In Luke 12:41-48 and Matthew 24: 44-50, Jesus tells us the Parable of the Good Servant Who Turned Evil. However, traditionally this has been called the Parable of the Evil Servant. Yet, that is a misnomer. It is the story of a Good Servant turned Evil. This is a very important correction in naming. It helps us remember the point of the message. This is about the fall of a good servant into sin. It is just like the second seed in the Parable of the Sower. That seed “believed for a while” but then “fell away” into “temptation,” and thus “withered” and died. (Luke 8: 6,13.)

In the gospels of Luke and of Matthew, Jesus tells a story about a faithful and wise servant of the Lord who is promoted over the household of his Lord but who gets tired of waiting for his return. Then this servant engages in sin including mistreatment of fellow servants of the Lord. He is also partying with the drunk. Jesus says this servant who lost patience will find the Master so displeased that he “will tear that servant apart and banish him with the hypocrites” and “unbelievers” in a place where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. 24:48-50 (hypocrites); Luke 12:41-48 (unbelievers, apiston).)
The Lucan Text

In Luke, Jesus describes a servant who oppresses the household of his Lord. Is this the same as the good servant Jesus describes initially?

(42) And the Lord said, Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? (43) Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. (44) Of a truth I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath. (45) But if that servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; (46) the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the unfaithful [apistos, or “unbelievers”].

In Luke, there is no question but that the good and faithful servant is the same as that servant who later turns to evil.

The Version In The Greek Matthew

The parallel passage in Matthew, based on the Greek version, reads in the American Standard Version as:

(44) Therefore be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh. (45) Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath set over his household, to give them their food in due season? (46) Blessed is that [=ekeinos] servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. (47) Verily I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath. (48) But if that [=ekeinos]
evil servant shall say in his heart,2 My lord tar- 
rieth; (49) and shall begin to beat his fellow-
servants, and shall eat and drink with the 
drunken; (50) the lord of **that** [=ekeinos] **ser-
vant** shall come in a day when he expecteth 
not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, (51) 
and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his por-
tion with the hypocrites: there shall be the 
weeping and the gnashing of teeth. (Matt. 
24:44-51, ASV.)

**What Verse 48 Means In The Greek Matthew**

The King James and the American Standard Version 
read similarly in verse 48. The KJV reads: “But and if **that** 
evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his com-
ing...” (Matt. 24:48 KJV.)

1. The KJV has that God will “appoint him his portion with the **unbeliev-
eers**.” So too the Geneva Bible, the American Literal Translation and 
Reina Valera. This is Paul’s usage of **apiston** in 1 Cor. 7:16 where he 
specifies a wife’s duty if her husband is an **apiston** (unbeliever). How-
ever, some translations such as the ASV, NLT, and YLT have a doctrin-
al bias that influenced them to choose in verse 51 the alternative 
meaning of **unfaithful**. This is because anyone can see the evil servant 
was the good servant. Yet, they also believe in cheap grace, which 
teaches there is no damnation for a Christian after they once believed. 
So they cannot imagine the place for a **good servant** could ever be in 
hell even if the servant turned evil. Thus, they feel compelled by doc-
trine to choose a meaning of **apiston** as **unfaithful**. They thus imagine 
the good servant still ends up in heaven, but just in a losers’ circle of 
the unfaithful (but saved) Christians. To give traction to this view that 
the good-servant-turned-evil ends up in heaven, they render **apiston** as 
**unfaithful** instead of as **unbelievers**. However, there is no avoiding that 
this place for the good-servant-turned-evil is hell because Jesus says in 
the more complete summary of the parable in Matthew that the good-
servant-turned-evil ends up in a place of “weeping and gnashing.” 
(Matt. 24:51.) Elsewhere, Jesus said at the judgment, those ensnared 
by sin will be sent to the “fiery furnace” — a place where there is 
“weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. 13:42,50). Thus, there is abso-
lutely no reason to try to bias the reading and reject the meaning of 
**apiston as unbeliever** in the Parable of the Good Servant Turned Evil.
Yet, we see a variance between the Greek Matthew and what we read in Luke. For in Luke, we know the faithful and wise servant is then said to have turned to evil. Jesus then spells out the outcome if that happens: weeping and gnashing.

