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WILLIAMSVILLE STUDY WEEKEND - August 1994

CHRIST IN YOU - THE HOPE OF GLORY

Speaker: Bro. John Ullman

Study #3

Keeping The Faith

Reading: Luke 12:41-47

We're going to commence our third study with a few words from Ephesians chapter 5, that will wind up our thoughts, and provide an apt summary for the parable of the ten virgins, that we considered in our previous study. This is in Ephesians chapter 5 and verses 15 to 17, just three verses here, Paul gives us some incredibly wise counsel for the times in which we are now living, and of course, very appropriate to the conditions and the problems that the Ephesian ecclesia was facing, in the days that Paul wrote the epistle, but certainly with a very powerful message for us. Now, when we think about what we learned and what we studied in that parable of the 5 wise and the 5 foolish virgins, look what Paul says here, in a few brief words. In Ephesians chapter 5 and at verse 15, 'See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise', (we can all see the connection), 'Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is'.

Now let's look at that very, very carefully, because as we said it provides a wonderful, apt summary to the parable of the ten virgins. Paul exhorts the ecclesia at Ephesus and he exhorts us today, as we endeavour to develop the character and the disposition of Christ within us, as the hope of the glory that is to come, and he says, 'See then that ye walk circumspectly'. Now, he chooses a very particular word here, which has a wide range of meanings, everyone of which, is important to us. The word 'circumspectly' comes from a Greek word which means 'to walk diligently, to walk accurately, to walk exactly and to walk carefully, so it conveys all those meanings to us; to be diligent, to be accurate, to be exact and to be careful. And when we consider what he is saying there, he is surely telling us to be careful how we handle the truth. Remember that it is God's Word, it is not ours to trifle with or to bandy about as we may see fit, to suit our own particular purpose. BE CAREFUL HOW WE HANDLE THE TRUTH! We are not playing games when it comes to walking in the way that will lead to the hope of glory. He is telling us that we need to be careful how we handle it, because how we handle it will determine whether it leads us to eternal salvation or not. He is telling us with that one single word, that the truth is not something to be treated lightly. It is not to be handled as though it was the word of man; it is something that is very vital and it is of

divine origin, so he is telling us to walk carefully when we are dealing with the Word of God. No wonder, he then adds 'not as fools, but as wise'.

Now, of course, immediately we note the astonishing similarity to the parable of Matthew 25, the fools and the wise. However, very significantly, the words are quite different in the Greek. In Matthew 25, the word for 'foolish' describes 'a person who though they may think themselves to be mentally sharp and well informed, are really dull, of slow mind, not acute or perceptive'. Now, that's the meaning of the word 'fools' here. It means to be dull, it means to be slow of mind, BUT acute or perceptive; now you see, that aptly describes the 5 foolish virgins of Matthew 25, but the word that is used there is different. So, you see, here the word, being quite different, is a word that simply means, 'without wisdom'. Now in Matthew 25, we've got that word, 'the foolish virgins', it means to be dull; it means to be of slow mind, not acute or perceptive. Now, many of us might think, 'well, we're like that; we're not quick thinkers'. Well, if it's of any consolation to anyone, I just want to make it quite clear, that I am not a quick student. I'm not a fast student; I have to take a lot of time, over my contemplation of the things that I study, and I know of brethren, who would achieve the meager limits that I may achieve, in half the time that I would do. I have to go very slowly, because I find that that's the only way that I can study, so in many respects, I would describe myself as being dull, or of slow mind, and not acute or perceptive to the extent of brilliance that some people are. So, we don't want to be discouraged by that, if we are slow to pick up a point and to grasp it; don't be worried about that as long as we get the right point, and we get it in the right spirit! Don't be worried if we think, 'I'm not as perceptive as I should be', as long as we perceive the vital elements of the truth. It doesn't matter if it takes a while; don't be worried about that, and don't say, 'well, I must be numbered among the foolish, because I'm of slow mind; I'm not acute or perceptive, so I must be one of the foolish virgins'. Don't think that for one moment; the foolish virgins are described in Matthew 25, as being dull, of slow mind, not acute or perceptive because they failed to have sufficient oil in their lamps. That was their problem; they thought that they were wise; they thought that they were neatly sharp, and well informed in the things of the truth, but they were not!

