

# PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path"  
Psalm 119:104*

May 5, 2019

## A Hard Master

by Frank Himmel

Jesus' Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) is a well-known story about the judgment. In fact, it is on the basis of this story that the word *talent* refers to one's ability. Originally a talent was a weight, then a measure of money.

In the story a master entrusted his possessions to his slaves before going on a journey. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to a third, one. When the master returned he settled accounts. The five-talent slave had gained five more, and the two-talent slave had gained two more. The one-talent slave did not work with his; instead, he buried it. He explained that he knew the master to be "a hard man," and out of fear he had hidden his talent, but at least now he could return it.

The one-talent slave accused his "hard" master of reaping where he did not sow and gathering where he did not scatter. The word translated *scatter* can refer either to scattering in a general sense or to winnowing, the process of separating grain at the harvest. Whether this is a reference to winnowing (KJV, RSV) or a parallel reference to sowing seed (NASB, NKJV, ESV)

makes no difference. Either way, the slave accused his master of unduly profiting from others' labor. In this slave's mind, *his own failure was the master's fault!*

The one-talent slave epitomizes excuse-makers at the judgment. "I didn't know." "I was deceived." "I was afraid." "I intended to." "Your way was too hard." "There were too many obstacles." "I did some of what You asked." "I did a lot of things in Your name" (Matthew 7:22). "I didn't think You really meant it."

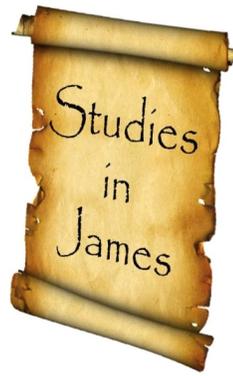


The parable itself reveals the absurdity of the one-talent slave's charge. The master generously gave everyone a significant sum to work with. He evidently apportioned the money to each one's ability so as not to be overburdensome. At the end he graciously welcomed his slaves into his joy, promising them a greater position. As for the extra talents he "gathered" from the other slaves, these were the result of his seed that he had entrusted to them.

The master completely rejected the one-talent slave's rationale. He called him wicked and lazy: wicked, for misrepresenting the master and himself, and lazy, for not working in the master's absence. Accepting for the moment the slave's description of him, he said at the very least the slave should have put his money in the bank so it would draw interest. That would have been the easiest thing to do to make at least a little gain, but the slave did not even do that! His verdict? ▶

# Rahab's Faith

by Frank Himmel



Abraham is the epitome of a man of faith. Paul called him “the father of all who believe” (Romans 4:11). He wrote, “So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer” (Galatians 3:9). James uses Abraham to illustrate that acceptable faith is obedient faith (2:21-24).

James then reinforces his point about the essentiality of working faith by turning from Abraham to another example: Rahab. “In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?” (v. 25). Rahab’s story is recorded in Joshua 2, with the conclusion in Joshua 6:22-25.

In many ways it is hard to imagine two more dissimilar characters than Abraham and Rahab. Besides being opposite genders, he was a Hebrew, she was a Gentile; he was an upright, godly man, whereas she was a harlot; he was the progenitor of God’s chosen people, while she was a citizen of an accursed nation.

These differences may be the very reason James chose Rahab as his second example. Together, a patriarch and a prostitute illustrate the universality of the principle that saving faith is demonstrated in works.

A careful reading of Joshua 2 reveals the propriety of selecting Rahab as an example. In her statement to the spies, Rahab said “we” have heard of the Lord’s deeds (v. 10). “When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer...” (v. 11). Everyone in Jericho heard. Everyone believed. Everyone had the same emotional reaction to the truth. But only Rahab acted on her faith by appealing for mercy, siding with God and His people, and doing what she could to aid them. Saving faith works, regardless of what others do.

Rahab’s working faith was rewarded by more than deliverance and a place among the people of Israel (Joshua 6:25). God also made a place for her in Jesus’ lineage (Matthew 1:5) and included her in the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 (v. 31).

“For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead” (v. 26). ■

## A Hard Master - continued from p. 1

Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (vv. 28-30).

Jesus is the master. We are the slaves. He has entrusted much to us. What are we doing in His service in preparation for His return? ■

## Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	David Gray	John Baucom
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	Clifton Lefort
OPENING PRAYER	Adam Gibson	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Sam Walters	
CUP	Kerry Gray	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Albert Harrison Sr	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Bruce Williams
CLOSING PRAYER	Justin Candella	Ian Brown