**TO WHOM MUCH IS GIVEN…** By Al Diestelkamp

There are many biblical verses that serve to comfort and assure believers. Such verses often become works of calligraphy, displayed in our homes and shared on social media sites. While there is great value in gaining comfort from select scriptures, we must not fail to remind ourselves of the many passages which warn us—and perhaps should frighten us.

One of the most challenging statements in the Bible is one that Jesus spoke to His disciples when he was teaching about service to Him: “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required” (Lk. 12:48b). That’s one Bible verse I have never seen framed and displayed on a wall.

The context of this statement is a lesson about stewardship (Lk. 12:35-48). Jesus began this lesson by emphasizing the importance of His servants being prepared (vs.35-36). His admonition to “Let your waist be girded” is calling on us to be dressed and ready for service. Later the apostle Paul informs us this girding of our waist is to be “with truth” (Eph. 6:14). And how can we forget Jesus’ own words, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Me” (Jn. 14:6).

Along with being girded, Jesus wants our “lamps burning.” This reminds us of the psalmist’s declaration: “Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path” (Psa. 119:105). God’s Word is essential in our own walk, and to the extent that it is producing “good works” in our lives we let our light shine so that others may ultimately come to glorify our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:14-16).

We may wonder just who these people are about whom Jesus said “much will be required.” Obviously, Peter wondered the same thing, and asked, “Lord, do You speak this parable *only* to us, or to all *people?* (v.41). In answering, Jesus first issues comfort and assurance to the “faithful and wise steward,” followed by an
urgent warning to the unfaithful (vs.42-48a). He finally answers this question at the end of verse 48 applying it to “everyone.” At the very least, if one considers himself a “servant of Christ,” this teaching applies. Jesus’ implication of degrees of reward and punishment may evoke some unanswered questions in our minds, but what is unmistakable is that there is stricter judgment on those “to whom much is given.”

Jesus uses the illustration of a thief breaking into a house to illustrate the problem with apathy toward our stewardship (vs.37-40). The steward who is always ready for to defend his master’s house will be rewarded generously. Though His teaching is in the form of a parable, the message is not subtle. Just as a thief doesn’t announce his intentions, the Lord has not announced when He will come, behooving us to expect Him at any time.

***Some Applications***

God’s dealing with nations throughout history ought to make Americans tremble. Our nation and its citizens have been given much more than we deserve. The wealth and power God has granted to us requires much in return. He has blessed us with full access to His Word and liberty to worship without much interference. If a nation squanders God’s blessings He will likely discipline it. I have to wonder just how long God will tolerate our nation that increasingly ignores and resists His righteousness.

Local congregations blessed by the Lord above their local needs would do well to look for ways to help brethren in other locations who are in need. There may be needy saints due to unfortunate circumstances in struggling churches lacking the resources to provide adequate relief. There are also gospel preachers in needy fields that need help from churches “to whom much is given.” The apostle Paul appealed to the Corinthian brethren to share in their abundance with the goal “that there may be equality” (2 Cor. 8:13-15).

Christians should consider this principle when called upon to forgive those who sin against us. Jesus made it abundantly clear that we who have received His forgiveness must be willing to forgive others. The parable of the unmerciful servant (Matt. 18:21-35) is plain enough, as is His direct statement (Mk. 11:25-26).

The principle also applies to *spiritual* *abilities* God has given us individually. Whatever level of the knowledge of the Word God has granted us demands a willingness to pass that knowledge onto others by way of evangelism and edification. God doesn’t require all to be public teachers (i.e., Jas. 3:1), but He expects us to do what we can. Parents (and especially fathers) who are Christians must personally take on the responsibility of teaching their children instead of relying solely on Bible class teachers.

Our prosperity and material possessions are gifts from God and we should be willing to give accordingly. This applies not only to giving to the local church, but also our generosity toward those in need and other worthy causes. Our giving is to be “according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have” (2 Cor. 8:12). We are called to heart-felt, liberal giving (2 Cor. 9:6-15). One’s first-day giving is to be according to prosperity (1 Cor. 16:1-2). A question one might need to consider: If the Lord prospered me according to my giving, would I be able to live on it?

Obviously, there are other specific applications to Jesus’ warning “to whom much is given,” but it’s all about giving—giving of ourselves because of all that we have been given from the Lord.

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