Now, on the other hand, this word in Ephesians 5 and verse 15 that is rendered 'fools', is a word which simply means 'without wisdom', so, you see, both words apply. And the word for 'wise' in Matthew 25, is a word which describes those who are thoughtful, who have an understanding, who are sensible and who are prudent. To be 'prudent' means to 'exercise care and wise judgment in how you think and how you act'. So, that's the word for the 'wise' in Matthew 25. They're thoughtful, they have an understanding, they are sensible, they are prudent, what's caused that? The indwelling and the illumination of the oil, the light of the Word of God.

But, the word rendered 'wise' here, in Ephesians 5 and verse 15, describes those who are skilled or skilful. Now, once again you might say, 'well, that depresses me a bit, because I'm not very skilled or skilful in the Word of God, and I'm not as brilliant as other brethren are; and I'm not as quick to think', and so on and so forth', but bear in mind the fact, that the word does not mean 'smart'. Sometimes in popular usage today, we describe people who are 'skilled' or who are 'skilful' as being 'smart', sometimes

they're smart in the very wrong way. So you see, as long as we've got a good grip on the fundamental issues of life, as they're revealed to us in the Word of God, then in biblical 'terms' we are skilled and we are skilful. We don't want to be smart, but we do want to be 'skilled' in the way in which we read the Word of God. We do want to be 'skilful' in a way in which we use it. First of all, in our own lives and the way in which we may be able to influence others for good. So here are people, who have diligently applied themselves to understanding the principles of divine wisdom. Not merely acquiring knowledge, but the divine wisdom that comes out of knowledge. And as I have said earlier, it doesn't matter if we are slow at absorbing those things; don't be worried about that; don't feel as though you're a failure, because you haven't got the quickness of mind that some other brethren have, that you know. Some are blessed with a very good quickness of mind, and they can see things very quickly, and they can see things in a verse straight away, that perhaps you might not see until you've had a bit of time to think it over. That doesn't matter!. Nobody say that you've got to be a speed reader with the Word of God; nobody says that you have to have a brilliant IQ of 497 + to be able to understand the Word of salvation. **DON'T BE WORRIED ABOUT THINGS LIKE THAT**, as long as we know, as long as we steadily work away at our understanding of the Word of God, then we are developing that principle of **CHRIST IN US, THE HOPE OF GLORY**. And that's what is important.

Now, what I want to do is this, looking at these words in Ephesians 5 and verse 15 and 16, and considering what the two sets of words mean, I want to put them together, because really, they both apply. We want to put the meanings of these 4 words together, and see that their combined meanings, convey to us an important set of instructions. So we ask the question, Who are the 'wise'?, and we get the answer from Matthew 25, and we get the answer from Ephesians 5. And here is the answer to the question, Who are the wise? And we have all these meanings. **THEY ARE THOUGHTFUL; THEY ARE MEDITATIVE** (in other words, they don't just read the bible and say, 'Right, that's the readings for tonight; right, now where do we go? What do we do next?') they meditate upon the Word of God; **THEY EXERCISE THEIR SENSIBILITIES** in acquiring a sound and mature understanding of the truth, no matter how long it will take; **THEY ARE PRUDENT AND THEY ARE CAREFUL; THEY ARE SKILLED AND THEY ARE SKILFUL** in knowing the Word of God and how to serve their God and their brethren, because of these other characteristics that they have developed from the Word. So, there now, are the 'WISE'. The wise are the virgins of Matthew 25 and the wise of those of whom Paul speaks in Ephesians chapter 5.