In the Greek Matthew, this meaning is less apparent, because Jesus calls this person “that evil servant,” suggesting perhaps this is a new second servant who begins as wholly evil.

Nevertheless, even in the KJV-ASV Greek-based Matthew for verse 48, commentators agree it is the faithful and wise servant who turns to become the evil servant.

Barnes points out the literary structure of the parable dictates the good and evil servant are one and the same. The one who is faithful is appointed to be overseer but then later abuses that position and turns evil. Thus, Barnes says the evil servant is the same as the earlier faithful and wise servant. He explains:

That evil servant — If that servant, so appointed [i.e., the good servant], having this office, should be evil or wicked.

Likewise, Dillow admits at page 387 of Reign of the Servant Kings (1992) that the Greek and the text structure requires us to understand this servant-overseer who falls is the same as the good servant (Christian) mentioned earlier. Jesus is saying the good and faithful servant has turned to evil which serves as a warning to us:

In the parable of the wise servant [i.e., the parable under discussion], the evil servant is after all a ‘servant.’ If the wise servant is saved, there is no exegetical basis for implying that the evil servant is not. In fact, the Greek text makes it

---

plain that **only one servant, not two, is in view.** Then the Lord says, “But if that (Gr. *Ekei-nos*) evil slave says …” (24:48).³ He is speaking of the **same servant,** the wise one of the preceding verses.” (Dillow, *Reign of the Servant Kings,* supra, at 387.)

**Other Greek Variant Translations Of Matthew Closer To Luke**

In further support of viewing Matthew 24:48 to read just like the Lucan version, we find both the NIV and NLT translate it to match Luke’s version.

The NIV version of verse 48 renders the Greek of Matthew so it matches the Lucan version of that same parable. The NIV reads: “But suppose **that servant is wicked** and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time.’

Likewise, the modern *The New Living Translation* of verse 48 in Matthew reads comparable to the Lucan version: “But **what if the servant is evil** and thinks, ‘My master won't be back for a while....’

Thus, in both the NIV and NLT, the Greek text is translated similarly to the Lucan version. They thus both reaffirm that Jesus addresses a warning about a good servant who turns evil.

**The Hebrew Original Of Verse 48 Of Matthew 24**

One final proof, but no less important, is that the Hebrew version of Matthew appears to be the correct original version of whatever we may read in the Greek version of Matthew. All the early church commentators said the Greek Matthew was a translation of an underlying Hebrew version. That Hebrew version had been thought lost for centuries. However, Professor Howard recently published a version of the Hebrew Matthew discovered in a medieval text that has

³. The transliterated Greek is “ean de eiph o kakos doulos ekeinos en th kardia autou cronizei mou o kurios.”
all the earmarks of the original Hebrew Matthew. It has very few variants from our Greek text. Yet, those variants often unlock gnarled syntax, such as in Matthew 24:48. There and in many other places, the Hebrew Matthew reveals our Greek New Testament is surely a translation of this original Hebrew version. The Hebrew version makes sense where our Greek version sometimes does not.

Thus, we find it is often useful to use this medieval copy of the Hebrew text of Matthew to double-check the current translation we have from the Greek.

The Hebrew Matthew provides in verse 48:

But if that servant should be evil and should say in his heart: my Lord is late in coming.

This Hebrew version precisely matches the Lucan passage.

It thus appears once again that the Hebrew Matthew helps restore the original words of Jesus lost in various Greek translations. Even though at first this may appear a minutely small variance, it has an enormous impact on whether this parable is about a good servant turned evil or merely about an evil servant who was never a good servant. Thankfully, God never leaves us without a path back to His truth.

