

A Treasure In Earthen Vessels - Promise Of The Spirit : Pt 1

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I was just reading an article in the May 30th edition of the New York Times entitled "Utah Law Makes Coins Worth Their Weight in Gold (or Silver)". It concerns a law which was recently passed by the Utah legislature called the "Legal Tender Act of 2011". The intent of the controversial law is to allow residents of Utah to make everyday business transactions -- such as purchasing an item at a local store -- using gold and silver coins as legal tender. However, according to the law, the value of the coins used won't be based upon their face value -- such as a silver dollar being worth just a dollar -- but rather upon the actual weight of the gold or silver metal that is contained in the coin. The impetus behind the legislative move, is the widespread belief that the American dollar -- and the U.S. economy in general -- is in serious trouble, and is headed towards total bankruptcy and insolvency, unless firm measures are taken soon to prevent this from occurring.

As I explain in such series as "Saddam Hussein's Execution And The Euro Dollar", the American dollar is what is referred to as "fiat money". It has no real value other than the paper that it is printed on. Any other value that it possesses is based upon the faith that people place in it, which itself is based upon the faith that they place in the word of the American government. The simple truth of the matter is that the U.S. Government does not possess enough actual silver or gold reserves to back up all of the paper money and coinage that is currently in circulation, and much less the trillions of dollars that is represented by imaginary numbers in online transactions, in bank terminals, etc. It is all financial fiction and a very delicate house of cards. So to reiterate, the U.S. dollar is only worth something because the U.S. Government has declared it, or decreed it -- that is, a fiat -- legal tender. Furthermore, unlike decades ago, a person cannot go down to their local bank and demand a pile of gold for their stack of money.

This dangerous development came about as a result of decisions which were made in the 1930's, and then again in the 1960's. Very briefly, following the Great Depression of the 1930's, there was so much money in circulation, that the U.S. Government couldn't possibly back it all with actual gold reserves; it was non-existent. So, in 1932, after a long battle of trying to establish a bimetallic -- gold and

silver -- standard in the United States, American President Roosevelt moved to take the dollar off of the gold standard, at least as far as the national economy was concerned. In contrast, international financial dealings still remained tied to gold. Thus, by an act of Congress, in 1933 the American economy was placed on a silver standard instead. However, even this did not last. Thirty-five years later, in 1968, President Richard M. Nixon announced that the U.S. Government would no longer redeem currency for gold, silver or any other precious metal. Thus, it was at that time that the American government fully abandoned the gold and silver standards insofar as the national economy is concerned, and the U.S. dollar became one hundred per cent fiat money.

So, the intent of the Utah law is to reverse America's financial course, and to establish an alternative economic system -- at least within the state of Utah -- so that the citizens of Utah will be able to survive the inevitability of the impending national economic crash. Utah is by no means the only American state which is taking such precautionary financial steps. According to the article, Minnesota, Idaho and Georgia are likewise considering similar measures as a means to protect their citizens.

Of course, having to deal with heavy gold and silver coinage and bullion is obviously a problem, so certain individuals have already begun putting a system into place in Utah, whereby the citizens of Utah will be able to use a Visa credit card, which will be charged against the value of their actual holdings in gold and silver.

The Utah law is not without its legal challenges. According to Article I, Section 10 of the Constitution of the United States "No State shall . . . coin Money . . . make any Thing but gold and silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts". If we accept that the second clause assumes the validity of the first clause, then Article 10 seems to be saying that no state can coin its own money, and that it can only use gold and silver coinage which has been minted by the Federal Government, as legal tender. However, the legislators of Utah have interpreted Section 10 to mean that any state can mint its own coinage, as long as it is gold and silver. Not being a politician or a legal expert when it comes to Constitutional law, I will leave it to others who are more knowledgeable than myself to work out the difference in opinion.

As I was reading the aforementioned news article, I was reminded of an incident in the Book of Acts where the Apostle Peter healed a lame man by the Power of God. As he did so, consider what Peter said to the lame man:

"And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: And they knew

that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him."

