

(Power From on High) 4. the Parable of the Pounds; Or, Power for Service

by A.B. Simpson

The parable of the pounds teaches that the Holy Ghost is the power for service and the equivalent of all things that we need for our work, and that faithfulness is the key to a reward of commendation and promotion to higher service.

Scripture: Matthew 7:7, Luke 19:13, John 14:13-14, Acts 1:8, Romans 8:26-27, 1 Corinthians 12:7, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 4:30, 2 Timothy 4:7-8, 1 Peter 4:10

Topics: "Faithfulness in Service", "Empowerment by the Holy Spirit"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the importance of utilizing the resources given by God, represented by the pound in the Parable of the Pounds, to serve faithfully until Christ's return. He explains that every believer is endowed with the same Holy Spirit, which empowers them for service, and that spiritual effectiveness comes from this divine enabling rather than personal talent. Simpson urges Christians to actively engage in their callings, viewing all work as sacred and a means to glorify God, while also preparing for Christ's second coming. He warns against complacency and encourages believers to be diligent in their spiritual responsibilities, as the reward for faithfulness will be significant in the eternal kingdom.

Transcript

"Occupy till I come." Luke 19: 13.

Archelaus, the son of Herod, went to Rome to secure, by influence at the court of the Emperor, the kingdom of Judea, and then returned to enjoy his patrimony. Christ used this familiar illustration to represent His return to the Father to receive the Kingdom, and then to return to enjoy it with His followers during the millennial age. This is the frame-work of the parable of the pounds.

The special theme of the parable, however, is the trust committed to His disciples during His absence, and the resources given them to enable them to fulfill their trust. While the Master is representing us and caring for our interests at God's right hand, we are left here to carry on His work and to represent the interests of His Kingdom; to enable us to fulfill this ministry He gives us the necessary resources. These are illustrated by the pound, or mina, given to each of the ten persons. This was a little sum of money worth about fifteen dollars. It represents the resources which God gives to His servants for their work. What are these resources as represented by the pounds?

In answering this question it is necessary to remember the difference between the parable of the pounds and the talents. In the case of the latter, there was a difference in the enduement and endowment of the servants. They had different talents. In the case of the pound, they had an equal allowance. They cannot therefore mean the same thing. If the talents represent our natural gifts of wealth, social influence, or personal intelligence and capacity, then the pound must represent the special enduement of the Holy Ghost given to the people of God and the servants of Christ to equip them for their work.

We are taught most distinctly that spiritual service must come from spiritual enabling. "No man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord except by the Holy Ghost." No man can render any acceptable service to God through natural talent or fleshly energy. The apostles were commanded "to wait for the promise of the Father," and were to "receive power after that the Holy Ghost had come upon them," and then to be witnesses unto Christ, in the power of God.

There is but one divine enabling for service, and that is the enabling of the Holy Ghost. There was but one pound given to each of the servants, and it is the one promise to every true servant of Christ -- "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."

The same amount was given to each of the servants, and the same Holy Ghost is given to all who will receive Him. We do not receive a part of His Person or power, but we receive Him personally, and have as much of His life and strength as we are able to take. The Holy Ghost is one and indivisible, and there is no partiality whatever in the opportunity which God gives to every one of His consecrated children to serve and glorify Him.

The talents may be quite different. One may be obscure, while another may be in the blaze of publicity; but the same power is given to each one, and the same glory will redound to God through each, no matter how different they appear in the judgment of the world.

This blessed pound is given to every one of His servants. The Holy Ghost is purchased for all who belong to Christ and will yield their lives in surrender and obedience to the divine Spirit. The Apostle has given us the simple condition when He says, "The Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey Him." The promise of Pentecost was not restricted to a few special cases, but the Apostle distinctly states, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

God does not send us warring upon our own charges. He gives to us all that is needful for the trust committed to us. If you should be sent by a great commercial house to carry out a trust for them in some distant land you would expect them to pay your expenses, to provide you your ticket, to give you all necessary introductions, and to equip you thoroughly for your important journey. And when God sends us on His great embassy, He pledges Himself to enable us to carry it out successfully. This promise of power just means -- all we need for efficiency. It is sufficiency for efficiency, all personal qualifications, providential workings, and divine enablings that we have a right to expect for the successful accomplishment of the work that is given us to do.