Hence, using the Lucan passage, the Hebrew Matthew, and modern scholarship, we are able to unlock the gnarled syntax in the Greek of Matthew 24:48. The KJV has the wrong wording. The NIV and NLT are both true to the original text. The good servant later changes and turns into an evil servant, as Table 1 below demonstrates.
Table 1 compares the Hebrew Matthew 24:48 and Luke 12:45. They are virtually identical. By contrast, the KJV-ASV Greek text tradition of Matthew is at variance:

**TABLE 1. “That Servant” Or “That Evil Servant” In Parable Of The Good Servant Turned Evil**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 24:45</th>
<th>Luke 12:45</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“But if <em>that servant should be evil</em> and should say in his heart: my Lord is late in coming.” <em>(Hebrew Matthew)</em></td>
<td>“But <em>if that servant</em> shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;” <em>(ASV)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“But and if <em>that evil servant</em> shall say in his heart, My lord tarrieth” <em>(KJV/ASV - Greek New Testament based on Majority Text tradition)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In both Luke and the Hebrew Matthew, it is unquestionably clear that there are not two servants in view. Jesus is saying that suppose the same servant who previously had been good and faithful becomes impatient, and rationalizes that his Lord’s return justifies impudent sin. Jesus then spells out the dire consequences as a warning to the good and faithful servants of His day and all generations thereafter.

However, in the Greek version of Matthew which was the basis for the KJV-ASV, it abruptly says “if that evil servant...” This opens up an ambiguity. The sudden thrust at us of an “evil servant” in the KJV-ASV tradition has led those wed to cheap grace to think this is a second and distinct ‘servant’ who was never a faithful and wise servant whom Jesus previously mentioned. (This was my personal solution when I too believed in cheap grace.)

Yet, some cheap grace proponents admit the Greek still means one servant is in view, as pointed out earlier. Thus, the Greek word for *that*, according to Barnes and Dillow (cheap grace proponents), supports the idea that one servant is in view, and that the good servant turned evil.
The Parable Of The Good Servant Turned Evil

Thus, even if one rejected correction from the Lucan text or from the Hebrew Matthew or the NIV-NLT, the Greek used by the KJV-ASV still supports there being only one servant in view. This is because the Greek word *ekeinos*, meaning *that*, is clearly pointing to the previously described *faithful and wise* servant. Unfortunately, it cannot be disputed that the Greek syntax behind the KJV-ASV is somewhat gnarled.

Accordingly, if there was any doubt, we must conclude, in light of the Lucan passage, that the Hebrew Matthew is of superior quality to the Greek text upon which the KJV-ASV was relying. The Hebrew Matthew lacks this gnarled *that-evil-servant*. The Hebrew Matthew has the simplicity which matches Luke and the parable’s meaning itself: *if that good servant should turn evil and should say in his heart*. Jesus was warning *good-and-wise servants* to be watching and waiting. Don’t lose patience like Aaron did waiting for Moses to return from the mountaintop. The point of Jesus’ in the Lucan and Matthew passage remains identical only if we use the Hebrew variant to Matthew’s Gospel.

Thus, the Hebrew version of verse 48 is more accurate and more helpful. So is Luke’s similar passage of the same critical verse.

Next, now that we have resolved this very important translation issue, we can begin to understand this parable. We start, like with all parables, by identifying its constituent parts. Let’s break down the parable’s symbolism.

**The Symbolism Of The Parable**

The faithful and wise servant is elevated by his Lord over his household. Thus, because the Lord here is a symbol of Jesus Christ (Barnes), there is no doubt this faithful and wise servant is being correctly viewed as “faithful and wise” by the Lord. Accordingly, it is important to note this servant begins as a *true*, not a *nominal* believer.
Then as seen in the prior section, Jesus then explains if this faithful and wise servant should contemplate evil and starts oppressing others and revelling with the drunken, then the bad things identified in the parable will follow. Jesus explains the root cause of the fall of the faithful and wise servant into temptation. He had lost fear of his Lord’s sudden return whereupon he would be held accountable for misdeeds. He “believes the day of reckoning and judgment to be far distant,” thus “abandon[ing] himself to the more unrestrained indulgence of lusts.” (Lisco, supra, at 254-55.)