Acts 3:2-10, KJV

While Peter and the other Apostles may have been poor in a worldly sense because they possessed neither silver nor gold, they were rich in other ways. In other words, they had faith, they had the knowledge of the Kingdom, and they had the truth. From a Christian perspective, having these things is so much more important than anything that this current world can possibly offer us. The world's offerings -- which in reality are Satan's offerings, because he is the false god of this world, as per 2 Corinthians 4:4 -- are cheap, worthless counterfeits and imitations. Thus, as the Apostle John admonishes us in his first Epistle:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

1 John 2:15-17, KJV

As I explain in my year 2000 article "Have You Sold Your Soul For A Pound Of Flesh?", there are so many other verses in the Bible where we are likewise informed that the things of this world, and the wealth that it has to offer us, is totally insignificant, compared to those things which God has prepared for those who love and obey Him. Consider the following examples:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Matthew 6:19-21, KJV

". . . Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Matthew 19:23-24, KJV

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Mark 8:36-37, KJV

". . . Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"

Mark 10:24b, KJV

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of

thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Luke 12:16-34, KJV

"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

John 6:27, KJV

"And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

1 Corinthians 7:31, KJV

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

Philippians 4:11, KJV

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

1 Timothy 6:6-10, KJV

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Hebrews 13:5, KJV

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is

of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain."

James 5:1-7, KJV

So it is evident from the previous verses that, contrary to what is promoted by certain misguided "prosperity preachers" and "abundant life preachers", to pursue worldly fame, the accumulation of wealth and the enjoyment of sensual earthly pleasures is a complete waste of the limited, precious time that we are each given to dwell on this Earth. To dedicated Bible-believing Christians, faith in God, belief in His Word, obedience to His Word and working towards the coming Kingdom of God on Earth should be of considerably more importance.

In fact, the Apostle Paul informs us that we must place our faith in the unseen, and not in the visible, temporal things of this current world, because it is the unseen which is truly eternal. Contrary to the short-sighted view of the children of this world, who teach us that we should only trust those things which we can perceive and experience with our five senses, Paul informs us that God requires that we go further, and that we demonstrate faith, if we truly wish to please Him. Consider the following verses:

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

2 Corinthians 4:18, KJV

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen . . . But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Hebrews 11:1, 6, KJV

So exactly where does faith come from? How is it born? What is its true source? Can we simply produce it within ourselves and call it up whenever we have need of it? That doesn't seem likely. To the contrary, the Apostle Paul plainly informs us that faith results from a direct intervention of God's Spirit, and that it grows through a knowledge of His Word, as we see here:

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Romans 10:17, KJV

So it is God's Word which plants the Seed of Faith in our hearts. Furthermore, it is through abiding in God's Word, and observing His Laws, that the tiny seed of faith can grow and develop, eventually resulting in the full spiritual man. In the Old Testament, despite his own personal wealth, King David likewise recognized the true value of God's Word, and esteemed it above everything else in his life. Thus, in some of his Psalms he was inspired to write the following:

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the

testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

Psalms 19:7-11, KJV

". . . For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven."

Psalms 119:89, KJV

". . . Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

Psalms 119:105, KJV

"Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it."

Psalms 119:140, KJV

"Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever."

Psalms 119:160, KJV

"I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

Psalms 138:2, KJV

You may also recall that in the Gospels, Jesus emphasized the importance of abiding in His Word when He said the following:

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free . . . If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

John 8:31-32, 36, KJV

". . . thy word is truth."

John 17:17b, KJV

So it is through the diligent study of God's Word that we not only acquire faith, but we also come to the knowledge of the truth, which in turn liberates us from the spiritual darkness of our past lives. Furthermore, it is through studying God's Word that we can come to understand God's Will for our lives, and avoid those things which are displeasing in His sight. Following are some additional verses for your consideration:

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Psalms 119:11, KJV

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

John 5:39, KJV

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily,

whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."

Acts 17:10-12, KJV

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

1 Timothy 5:17, KJV

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

2 Timothy 2:15, KJV

If we diligently and faithfully study and examine the Bible, we will indeed discover that there are many hidden treasures and mysteries which are buried within its pages, which we may have previously overlooked. God's Word is just that profound. I can personally attest to the fact that even though I have been reading the Bible for over forty years now, I am still amazed by the things which I continue to discover within its pages. Concerning these hidden treasures and mysteries, consider the following verses:

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

Psalms 119:18, KJV

"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."