If our work is in the secular realm, we have a right to expect His help and success. If it is in directly spiritual things, we have a right to expect it there. The power is in proportion to the place. God's provision is ample for God's trust. Now the Holy Ghost is the equivalent of all we need for our trust and work.

An English writer, I think Mr. Pearse, tells how he once spoke to a poor woman in a London City Mission, and tried to show her how Christ was the adequate supply for all her need. She could not understand it at first, and then he stopped and began to ask her about her home and her circumstances, and what she needed for her family. Then, handing her a shilling, he said, "Now what would you do with this shilling if you had it?" She told him that she would spend two pence for bread, and a penny for coal, and so on until she had spent the shilling. "So you see," he said, "that this shilling is really not a shilling, but it is coal, and sugar, and bread." "Now," he said, "Christ is the same. Looking at Him in one way He is Christ but in another way He becomes to you peace and joy and salvation and answered prayer, providential help and guidance, supply for all your needs, -- everything God can be to you both for time and eternity." The illustration was very simple and beautiful. She understood it and accepted the Savior, who was the equivalent of all her need.

Just in the same sense the Holy Ghost is the equivalent of all things. Therefore, in one place in Luke, He says, "How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Ghost to them that ask Him;" and in another place in Matthew He says, "How much more will your Father in heaven give good things to them that ask Him." So this pound is the equivalent of all we need for our work.

Do we need to understand the Bible? He will be Light and Teacher. Do we need unction? He will give the anointing of the Holy Ghost. Do we need faith? He will be to us the Spirit of faith. Do we need sympathy and love to draw souls to Christ? He will be in us, the love of God shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. Do we need power to convict and convert men? He will convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, and will accompany our words with His effectiveness. Do we need a power that will cooperate in the circumstances of life? He will make all things work together for us. So the Holy Ghost is just all things, and none of us is excused if ever we fail or come short. God has made provision for all that we require, and He will surely expect us to be faithful and true and to measure up to His high calling.

A Quaker lady was approached, one day, by a friend who begged her to pray for her son, who was going down to destruction through the power of drink. The Quaker lady turned to her and said, "Sister, has thee prayed for thy son?" "Oh yes," she said, "I pray as well as I can, but I'm afraid my prayers are not worth much. I want you to pray, for I believe you know how to pray better than I." "Sister, has thee prayed with thy boy?" she again asked. "Why," replied the lady, "I couldn't pray aloud, I should be embarrassed at the sound of my own voice. Why, you don't expect me to pray in public, do you? I'm a woman." "Sister," said the Quaker friend, "what right has thee to be weak, so that thee cannot pray for thy boy? Thee has the same Holy Ghost as I, to be thy power. Sister, I will not pray for thy boy, till thee prays with thy boy." The lady went away, angry, like Naaman of old, and feeling very badly used; but, like Naaman, she came to her senses a little later, and God began to talk to her, and to make her feel that her friend was right; that she ought not to be powerless; that perhaps her boy was going to perdition through her own weakness and unbelief.

There were many tears and much heart-searching and earnest prayers to God for righteousness and help; at length the Holy Ghost came to her heart, and she began to pray for her boy in faith and love. One night, he came home in a drunken stupor, lay down in his room, and was soon fast asleep. But the Spirit drew that mother to his side, and she knelt and laid her hand on his hot brow, and began to smooth his tangled hair and pray to God that He would touch his heart and save her boy. Suddenly, he awoke, and the Holy Ghost sobered him in a moment. He looked up in surprise, and cried, "Mother! you praying for me? Oh God, have mercy on me," and then he broke down in repentance and prayer for his own soul. God heard those united prayers, and before the night was over that boy was saved, and that mother's heart was filled

with the Holy Ghost.

"O sister, what right has thee to be weak?" O brother, why should you be ineffective and powerless? "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me." We have said that the Holy Ghost is given alike to all God's servants. Why then was there such a difference? There is a difference in the way that we use the Holy Ghost. He is given to us to use Him, and this is the meaning of that word, "Occupy till I come."

