

Now, there was a hard guy.

And that's kind of the picture here, but there is a literary opposite here. That's what's going on because over in Matthew 11 (And this is just a reference; you remember these.) where Christ says:

Matthew 11:28. *Come to Me, all [of] you [that] ... are heaven laden, and I will give you rest.*

29) *Take My yoke [on] you and learn from Me, [He said, "I'm] gentle and lowly in heart, and [you'll] find rest for your souls.*

30) *... My yoke is easy and My burden is light."* (NKJV)

That's the real Christ. So, this is a literary thing going on here.

But continuing in Luke 19 verse 23, where, again, a little repetition here, but it says:

Luke 19:23. *Why [didn't] you put my money in the bank, ...* (NKJV)

Then he says, "Take the mina from him and give it to him who has ten" in verse 24. So, what it's really saying here (And it's a picture for us.), "Do you think by holding your little mina really close, doing nothing with it even if you make mistakes, living a good comfortable life, do you think that's going to protect you spiritually?" That's what the nobleman (Christ) is saying in the parable.

So what God is saying there (And it's the same message for us.) if we are to do nothing, if we're afraid to do anything and Christ knows we're fearful sometimes in some ways. What He's saying here though is, "Give me that mina. Where's that guy that had ten? Where are you at? Here. Catch." And He throws him that mina. And we might think that's kind of hard, but that's what Christ says. Whether we agree with that or not, that's what He says.

Let's be turning over to Matthew 25. And, again, I think the past and that kind of a fearful intimidation (because frankly that was what it was in far too many ways whether that was intentional or not), but I think we just turned the reins of our spiritual lives over to someone else instead of depending on Christ. And a lot of us have to overcome that.

And what we should have done, what we should do now is just get out there and use those things that God has given us. He's graciously given us these things. We don't deserve any of it. And again, we should know if we stumble and fall down, He will help us. If we just step out, He'll give us the determination. We'll exercise faith. Our faith will grow. And, again our motivation should be what? That we're going to be priests of Christ for a thousand years. That's what's coming up. So if we get off dead center, God will help us through His spirit. We're going to see later on here that He'll actually do that and sometimes in some ways we wouldn't expect.

But in Matthew 25, I'm going to break in on down about verse 13. Did you know there is a lot packed into Matthew 24 and 25? I mentioned at the Feast that I'd encourage everyone to read those together whenever you read and study those.

It says back in Matthew 24 and verse 13, as a reference, and this in the context says: “He that endures to the end shall be saved.” I like the way the NIV puts that because it implies some courage. The NIV says:

Matthew 24:13. *But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.” (NKJV)*

In the Greek, that’s what the Greek means—that word “endure” means. It means *bears up courageously*. And sometimes it takes some spiritual courage to stand firm and that’s what we all need to be doing in our lives. In other words, we just need to keep doing what we know to do and not shrink back waiting on someone else to do it. No white flag surrender. No throwing in the towel. Just step out and use what God has given us.

Matthew 25:13.

Matthew 25:13. *“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. (NKJV)*

That’s a really tough watch for the people that just need to know when the time to flee is, where the place of safety is and all of that. If you think about that, there is kind of a paranoia to that—“If I don’t know, something I won’t be saved. I’ll never make it.” That’s just not true. It’s a fearful waiting on the other shoe to drop, because I don’t something; I don’t have this special information or knowledge. It’s not true. But Christ says very plainly right there, “We don’t know.”

The point being we need to be doing what we should be doing no matter when Christ is going to return because we don’t know.

Verse 14 of Matthew 25, continuing on:

Matthew 25:14. *For the kingdom of heaven is like a man ... (NKJV)*

And we know just like the nobleman back in Luke 19 that’s Jesus Christ.

14b) ... traveling to a far country ... (NKJV)

In other words, he left for a while and that’s kind of why... God is using a duration of time.

14 continued)... who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. (NKJV)

And he said to one. We know his story. We’re familiar with the parable.

Matthew 25:15b. ... he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; ... (NKJV)

Because he knows we're all different.