Psalms 139:6, KJV

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Romans 11:33, KJV

"Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

Matthew 13:52, KJV

While I have spoken of the treasures of faith, and of God's Word, and how all of the gold and silver in the world cannot compare to them, the Bible speaks of yet another treasure; that is, a hidden treasure so-to-speak. That treasure is revealed to us in the following verse:

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

2 Corinthians 4:7, KJV

Exactly what is this "treasure in earthen vessels" that the Apostle Paul is talking about? If we read the surrounding verses, we come to understand that Paul seems to be talking about several things at once; that is, God's Spirit which was promised to us and which now resides in each one of us, the Light of the Gospel which emanates from us as a result of the indwelling of the Spirit, as well as our faith and hope in the Eternal Life which is yet to come. In the verses below, please note that when Paul uses the phrases "earthen vessels", "outward man", "earthly house", "tabernacle", "building" and "house", he is actually referring to our body of flesh which houses God's Spirit, and which is a vessel

for the Light of God:

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:"

2 Corinthians 4:6-5:6, KJV

To confirm that Paul is indeed referring to the Holy Spirit which resides within our physical bodies, consider what he also wrote in his first Epistle to the Corinthians:

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, KJV

So again we see that this "treasure in earthen vessels" is nothing less than God's Spirit which indwells a child of God. That is why Paul also says "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us". That power is the power which is derived from the Holy Ghost, exactly as Jesus stated to His followers in the following verse:

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Acts 1:8, KJV

Often when we read the King James Version of the Bible, we tend to miss certain important points, because we are not familiar with some of the archaic words that are used in this particular version of the Bible. It is at times like these when Hebrew and Greek lexicons become very useful. For example, Paul refers to "this treasure in earthen vessels", and then later he tells us that God has "given unto us the earnest of the Spirit". What does Paul mean by this? As it turns out, the word "earnest" is derived from the Greek word "arrhabon". According to Thayer's Greek English Lexicon, "arrhabon" refers to money which, in purchases, is given as a pledge or a down payment, signifying that the full amount will subsequently be paid.

In short, while Jesus was given the full measure of God's Spirit while He was on Earth, we, His followers, have each been given but a small sampling of the same, as a foretaste of what is yet to come. In other words, in His Wisdom, God has chosen to provide us with a down payment, in order to encourage our faith, and to assist us in doing His Work. In the second chapter of the Book of Acts, that is exactly what the miracle of the Day of Pentecost was all about. God was spiritually charging up the Apostles with the Holy Ghost, in preparation for the Great Work of evangelization which lie ahead. He was giving them the earnest of the Spirit, He was giving them a down payment, as Jesus Himself had promised them in the Gospels. Consider the following verses which clarify these points:

"For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."
John 3:34, KJV

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."
Colossians 2:9, KJV

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."
John 14:16-17, KJV

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
John 14:26, KJV

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:"
John 15:26, KJV

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."
John 16:13, KJV

"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
Luke 24:49, KJV

Please go to part two for the conclusion of this article.

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A Treasure In Earthen Vessels - Promise Of The Spirit : Pt 2

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A Treasure In Earthen Vessels, The Earnest Of The Spirit And The Promise Of The Spirit Are All The Same Thing, Lights In The World, Parable Of The Five Wise Virgins, Being Faithful In Our Work For The Lord, God's Ministers Are Flames Of Fire, Seven Lamps Of Fire, Watch Out For Enticements Of The World, Redeem The Time, There Is No Guarantee Of Tomorrow So Remain Faithful Today And Burn Brightly For Jesus While You Can

Continuing with our list of Bible verses regarding God's promise concerning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, consider the following:

"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
Acts 1:4-8, KJV

"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."
Acts 2:33, KJV

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."
Romans 8:9, KJV

"That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."
Galatians 3:14, KJV

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise . . . That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,"
Ephesians 3:13, 17, KJV