Now then, as to the 'foolish', Who are they? Well, as far as the Word of God is concerned, and the principles of absorbing divine wisdom, **THEY ARE DULL OF MIND** in that they never really comprehend what the Word is suppose to produce in their lives. **THEY ARE NOT ACUTE OR PERCEPTIVE** because they miss the point of it all. They understand the theory of the Word of God, and no doubt they could talk about doctrine from morning till night, but they miss the point of Christ being developed in them. That's their problem; and the other problem is, that despite their assessment of themselves, that they have enough oil and that they are quite all right to go out and meet the Bridegroom; despite their assessment of themselves, the Bridegroom is going

to find, that they ARE WITHOUT TRUE WISDOM, as the word means here in Ephesians 5. Without true wisdom, so then, what we have to do, is to see the difference between the two, and we have to see those characteristics which the word 'wise' in those two meanings, defines as THOUGHTFUL, MEDITATIVE, EXERCISING SENSIBILITIES, to acquire a sound and a mature understanding, to be PRUDENT and CAREFUL in the things that we do; to be SKILFUL and SKILLED in knowing how to serve God, how to understand the Word, and how to handle it in our own lives, and how to help others also.

So, there we have the definition of the 'wise' and the 'foolish'. In verse 16, the apostle here, in Ephesians 5, goes on to say that with these qualities now that we have seen, that are part of the characteristics of the wise; with these qualities of character, he says in verse 16 that we must 'redeem the time, because the days are evil'. Now you see another link there, with the parable of the ten virgins. Because that's exactly what the 5 wise virgins did. They 'redeemed the time' and they made sure that they made diligent search and they had ample supplies of oil, not only for their lamps, but a back-up supply to take with them. They 'worked their way diligently', and again I emphasize, it's got nothing to do with brilliance. It's got nothing to do with 'spectacular things in the truth'; Nothing to do with that at all. The most humble of brethren and sisters, and of course, we all should be humble, but what I mean is, those who consider themselves, to be of little account in their ecclesia; you know very often it's my finding in my travels around the world, that going from ecclesia to ecclesia, it's very often those brethren and sisters in an ecclesia, who feel (and sometimes they come and tell me, that they're of little value to the ecclesia; that they're of little worth; they're not able to do very much; they're not brilliant and spectacular and so forth) but when I get to know them, I very often find, that they are the real shining lights in that ecclesia. So don't let us be concerned about our lack of fleshly talent. Fleshly talent doesn't come in to it.

So the apostle says, 'with the characteristics that we have; let us be sure that we all redeem the time' like the 5 wise virgins of Matthew 25. And do you know what that word 'redeem' means? it means 'buy up' and it was a word in apostolic times that was used of merchants; particularly merchants who had the brains to know that a merchant who makes money is one who buys at the lowest price and sells at the highest. He knows when to buy and he knows when not to buy. If prices are high, he relies on the stocks that he's got in his warehouse, and he says, 'No, thank you very much, I've got ample supplies at the moment, which I happened to buy at 30% of the prices you're offering now; I'll just wait and I'll abide my time'. So the word 'redeem' means to 'buy up' and it's in the power or possession of everyone to buy up from somebody else, so we have to buy up the time because time can work for us, if we use it to advantage. BUY UP THE TIME is what the apostle Paul says. He says, 'you don't know at what hour to come'. You don't know the day nor the hour, but what you do know is, until He does come, you've got every opportunity to 'buy up that time'; don't waste it; don't fritter it away. And so we must value our opportunities like the 5 wise virgins. And why should we do that? Because, as the apostle says here, 'the days are evil'. And what he means is not simply that we live in evil times, as we do today and in the Ephesian ecclesia, struggle to survive in evil times, he doesn't simply mean that; what he means

