

# Trials Enrich us and Prepare us for Christ's Return

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon delves into the parable of the wise and foolish virgins from Matthew 25, emphasizing the importance of having a hidden vessel of oil, symbolizing our hidden life with God. It highlights the need to endure trials as 'dealers' that provide the oil to keep our light burning in darkness, preparing us for the Lord's return. The message stresses the significance of faith and love, following Jesus in the fellowship of His sufferings, and learning the 'new song' that only true overcomers can sing, reflecting a deep, unwavering commitment to Christ.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 25:1, Matthew 5:16, Job 2:4, Job 35:10, Revelation 14:3, Revelation 5:9, Revelation 14:3, Revelation 14:3

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## Description

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## Transcript

I want to read what I saw earlier today from Matthew 25 and it says here about the wise and the foolish virgins. The story, you know the story very well, verses 1 to 13 and it's this statement of the foolish, you know, you know the story that the foolish did not take extra oil with them. They had enough up to a certain point for the light to burn.

Light burning is a very good thing. It's not that these foolish people had no light. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, Jesus said Matthew 5, and glorify your father in heaven.

And for a period these five foolish virgins, their light shone before men and people glorified their father in heaven. Like many of us, we have a light that's shining before men and people glorify God. We praise the Lord for that because we know that because it says in Matthew 25, verse 8, the foolish said, the lamps are going out.

That means all those hours, they came at six o'clock right up to six hours. Their light was burning. That means they had a good testimony before men.

But what they did not have was this flask of oil, which is a picture of your hidden life. The wise virgins had a flask. They were not carrying the flask in a visible way somewhere in some pocket in their dress.

They had a flask. Outwardly, it looked as if the wise and the word foolish were the same. They all had the lamps, but five had a hidden vessel of oil.

And I want to say among all born again believers, there are those who have a good testimony before men, lights are burning, but some have a hidden vessel of oil. Now, if it's only the Holy Spirit, everyone has the Holy Spirit who was born again. But here it says that the foolish then came to the wise and said, please give us some of your oil.

And because our lamps are going out, verse eight, and the wise answered saying, we can't give it to you. Sorry. They're not being selfish there.

So go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves. So there's something in oil, which is not free. You have to buy it.

This extra vessel of oil, eternal life is a gift. The Holy Spirit is a gift. You don't pay for it.

Forgiveness of sins is a gift. But here is something in the Christian life, which is not a gift. It's not free.

It's a story Jesus said, go to the dealers and buy it. You have to pay a price for this hidden thing that'll keep your light burning in pitch darkness. That'll keep you ready for the coming of the Lord.

So I believe the dealers are the trials that God sends into our life where we have to pay a price to be able to praise God and not complain and give thanks. You know, when Job was being tried, it's often thought of the fact that the first book God wanted to write for man was not Genesis. That was written by Moses 500 years after Job.

Job was a contemporary of people like Abraham. There are many evidences of that in the book of Job. I don't want to go into that.

But first book he wrote was about a discussion between him and Satan about what, can there be a man who's really righteous on the earth? And, you know, first God allows him to test him with his property and his children being taken away. And Job passes the test. He says, the Lord gave, the Lord's taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. And then Satan says, because he studied man for many years, because I think there must have been 2000 years between Adam and Job. So Satan studied man for 2000 years.

And he says in Job chapter two, verse four, let me paraphrase. I've studied man for a long time. And I'll tell you one thing I've discovered.

All that a man has, Job two, verse four, he'll give for his own life. He's even willing to lose property and even his children. When it comes to his own life, he really won't give that up.

So Satan says to God, you put forth your hand and touch his own body. Make him suffer. Till now other people were suffering.

Make him suffer. Okay, loss of property. That's not such a big suffering, but touch his body and make him suffer in some way.

And he says, I guarantee you, he will curse you to your face. Job two, five. I want to ask you, my brothers and sisters, is there anything Satan can do that'll make you stop thanking God? That'll make you question God and complain when Satan has won the victory.

Some situation comes into your life and you say, why? Why that? Uh-huh. You know, Satan is called the accuser of the brethren. And he says in Revelation 12, when he accuses them day and night, God is still looking for people who will proclaim by their life, Satan is a liar.

I don't love my life more than I love God. We have to say that in Job's case, what Satan said proved to be true. Even though in the beginning, he didn't say anything, but you know, the whole book of Job, you see, he complains against God and said, why have you treated me like this? He failed.

Undoubtedly, he failed. And we have to say that Satan proved his point. But remember, Job didn't have a Bible.

He didn't have any fellowship. He didn't have Zoom meetings like we have every week or twice a week. He didn't have the Holy Spirit.

He never knew that Jesus loved man so much that he'd be willing to give his life for us. He knew nothing about God like we know. So we're not in the same class.