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:"
Colossians 1:27, KJV

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."
Colossians 3:16, KJV

"Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."
1 John 4:13, KJV

So as you can see from the previous verses, the "earnest of the Spirit", the "promise of the Spirit" and the "treasure in earthen vessels" are all basically referring to the very same thing; that is, God's Spirit dwelling within us, and the spiritual light which emanates from us as a result of it. While we may not possess the full measure of the Spirit as Jesus did -- would we even be able to bear it in these weak, mortal vessels of flesh? -- nevertheless, even this small spark of faith that we do have, this small light that burns within us, this small down payment of the Spirit, is so much more valuable than all of the gold and silver in the world. It is a priceless treasure which we should not abuse or waste. Rather, we should use it for God's Glory.

The Scriptures make it very plain that it is our God-given responsibility to allow this light within our weak earthen vessels to shine before the world. We must not attempt to hide our light, or our candle, under a bushel, as we see by the following verses:

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
Matthew 5:14-16, KJV

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;"
Luke 12:35, KJV

"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;"
Philippians 2:15, KJV

In fact, based upon the previous verses, we can better understand that the Lord's Parable concerning the Five Wise Virgins who retained oil in their lamps, was in fact a reference to the Oil of the Spirit which burned within each one of them. In other words, they were in effect the lamps themselves. They were the earthen vessels which held the Oil of the Spirit. The lesson which Jesus is teaching us through this Parable, is that we must remain faithful, well oiled with His Spirit, and keep busy working for Him, feeding His precious sheep, until the Day of His Return. Consider the following verses which confirm these points:

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were

foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."
Matthew 25:1-13, KJV

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."
Luke 12:35-48, KJV

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."
1 Corinthians 4:2, KJV

I am also reminded of the following verse that is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews where we are told that the Lord's ministers -- or servants, from the Greek word "leitourgos" -- are "a flame of fire":

"And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire."
Hebrews 1:7, KJV

In fact, if we turn to the fourth chapter of the Book of Revelation, we discover that the Seven Spirits of the Lord are represented by seven Lamps of Fire, as we see here:

"And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."
Revelation 4:5, KJV

If you are interested in examining further this topic of burning brightly for Jesus, please consider reading such articles as "Are You A Burning Ember For The Lord?", "The Parable Of The Sower: Salvation And Service" and "The Children Of Light: Are You One Of Us?".

In conclusion, we must not allow anyone to control or hinder our light, or to extinguish our flame of faith. Furthermore, as the Lord explains in the Parable of the Sower, we must be very careful that we don't allow ourselves to be enticed by the temporal things of this current world which will choke our faith, and reduce our effectiveness for the Lord. As I explain in the article "Are You Redeeming The Time?", we all need to watch out for time wasters which will rob us of valuable time which could be better used in the Lord's Service. We must remain faithful, and burn brightly for Jesus, until the day that He and His Father choose to call us Home. In this current world which grows spiritually darker by the year, this will not be an easy task; for as Jesus Himself hinted at in the Gospel of Luke, our faith will be tested:

". . . Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"
Luke 18:8b, KJV

However, as the Apostle Paul also informs us, God will provide a way for us to escape the temptations of the world, as we see here:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."
1 Corinthians 10:13, KJV

So what will you do? Will you remain faithful? Will you remain grounded in God's Word so that you will have the necessary spiritual stamina and won't be moved by the lies, deceptions and enticements of this current world? Or will you be overcome and led astray by the cares and riches of this temporal earthly life? The choice is up to you. Just remember one thing: time may be shorter than you think; and while you may not be expecting it or anticipating it, your sojourn on this Earth could end today or tomorrow. As the Apostle James and other writers inform us, there is no guarantee of tomorrow, so we must remain faithful today. Consider the following verses:

"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."
Psalms 90:10, KJV

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit

of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

Isaiah 40:7-8, KJV

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

Luke 12:20, KJV

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"

Hebrews 9:27, KJV

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

James 4:14, KJV

Think about it, and act today, because tomorrow may be too late. I pray that this article has been a blessing and an inspiration to many.

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