is that there is an evil, corrupting influence out there in the world, and that evil, corrupting influence desires very earnestly to corrupt our faith and to take us and draw us out of the truth. WE MUSTN'T LET IT DO SO; we must recognize that the 'days are evil' and therefore that is our enemy. The times in which we live that will have influence upon us if we allow it to do so, that will draw us away from God, and away from serving the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we look at those words in verse 16, 'the days are evil', we know that these are not days that are conducive to the flourishing of the truth; they are not days, when it is easy for us to love the Lord our God with all our mind; that is the facility of exercising the mind. It is not easy to do that in these days; these are dangerous days for those who've been called to become numbered among the wise virgins for Christ. They're days in which every possible mental and moral indulgence exists, in the world out there, and all of them are designed to corrupt the bride of Christ. And so, we know that the days are certainly evil, for the survival of the truth, and therefore, that makes our responsibility the greater, does it not? But, of course, we can 'redeem the time'; we can buy up that time, and use it wisely in the service of our Bridegroom, until He comes. We can use that time to renew our vigour, to renew our loyalty to the purity of the truth, and rededicate our lives to the great Bridegroom, who's coming we await, and continue to prepare ourselves, to developing the characteristics of Christ in our lives. And of course, we have these wonderful words in the book of Revelation chapter 19 and verse 7, 'Let us be glad and rejoice; and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath prepared herself, and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints'; and these are the 5 wise virgins.

And so, may we go back to where we began our second session today, 'And I saw the dead small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened which is the book of the Life; and the dead were judged out of those things, which were written in the books, according to their works'. So we have every way made open to us, brethren and sisters, to be numbered among the 5 wise virgins, who will be acceptable to their Bridegroom when He comes.

Now let us turn our attention, to those few verses read for us by our presiding brother, in Luke chapter 12. And here we have further evidence of our basic theme, CHRIST IN US, THE HOPE OF GLORY. In Luke chapter 12 and verse 41, here we have Peter's question. How many times is Peter represented to us, as the spokesman for all the others. It often appears, doesn't it, that Peter was the one who was willing to speak up, when the others were a little reticent to speak. And yet, we so often find that the same question is in the minds of them all. So here in Luke chapter 12 and verse 41, 'Peter said unto Him, Lord, speakest Thou this parable unto us, or even to all?' Now, you know what the parable is that he is talking about from verse 31 to verse 39, and that is a parable with which we are familiar. Verse 37 for example, '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 so forth, in other words, He will receive them with joy, and gladly unite with them.

Now in verse 40, He ends that parable with the words, 'Be ye therefore, ready also: for

the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not', doesn't that verse seem to recur in our thoughts today, again and again? It's not that we are desirous of merely simple repetition, it's just that in the sections of the Word, that we have considered to put together a series of 5 talks, because, God willing, our exhortation tomorrow morning will be the final in the series, and will hopefully, wind up these talks for the weekend; it's just that these words, we've found ourselves looking at certain sections of scripture, and all of a sudden, these words pop out, and they are there again and again!

So, in verse 41 we read, 'Then Peter said unto Him, Lord, speakest Thou this parable unto us, or even to all?' Now, that's interesting. The answer in verse 42, '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?' What's the answer then? He doesn't say 'yes' or 'no', does He? He answers with the words of verse 42. What is He actually saying to Peter? Peter's question is, 'Speakest thou this parable unto us or even to all?' His answer there in verse 42 is, 'To my servants' as the word is there in verse 42, 'Who is that faithful and wise steward, whom the Lord shall make ruler over his house, to give them their portion of meat in due season'. To my bond slaves, to my servants, in other words, the parable is only for those who had become related to Me, says Christ, through the office to which they had been called. In other words, those who are responsible to the Lord, and those who are answerable to Him, for the way in which they have occupied the time or redeemed the time, or bought up the time, during the time of His absence, and used it to the best possible advantage, to develop within themselves, those qualities of character that will be acceptable to Christ.

