

No.

240.

"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

PARABLES OF THE LORD JESUS:

MATTHEW 25:1-13.

*An Address (revised) at*

Forest Gate, E. 7.

April 4, 1930.

by

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Scriptural literature for Believers

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Address by Mr. P. W. Heward  
Forest Gate, April 4, 1930.

The "body" would seem to indicate vital union and dependence, and a fellowship of activities in obedience. The bride would indicate the unity of the redeemed, and affection to the Lord with a devotedness which will not be turned aside. The virgins would indicate individual responsibility, and local assembly responsibility, it may be, with regard to that bright hope a looking for the Lord, with a somewhat different standpoint from that of the united bride; yet there is the same stress upon purity and separation, the same stress on unwillingness to be satisfied by any thing else but His coming. It is therefore remarkable that we should find foolish ones among virgins, but, though remarkable, it is a fact, in the words of the Lord Jesus, and this, as we have seen, impresses and pierces and humbles our hearts as well as the hearts of others.

We have been brought to notice many similarities between the wise and the foolish, and at first the outwardly small difference, but there was a fundamental difference. We have thus been brought to lay a stress on the work of the Holy Spirit and the privilege of devotion and worship. We have also seen it is possible for wise ones to sleep, as well as for foolish ones to go out. We have no wish to examine how far a believer can wander, nor do we seek to find out how far one can go without being saved. Our desire is that all truth may come in the practical power of the Holy Spirit to our hearts, and that speculation may be more and more abandoned.

We realize that the Bridegroom has an appointed time, and He will not come before the time. The word "tarry" may bring this to our notice. The danger of saying "My Lord tarrieth" or "My Lord delayeth" has been noticed. We ~~wish~~ wish to be more and more awakened when there is a time of waiting. It is so easy to be spasmodically earnest, "While the Bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept". Continuance is the test, a test which we all find makes us at least in some measure ashamed. "They all slumbered" and slumber goes on to sleeping. It is so easy to allow the beginning of sin to become a larger sin. "They slum-

bered and slept".

But it is blessed to realize that the Bridegroom would not come while they were asleep. Throughout Scripture we are reminded that we have a responsibility and in connection with that responsibility we may lose much, and we are warned lest we should lose all, but the Lord graciously has His own precious responsibility to His own promise, and He will not permit us to lose all. But never must we use His responsibility to His promise, to weaken our responsibility to His will. The two parts of truth stand in their perfect relationship.

They are awakened, awakened with the thought of Himself. They hear the words, "Go out," or "Come out to meet Him". Have they all already come out? Undoubtedly, but if there is the sleeping there is a need to rise. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead". Sleep spiritually is always connected with a wrong position as well as a wrong condition. Hence the words, "Come ye out" comes the second time. We cannot sleep without wandering. "Come ye out". Grace appoints, enables and encourages a further going out. The "out of's" and "into's" of Scripture are striking. "Come ye out into a meeting of Him". "Brought out of death into life". "Called out of darkness into His marvellous light." We have every "out of, into that which is of Himself, with a view to meeting, not an event, not a thing, but a Person, that Person the Lord Himself. He is the attraction. "See" - the eyes are directed toward the Bridegroom. "Come ye out", - the feet are toward the Bridegroom. "To meet Him" - "All these virgins arose". They were raised. They awakened, and they trimmed their lamps. It would seem to suggest that no lamp is in a right condition when there is sleep. There is need for trimming. "They trimmed their lamps". All had wicks. They trimmed their lamps for now they felt their need for the light. "At midnight there was a cry made". The darkness has reached its climax, He comes to bring in the new day. Here we have the coming of the Lord associated with the new day, and it is somewhat strikingly a hint of Roman reckoning, and not Jewish reckoning, Moreover, there seems to be a stress on the fact "their own lamps", but yet "they had no oil with themselves", for they were foolish. The foolishness is linked with incompleteness. To take a

any lamp without oil is manifestly foolish, but we realize how often in our spiritual life even with believers also there is foolishness because we do half and leave out the other half. We often have faith up to a certain point, enough to bring ourselves into difficulties, and fail to have faith up to the further point to see the Lord's deliverance. It is so important to carry a thing right through, there should be completeness. Who wise were occupied with their work, the foolish spoke, "Give us of your oil because our lamps are (not "gone out" but) "going out". Apparently, therefore, immediately after trimming, as far as the record goes, the lamps were going out. It is sometimes said that the lamps has been lit. Scripture does not say so. Just as we have no evidence in John 15 that a fruitful branch becomes fruitless, so we have no thought here the lamp which has been lit goes out. The lamp is going out as soon as we are told it has been trimmed. Moreover, it is the foolish virgins whose lamps are going out. Evidently the wicks would give a smouldering. We can hardly call it "lighting up". The Lord says they trimmed their lamps, but the Lord does not say they lit them. They declare that their light is going out - that is all. I think the inference is plain and humbling. "They had no oil" is the Divine statement. There was but the flickering after they attempted to light the wick.