15 continued) ... and ... he went on a journey.

And we know Christ went to heaven. That's where He's at until He returns.

And a talent here is again it's just like the mina. It's a weight that has a certain value just like the things that God gives us have a value. They are certainly valuable to God and they should be the most valuable things in our lives.

But looking at that strictly on the surface, a mina is one-sixtieth of a talent according to the Bible Handbook and you have to think about that a moment. Why in Luke would He use "mina," but in Matthew He would use "talent," a greater value? Well, it's because of who He's writing to, who He's addressing. In Matthew, He's addressing the Jewish people and that's why He uses the "talent" there, a much greater value because if you think about that a minute, the Jewish people should have more knowledge of God. They have the oracles of God. They had the history, all of that. They had something extremely valuable, but they didn't use it as we know. The way Christ addressed the religious leaders of that day, they simply didn't use it. That's kind of the difference in that. And Luke is written to a more general audience and that's the difference in that. Anyhow, I thought that was kind of interesting, but theoretically they had a lot more.

But He's talking about the opportunities that we have. And if we're living and breathing, we have opportunities to use God's spirit to apply those things we should be doing. And I started to do this at the Feast, but I ran out of time. I'd kind of like to develop an analogy here in this parable of talents. I'd like to substitute the word "opportunity" for "talent" and see how this applies. So, if we went back to verse 15, it would say:

Matthew 25:15. *And to one he gave five [opportunities], to another two, and to another one, each according to his own ability. (Paraphrased)*

We're not all given the same opportunity. We just aren't. We have all different styles of life. We have different things that we do, different occupations. We have young and old, the whole spectrum. But we all have opportunities. Verse 16:

Matthew 25:16. *"Then he who had received the five [opportunities] went and traded with them, and made another five [opportunities]. (NKJV)*

Wow! He did something. He grew. Verse 17:

Matthew 25:17. *And likewise [the same thing with] he who had ... two ... (NKJV)*

Then he gets down to verse 18 and He says:

Matthew 25:18. *But he who had received one [opportunity] went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. (NKJV)*

Something that valuable—buried it! And we can do that in our lives if we don't use what God has given us. If we don't apply God's holy spirit to our lives, in a sense we're burying that wonderful gift that God has given us. Verse 19:

Matthew 25:19. *After a long time ... (NKJV)*

After a long period, Christ is going to return. We can kind of read that in there.

19b) ...the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. (NKJV)

And we're all going to settle accounts. Scriptures tell us every knee will bow before Christ. Verse 20:

Matthew 25:20. *"So he who had received [the] five [opportunities] came and brought five [others], saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five [opportunities]; [and I took and I've] gained five more ... (NKJV)*

Again, he grew and he developed. Verse 21:

Matthew 25:21. *His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, ... (NKJV)*

Not fearful.

21b) ... I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord. (NKJV)

That's eternal life. That's God's Kingdom. That's what that represents there.

And then He talked about the one that had two opportunities. He gained two. He used it—different abilities, different life, different everything, but he used what he was given. Verse 23 where he says, "Well done," the same statement. And at the end of that very it says, "Enter into the joy of your lord," the same thing. It didn't matter; it doesn't matter to God. God doesn't play favorites like we have a tendency to do. He just doesn't do that. God tells us not to do that.

In verse 24 and 25 he talks about the one who had one talent. He came and said, "I knew you were a hard guy. I knew you were just going to hammer me if I did anything. You know I had these other guys over here. I had this system over here that told me they were going to do everything and I didn't really need to do much." That's not just going to wash with Christ. It just isn't going to work.

Verse 25, he said:

Matthew 25:25. ... *I was afraid, and [hid it] ... (NKJV)*

“I just held it really close to my chest. I didn’t do anything with it.” You get kind of an ugly picture here because here is a picture of someone that never served, never picked up a phone, never said a kind word to anybody. And I’m talking about anybody in or out of the Church. That’s just the kind of individual that is pictured here. But he’s telling God, “Look, I’m giving You back what You gave me.” Not really because he hasn’t gained anything.

