

The Parable of the “Mina”

The reason of this parable, given in Luke 19:11-27, is that Jesus is showing how He will compensate servants manifesting **DIFFERENT DEGREES** of faithfulness with the **SAME** opportunities.

Luke tells us that the Lord gave this parable because His listeners thought the Kingdom of God was about to appear. Consequently it has to do with the **DELAY** of His kingdom and what was to happen in the meantime. While the setting is different, the story is similar to the parable of the talents. This one is often referred to as the parable of the pounds - but that is inaccurate. It is more properly called the **Parable of the Mina** [a "mina" was an ancient unit of weight, with value equal to a 16th of a talent.]

Luke 19:11-27, *"While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: 'A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' 'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' 'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them - bring them here and kill them in front of me.'"*

This story, which Jesus gives, is about a high ranking nobleman who had apparently rendered a great service to his emperor and was invited to the capital to have a kingdom conferred upon him. (The story was meaningful to Jesus' listeners. Such a thing had actually happened and was a part of recent Palestine history) Before departing, the nobleman summoned his ten slaves before him. He gave each on mina (\$17.00 in today's money), instructing him to do business with it while he was gone. When he returned, he called them to give an account of what they had done with the \$17.

The stewardship in this case is very slight, - because the mina (\$17.00) is nowhere the value of the talent.

- 1 Talent would be worth \$29,085.00 in today's money
- 5 talents would be worth \$145,425 in today's money
- 2 talents would be worth \$58,170.00 in today's money

In this case, each man is given the **SAME. The parable there is dealing with faithfulness** in a matter of small value, rather than one of extreme value, applies to something all Christians have in common.

On the surface, the accounting scene resembles the one in Matthew 25, but the reports are quite different. Since each man has a single mina to invest, all have the **same** opportunity. The first man steps up proudly. He holds out to his master ten minas more. He has produced 10 times over for his lord. The master beams, "*Well done, good servant, because you have been faithful in very little, be in authority over **TEN CITIES***" (verse 17).

The kingdom that the master received would no doubt include numerous cities. Even as Jesus was speaking, certain cities of Palestine belonged to different Roman rulers. Herod the Great, for example had given four cities to his sister Salome. Usually it was done to provide favored persons with income and prestige. In the story, the master is now delegating positions to servants within the newly received kingdom. Imagine receiving 10 cities, just because one had been faithful to multiply \$17.00. That is staggering, but it represents the generosity of our Lord Jesus. Those who are faithful in little things will be shocked to see the great reward it brings.

Then the next man stepped up to account for what he had done with his mina. Consider again that he had exactly the same opportunity as the man before him. But he brings his master only **FIVE** minas. Still, he is rewarded. His master replies, "***You are to be over five cities.***"

Note, that "*Well done*" is missing. He doesn't deserve the **same commendation** because his effort has been less. Yet he is rewarded according to his faithfulness - he receives FIVE cities. We observe now that the one who **does the most** with what he has, **profits most** in the accounting. Even so, **anything, and everything, gained** through obedience to the master earns a reward.

Every servant had the same chance to qualify. No one was disadvantaged; no one was privileged. The opportunity for each was **unlimited**. That wasn't the case in the parable of the Talents where each was portioned "*according to his ability.*" But in this parable of the Mina, every man starts off the same. All are in the same category. The variable is the **industrious-ness** with which each applies himself. While all have the same opportunity, not all work with the same zeal and determination

Now let's see what happened to the third fellow (Again, these three are only representative of the many servants the man had). If, perchance, I have, in any way, mishandled the truth of consequences, any error will, surely, show up here. Here he comes: There is no smile on his face. He doesn't appear eager to give his report. His story isn't too different from the one who hid his master's money in the ground: "*Master, here's your mina. I kept it safe for you, right here in this handkerchief . . . (Can't you just picture him unfolding it?) . . . I was afraid of you, for I know how hard and exacting you are. You make money without working for it. You take up what you don't lay down, you reap with you don't sow. I know how you expect to make a profit off of everything and everybody. So, knowing how you feel, I felt it would be better not to risk your money. Here it is, all safe and sound!*"

He would have been better off if he had not said all of that, because, not only did he fail to obey his master, he also indicted him for severity. But he lies. Had he really believed his master to be tough, he **wouldn't dare** disobey him. The truth is, he regarded his master a pushover for a

sad story. He condemned himself with his own words. The master saw through him at once. If he had any fear of his master, he never would have allowed what the master gave him to remain idle, but he would have used it. His master confronts him with his contradiction: "*Out of thine own mouth will I judge you, you wicked servant . . . If you knew me to be such a hard man, why didn't you put my money in the bank, so that when I got back I could at least have the interest on it?*" (verses 22-23).

