

Pressures, Tests and Challenges - Part 3

by Derek Prince

Faithfulness rather than success is what matters in serving the Lord, and laziness is a form of wickedness.

Duration: 28:28

Scripture: John 14:23

Topics: "Faithful Service", "Eternal Judgment"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of faithfulness over success in serving the Lord, highlighting the need for love as the motive for service rather than fear. It addresses the dangers of laziness in serving God and the significance of using and investing the gifts God has given us. The sermon also delves into the judgment of nations based on how they treat the Jewish people, emphasizing the eternal consequences of mercy and compassion towards others.

Transcript

What he's looking for, as I've already said, is faithfulness rather than success. Each was rewarded with corresponding authority in Christ's kingdom. In other words, the way we serve in this life will determine our position in the kingdom of God throughout eternity.

Now let's take the lessons from the third unfaithful servant. First of all, he acted out of fear. And fear is not the right motive for serving the Lord.

Love is the motive. Jesus said in John 14, 23, If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. Don't be motivated by fear.

Let the love of Christ, as Paul says, the love of Christ constrains us. That's the only fruitful motivation for service. Second lesson is one which is very important for all Christians.

Laziness is wickedness. You lazy and wicked servant. You see, we all have a kind of religious set of values which is not always realistic.

Most churches will not tolerate drunkenness, quite rightly. But many churches tolerate laziness. And I believe actually God's condemnation of laziness is more severe than his condemnation of drunkenness.

We've got people in our churches who really don't do anything for God. They're too lazy to read the Bible. Too lazy to get up and pray.

Too lazy to go out to a street meeting. They just sit in the pew and they're nice to everybody. They do nobody any harm.

They put some money in the collection. We don't think about them as wicked, but Jesus does. He says laziness is wickedness.

Now then, Jesus said you should have deposited the money with the bankers and you would have received interest. That to me is convincing that it's not always sinful to receive interest. As Jesus said, you ought to have received it.

I think the laws against usury in the Old Testament were when you borrowed or gave or lent to a fellow Jew. Then it would be wicked if he was in need to require interest on that loan. But if you lend to somebody who's got a business which is going to make profit, you are entitled to a legitimate share of his profit.

That's the way I understand it. Because Jesus certainly expected this servant, if he couldn't do anything else, put the money in the bank. Open a savings account.

Now what does that mean in terms for us? I'll suggest this. To put the money in the bank means you have to say to yourself, well I don't have a really strong ministry of my own, but I've got this one talent, I'll invest it in the ministry of another. Someone who has a ministry that's approved, that's bringing forth fruit in the kingdom.

I'll give him my contributions, or her, or them. I'll invest in them. I'll put myself at their disposal.

I'll serve with them. If it's necessary, I'll lick envelopes. We don't lick envelopes today, but whatever.

I'll make myself available to that ministry. And then, when the Lord comes, he'll get his own with interest. But just to sit idle and say, well I only have one talent, there's not much I can do.

It's so true psychologically. It's the one talent person who failed. The man who had five talents was excited about it.

He knew he'd do something. The man who had two talents was excited. The man who had one talent just said, well there's not much I can do, so I'll do nothing.

That's a terribly dangerous attitude. The next truth is, not to use is to lose. Okay? Spiritual gifts God gives unconditionally.

He never demands them back. But if you don't use them, you lose them. Now God gave me a gift in the early 1970s.

Some of you are familiar with it. It's faith for people whose legs are unequal. I have seen, I think, thousands of unequal legs made equal.

Well some of my good friends said to me, dear friends, they said, now listen, you've got a good reputation as a scholarly Bible teacher. Don't spoil it by going around and kneeling in front of people and lengthening their legs. So I thought, well maybe that's good advice.

So I'll pray about it. Well when I prayed, I thought, this is what the Lord said to me. I've given you a gift, there are two things you can do.

You can use it and get more, or you can not use it and lose it. So I said, Lord, I'll choose the first. That's just an example.

I'd very seldom use that gift today. It's still there, but it's been superseded by other things. But each one of you, dear brother or sister, you have a gift of some sort.