Apostle Peter likewise teaches by contrast that fear of imminent final judgment — where no favoritism is shown anyone — is one which leads you to “sojourn in fear.” Apostle Peter writes in 1 Peter 1:17 ASV: “And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear.”

Thus, this parable is clearly a warning by Jesus to those who are now truly faithful and wise servants — even those who have been elevated by their Lord to overseeing positions. Jesus is going to explain what happens if they lose fear of accountability to Him upon His return, and thereby turn to evil oppression of fellow believers under their care.

The Fall Of The Good And Faithful Servant

How did the good servant fall? He reasoned, in effect: “Why should I obey the Master if He will not return promptly to hold me accountable for disobedience?” This is evident in the thought which preceded the evil deeds:

But if that servant should be evil and should say in his heart: my Lord is late in coming. (Hebrew Matthew 24:48)

What is this Lord’s servant’s end for his disobedience? He will be torn apart and cast into the place reserved for the hypocrites and unbelievers. As Barnes explains:

The unfaithful and wicked minister of God, who lives without expectation or fear of judg-
ment, shall suffer the **severest punishment** inflicted on sinners in the world of woe.

Barnes is correct. However, he somewhat eviscerates Jesus’ meaning by suggesting that the only Christians who need fear Jesus’ threat are ministers. Instead, any servant who loses patience for Jesus’ return, and who uses such delay to justify lack of concern over accountability, is under Jesus’ threat. It would be nonsense to suggest only ministers go to hell for evil deeds done by losing fear of accountability upon Jesus’ return, but the rest of us can frolic in sin if we lose such fear. (In fact, Jesus never identifies a class known as *ministers*.) Moreover, to suggest the parable only applies to ministers is to undercut Jesus’ explicit point of telling the parable, which was:

> Therefore be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh. (Matt. 24:44.)

Jesus wants all of us (and not just ministers or apostles) to be ready and waiting when He returns. We all must not lose fear of accountability at any time due to His return and thus turn to debauchery and sin.

If you do, your fate is no different than the *apiston* (non-believer) and the hypocrite. Your end is in the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth — a short-hand expression that Jesus calls elsewhere the “fiery furnace” where all sinners are sent by the angels on judgment day. (Matt. 13:42, 50)

Thus, what of the faith of this initially faithful and wise servant? He lost concern about any accountability for his actions which brought his prior faithfulness to naught by sin. Robertson in *Word Pictures* explains this verse: “That is the temptation [that causes him] to give way to indulge in fleshly appetites or to pride of superior intellect.”

Loss of fear was the root problem of the fallen good and faithful servant. Jesus’ exhortation in verse 44 signals that we must work on our expectations being ever vigilant. By losing fear of an imminent judgment, we lose concern for
The Gospel Of Cheap Grace Is Indicted By This Parable

Interestingly, the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace feeds the precise assumption among God’s servants that Jesus was condemning in the Parable of the Good Servant Turned Evil. While cheap grace keeps up the constant hope of Jesus’ coming and rapturing us, it then negates the impact Jesus wants from that event. Cheap grace teaches all believers are simultaneously assured that they cannot miss the rapture if they have ever once believed. No amount of disobedience or sinfulness will separate them from the salvation God supposedly promised based on faith alone. As we will demonstrate below, cheap grace directly negates having any fear of accountability even if Christ returned today!

Hence, the Gospel of Cheap Grace precisely feeds us with the very identical assumption which caused the good servant to turn evil and loose salvation. Cheap Grace affirms we have no accountability for sin in relation to our salvation once in Christ, contrary to what the Parable of the Good-Servant-Turned-Evil teaches. This is why the cheap grace (faith alone) gospel is so inimical to Christ’s teachings.