And so we look at verse 42, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward?' and those words mean, who then is that trustworthy and prudent steward? They have to be trustworthy. You see, really, as we mentioned earlier, the Lord did not answer Peter's question directly. He didn't say 'yes' or 'no'. Yes, it's to them; No, it's to you; He gave the answer but He really left it up to the individual to see whether in the light of the Word of God, he would be eligible to be related to this particular answer that the Lord gives. The Lord often does that, doesn't He? He really, very often does that, and He does it in a very wonderful way. You remember the occasion, for example, when in John chapter 6, because of some of the things that He had expounded, that many of His disciples, men who had walked with Him for a period of time, they said, 'this is a hard saying', and after that time, it says a little bit later on in that chapter, 'many of His disciples left Him, and walk again no more with Him'. And then the Lord turned around to the others, to the 12, and do you know what He might have said to them then, I think I know what I'd probably would have said if it had been me. I would have said, 'Well, look, all these other men have left me, look at them, they've all turned around and they're going, and they're not going to come back. Whatever happens, don't you 12, don't you leave me, whatever you do! Tell me that you won't leave me, that you'll stand by me. I've got to have somebody'. Now, had the Lord done that, then they no doubt would have given the matter some consideration, and then they would have said, 'Well, look, you know things are like that; you know, if you need us, well, we'll stay around for a while. Don't worry; don't worry, we'll be here; we all will'. Now, if the Lord had done that, that would have brought a response in them, that would have been

nothing more or less than human pride. They would have said, 'well, look, He needs us; He can't do without us; what's He going to do? We've got to stick around; we've got to be here; We've got to show loyalty, don't we?'

But the Lord didn't do that; what the Lord did there, was very much what He does here. What He did was to turn around to His immediate disciples, to the 12, and to say to them, 'Will you also leave Me?' And you see, that put the matter right back in their court, and they had to make the decision. He didn't plead with them and say, 'Look, don't you leave Me too! I'll be destitute; I won't have any friends at all'. He put it right back on them, and He said, 'Well, are you going to leave Me as well?' And remember the response it brought forth? When Peter stood up and he said, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life'. What a difference! If He had adopted the human approach instead of the divine, and if He had said, 'Whatever you do, don't leave Me. Please tell Me you won't leave Me', it would have resulted in pride. They would have elevated themselves and even perhaps, placed themselves above their Master, since He would have been expressing the fact, that He depended upon them. Instead of that, the Lord handled it in the divine way. And hasn't God said that to His own people down through the ages? Hasn't He said it in the days of the patriarchs; hasn't He set up through the history of Israel, 'Wilt thou also leave Me?' and put it right back on them, that they have to make the decision, whether they will serve God to the honour and glory of His Name, or whether they won't. We have to decide that. He will certainly bless us if our decision is right. So, the Lord doesn't answer Peter's question directly here in verse 42 of Luke chapter 12, but He leaves it up to the individual who's got to examine himself and see whether that parable applies to him or whether it doesn't. And the exhortation is very pertinent to all of us, because in effect everyone called to the truth is given the responsibility of being a steward over the affairs of the Lord during His absence. And this statement from the Lord here, emphasizes to all of us, our obligations to our Master. We are required by Him to be trustworthy, to be wise, to be prudent in our constant care for those things over which He has made us responsible and also answerable to Him, at His coming. So we've got to be found at His coming, to have consistently manifested a disposition of loyalty and faithfulness, that is not based upon pride or the elevation of self, but is based upon the denial of self, that we might do, as Paul says in Corinthians, 'all to the glory of God'.

And so in verse 42 the Lord says that it is the responsibility of faithful stewards, 'to give them their portion of meat in due season'. Weymouth translates that in his version, 'to serve out their rations at the proper time', to serve out their rations at the proper time, what does he mean? Well, He's speaking about our responsibilities to serve one another in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ or as Paul required of the ecclesia at Ephesus, 'feed the ecclesia of God'. Remember when he said that? Feed the ecclesia of God, and there the word 'feed' means to 'exercise the whole office of a shepherd' and the word means 'not merely the feeding on grass, but the entire leading, guiding, guarding and folding of the flock'. It's a most wonderful word and that's the meaning that is given to that word in Boulanger's lexicon, and you'll find it in Acts 20 and verse 28. But there it is, the whole office of a shepherd and when He says 'feed the ecclesia of God', it's a very responsible thing, but is that only the duty of speaking