"The wise answered them, saying, Not so". I think it is better to leave out words in italics. The first statement depends largely on the second. "Go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves, lest there be not enough for us and for you". Undoubtedly, "lest" is put first, but there is a close relationship between the two. "Lest there be not sufficient for us and for you, Go ye". "The Bridegroom cometh; come ye to meet Him", but those who are foolish hear another word, "Go ye". "Give us", they ask, and the words sound in their ear, "Buy". "They had no oil with themselves", though they had the lamps "of themselves", and the words wound in their ears, "Buy for yourselves". It is all very solemnizing.

And verse 10 tells us that they went away, - the exact opposite of the aspect of verse 6, "Come ye out to meet Him", "They went away"; they went away to buy. We are not told they went away and bought. We are not told they went to them that sell. The Lord does not say there are those that sell. The just-

awakened virgins say "Go ye and buy", the Lord does not say a word about this. It is important to distinguish what people say in a parable and what He says. There is no suggestion from the Lord that there were those who sold, or that they could buy, or did buy. But the words were intended in the Lord's record of them, to have a very solemn message and to show the hopelessness of receiving the oil as a gift from a fellow-creature, or obtaining by our purchase. Thanks be unto God, for His Unspeakable Gift has many applications in the fulness of that which His love has provided, for those who feel their need rejoice to receive it from His fulness Who is full of grace and truth.

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May 11, 1930.

Last time, by God's grace we were pondering the words of the foolish virgins and of the wise. The foolish realized their need, but realized it too late. Nor is there a word of confession of sin, or of true heart-sorrow for the need. There is that which is peculiarly painful in the utterance of verse 8, "Give us of your oil". "Your oil", for we have none. "Give us" - we want to get it. We want the oil, we want to be ready in our own way. "Give us of your oil". "Our lamps are going out," as if to say "We are surprised they are going out". They did not at the outset declare, "We have no oil, we cannot light our lamps, we have made a mistake, we have come out carelessly, we have been neglectful of our real need." No, they seek to trim their lamps, they seek to light their lamps, ~~they seek to light their lamps,~~ and it is only when the flickering lamps show they have nothing, that they turn to the others. The tone we know not, it may have been the tone of excitement or of calmness. We cannot tell; the unrecorded tones of Scripture give scope for the application of the Spirit of God in a number of ways to our hearts. The blessing of a written book is that we have brought before us that which cannot be changed. The blessing, further, is that we have that which allows of various tones applied by the Holy Spirit, that we may get His fulness of meaning.

They want to get into the feast. They want to see the Bridegroom but it does not need a spiritual work to bring about a desire for blessing, for the natural man can "desire", without the pa<sub>th</sub> thither. There are many attractive

things in Scripture which the natural heart can seek. Oh that we may seek every-thing of Christ, not only the attractive things from the world's standpoint. Oh that we may seek not only to be with the Lord in the glory, but to be with the Lord in the way that pleases Him, and that glorifies Him.

"But the wise answered". We are not told the Lord answered. Let me repeat, I do not think we have any warrant for saying that the Lord gave this statement as His own wording. "The wise answered", the wise who but a little before had been asleep, and who had been in mercy awakened. We cannot fully understand why they thus answered. I am not sure we are to fully understand many sentences of Scripture. The buyings and sellings of the parables are very remarkable. We have that precious Glorious One Who sold all and bought the field, the One Who bought the pearl. We have the contrast in Luke 14 of the one who bought the field and who bought the five yoke of oxen. Men's buying interfered with the things of the Lord. The Lord's buying was in love to His people that He might display them in His glory.