Example Of Nothing To Be Guilty About Once In Christ

For example, listen to this passage of Max Lucado in The Grip of Grace (Word: 1996) page 147, and compare it to Jesus’ message in the Parable of the Good Servant Turned Evil:

The moment we begin asking those questions [i.e., will I be punished for sin] we have
crossed an invisible line into the arena of fear. *Grace delivered us from fear,* but watch how quickly we return. Grace told us *we didn't have to spend our lives looking over our shoulders,* but look at us glancing backward [i.e., worried whether our sin will get us in trouble]. Grace told us that *we were free from guilt,* but look at us with ... guilt on our consciences [i.e., over the sin we committed today].

There is never a point at which *you are any less saved* than you were the first moment he saved us. Just because you were grumpy at breakfast doesn't mean you were condemned at breakfast. When you *lost your temper yesterday, you didn't lose your salvation.* Your name doesn't disappear and reappear in the book of life according to your *moods and actions.*

Unfortunately, Max Lucado sells millions of books on each new release. He is telling all the good and faithful servants that they have nothing to worry about. Losing your temper? Oppressing someone? Reveling with the ungodly? He says ‘don’t worry about it.’ The problem is to get rid of the guilt, not the sin! Oh my! God only help us!

Lucado’s words prove faith-alone doctrine is the Christian equivalent of how evolutionary doctrine salves the conscience of atheists. Wil Durant noted this function of evolutionary theory: “By offering evolution in the place of God as a cause of history, Darwin removed the theological basis of the moral code of Christendom. And the moral code that has *no fear of God* is very shaky [making it is hard to manage] social order and individual decency *without fear of some supernatural* being overlooking him and capable of punishing him.” (Wil Durant, “Are We In The Last Stage of a Pagan Period?,” *Chicago Tribune* (April 1980).)

In the same way, faith-alone doctrine removed God as One to fear. This has led to a mesmerizing effect which faith-alone doctrine shares with evolution. No counterarguments
are seriously weighed which refute faith alone or evolution. Any rationalization, even circular logic, is used by faith-alone ‘Christians’ to tenaciously reject Jesus’ true doctrines, just as atheists do so to reject the reality of a designed universe. These myths are destroying our character and our civilization.

**Parallel To The Second Seed In The Parable Of The Sower**

The good servant hence was a believer who fell in time of temptation. As a result, he became evil and lost, heading for hell unless he repents. This message of Jesus is precisely given again in the Parable of the Sower. Jesus describes the second seed had an identical path. The second seed “believed for a while” but then “fell away” into “temptation,” and thus “withered” and died. (Luke 8: 6,13.) The parallel is striking:

**TABLE 2. Parallelism Of The Second Seed To The Good Servant Turned Evil**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christian/Believer</th>
<th>Temptation</th>
<th>Spiritual Death and Lost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“received word with joy” “believed for a while” “sprouted” (Luke 8:6, 13)</td>
<td>“fell away” “temptation” (Luke 8:6)</td>
<td>“withered away” (Luke 8:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“faithful and wise servant” put over Lord’s household. (vv. 45, 47)</td>
<td>“shall begin to beat his fellow-servants, and shall eat and drink with the drunken” (v. 50)</td>
<td>“torn asunder” and cast into a place of “weeping and gnashing” (v. 51)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Parallel To Jesus’ Exhortation To Overcomers In Revelation**

In Revelation 2:10,11, Jesus said if we are faithful, we receive the crown of life:
Be **faithful until death**, and I will give you the **crown of life**. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the **second death**.

It follows if we are unfaithful that we will be hurt by the second death (judgment in hell). Thus, this repeats what we read in the Parable of the Good Servant Turned Evil.

**Parallel To The Ten Virgins**

In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, we have another parallel to the message of the good servant turned evil. In both parables, Jesus teaches that there are two kinds of Christian: those who are watching and prepared with oil burning, looking for the any-time return of Jesus versus those Christians who watch for a while, are ready for a while, and have oil burning only for a time.\(^4\)

The foolish virgins were Christians who took no heed to get the extra oil as the wise had done. The wise had more of the Holy Spirit at work in their lives. The foolish were no longer behaving as if their Lord could come at any moment.