brethren? Do we sit down in the ecclesia and say, 'Well, our exhorting brethren and our bible class speakers and our lecturing brethren, they're the ones that have got to do that; it's not my job. It's their job!' Well, we can never, ever say that, because we all have been appointed stewards over Christ's household, and no one with a more greater responsibility than anyone else, in that sense of being a steward. So, we're all to do that, to serve out our rations at the proper time. FEED OUR BRETHREN WHEREVER AND WHENEVER WE CAN! And we all can do that, even if it is by no other means than the setting of a faithful example. You know, in our own ecclesia at home, I can't help mentioning it at this time, and I hope that the tapes don't eventually find their way back to Perth, because that would be a bit of shame, but I want to mention this now, that we have at home in our ecclesia, three elderly sisters, and they are well up in their 80's and one into her early 90's, and do you know that those sisters (I belong to an ecclesia with around 135 members) and those sisters are always there. I know they're now getting rather infirm, they can't do a great deal, but they are always there. We have in our ecclesia, quite a number of young married couples, in the very height of their physical prowess, so to speak, and their physical virility; they're young, they're athletic in certain things and they haven't got the frailty of age and so forth; but with a lot of them, it is very rare to see them in support of the affairs of the ecclesia. Sunday morning, and that's it! you don't see them! But, you see, these sisters are always there. Now, what are they saying in the ecclesia? Are they leaping up on the platform and thundering forth exhortations to the brotherhood? No; but their exhortation thunders forth just the same. Why? Because everyone sees that they are there; they are not worried about the infirmity of the flesh. Well, they are and one of them has now reached the stage, that she cannot attend as much as she use to, just simply because she can't do things anymore. But, basically, I'm talking about the process over many years, not just at this present time, but over years and years, that these sisters have passed into an age group where they are numbered among our elderly. They are the oldest members of our ecclesia and yet they can always be relied upon. Now, if they have to get up on a platform and thunder out exhortations to their brethren, their very presence in the ecclesia, is an exhortation to all! So, you see, I want to get this across to everybody, that we don't have to be brilliant, we don't have to be spectacular! The Lord doesn't require that, only if we have the ability to speak the Word of God and we are prepared to spend our time studying it; because it's no good getting up and talking about the Word of God, unless you know what you're talking about; unless you spend hours and hours and hours preparing your work and studying it and meditating upon it. When I prepare an exhortation at home these days, and I would say for the last 30-35 years, and even today, when I prepare an exhortation for the ecclesia, I would spend at least 15 hours at my desk, preparing an exhortation on one chapter of the day's readings. You might think that's being over zealous or being overly keen or being too finite or something or other; you might be critical about that, but nevertheless, that's the way I do it, because I want to spend the time on it, and I want it to be for the ecclesia, the very best that I can present, and I'm not going to do that, unless I give it the time. It's easy enough when Sunday morning exhortation is coming around, and to look up the day's readings and say, 'Well, yes I know a bit about that'; make a few notes on a piece of paper; get up the next morning and give an exhortation. That's no good to me, because that Sunday morning, I have a responsibility to 'feed the flock of God'; that's

what I'm there for. I've got to feed the flock of God and I'm not going to do that, unless I first absorb it myself and exhort myself out of the Word, and study those things and meditate upon them. That's why it takes me so long. So, don't be worried about how long it takes you. Don't be worried about the time, because what you're doing is what Paul says in Ephesians, 'you're buying up the time' and you're using it to some worth and value in the service of Christ.

And so here in verse 43, we find that the Lord says, 'Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing'. Notice 'so doing' and the point there, is that life in the truth is to be intensely practical during the Lord's absence from the earth. It is not theoretical; we have to know the theory, of course, we have to know mentally and have knowledge of the truth, and an understanding of it, but it's intensely practical. It's not mere theory; the truth is to become the motivating power in our lives, to cause us to do those things which will be pleasing to Christ at His coming, so that He can see that we have been surrendering up our will to God, so that Christ may be formed in us, so that we have THE HOPE OF GLORY. And that is what the Lord is alluding to in verse 43, 'Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Practically and literally employed in the service of his Master, doing the work of the truth, in whatever sphere it may be.