He was pre-kindergarten, not even kindergarten. It was pre-kindergarten. Old Testament was kindergarten.

He was like a kid who's not even gone to kindergarten. We are college students. You can't say, you can't compare yourself with Job.

You can't compare yourself with David. Look at the number of pastors today who fall into adultery and say, David fell into adultery and continued his scheme, so I continue as pastor. They don't have a clue of what the new covenant is.

We can't afford to let Satan proclaim that lie. God wants those who will say, skin for skin, he can take my life. I will still praise God.

I will not question him. I will not even question why. I will bow and say, thank you, I don't understand why.

It may not be a physical trial. It may be somebody who's got a difficult wife or a difficult husband. Those are the dealers who are going to give you some oil that will prepare you to be strong.

If you can praise God, it says in, you know, Elihu was the one person who, there were four advisors to Job, Bildad, Halifaz, Shofar, and Elihu, and out of those, only three of them got condemned in Job 42. Elihu, God did not condemn him. Elihu says something like this.

He was the youngest. Read this word, Job 35 and verse 10. It's a beautiful expression.

I hope you'll never forget it, all of you. It's a lovely verse. Job 35, 10, God, my maker, who gives me songs in the night, in the night of trial, in the night of spiritual darkness, and you don't seem to find the way

around.

You don't know the way forward. You've been faithful, and yet it's dark, pitch dark. God, my maker, who gives me songs in the night.

Some time ago, I think some weeks ago, before breaking your bread, I told you how when Jesus offered the blood and the cup and the bread, bread and the cup, immediately after that, he said, let's sing a hymn. That was songs in the night. Turn to Matthew 26.

He came to that place. They never knew. The disciples didn't have a clue.

That within about 12 hours, Jesus would be hanging on a cross. No, but Jesus knew it. He knew my time has come.

And this is my last night. And so he says in Matthew 26, verse 26. Here, take my body.

This is my body broken for you. He knows within 12 hours, they're going to whip me, beat me, put a crown of thorns on my head, curse me, and nail my body to the cross. And I'll be forsaken by my father, the most greatest agony that no human being will ever face, except those who go to hell.

Jesus knew that he was going to be separated from the father. He says, take my body, take this symbol of my body and eat it. Take this as the cup of the new covenant, which I'm shedding for the forgiveness of sins of many.

Drink this cup. I'm going to do that in a few minutes. So what shall we do? Verse 30, let's sing a hymn.

This is the song in the night. This is our savior. This is the one who we follow.

We heard about Revelation 14, where the 144,000 stand with the lamb on Mount Zion. And it says here about this 144,000 and verse Revelation 14, 3, they sang a new song. And you know, the new song is what we come across earlier also.

In chapter 5, they sang a new song, chapter Revelation 5 and verse 9. And the new song is about death. You were slain. You shed your blood and you purchased us.

And that's a new song. New, translate the word new as fresh, a song that is ever fresh. I want to ask you, is this song ever fresh to you? Jesus died for me.

Has it become stale, the story of Calvary? I know years ago, the Lord gave me a revelation on that. That for all eternity, every time they sing about Calvary, it'll be as if they're hearing it for the first time. My savior died for me, for a sinner like me, fresh, as if I'm hearing for the very first time.

And I said, Lord, I want heaven right now. My heaven is not a geographical place. It's the presence of Jesus is heaven for me.

And I want to experience that even now that every time I sing about the cross or think about the cross, it's as if I'm hearing it for the first time that for a wretched sinner like me, my savior died. Lord, let me never lose the wonder of it. They sang a fresh song.

That's how I read the word new. Every day in heaven, it'll be fresh as if I've never heard it before. And I want to tell you something, dear brothers and sisters, the gift of the Holy Spirit, so many people say it's

speaking in tongues is the evidence, and this is the evidence, and that is the evidence.

And people are seeking for the anointing of the Holy Spirit to be able to preach powerfully. Oh, I tell you, it's not all that, brothers. That's all extra things God gives.

The greatest thing the Holy Spirit does is to make the presence of Jesus real to us. That's what the Holy Spirit brings, the presence of Jesus. I'll give you another helper, he said.

In other words, Jesus was saying, I've been with you all the time, right next to you. Now I'm going, but another person will come. It'll be just as if I'm here with you.

That is the greatest mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit, that the presence of Jesus is there. That's what keeps us from sin. Imagine if Jesus was physically standing next to you.

Tell me, which sin can you commit? Will you get angry with your wife if Jesus is standing next to you, or your husband? Will you have an unforgiving attitude to somebody if Jesus is next to you? Will you sign a false statement? Will you do something unrighteous with money? Will your mind always be occupied with money if Jesus is standing right next to you? No. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and this song will be fresh. He was slain.

They sang a hymn when he passed the bread and cup around. Well, we can sing a hymn physically, but when the reality of that sharing his death, eating his flesh and drinking his blood, means sharing in his death, and that's what we read in Revelation 14. Three, they sang a new song which no one could learn.