A similar thought is expressed in the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians, where the apostle says, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." He is given to us to "profit," to use, to invest, to exercise the divine gift, and thus to grow; and as we use the Holy Ghost, we become accustomed to using Him, and we have great boldness in the faith and work of God; our efficiency increases and multiplies, until the one pound is worth ten, and the servant hands back his trust, tenfold greater than he received it. This is the reason of the difference between men and men. It is a difference of faithfulness. It is a difference of diligence in improving the trust given them. It is a very solemn thing to receive divine power. God invests Himself in men, and God is a great economist of power and is deeply grieved when we waste His treasures; when we let His power lie idle, or sluggishly neglect the mighty trust that has cost Him so much.

Let us use God's precious gifts. Let us be diligent and faithful in the exercise of spiritual things, and, as we do, our faith will grow; our love will increase, and our usefulness will expand until we shall "bring forth some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundredfold."

The word "occupy" in the original is a very striking one. Indeed, even the English word is quite suggestive. It implies that we do not own our gifts, but that they are simply lent to us, and we use them as the gifts of another. It is not your power. It is not your faith, but His, and He lends to you His own divine sufficiency for the special service required of you; when the service is performed, you are no stronger nor wiser than before. You just quietly depend upon Him for His own personal power for the next service and opportunity.

But the word in the original has a still stronger force. It is a word of affairs. It literally means to be engaged in business affairs. The expression, "trading," used later in the parable, expresses the same idea. There is the deepest emphasis in the expression. The Holy Ghost is not restricted to what we call spiritual things, but He is a great business manager. He is a Spirit of practical wisdom and power. He is an all-round Friend, and He wants to be concerned in all the affairs of our life. Indeed, there is nothing secular, but all things that are given to God are sacred, holy and divine.

It is not necessary, therefore, that you should give up your business and go out of the world to serve Him; but let it be God's business, and then it will always be service. God has no better opportunity for glorifying Himself than to use a man in the secular affairs of life, and be as near to him on Monday as on Sunday; in the workshop as in the holy sanctuary and the secret place.

There are plenty of preachers in the world today, but God wants more practitioners. There are many apostles, but Christ is looking for living epistles. There is nothing that speaks more for God than a life spent in the blaze of the world, yet lighted up with holy and heavenly purity and power. Such lives preach to men, whether they want to hear or not.

We are living in a day when the great men of the world are businessmen. The strongest men of the present century are our railroad kings, our bankers, the founders of our immense corporations and

commercial enterprises. These men have gigantic intellects and far-reaching power. Why can they not be as mighty for God as they are for the world? Why can they not be as effective on the Board of Missions as they are on the Board of Trade? They can spend their millions for railways and business corporations; what is to hinder their spending their hundreds of millions to spread the Gospel of Christ? Why should the day not come when men of wealth and successful enterprise shall invest, not a few thousand, but ten, twenty, yes, fifty million, for China, Africa and India? I should not eulogize the man who should come to me and say, "I have twenty million I want to spend for evangelizing Central Africa." I should say to him, "You have done just right, but you have been a long time getting at it."

When businessmen come to understand that this is the nature of entire consecration, we shall see greater things than were seen on the day of Pentecost. Then young men will come forward and consecrate their lives to God, and He will give them the millions that belong to Him to spend as grandly for Him, as the men of the world are laying out their treasures for commercial enterprises and gigantic schemes of selfishness and gain. God help us to "occupy" in these practical ways and days, with a view of His coming!

The most encouraging facts which I know today are just such facts as I have spoken of. There are men in this country who are carrying on great commercial enterprises for the exclusive purpose of devoting the proceeds on a magnificent scale to the evangelizing of the world, and the giving of the Gospel to all nations.

"Occupy till I come." The object of the Holy Ghost and the object of the consecrated believer must always have direct reference to the Lord's personal return. The business of the Holy Spirit is to prepare Christ's people and the world for His second coming. First, this will be done by the spiritual preparation of our own hearts and lives. The Bride must be made ready, and so the Holy Ghost is working out today a wondrous work of sanctifying grace, in the hearts of the chosen few who are willing to hear His call and to prepare for His return.

But this is not all. Our work is also to have reference to His coming. We are "to occupy till He come." We are to accomplish our ministry with direct reference to the millennial reign of Jesus. Our Christian work is to be shaped and molded by this consideration. Oh, what a difference it would make in our methods of service, if we would make this the standpoint and object of all our work for God! Then we should not have 120,000 ministers among sixty million on this continent, and a few hundred among the vaster millions of China.