Verse 26:

Matthew 25:26. *“But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew ... (NKJV)*

“That I expected something from you because I have that power. I’m God. I have that authority to expect something from you from what I’ve given you.” Verse 27:

Matthew 25:27. *“So you ought to have done something with it, given me interest or something; given my money to the bankers, so when I came I would have had something. (Paraphrased)*

I think it’s kind of interesting. If you really analyze this a little bit you’re looking (I mentioned this earlier.), but you’re looking at two different values here. You’re looking at the value to you as you grow in character and develop and the value to God is the fruit that we produce. What did Paul say to the brethren? I can’t remember. I think it was in Philippians. He said that his joy was to see the fruit that was produced through his preaching, his gospel to the people of God. That was his joy. Not that it gained him anything. It was the fruit that was produced because he knew that was what God wanted. So there are two different value systems imbedded in this parable.

Verse 28 says, “So take the talent. Take everything from him,” opportunities are gone. It’s the end of the line. “From him and give it him who has ten”—the one that did something.

Matthew 25:29. *For to everyone who has, more will be given, ... (NKJV)*

And this may sound redundant, but these are two different parables.

29b) ... and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have... (NKJV)

Never did anything with what God gave him.

29 continued) ... even what he has ... (NKJV)

His life and his opportunity for eternal life:

29 continued) ... will be taken away. (NKJV)

And it goes on, verse 30 it says:

Matthew 25:30. *And cast [that] unprofitable servant into ... outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'* (NKJV)

That's just an idiom for the lake of fire. Verse 31:

Matthew 25:31. *When the Son of Man comes in all His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32) and all the nations will be gathered before Him, ... (NKJV)*

And then it goes on to talk about the sheep and the goats. Verse 34:

Matthew 25:34. *Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (NKJV)*

God's entire plan, which we're a part of; we're included in that if we do our part. Verse 35, it makes some interesting statements here. He says:

Matthew 25:35. *for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in. 36) I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'*
37) Then the righteous will answer Him saying, ... (NKJV)

"Lord, when did we see You in these situations? We don't remember that. When did we see you naked? When did we see you sick? When did we see you in prison?"

Matthew 25:40. *And the king will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'* (NKJV)

So, what Christ is doing here is He's painting a portrait of someone living the way we should be living, living a true Christian life.

And the whole point here is He's saying, "Here are people who saw a human need and responded to it.

They never thought they were somehow righteous by doing that. They just did it. That's what they did. That's the way they operated their lives.

I'll throw in one of my golf analogies. When you watch the golf channel, you'll see a golfer. He'll stand behind the ball when he's making a shot. And what these guys—depending on which school you go to, these pros go to learn all this stuff—he has two different modes of thinking. When he's standing back there, he's looking at the ball and he's imagining the flight—where it's going to land, all this and that. That's his “think box.” But when he steps up to it and gets ready to hit it, that's his “play box.” In his think box, he's using the left side, the analytical side of his brain; on the right side, he's using the action part.

So, it's kind of like that. If we do things, if we practice God's way of life, if we use God's holy spirit and everything, we do things unconsciously. We just do it because that's the way we live. That's the way we operate.

But continuing in Matthew 25 and it's interesting that this is part of those parables there. It's all part of chapter 24 and 25. Because he's telling the individuals that didn't do anything, He says, “You saw Me in these same situations these other ones did. You didn't do anything.” And verse 44:

Matthew 25:44. *[They answered] Him, saying, ... when did we see You hungry ... [when did we see You] naked... and [we didn't] minister to You?'*
45) *Then He [answered and said to] them 'Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you [didn't] do it to Me.'* (NKJV)

“You didn't do with the opportunities that I gave you,” is what He's saying. Verse 46:

Matthew 25:46. *And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous [those who use what they were given] into eternal life.”* (NKJV)

It doesn't get any clearer than that.

By the way if you look at that “to the least of these,” that statement there, we can kind of consider that every little thing that we do means something to Christ. It means something to Him—everything to everybody.