And here too we have brought before us the thought of buying; but at the outset the wise give a reason - "Lest there be not enough for us and you". "Go ye and buy". I mentioned last week a hesitation as to the added words in italics. There is more force without them. "Lest there be not enough for us and you, go ye rather to them that buy". There was enough for the wise - thanks be unto God for this. But they could not give to others, they could not transfer. "Lest there be not enough, Go ye". They could not make the oil, they could not obtain the oil by any effort of their own, and there was no thought of going to the Bridegroom for the oil. Thanks be unto God at the present time, when we feel our need, we can go to Him and buy. "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire", - a unique passage where the Lord tells His people to buy. If He counsels to buy, buy we can, but we do not go to them that sell, we go to Him. "I counsel thee to buy of Me". There is a wondrous contrast in that context, with the thought of bringing together earthly things, "Thou art rich and increased in goods"... "I counsel thee to buy". If we are to buy from Him we are to give up". Ah, it is not a giving up; if we "buy the Truth and sell it not" we

have wondrous value for our buying. It is better than a bargain, it is wondrous, the fulness that He gives. But we must be willing to lay aside the tinsel and tawdry things of earth, we must give up our time, we must give up a measure of our strength, we must give up that which a man of the world holds dear, if we would buy that which the Lord gives.

But here is the thought of buying from those who sell, in order that there may be a consciousness of the desperate impossibility of those in this condition (cf. Ezekiel 18:31). They can do nothing, they can obtain nothing. The solemn silence of Scripture impresses us. They went to buy - they did not go AND buy. They did not come back with the oil, they only went to buy. How many seek to buy, to obtain, to secure, but they obtained nothing. Israel sought, but they obtained not, because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. Here we have a going to buy. Happy are those who have received the gift of the Lord's oil, and who know their need yet.

But oh, dear friends, let us be concerned that we have the oil now. Death-bed conversions are possible with God, and sudden preparations at the last are within His power, but normally we have the holy warning of God against expectation of a sudden final work, when we have neglected the things of God now. These, all of them, were kept out of the feast. It is important to be prepared now. Let us not put off. One dreads the tendency of putting off even among believers. One sees it peculiarly among children at the present time. There are many who are longing to be saved, but there is a tendency to put off. They anticipate they have plenty of time, or that parents' prayers, or the prayers of others, will avail for them before they die. It is a deadly peril. It is important to be concerned, and for us as believers to be concerned about spiritual things now. There is a solemn message here for every one of us. Not one who sought at the last quickly to obtain the oil, obtained it. Not one. Those who had beforehand had slept, alas. They are not held up as examples throughout, but we realize the wonderful love of the Lord, they were brought in to the feast, they were made ready. His grace shines out.

"While they went to buy, the Bridegroom came". They were absent. They had

been with the wise in going out, they had been with the wise in having lamps, but they were absent when the Bridegroom came. There are many who are in meetings in the present dispensation, who hear God's truth, who take an interest in God's truth, who will be absent when the Bridegroom comes. May the Lord impress this upon our hearts, beloved friends.

"They that were ready went in with Him into the marriage". There were ready ones that were not disappointed. They were ready; they had been sleeping a little while before, but they were made ready. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise", and will bring His people to readiness. "They that were ready went in with Him to the feast". "Be ye also ready". It is remarkable. A ready feast - men would not come, but the Lord made some ready. He made ready a people prepared for Himself. We have a ready people to meet their Lord. "They that were ready went in...and the door was shut". The shut and open doors of Scripture would give us a very helpful study. Thanks be unto God if we read of shut doors, we also read of open doors, and the door is not yet shut. While He now sits, the door is not shut, and He Who liveth to make intercession for transgressors is still at the Father's throne with the unshut door, that it may be a welcome to those who, finding He is the very Door, may also be among the ready ones when He comes back.

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May 18, 1930.

I trust, beloved friends, our hearts will always apply Scripture practically personally. The Lord's words about the foolish virgins are deeply suggestive to us all, and we long to have more wisdom, not that we find perfection except in the Bridegroom. It is blessed to realize that the Lord wakes up those who have slept. It is sad to realize that oft-times we have slept when we ought to have kept awake.

There are many inferences which are wrongly made in this parable, and at the risk of repetition I would refer again to them. So many dear children of God assume that the foolish had some oil, whereas the Lord Jesus said they had none at all. So many assume that the lamps were lit for a little period, and then began to go out. Scripture says nothing of the kind. So many seem to regard the words ~~of~~ of the wise virgins as the words of the Lord, and almost to

imply that there were those who sold the oil, and some even go so far as to infer that the foolish virgins went, and came later on with the oil, but the door was shut, Scripture says nothing of the kind. The Lord tells us what the wise virgins, recently awakened, said, but He gave no instruction on those lines, He gave no hint of success on these lines. It is important we should distinguish between what He says (i.e. what the King or the Bridegroom, or whoever it may be, says) and what the people say, in the parables.