No wonder the majority of the Church today rejects as a valid teaching of Jesus that we are being threatened damnation by Jesus if we are a foolish virgin. If we saw this as what Jesus intended, we would be more zealous for good works and obedience upon His return. Instead, evangelical Christians are far more **zealous to insist that good works are unimportant for salvation**. To avoid supposed heresy, evangelical Christians in fact urge every believer to affirm obedience does not matter for one’s salvation. The consequence of the Fable of Cheap Grace has become a direct negation of the warnings and exhortations of the Lord of the Universe.

---

\(^4\) We discuss this parable in depth in the chapter entitled “Parable of the Virgins” on page 263.
Cheap Grace says that no misbehavior of a Christian has any impact on their eternal destiny. This fable insists that if this were possible, this would be the heresy of faith-and-works.

Yet, Joseph Dillow, one of the leading defenders of the Fable of Cheap Grace, concedes that the faithful and wise servant in this parable becomes evil and then suffers weeping and gnashing. Dillow makes this admission only because of the force of the underlying Greek and the logic of the passage itself.

Having confessed this fact, Dillow tells us how to square this parable with the Fable of Cheap Grace. Dillow tells us how we can resist that Jesus teaches faith-and-works. Dillow insists that this place of weeping and gnashing suffered by the once faithful and wise servant is in heaven. Dillow insists this good servant turned evil merely suffers profound regret as he enters heaven. (Reign of The Servant Kings, supra, at 387.)

Then what about Jesus’ saying this evil servant suffers the same fate as hypocrites and unbelievers? Aren’t they the lost? Dillow says no.

Dillow says the hypocrites can mean Christians who hypocritically judge others but still remain supposedly saved. Dillow similarly contends that the unbelievers who share the same fate as the good servant turned evil (Luke 12:46) are supposedly merely “unfaithful Christians.” (Id., at 389.)

However, the Greek word apiston literally means primarily non-believer but Dillow prefers its secondary meaning as one who is unfaithful. Thus, the faithful servant who is dis-

---

5. See his quote on page 58 supra.
obedient is supposedly not sent to hell. Rather, he is allegedly sent to a special place where merely unfaithful Christians are congregating in heaven.

Hence, Dillow is saying the hypocrites and unbelievers are references to people who actually are saved Christians. Thus, the evil servant’s fate is supposedly a guaranteed salvation. The good-servant-turned-evil merely suffers some regret as he enters judgment day. After that brief episode, Dillow incredibly says the evil servant will enter into the joy of his salvation for eternity.

This solution will not work. We saw previously how absurd is such a notion. Jesus says the place outside in darkness where there is weeping and gnashing is the “fiery furnace” where the “wicked” are sent on judgment day. (Matt. 13:42,50.) All the characteristics of this place as being outside in darkness are described elsewhere in Scripture as the place for those destined to go to the lake of fire on judgment day.6

Yet, this bizarre idea that weeping and gnashing is in heaven is forced upon Dillow because he confessed all the other material points which, but for this bizarre notion, would refute the Fable of Cheap Grace

Fable Of Cheap Grace Alternatively Requires Good Servant Is Not In View

MacArthur Cannot Accept The Evil Servant Was Ever The Good Servant So He Ignores The Issue

John MacArthur in his Study Bible (1997) comments on the Parable of the Good Servant Turned Evil. MacArthur finds “the evil servant represents an unbeliever who refuses to take seriously the promise of Christ’s return.” (Id., at 1440).

6. See “What is Outer Darkness Where There Is Weeping and Gnashing Of Teeth?” on page 280 et seq.
MacArthur thus utterly ignores that it was a good servant who turned evil. He affirms without any textual proof that the evil servant was not the good servant who was elevated. MacArthur thereby ignores that Jesus describes the evil servant as having once been a believer! Not only that — a faithful and wise one.