If you don't use it, you lose it. If you use it, you'll get more. The choice is yours.

Notice also that the rejection of this unfaithful servant was final. He was cast into outer darkness. That's neither heaven, nor earth, nor hell.

It's a different place, don't let's get involved with that. And then, where he went there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. We've dealt with that, I will not go into that again.

So we go on to a parallel parable. Which is found in Luke 19. Which is the parable of the miners.

In the old King James Version, it used to be called the parable of the palms. There are some differences. In the parable of the miners in Luke 19, we won't turn there.

Each of the ten servants received one miner. Whereas in this parable that we've looked at, each received according to his ability. Jesus knew how much he could trust each one with.

Now one at the end gained ten miners. He made a tenfold increase. The Lord said to him, well done, good servant, good and faithful servant.

Have authority over ten cities. Another one gained five miners. And the Lord said to him, have authority over five cities.

But he didn't say well done, good and faithful servant. He wasn't on the same level as the man who gained ten. And one, like the other parable, had gained nothing.

And he was called wicked. And his one miner was taken from him. And then, let's read the last verse of that in Luke 19.

I want to read it because you wouldn't believe it was there if I didn't read it. Luke 19 verse 27. You remember that the citizens of this Lord had said, we don't want you.

We don't want you to rule over us. Don't come back. And the Lord didn't forget that.

So at the end of this parable, he, Jesus says. But bring here those enemies of mine who did not want me to reign over them. And slay them before me.

I want to supervise their execution. Does that fit in with your picture of Jesus? We have all heard gentle Jesus, meek and mild. But that's true, but it's not the whole truth.

He is God's appointed judge. We'll return to that later on in this series. If you've got the courage to face it.

So the one who gained nothing in the same parable, in the second parable was called wicked. His minor was taken away from him. He was exiled forever from the presence of the Lord.

Now let's go to the fourth category in Matthew chapter 25. Which is the sheep and the goat nations. And we're starting at verse 31 now.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the holy angels with him. Then, that's number 11. He will sit on the throne of his glory.

All the nations will be gathered before him. And he will separate them one from another. As a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

And he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the king will say to those on his right hand. That's then number 14.

Come you blessed of my father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 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. I was naked and you clothed me.

I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. Then number 15.

The righteous will answer him saying. Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and take you in? Or naked and clothe you? Or when did we see you sick or in prison and come to you? 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. Then number 16.

He will also say to those on the left hand. Depart from me you cursed. Into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Some of the strongest words that Jesus ever uttered. For I was hungry and you gave me no food. I was thirsty and you gave me no drink.

I was a stranger and you did not take me in. Naked and you did not clothe me. Sick and in prison and you did not visit me.

Then number 17. They also will answer him saying. Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to you? Then he will answer them.

Assuredly I say to you. Inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these. You did not do it to me.

And these will go away into everlasting punishment. But the righteous into eternal life. Now in order to understand that.

It's very important to recognize that it's a, it's a follow on from Joel chapter 3. This gives us the setting. Joel chapter 3 verses 1 and 2. The Lord says. For behold in those days and at that time.

When I bring back the captives or the exiles of Judah and Jerusalem. So notice this is looking forward to the days in which we are living. When the Lord is bringing back the Jewish captives from all over the world.

From more than 100 nations. Jews have returned to the land of Israel in the last 50 or 60 years. I was in a class in the Hebrew University, a language class.

And I discovered there were people in my class. That had returned from 30 different nations. It's stupendous.

The human mind can hardly take in what's involved. So this is the time and the situation. It refers to the regathering of the Jewish people in the land of Israel.

Then the Lord says this, verse 2. I will also gather all nations. And that's the word for Gentiles. Goyim if you know what the, how the Jews speak about Gentiles.

I will bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. And Jehoshaphat means the Lord judges. And I will enter into judgment with them there.

On account of my people, my heritage Israel. Whom they have scattered among the nations. They have also divided up my land.

Now we're talking about the judgment of the nations. At the close of this present age. And God says I will judge them on the basis of how they've treated the Jews.