All these here it talked about giving food, visiting people. Where do we apply and exercise God's holy spirit the most? In the interactions, the relationships and everything we have with other people. That's why He's using that here. That's where it's expressed. That's where it shines the brightest.

I don't know if Rick shared that letter from Sunshine, the young lady from Australia. He told you about her writing him and saying how much she appreciated the Church and she'd never really felt that way in any other setting, in any other church. Do we consciously do that? I don't remember consciously doing any of that. We just did it because that's what we do. And that's God spirit. She told Rick she “saw God's spirit at work there.”

Over in Romans 8, we read this earlier I believe but I'm going to read it from the Amplified. I'm trying to add ammunition to what I'm saying here and emphasis to what I'm saying. In Romans 8 beginning in verse 12 and this is 12 through 14 from the Amplified.

Romans 8:12. *So then, brethren, [we're] debtors, but not to the flesh... (AMP)*

In other words, we're not obligated to our carnal nature.

12b) ... to live ... (AMP)

We don't live our life ruled by the standards of our carnality and the culture, the society, the morals, everything of the society around us.

12 continued) ... of the flesh. (AMP)

It goes on to say in verse 13 from the Amplified:

Romans 8:13. *For if you live according to [the dictates of] the flesh, ... (AMP)*

And, again, that's what the world does in general.

13b) ... you will surely die. But if through the power of the [holy] Spirit you are [habitually] putting to death ... (AMP)

A habit, something that we do, we just do it.

13 continued) ... putting to death the [evil] deeds prompted by the body, you shall [surely] live forever. (AMP)

Verse 14; and the Amplified doesn't change this much from any other translations.

Romans 8:14. *For all who are led by the Spirit ... (AMP)*

Do the things that you are led to do.

14b) ... of God [you] are sons of God. (AMP)

So again, the whole point there is if we're using God's spirit, it just means we're not quenching it. It gives us the power to conduct our lives in a certain way.

And by the way we respond, and in some cases (And you have to think about this one.) sometimes the way we don't respond because how many times have you had this thought in your mind? Boy, you'd really like to get up on your self-righteous indignant horse and stand up for your rights and do all this and that. Then blow your stack, have a meltdown, whatever it might be. But you don't do that. You just don't do that because

your mind's telling you and it's God's spirit affecting your mind, "I can't do that. I can't think like that. I can't go there. I just can't do that." So God's spirit helps us to do things and to not do things.

But Christ's words again drive home the point back in Luke 12 beginning in verse 1.

Luke 12:1. *In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first ... (NKJV)*

Not to the people—to His disciples, us.

1b) ... *"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. (NKJV)*

That means *they espouse one thing and they do another*. We don't want to be in that category either. That's a self-righteous attitude. Verse 2:

Luke 12:2. *For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. (NKJV)*

At the end of our lives, that's kind of a scary thought. At the end of our lives when we stand before Christ, what's going to be revealed? We hope there are some good things there that we should have done that God's spirit led us to do. Verse 3:

Luke 12:3. *Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms [boardrooms, whatever] will be proclaimed on the housetops. (NKJV)*

Maybe all those little things we thought never counted for anything? Verse 4:

Luke 12:4. *"And I say to you, My friends, [don't] be afraid of those who kill the body, ... (NKJV)*

Because that's all men can do.

4b) ... *and after that have no more that they can do.*

5) *But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell [or the second death]; yes I say to you, fear Him! (NKJV)*

And then it goes on in 6 and 7 to talk about how valuable you are to God and the things you produce for God, the fruit you produce, the character you develop and grow with God's spirit. Sparrows, it talks about sparrows. The hairs on your head are numbered.

The end of verse 7 says:

Luke 12:7b. ... Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

8) "Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, ... (NKJV)

And we do that largely by exercising God's holy spirit, conducting ourselves in certain ways in good times and bad.

8b) ... him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God.

9) But he who denies Me before men ... (NKJV)

And we do that again by our behaviors, by our conduct, how we respond or not respond. And sometimes, frankly, we blow the opportunities that we're given to respond in a right way, but let's don't do it by neglect or by fear.