What is the song that nobody can learn? Is it because the others don't have musical ability? This is another type of musical ability. It's not the gift of music. It's a song which you can learn.

It says only the 144,000 could learn it. Have you learned it? Have I learned it? It's got nothing to do with musical ability. It says because, how did they learn it? Middle of verse four, they followed the Lamb wherever he went.

They walked in his footsteps, willing to face suffering, and identifying with him. I remember when I was a younger Christian, after I was filled with the Spirit, and I said, Lord, it would be a great privilege for me if I can have some of the experiences that you had when you were on earth, what Paul called the fellowship of his sufferings. That's a great phrase, the fellowship of his sufferings.

Those are the dealers who give us oil. That's the thing that can help us to endure. If you go through the fellowship of his sufferings, I'll tell you, you'll have a vessel of oil inside you that will keep you going in the deepest darkness until Jesus comes again.

You'll be having songs in the night, however dark the night is. I remember when you pray a God may answer it. You may suddenly find yourself in a situation where... So about 22 years ago, some religious people took me to court for some of the things I stood for and proclaimed, which they didn't like.

And it was pretty bad. They wanted to file some charges against me and get me imprisoned and all that. Actually imprisoned.

They gave me a court letter saying, that this is to imprison you, et cetera. Anyway, so I was scared. I'll tell you honestly, I was scared because I've never been in a court in my life.

And particularly with this type of criminal charge and completely false charges. And the first day I walked into court with this fear in my heart, the very first day, the Lord said to me something that really comforted me. It's amazing how God comes to you in your hour of need and said, don't be afraid.

Religious people took me to court before they took you. Look for my footsteps here and walk in them. I'll never forget that, what the Lord said to me nearly 22 years ago.

And I said, what are those footsteps Lord? Footsteps of faith and love. Like they say, left, right, left, right in the military. Faith and love.

Faith in a father in heaven who has in great wisdom ordained this trial for you. Never lose that faith. Who never allows anything, who's in control of all the circumstances, who has allowed this, accept it.

And love towards those accusers of yours who hate you, who accuse you. Walk in faith in your father and love towards people. Faith and love, faith and love throughout this time and you will come out triumphant.

And I tell you, that's what strengthened me that very first day. I stood without fear in my heart before the magistrate and I was the happiest person there. Happier than my accusers and happier than everybody else.

It was an amazing experience. I found that's helped me through the years. I have to really thank those people who took me to court.

They made me a stronger Christian. They gave me what Bible study didn't give me. They gave me something with going to many meetings, didn't give me something more.

Songs in the night, following the lamb wherever he goes. Don't be afraid, dear brothers and sisters, if the Lord takes you through a hard path, loneliness perhaps. You know, for example, there are some people who never get a chance to get married.

That's a big trial for them. I mean, I've not faced that trial. I'm very happily married for 52 years.

But what about people who never get married? Sometimes that is God's will. Some of God's greatest missionaries were single men and single women. They can look at Jesus who never got married, who was tempted sexually but never sinned.

The pleasure that married people have of sex and having children and a family Jesus never had. That's part of the fellowship of his suffering for some people. They accept it.

All accept it. What I'm trying to say is this. God doesn't plan everybody's life the same way.

But if you look at Jesus in whatever trial you're in, you can have songs in the night because he's gone through it before you. And he will hold your hand, walk the footsteps of faith and love. That's what it means to eat the bread and drink the cup, to follow the lamb wherever he goes.

And you can learn a song, the song of the 144,000, that you can only learn on this earth. It says something more about this 144,000 in Revelation 14.3. One reason they could learn this song is, I read that last part, as purchased from the earth, as freed from the earth, redeemed from the earth. Redeemed means purchased away from the earth.

That means they were, you know, when you purchase the slaves from some place, you have taken out, that slave is taken out of his old home and brought to a new home. So that's the meaning there, that these 144,000 were freed from the earth. They were born as a group of people like human beings attached to earthly things, attached to earthly people, but somehow they followed Jesus and they hated father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children, their own brothers and sisters, and loved Jesus supremely.

They were freed from their relatives. And they loved Jesus more than money and property. And they got freed from property as well.

They were completely freed from the earth, from people and from property and things. And then they could learn the new song. It's so easy to know all the theory of the new covenant, but ultimately it's only in the fellowship of his sufferings that we learn this new song.

Then we can sing. And then we'll be true overcomers because these are the overcomers. They overcame Satan.

Satan could not say about these people that, Lord, give them some personal trial and they'll stop singing. No, you can take them through any trial. They will sing in the night.

Let's be among that number. We, some of us may be congratulating ourselves that we've already progressed so much spiritually. Brother, sister, you've got a long way to go.

Let's learn to sing songs in the night. Amen.

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