The Bridegroom comes while they went to buy. They went, the Bridegroom came, they that were ready went in. The words are very striking, for "came" and "went" are from the same root. They went from, the Bridegroom came, the ready ones went in. Going from and going in. What a solemn contrast. The Bridegroom came. They went out to meet Him, but they were not ready when He came. Not one who was unwise was ready, not one without oil was ready; not one of the wise was absent when He came, not one who had oil was absent. It is very noticeable. Every wise one was present and went in, - there is no exception, they went in to the marriage, and the door was shut. Here is the crisis. Let me again say that there is much to be learned from the shut doors of Scripture. The shut door of the ark - Noah shut in and others shut out. The shut door undoubtedly has a different aspect in some Scriptures, as the shut door of prayer in Matthew 6, to be read strikingly with Luke 11, where the one who is approached to lend loaves says, The door is shut. But in the future, when once the Master of the house is risen up and has shut to the door, - there is a parallel with Matthew 25. It is important that we should by grace live in the light of our coming Lord. There will be a shutting of the door, and there will be those who will be outside. There we have the words of Christ regarding those who will begin to stand without and to cry that the door may be opened, and we find that neither there nor here will there be any opening. There is infinite compassion with our gracious Lord, but He has not only compassion. I think we feel that as we listen to His statement, the other virgins come and they cry and say, "Lord, Lord, open to us", He is absolutely unmoved. There can be no

persuasion. He is full of compassion, but not only compassion. There can be no untruthful compassion, no unrighteous mercy, no unholy excusing of sin because of indulgence. His love never rules out another attribute. Every attribute is in perfect harmony, and our hearts feel the Lord's lesson for our hearts today.

The other virgins come, - their condition unmentioned, their relationship to oil unmentioned, their lamps and the lights unmentioned. We are only told they come. The silence of Scripture has a deep meaning. They say, Lord, Lord. We call to mind Luke 6 where we read, Lord Lord, but they did not the things which He says. Indeed, is it not true that generally the repeated word, Lord, Lord, is associated with failure. It is well for us to have an intensity of the right character, but the repeated, Lord, Lord, has a deep meaning for us. We may be very earnest and yet be wrong; we may seem very devoted, and yet be wrong. O for grace, not to have so much talkativeness of "Lord, Lord", or of love, but to illustrate love. In 1 Cor. 13, (our Scripture reading today), love does not talk, but love acts. Love does not boast, but love bears. Love is a reality in little things, and little things make up love far more than we realize. "Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am" - He is Lord, we should call Him Lord, but we must not call Him Lord simply for our own advantage, but for His glory. Here these are intensely earnest for their own sake. How much of our prayer is selfishness, dressed up in religious language. O that it may be a concern for ~~κ~~ His glory, beloved friends.

The word "Verily" is an emphatic introduction. He is the Truth, and He says the truth. "I know you not" - no recognition, no acknowledgment, no relationship, no acquaintance. Undoubtedly, in His Deity, in His control of the universe, He knows all, but the word, "know" is employed here with respect to the Bridegroom. The Bridegroom knows the virgins who are to come, He knows those who are related to the wedding, but there is no relationship here. "I know you not". These words are His words. We cannot alter them. They say no more. We are not told that He says anymore. Their last words are pleading, but His words are decisive. In Luke 13 there is an equal decisiveness; and we are meant to compare Scripture with Scripture to see the emphasis. There they plead

and begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets, and He adds, "Depart from Me all ye workers of iniquity". Knowledge is nothing, profession is nothing, activity is nothing. The question is, Have we been obedient to His will? If there has been lawlessness and refusal of His will, how can we say we love Him? "If ye love Me, keep My commandments". "I know you not". There had not been the oil of devotion, there had not been the oil of the activity of the Holy Spirit - "I know you not".

Then comes the application, "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour". The "Watch, therefore" - reading on from chapter 24, reminds us that we are not to be careless because the word "Behold the Bridegroom" awakened the wise. We are not to say, "Oh, there will be a cry to awaken us". We are not to trade on grace to excuse disobedience. The Lord's promises are never to be employed to hinder our appreciation of His commands. "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour". We realize the preciousness of that command, for it is more than exhortation. We realize its power when we see that none of the wise did watch, yet He said, Watch. None of the wise were excluded, but He does not say, Be wise, but He says, Watch. They were welcomed in, by grace. But we are never to infer that because we have oil, and because we have worshipped, that is enough. The Lord's command is, Watch ye therefore. As soon as we begin to use election or grace, or the fact that we once loved the Lord and pleased Him, to excuse the lack of watching - as soon as the eternal preservation of believers comes in as an argument to hinder the godly walk, it is distortion of that which the Lord would have us do. The command is not, "Be sure you have the oil", but it goes beyond that - Watch, ye therefore". May we have grace and enabling of the Holy Spirit to hear and heed the precious command of love.

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