And the land of Israel. That's important to know. And he says they have divided up my land.

Remember it's first and foremost God's land. Secondly, it belongs to the Jewish people. Because God gave it to them by an everlasting covenant.

For an everlasting possession. It doesn't matter who's in it. The ownership has not changed.

It belongs to God and to the Jews. And God is not restoring them because they deserve it. Let me hasten to add that.

He's very clear about that. It's not for your sake, but for my holy name's sake. That's what God says.

But notice the second charge against the nations is they've divided up my land. You know what dividing up is in modern political language? Partition. They have partitioned my land.

Now in 1920 or thereabouts. The League of Nations assigned to Britain. A mandate for the land of Israel.

Both sides of the Jordan. And the terms of their mandate were to provide a national home for the Jewish people. In 1922, with a stroke of his pen, Winston Churchill signed away 76% of that land to an Arab nation then called Transjordan.

Now called Jordan. And in that territory no Jew is permitted to live. So they had divided up the land 76% to 24%.

In 1947 the United Nations, the successor to the League of Nations, arranged a scheme by which they would divide up the land. So out of the reigning 24% Israel would get maybe 10% and 14% would go to

the Arabs. What are they guilty of? Dividing up God's land.

And those nations are going to have to answer for it. Now I'm British by birth and I was living in the land of Israel when partition took place and when the state of Israel was born. And I'm an eyewitness of these things.

And I will say that short of open warfare the British administration did everything in their power to prevent the birth of the state of Israel. And you know what happened? Israel was born and the British Empire fell apart. Without ever losing a major war.

The only one they really lost was with the colonists in America. The only major war. Their empire disintegrated, why? Because they sinned against Israel and their land.

This shows you that God takes it seriously. Now going back to this parable in Matthew 25. Jesus sitting on his throne of judgment, his throne as king on earth.

He's been sharing his father's throne up till now. Now he has his own throne on earth, the throne of his glory, the throne of his kingdom. And on that throne he judges all the nations that are gathered before him, the Gentiles.

He doesn't gather the Jews, I'll explain that why in a little while. And there's only one basis, only one basis, how they've treated the brothers of Jesus. And in the light of Joel, it's absolutely sure that what that means is the Jewish people.

Remember that in Revelation chapters 4 and 5, John had a vision of a scroll that had to be opened. And no one was able to open it. And he was weeping.

And one of the elders said to him, don't weep. The lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to open it. And John looked around expecting to see a lion.

What did he see? A slain lamb. That's where the power is brothers and sisters. It's in the life that's given over to God.

And the title of Jesus in eternity is the lion of the tribe of Judah. And Judah is the name from which we get the word Jew. In Hebrew Judah is Yehudah and Jew is Yehudi.

See it's only one syllable different. So bear in mind that Jesus did not become a Jew simply for 33 and a half years. He eternally identified himself with the Jewish people.

That's his title, the lion of the tribe of Judah. Now you may dislike that, but you can't change it. Because God didn't ask your opinion.

He didn't ask mine either. But I've learned it's safer to agree with God. Oh, I tell you, when you see anti-Semitism rampant throughout the earth and not least in America.

We better take careful heed to our own attitudes. Because we're going to be judged. It's clear to me from this picture of Jews in clothing, without clothing, without food, without shelter, in prison, sick.

There's going to be a tremendous worldwide upsurge of anti-Semitism. Which you can already feel the currents of it. God is going to permit it.

David Pawson, who's a friend of mine, said once. He said whenever the Jews aim to settle down in any Gentile nation, God always permits anti-Semitism to arise. Because that's not their home.

God said in Ezekiel 37, at a certain time. My people, you're like dry bones scattered in the valleys. But I'm going to open your graves and bring you out of your graves and bring you to your own land.

Now I tell some Jewish believers here, and I have many friends here. I said it's wonderful that you've come to believe in Jesus. You've got out of the grave, but you haven't got out of the cemetery.

There's only one place that Jews are appointed to live. That's in the land of Israel. We have a dear friend, I won't give you his name.

But he was, he was like most, the only adult Jewish believers I've ever met. Have all come by way of the occult. I think without exception.

