

September 6, 2020

Viewpoint from the **Valley Grove Church Of Christ**

The Man Who Wouldn't Try

By K. M. Smith

As children of God, our dearest wish is to hear the final commendation: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” The hope of hearing those words at the end of our journey helps us suffer the trials of this world, and brings us comfort when we part with loved ones.

Two people who received this reward are described in Matthew 25. The five and two talent servants have been upheld as positive examples in many lessons through the years, while the one talent man is pointed to as a warning against laziness in the kingdom.

And yet, I fear that many of us see ourselves in that one talent man. And even if we don't see it, we certainly follow in his footsteps more often than we should.

It's very easy to see the accomplishments of others. It's easier still to think of those accomplishments as something unattainable for ourselves; such lofty endeavors are best left to people more talented, more suitable. How many times have you said or thought, “I wish I could do that”?

When we think this way, we are falling prey to the same thinking that the one talent man did — we forget that one isn't the same as none. We also forget that even if there really is only one thing we can do for our Lord then we had best get busy doing it rather than lamenting all of the things that are beyond our ability. How much more productive could we be if we were to focus on what we can do rather than on what we can't?

Moses, one of God's most faithful and noteworthy servants, attempted to reason with God by this logic, and failed. When presented with the enormous task of facing Pharaoh and leading the Hebrews out of bondage, Moses very quickly protested that he was the wrong man for the job.

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Visitors — We pray that you benefit spiritually from our worship together and hope to see you again.

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“Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” (Exo. 4:10)

This was hardly Moses’ first excuse that he offered in his attempt to dodge the work God had for him. But the Lord was no more impressed with this excuse than He had been with the previous ones.

*“Who has made man’s mouth?
Or who makes him mute or deaf, or
seeing or blind? Is it not I, the
LORD?” (v. 11)*

We need this reminder just as much as Moses did. Complaining to God about all of the abilities we do not have will not give us a “pass” — especially because He is the one who gave us those abilities in the first place. He knows the exact inventory and limits of each and every person far better than we do. Telling Him that He did not properly equip us for the work He has given will not do us any favors. We must not forget that if God has commanded us to do something, then we can safely assume that our ability to obey that command is within our reach.

But our spiritual productivity is not threatened merely by throwing this sort of pity party; falling stagnant and being content with our abilities rather than expanding them is equally dangerous. How much more do you think the one talent man would have been able to do if he had raised his own expectations to meet the ones

that his master had of him?

God is better than anyone for seeing untapped potential in the most unlikely places. He has made apostles out of murderers and fishermen, out of doubters and tax collectors. He has made kings out of shepherds and military leaders out of men who had hidden from their enemies. And He has raised prophets out of men who were heartbroken and weary by a nation left desolate from sin.

Numerous characters in the Bible story give the reaction of “Who, me?” when they are given a task by God, and every time God assures them that yes, they are exactly what He is looking for. With such examples, what reason do we have to doubt His hope for what we can accomplish by His strength?

The question then, is not whether we are the five or two or one talent man. Some of us have a larger “toolbox” than others, and some of us might only be able to do a few things for God’s kingdom. But as we see throughout Scripture, it is not how much we can do that truly matters — it is how much we are willing to try. That is the mark of a “good and faithful servant”.

H*e who is slow to anger is
better than the mighty,
And he who rules his spirit
than he who takes a city.*

— *Proverbs 16:32*

When A Young Person Grows Old

By Mark White

Unless thwarted by the Lord's return, or an "untimely" death, all young people will eventually grow old. Regardless of how many creams and rinses are used, the aging process takes its toll on most members of the human family. Aging is an irreversible part of life, for if you live at all, you get older. The curse of our generation is an inordinate preoccupation with youth. No one wants to be old. At least, no one wants to look old. People do not mind feeling old as much as they detest looking old. But while the human family may take such a grim view of aging, the Bible does not so regard the aged. In fact, a special and significant honor is bestowed on the "hoary head" (Leviticus 19:32; Proverbs 16:31). God enjoins us to "rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man." And "a silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness."

When a young man grows old, there are some definite changes which take place. Solomon gives a detailed description of the aging process in Ecclesiastes 12:1-7. Old age is called the "difficult days" in verse one. These days of difficulty are brought through hampering physical maladies which make it hard to really enjoy living. When our hands are racked with arthritis; the legs cease to carry our weight; our teeth are few and brittle; and our eyes grow dim, it is a "difficult" day indeed (verse 3). Even worse, the slightest of noises awakens us and robs our tired bodies of needed rest. Our ability to make melody with a clear, strong voice is gone (verse 4). And we are now frightened easily by heights and are more prone to worry about the dangers in our path. Our physical strength wanes, and even the weight of a "grasshopper" is a burden too heavy (verse 5). In the difficult days of old age, the "silver cord" (nerves / spinal cord) is loosened and the "golden bowl" (brain) is broken, and senility takes hold. The heart and circulatory system is "shattered" and "broken" and death is not far behind (verses 6 and 7). A more complete and graphic description of what happens when a young man grows old has never been penned! But Solomon was not writing to an old man about something he was already experiencing in his aging body. There would be little value in telling an old man that his dusty frame was returning to the earth. He would know this without being told, being in the midst of the process himself. Solomon addresses the young who are not yet to this point of life. He said to the young, *"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them'."*

Solomon addresses the young man before he wastes the precious time of his youth on frivolity. He is hoping that the young man will listen to wisdom

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and do something constructive with his days of brightness and strength. Solomon urges that the young “remember” the Creator, but this involves more than a mere mental recall of God. Consider what God did when He remembered Hannah (1 Samuel 1:19). God did something for her. He gave her a son. Likewise, the young are to remember God by serving Him with the strength and vitality of their youth. This will also keep the young man from looking back on his youth with regret, as he remembers how he forgot God and wasted his time with vanities.

To be sure, it does not miraculously become easier to serve God as we get older. In fact, there is no time in life when worldly things automatically lose their appeal. Solomon advises that we get ourselves on target early in life. He labors to get us to see that it is ridiculous to put off commitment to God until later in life. While we may think the young deserve a chance to have their fling with life and settle down to spiritual things later, Solomon teaches just the opposite. In fact, age may work against us in our struggle to shun the world and obey God. And when we look back on a youth misspent — what a sad, empty, haunting gaze it will be.

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September Birthdays:

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Worship 10:30 A.M.

Worship 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday

Bible Study . . . 7:00 P.M.

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