The truth was, the man just didn't care enough to bother himself with his master's orders. He went his own way. He remained indifferent to what his master required of him. But he didn't get away with it. As in the case of his counterpart (in the parable of the talents) he too lost what he once had. He came to the end of his opportunity. No longer did he have a mina to use for his master. "*Take the mina away from him,' said the master, 'give it to the one who has ten'" (verse 24).*

The wicked servant suffered the **LOSS** of his mina - his opportunity. That meant he forfeited **FOREVER** the privilege of earning a place in his master's kingdom. He received no cities. He lost the privilege of competing for any. He was absolutely through qualifying as a faithful servant. There can be no cities for him - **ever**. He will never reign with his master.

With the story concluded, the Lord Jesus presses the application upon His disciples: "*I tell you, that to everyone who has shall more be given, but from the one who does not have (through neglect or disobedience), even that which he has shall be taken away"* (verse 26).

Just as the servant in the story suffered **LOSS**, so will the children of God if they allow themselves to fall into a similar attitude. The **SAME LOSS** will occur at the Judgment Seat of Christ for those refusing to invest in Christ. While the servant **LOST** forever what he could have had through faithfulness, he still **REMAINED** the servant of his master. The **LOSS** we speak of here is not salvation - but the **REWARD** of faithfulness. The opportunity for that **reward** ends when the Master calls us to account.

However, when we get to verse 27, the parable does speak of the unsaved. This 27th verse pertains to the unsaved. Notice they are NOT called "*servants*," but "*enemies*." See how differently they are treated: "*Bring those enemies (not servants) of mine, who did not want me to reign over them here before me and slay them in my presence*" (verse 27).

The enemies of God are those outside of Christ (Romans 5:10). The servants of the Lord are not regarded as enemies.

See what awaits those outside of Christ - **DEATH** - eternal death. A faithless servant might be expelled from the lighted hall of celebration into darkness, but he is **not slain**. It would be a horrible distortion of the Gospel to hint that those who are, unfaithful children of God would, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, be cast into hell.

These are those who are children of God ("*servants*" of God) who attempt to hand back to God their fruitless lives neatly wrapped in the handkerchief of disobedience. Let me tell you, it will be a miserable moment for them then. They will not hear, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant.*" They will receive **no** reward. They will **LOSE** the **opportunity to qualify** for any position of authority in His kingdom. Faithless servants of the Lord will not like what they hear at this judgment.

Who is to blame? Is the Master to blame? **No!** He has given every Christian "*a mina*." The broadest interpretation we can give "*the mina*" is to let it represent our one life - to be lived for Christ. There may be narrower, more specific definitions, but we'll stay with the wider one. It's safer, theologically. Every Christian has *one* life to live for Christ. There is no limit to how far a man can press that one opportunity. The only limitation is our own personal zeal and ambition.

Do we actually reign with Christ?

While the story speaks of cities appointed to the faithful servants, can we go so far as to think that we will actually reign with authority ourselves? Is that part of Christ's teaching here? Our Lord Jesus has gone to receive a kingdom. One day that kingdom will be established on earth. He even taught us to pray, "*Thy kingdom come.*" There will be many exalted positions in His government. People will be needed to carry out delegated responsibilities. Surely it is in the plan of God to administer the kingdom through His agents. Even Satan's kingdom has "*principalities and powers . . . and rulers*" (Ephesians 6:12).

On what basis will the Lord make His appointments? **He tells us in this parable!** The seriousness and determination with which a Christian cares for the interests of the Lord **IN THIS LIFE**, is the measure by which he qualifies for a job in Jesus' government. It is going to take a lot of people to run the kingdom. There will be many prime positions open to faithful servants. Those who want to rule and reign with Jesus, will have to forfeit the privilege of living for themselves in this life - and compete as faithful servants for Christ.

Did you say "*compete*?" Certainly! How else should Jesus do it? How would you suggest He make His appointments? On the basis of favoritism? Partiality? Intelligence, persuasiveness, good looks? You must know that wouldn't be fair? Since the Lord is "*no respecter of persons*," the only fair way is to give the positions to those who **care enough to compete** for them. And since it is a position in the future - as yet unseen - it is earned by **faith**. The competition will be fair. No one will have an advantage over anyone else. No one will compete against anyone else,

but, rather, our competition will be: "***What we are - with what we might have been.***" Since each one is given "*a mina*," in this parable, a person need only be faithful to invest it. Their opportunity to multiply his "*mina*" is as good as any other person's in Christ.

When a president of the United States is elected, he seeks qualified people for the numerous government posts. He can't put any into office simply because they are party members. That would bring chaos to the land. The individuals must be qualified. It is not an easy task for a president to find the right people for the right position.

The Lord has a way. He gives each Christian a "*mina*" - one life on earth. And while He is gone, they occupy with that *mina*, seeing how much they . . . [that is, "*we*"] . . . can produce for their ["*our*"] Master. When He returns, it is already settled who gets what position. I certainly do not do any violence to the parable by suggesting the Lord is using it to teach His disciples the truth of His own departure and return. I expect the scene at the Judgment Seat of Christ to be very similar to what we see in this parable. And even the words of the Judge to ring with, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Because thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will give thee charge over many.*"

We have one more parable which we will study in this series. There is yet another feature to learn about our competition for a good position with Jesus Christ, in His kingdom.