MacArthur’s idea is an incongruous one because an unbeliever means someone who never believed in Christ. Yet, then how can Jesus fault him for not being patient for Christ’s return? This is a primary fault of the evil servant.

Also, MacArthur’s idea overlooks that the servant in the parable did at one time take seriously his Lord’s returning, but concluded “My master is delaying his coming.” (Matt. 24:48). The servant instead grew weary remaining ready for his Lord’s return. Lastly, after the servant’s bout of sinning, Jesus still calls Himself the “lord of that servant.” (Matt. 24:48.)

Thus, MacArthur’s interpretation cannot possibly be correct. It mismatches the entire tenor of the parable. It ends up with a highly incongruous warning. MacArthur asks us to believe that those who never believed are warned by Jesus to not lose patience for Jesus’ return by turning to evil as leaders in Christ’s church. How utterly ridiculous!

Dillow in The Reign of the Servant Kings (1992) at page 385 aptly critiques those holding MacArthur’s views. Dillow says only “preconceptions” can keep one from seeing the evident truth that this parable is talking about a good servant turned evil — hence a Christian who falls into sin.

The Cause Of The Error Of MacArthur: A Presupposition In The Validity Of The Fable Of Cheap Grace

Then why did MacArthur insist that the wise servant turned evil was never a believer? Because MacArthur (a) never discussed the fact the evil servant was the wise servant
at one point and (b) he used the validity of the Fable of Cheap Grace to force a meaning upon the parable to fit his preconceived belief (as of 1997) in the Fable of Cheap Grace. John MacArthur in his Study Bible (1997) acknowledges the punishment for this servant is hell. This place of weeping and gnashing must be hell. Then, for that reason, MacArthur says the evil servant must be an unbeliever. “[H]e is an unbeliever … demonstrated by his punishment.” (Page 1440.) In other words, we must deduce the good servant turned evil was never a believer because otherwise Jesus teaches a Christian goes to hell for misbehavior.

Why did MacArthur use this notion to read the parable? Because the Fable of Cheap Grace says misbehavior by Christians is irrelevant in our final salvation. Thus, if this were true, this good servant turned evil must be viewed as having never been a believer. But then how could a good and faithful servant not be a believer? This makes no sense.

We can clearly see that MacArthur engages in circular reasoning in the quote above. Based on the fact the servant suffers hell, MacArthur says we supposedly know this is an unbeliever. That is circular proof from a preconception. In fact, this parable calls that presupposition into question. MacArthur is drawing from outside the parable — relying on the gospel of cheap grace — to force Jesus’ words to have implausible meanings. Rather than question the assumption in the validity of faith alone, MacArthur bizarrely asserts this good servant turned evil was never a true believer.

However, from within the parable, we have a good and faithful servant turned evil. Thus, it cannot be an unbeliever. Hence, once MacArthur admits the punishment is hell, this meant Jesus refuted the gospel of cheap grace — the faith alone of the good servant did not protect him in the day he sinned. In other words, because MacArthur admits this place where the servant goes to is hell, MacArthur should concede that a believer can go to hell if disobedient. In fact, this is precisely Jesus’ warning.
Breakdown In The Fable Of Cheap Grace’s Ability To Solve This Parable

Thus, we see those who struggle to protect the Fable of Cheap Grace have devised two equally invalid (and contradictory) views of this parable.

One view says that because misbehavior led the wise servant to be damned, the wise servant must be viewed as never having believed. (MacArthur.)

The other view admits this makes no sense, and says the only palatable alternative is that the wise servant who turns evil must still end up in heaven. The place of weeping and gnashing where there are hypocrites and unbelievers is a special place supposedly for Christian sinners who were unfaithful. (Dillow). But that flies in the face of Jesus calling this place the “fiery furnace” where sinners are sent on judgment day (Matt. 13:42, 50) and a host of other obvious flaws.