And then in verse 44, here is our grand hope, here is THE HOPE OF GLORY, for the Lord goes on to say in verse 44, 'Of a truth I say unto you, that He will make him ruler over all that He hath', and there the Lord alludes to our grand hope for the future. So, if the responsibilities we now have are great, then think of the elevation to divine nature, and the power and the authority associated with that, in the kingdom age. What an honour that will be, an inestimable honour; we can't count it; we can't really grasp what an honour that will be. So we must apply ourselves to these principles now, upon the basis, CHRIST IN US, THE HOPE OF GLORY. And as long as we struggles along in this present difficult time, when as Paul says, as we've seen this afternoon, 'the days are evil'. We struggle along toward that kingdom, and we keep on going, and we don't let anything deviate us from that pathway. Then we'll be with the Lord and we'll be with the apostle Paul, and we'll be with the other worthies of old in that time, and we will know the joy and the extreme pleasure and ecstasy of being associated with the Son of God throughout all eternity.

And so in verse 45 He warns 'that if that servant says in his heart, my Lord delayeth His coming'(notice that, He doesn't have to go around trumpeting to his brethren or whatnot and say, 'The Lord's not coming yet; the Lord's not coming yet. Don't worry we've got plenty of time! He's not shouting it to the rest of the world) 'if that servant says in his heart my Lord delayeth His coming, and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidens, and to eat and to drink and to be drunken; the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for Him'. Now you see, verse 45 is taking us back to the grave dangers of the times in which we live, and the way in which there are influences that will cause us to loose sight of our objective, which is CHRIST IN US, THE HOPE OF GLORY. So in verse 45, the Lord alludes to the dangers. What we say in our hearts will be reflected in our attitude toward life; we don't have to trumpet aboard our

thoughts. They will be seen in what we do, because Proverbs 23 and verse 7 tells us, 'As he thinketh in his heart, so is he', in other words, you will find the real character of the real man or woman in their heart. And of course, it doesn't mean the organ that pumps the blood; to the Hebrew, the heart represented the mental processes. In other words, how they think and what that thinking produces in their lives; that will be the true state of the man or the woman in Christ. So this man is represented as saying, 'My Master is a long time in coming'; my Master is a long time in coming, he persuades himself of that. Now, what would be the cause of such a state of disillusionment? because there's no doubt that he's disillusioned, because before he knows where he is, the Master is going to be banging on the door. Now what causes that? What causes him to lose sight of what he's suppose to be doing and where his heart really ought to be? so that he says 'well, my Master's not coming for a while yet; I've got plenty of time'. What causes that? Well, basically only one thing, it is a mind which has wandered from its earlier dominant interest in Christ. That's what it means; it represents a mind that has wandered, from the freshness and the earnestness of the dedication, that is there in those early days when we are transferred from the ways of Adam, into the things of Christ. And what is it that will cause the mind to wander? Well, obviously, other influences, other interests; the pursuit of other objectives, and of course, therein lies the danger which really confronts us all, in this wicked, wicked world in which we live today. You see, it's a situation not unlike that which is described by the Lord in His direct quotation from Isaiah 29 and verse 13, which is found in Matthew 15 and verse 8, where Isaiah says, 'This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me'. What is the Lord saying in Luke 12 verse 45, 'if that servant say in his heart'? What does Isaiah say, 'this people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me'. And here we have the servant who says in his heart, 'My Lord delayeth His coming'; now you see, if our mind is upon our objective, which we've endeavoured to set out today, CHRIST IN US, THE HOPE OF GLORY, then we will have a guard and a hedge against that danger. We might say, 'how could such a thing happen, that is described here in verse 45?' How could such a thing happen, when we are now at the very time of the end? when we have every revealed sign that shows so clearly that the Lord is soon to be manifested in the earth, and come into the presence of His servants? And the answer to the question is really something of a paradox I'm afraid, because while the signs are there, so also is the increasing pressure of an environment socially, which is hostile to the truth. That's the world that we live in today; remember in the days of Bro. Thomas, that when he went to England, and gave lectures in certain areas, and all that was done was a small advertisement placed in a newspaper, and a few handbills handed out, and he'd have an audience of 2,000 people. When do we get 2,000 people today to come and hear an exposition of the Word of God? Where are they in the world today, in their 2000's, that will come and support something like that? You know why they're not there? because of the social environment in which we live today. That's why! In the days of Bro. Thomas there was a resurgence of interest in the bible; people read their bible in the households throughout the English speaking world anyway, (the so-called Christian world), people were religious; they went to church. Even in my day, you know on Sunday morning, everybody on our street, (when I was born my mother and father, the first nine years of