Oh, if the Holy Ghost had His way, how many of us He would scatter to the uttermost parts of the earth! I think I see Him going through Scotland, and dismissing a thousand preachers, and saying, "Go to India, China, and Africa." I think I see Him entering a western town, where a dozen churches are competing for the scanty population and trying to establish their separate sects. I can hear Him say, "Shut up three-fourths of these places, and send the men to the neglected and destitute fields where no voice speaks of Me."

How much of our Christian work is standing in the way of Christ's will! How much of our best service is not the service of the Holy Ghost, and is not occupying till He come! How long we have delayed Him even by doing good, and not doing it in His way! But we can be looking for His coming even in our business.

It is very beautiful to notice that in the picture given of Christ's return and the translation of His waiting people, they are found occupied in their callings. It is night in one part of the world, and "two are in one bed;" "one is taken, and the other is left." It is all right to be in bed when Christ comes, if it is night, far

better be there than in sin. It is early morning in another place, and "two women are grinding at the mill." One of them is getting her husband's breakfast ready. It is quite right to be found there, and so she is taken right up from her secular occupation. It is midday in another land, and two are in one field working at their harvest. It is all right to be there, too, if the work is done for God. There is no need for them to hurry home and change their clothes. There is no need to go and fix up things. They are "found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless." And so these toiling farmers are taken right up to be with God, and meet their Lord in the air, and to sit down with the wedding robe at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

How beautiful to know that all that is done for God is sacred! How sweet the old story of the New England Legislature; when the storm came on, and some of the members thought that the day of judgment had come, one of them anxiously moved that the house adjourn. An old Puritan sprang to his feet and said, "Mr. Speaker, if the day of judgment has not come, there is no need for this unbecoming haste; and if it has come, I, for one, prefer to be found at my post. I move that the house do not adjourn." Thus let us "occupy" and be occupied with the Master's work, and for His glory and His approval.

Finally, when He comes there will be a just award. The servant that has faithfully used his endowment of power, receives the Master's commendation and is promoted to higher service. I am so glad that the coming of Christ is not going to end our work. I should not want to meet Him if I had to give up working for the Master. Thank God, we shall have higher service through the eternal years. "Be thou ruler over ten cities." Oh, how much greater is the recompense than the service! A city for a pound; ten cities instead of a hundred and fifty dollars!

All our service here is but a training for that higher ministry. How touching to hear the Master say, "Thou hast been faithful over a very little." The man that had gained ten pounds had done "a very little." The highest service we do for God on earth is but "a very little." We are simply playing at service, or rather going to school at it. We are taking lessons in true ministry. The best we do is but childish and trifling, but it is preparing us for the grand service of the ages to come when, with our Lord Himself, endued with His wisdom, power, and glory, we shall be co-workers, perhaps, amid yonder constellations or, on this green earth, to restore it to the beauties and glories of Paradise again, and to rear the eternal temple for which He is now preparing the precious stones.

The Master does not say that they have been successful, but He recognizes them as having been "faithful." God help us at least to be faithful!

The reward will be in proportion to the fidelity of the servant. The servant that had gained tenfold was rewarded tenfold, and the servant that had increased his investment fivefold received only in proportion. Beloved, we are laying up our treasures. We are carving our eternal destiny. We are preparing our immortal crown. Oh, how the days are telling! God help us to be true!

But alas for the servant who came with his pound wrapped up in a napkin! It was nicely kept. It was a clean napkin, perhaps a costly one. He had taken good care of his salvation. He had nursed his blessing, and he gave it back as good as he got it. But was the Master pleased? Alas, alas, for such a servant! "Take from him the pound, and give it unto him that hath ten pounds." He was not lost. He was not destroyed, as the "enemies" of the Master were. He was deprived. He had some place in the kingdom, but he was forever conscious of an opportunity lost, and a life that never would come again. Beloved, we may save our souls, but lose our lives. We may gain an entrance into heaven, but lose our everlasting crown. God help us to be our best!

Not easily shall that crown be won by any. Even the great apostle did not think rashly of his reward, but straining every nerve and reaching forth unto these things that were before as one that had not yet attained, he used this intense language, "If by any manner of means I might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead." So let us so run that we may obtain.

Beloved, we have an eternity before us. We have an unfading crown to win or lose; we have a life in which to win it, and we have the infinite Holy Ghost to enable us for this mighty competition, for this glorious prize, for this divine trust. God help us to be TRUE!

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