9b) ... will be denied before the angels of God [at the very end].

10) "And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. (NKJV)

And that's just an extreme willful neglect. "I don't want God's spirit working in my life." That's blaspheming against God spirit.

Luke 12:11. Now, when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, [don't] worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say.

12) For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." (NKJV)

Wow! Do you mean God's holy spirit is going to help me? Actually help me? Verse 13:

Luke 12:13. Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to ... (NKJV)

And it goes on here. And Christ tells him in verse 14 that's not what He came to do. He didn't come to make those kinds of judgments. It's not His purpose. Verse 15, He addresses the real problem here and it's a problem common to all. Les mentioned this somewhat in his sermonette about the envy, about the covetousness, the jealousy of others. But it says in verse 15:

Luke 12:15. And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." (NKJV)

In our hedonistic, materialistic society that we live in today, same as the Romans, stuff counts. So, He says we can make a mistake there. We're not living God's way of life if we constantly covet. Verse 16:

Luke 12:16. *Then He spoke a parable ... (NKJV)*

Another parable, He points out, gives a lesson to what He's saying here.

16b) ... *"The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. (NKJV)*

A lot of material stuff, a lot of material blessings.

Luke 12:17. *And he thought within himself, 'What shall I do, ... (NKJV)*

"I've got so much stuff; I need to build more buildings. I'm going to build barns. I'm going to store all my crops.

Luke 12:18. *So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and goods.*

19) *And I will say to my soul, ... (NKJV)*

"Life's good. Enjoy all the comforts. I can take care of all this other stuff later. I've got plenty of time."

Luke 12 20: *But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' (NKJV)*

You can't take it with you. [Verse] 21:

Luke 12:21. *"So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." (NKJV)*

The whole point there is our lives have a spiritual content. And if we are led by God's holy spirit, use that, we'll build up that treasure. We'll accumulate that fruit.

I think it's kind of interesting. I ran across one commentator that had some interesting statements to say about this parable. And this is the way he puts it and I'll quote him. He says, "Jesus is discussing one of the rules for discipleship: Be ready." It's one of the rules that we have. That's true. You may be called to account in a moment's notice. Continuing to quote him, "Jesus is saying, 'Don't be frantic and don't be lazy. Don't be like the house steward who gets lazy while his master is gone. When the owner finally comes home, he's not ready. Jesus condemns this person, not for the evil done, but for the good undone"—all those missed opportunities.

There are things we know we should be doing and we are not to be lulled in inactivity by the fact that the Lord has delayed His coming. We are to do the things we would do if it were the last day, but not desperately, not fearfully, not in a panic mode [any of that].

And then he makes an interesting statement that I have to agree with at my age. "Our longevity ought not to determine our day-to-day agendas," how we live our lives, how

we conduct our lives. It just shouldn't because it could be the next heartbeat. It could be anytime. "We're simply to do those things which we know are right being led by God's holy spirit. Do them diligently and without panic."

I thought that was pretty good for a commentator.

But continuing in Luke 12:22:

Luke 12:22. *Then He said to his disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; ... what [you'll] put on.*

23) *Life is more than food, ...*

24) *Consider the ravens, for they [don't] sow [or] reap ... God [takes care of] them. ... how much more [valuable] are you ...*

25) *And which of you by worrying add one cubit to his stature? (NKJV)*

And that's true. Most of the things that we fret about, we can't change anyway, but we can burn up a lot of time doing that. Verse 26:

Luke 12:26. *If you then are not able to do the least, why are you [so] anxious for the rest? (NKJV)*

And it talks about considering the lilies and how they grow and Solomon wasn't arrayed like one of these. Verse 29:

Luke 12:29. *And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. (NKJV)*

A fearful, a panicky mind. Then we have folks that have anxiety attacks over the things they think they should be doing; they know they should be doing. They're not doing it. So, they feel guilty about it and they're anxious. Again, that's a kind of a paranoia, a fear. It's a spiritual paralysis.