my life, lived in a near suburb of the city of Perth; only a ten minute tram ride from the middle of the city) and on a Sunday you wouldn't see anyone around on the street. It was a working class suburb, nearly all newly married couples with young children. You wouldn't see anybody; they were all in church, and if a young lad of eight or nine or ten or twelve, went out down the street looking for some of his friends in the street to play with; he wouldn't find anyone! You know why? They're all in Sunday School. But, what of the world that we live in today? It's altogether different isn't it? So that while the signs are there, in their brightness and their brilliance, so is an ever increasingly hostile environment in society, in the world at large there, which brings pressure upon our faith, because it is hostile to the truth of God's word.

And so the dangers are very, very real, and so there in that 45th verse, and we can dwell on this for some time, because really brethren and sisters, it is very fascinating to see the way in which the Lord unfolds this parable. Notice what he says there in verse 45, 'my Lord delayeth His coming', (what's he going to do, this servant, this faithful servant?) 'he shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, to eat and drink and to be drunken'. Now in the case of this type of servant, his mind is no longer upon His Lord's return, that's the most important point in that statement, and those words in verse 45. His mind is no longer upon his Lord's return; perhaps it is in theory; perhaps in theory he's saying, 'Well, I know the Lord is going to come; but I don't think that he's going to be here for a while'. His mind wanders to other things, but worse than that even, he abuses and misuses the authority that his Lord has given him, and he becomes lax in his conduct, and reverses his position. Now, he thinks of himself as the Master! because here is a servant who is beating the menservants and the maidens, and who's taken over the larder and the refrigerator and the deep freeze, and he's eating and drinking and even getting drunk, with reckless abandon. He's forgotten his position; he's now become Master over his own destiny. HE IS EXCESSIVE IN HIS SELF INDULGENCE ! And that reminds us of the words in Ecclesiastes chapter 8 and verse 11, 'Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil'. And there is the old human weakness!

So, there it is, brethren and sisters, and there we have a consideration of some of these things in this remarkable parable. We're able to link them up with Ephesians 5; we're able to link that back to the parable of the ten virgins, so that in verse 46, the Lord warns, 'that 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'. So we find that this statement is related to the warning, 'Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh', which is what we read in Matthew 25 and at verse 13, at the end of that parable of the ten virgins; it appears as though the two warnings are clearly connected. And so, therefore, we must understand very, very clearly, and I'm sure that we all do, that we must buy up that time that we have left; we've got to buy it up because it's valuable and we must use it to the best advantage, that we might spend that time, developing within ourselves through the steady, but unspectacular absorption of the principles of the Word of God, day by day, growing closer to God. Learning to walk in harmony with God; trying to keep God very near and very close in our lives, and serving

our Lord and Master, as faithful servants, as faithful stewards, and awaiting the day of His return, been busy in the time that He has given to us, in developing CHRIST IN US, and it will then become for us, not merely the HOPE OF GLORY, but the HOPE will become a reality, and we'll be joined with the Lord Jesus Christ, and all His other faithful servants down through the ages, and clothed upon with the glory and the wonder of divine nature, and inherit the kingdom together, with all the faithful, who are termed in the scripture, THE FIVE WISE VIRGINS.