So there he was, as a Jew in the land of Israel. A hippie with his hair down to his waist. And he tried to start a kibbutz for, what do they call farming? More organic farming.

So the Jewish agency said fine, if you can get ten other people, start. But he never could. He was totally disillusioned with Israel and the land.

Went back to the United States where he was born. Married a beautiful wife. And got saved, totally saved by faith in Jesus.

And God said to him one day, he said, you are a Jew. This is not your home. And from then onwards he knew he had to move back.

Those are true words. If you're a Jew, this is not your home. You can have a good time here and enjoy some of the so-called comforts and luxuries.

But I'm not sure that you'll be able to enjoy them for long. I think a change is coming. I don't tell anybody what to do.

But I think you should give careful consideration to the meaning of this parable. So what happened? Listen to what happened to the goat nations. Who didn't show mercy.

And it doesn't say actually they persecuted them. They just didn't show mercy. Verse 41.

The king will say also to those on the left hand, Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. I have never read anywhere more fearful words of condemnation than those. Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

And notice, the lake of fire was never prepared for human beings. We don't have to go there. The devil and his angels have no choice.

We only go if we make the wrong choice. And then he said to the others, In verse 34. Come you blessed of my father.

Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. So the decisive issue was who was going to be admitted to the kingdom, who was going to be excluded. This is the kingdom of Jesus on earth.

His earthly kingdom. The nations that passed the test, but were not part of the church, will be admitted to that kingdom on earth. Now I have just time to point out one more thing.

If you turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 32, 1 Corinthians 10, 32. It says, To believers, give no offense either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God. So there are three categories of the human race.

The Jews, the Greeks, that's the Gentiles, the church of God. And Paul says don't offend any of them. Now each of those will undergo a separate judgment of God.

I just want to point this out to you. First of all I'll share a principle with you. About God's blessing and God's judgment.

God blesses the Jews direct. He blesses the Gentiles through the Jews. All of us who are Gentiles owe every spiritual blessing we have to the Jews.

But when it comes to judgment, God judges the Gentiles direct. He judges the Jews through the Gentiles. And you can see that all the way through the Old Testament.

So you need to assimilate that principle of judgment. God blesses the Jews direct. He blesses the Gentiles through the Jews.

God judges the Gentiles direct. He judges the Jews through the Gentiles. Now there's a separate throne of judgment for each one of those three categories.

The church will be judged before the judgment seat of Christ. Second Corinthians 5.10, Romans 14.10. The word judgment seat in Greek is bema. It means the seat on which a Roman official judged his subjects.

It was the seat on which Pilate sat when he judged Jesus. So the church have their judgment, which I'll talk about in another meeting. And it's before the judgment seat of Christ.

The Gentiles, let me say first of all, the Jews will have their judgment during the great tribulation. The great tribulation will be the judgment time of the Jewish people. I'll give you one scripture out of many, Ezekiel chapter 20.

This is addressed specifically to Israel, Ezekiel 20 beginning at verse 32. He says to them, what you have in your mind shall never be. When you say we will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries serving wood and stuff, that's exactly what they're saying at the moment.

That is exactly the whole purpose of the present government in Israel. It's to obliterate the distinction between Jews and other nations. And it will never work.

God says it will never be. You can't do it. As I live, says the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you, Jews.

I will bring you out from the peoples, and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead my case with you face to face, just as I pleaded my case with your fathers in the wilderness, in the land of Egypt. So I will plead my case with you, says the Lord God.

I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. Passing under the rod describes the way a shepherd counted his sheep back into the fold. He put his rod down before each sheep, checked that it was one of his, then admitted it.

So the Lord says, I'll check each one of you, whether you qualify. And then he says, I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me. I will bring them out of the country where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel.

Then you will know that I am the Lord. The Lord says, I'll let you come out, but you'll never come in. And he says, I will make you pass under the rod, I'll count you back into the fold, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.

Remember that every permanent relationship of God with anybody is always based on a covenant. Amen. Thank you.

God bless you. Be safe. Bye for now.

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