Luke 12:30. *For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows ... you need these things. (NKJV)*

Then it goes on to say, "Seek first the kingdom of God." Verse 32:

Luke 12:32. *Do not fear, ... (NKJV)*

We referenced this earlier.

32b) *... it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

And some people actually think fearfully that God is trying to keep them out of His kingdom. They're always waiting in dread for the other shoe to drop. "I'm just not going to make it." I used that example, I think, at the Feast, of the lady that thought she

needed to be re-baptized because she wasn't using God's holy spirit. She had just gotten lazy and neglected to do what she should be doing. Once she got straightened around, she was fine. She recovered.

Verse 36... Well verse 35 said:

Luke 12:35. *Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning, (NKJV)*

That's symbolic there of using God's spirit.

Luke 12:36. *and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. (NKJV)*

And you know the Laodiceans. Christ knocked on the door to the Laodiceans. They weren't ready, weren't ready at all. It was kind of a wake-up call. Christ is saying, "Do something" to this particular church. "Do something," but they weren't doing it. They were very comfortable. They were very cozy with where they were. They really didn't need anything. They didn't need God really operating in their lives. They didn't need to make any changes or any of that. Verse 37, the last part of the verse there:

Luke 12:37. *Assuredly I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down... (NKJV)*

Talking about Christ at that time.

37b) ... to eat and will come and serve them. (NKJV)

And where is that? At the wedding supper. Verse 38:

Luke 12:38. *And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third ... and find them so [doing] ... (NKJV)*

And again, it doesn't matter what time. We don't know. The point is being ready. And we're ready if we're applying, using those things that God has given us, living the way of life that we should.

Well, let's skip down here to verse 45.

Luke 12:45. *But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, (NKJV)*

He's just not going to know. He's not going to be ready. He'll have the idea and the attitude and the approach to life "I can pretty much do what I want. It doesn't really matter how I conduct my life. It's not that important." Verse 46:

Luke 12:46. *the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. (NKJV)*

Verse 48, jumping down to verse 48:

Luke 12:48. *But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few.... (NKJV)*

But here's an important statement for us.

48b) ... For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will [seek] the more. (NKJV)

And that's plainly talking to His disciples—to us.

So again, our whole lives should be about applying God's spirit, using those opportunities, practicing God's way of life. And again, we can't earn those things. We're obligated to do those things. And again, we just pictured in the Feast what our future is. That's where we're going.

I'd like to end over in Peter. It's going to be 2 Peter. And remember who Peter is writing to. He's writing to people that were in that Roman Empire. They were also anxious for Christ's return. That's who he's writing to. They certainly had their problems, their trials, their issues. They had to struggle to live God's way of life. 2 Peter 3 and verse 9. 2 Peter 3:9 says:

2 Peter 3:9. *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, ... (NKJV)*

And He really is patient with us. And I think we all appreciate that.

9b) ... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (NKJV)

That's the world, but it certainly includes us.

2 Peter 3:10. *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. (NKJV)*

All the things that we think are so important will be gone, will be burned up. Verse 11. There's going to be an end to it, either literally or figuratively then. Verse 11:

2 Peter 3:11. *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, (NKJV)*

How should we conduct our lives? What kind of people should we be? And again, we can't earn that, but we're obligated to do that. Verse 12:

2 Peter 3:12. *looking for ... (NKJV)*

That means *never forgetting*.

12b) ... and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

13) Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (NKJV)

2 Peter 3:17. *You therefore, [brethren], since you know this beforehand, ... (NKJV)*

And we do.

17b) ... beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked, (NKJV)

Again, for whatever reason: Not using what God's given us, passing up those opportunities, not doing what Jesus Christ wants us to do with our lives. Verse 18, it says, "Don't do that." "But," on the other hand, it says:

2 Peter 3:18. *but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. (NKJV)*

And, brethren, that's what we should be doing. We should be using every opportunity that we have in our lives. We should be honoring, glorifying God the Father and Jesus Christ by the way we conduct ourselves. And we need to always remember never ever forget the future that they have in mind for all of us.