When the fabulists run out of room to explain this passage, we know the faith alone doctrine — the doctrine of cheap grace — must have been clearly refuted by this passage.

John Wesley (1703-1791), the famous evangelist and inspiration for the Methodist Church, said when such self-contradictions are necessary to bolster cheap grace (in his day called ‘once in grace, always in grace’), it proves its defenders have reached the limits of explanation. It proves they have a false assumption in their analysis. Wesley wrote: “When able men write such contradictions, the reason is, their mind is confused by a poor cause which they are laboring to defend.”

John Wesley (1703-1791), the famous evangelist and inspiration for the Methodist Church, said when such self-contradictions are necessary to bolster cheap grace (in his day called ‘once in grace, always in grace’), it proves its defenders have reached the limits of explanation. It proves they have a false assumption in their analysis. Wesley wrote: “When able men write such contradictions, the reason is, their mind is confused by a poor cause which they are laboring to defend.”

John Wesley (1703-1791), the famous evangelist and inspiration for the Methodist Church, said when such self-contradictions are necessary to bolster cheap grace (in his day called ‘once in grace, always in grace’), it proves its defenders have reached the limits of explanation. It proves they have a false assumption in their analysis. Wesley wrote: “When able men write such contradictions, the reason is, their mind is confused by a poor cause which they are laboring to defend.”
The Parable Of The Good Servant Turned Evil

Matthew Henry: A Famous Commentator
Who Understands Correctly A Christian Is
At Risk Of Damnation For Misbehavior

Surprisingly, Matthew Henry, the famous commentator, sees the evil servant as an evil Christian minister. Henry typically upholds the Fable of Cheap Grace. However, here Henry never tries to obscure the clear meaning of this passage. He says that this servant turned evil is a Christian — albeit a minister — whose sin starts with doubting his Lord’s return. Later, the minister’s lusts draw him away from his Lord and his profession. It is not that the minister never believed. Thus, Henry correctly sees Jesus is saying this servant was once a saved believer. Henry makes this clear by

7. John Wesley, “Perseverance of the Saints,” *Fundamental Christian Theology: A Systematic Theology* (C. J. Kinne), 1931, Vol. II, at 266-81. In this quote, Wesley was specifically dealing with the issue why Jesus gave warnings to Christians that they could become lost due to sin. Wesley insists Jesus’ obvious intent was that Christians understand this is a real risk. However, the Calvinists said then (as they still do today) that Jesus only wanted Christians to fear sinning lest they should become lost, but never that we should fear becoming lost. While this is a self-evident contradiction, the Calvinists to this day refuse to acknowledge their error, as they persist in this teaching. (See my prior book, *Jesus’ Words Only* (2007) at 504.) Wesley in the 1700s turned the light of logic on this Calvinist claim. Wesley’s critique is as follows: “Side by side with these solemn warnings of God I put this jumble of nonsense from a defender of the Calvinistic doctrine. ‘Once in grace always in grace.’ [The Calvinist says:] ‘*No true saint* who has an evidence, or an earnest of his acceptance with God, such as the true saint may have, *has a right to fear* for a moment that he shall fall nor has he a right to fear that he *shall not be saved.* I also add, that *the Bible nowhere encourages or calls upon the saints to fear, that they shall not be saved, or that they shall be lost.* It *calls on them* to fear something else, *to fear to sin,* or to apostatize, *lest they should be lost,* but *not* that they *shall sin and be lost.*’ [Wesley responds:] When able men write such contradictions, the reason is, their mind is confused by a poor cause which they are laboring to defend.”
using the very contrast that Jesus used. Henry says this person is not just a wicked man (hypocrite or unbeliever) but is a “wicked Christian.”

Henry also acknowledges that Christians are the ones who are being oppressed by this Christian minister. The reason is that Jesus calls them “fellow” servants. This is another point in favor of proving that Jesus wants us to understand that the oppressing evil servant had been a true Christian.

Henry makes one further observation that is worthwhile to note. He says these wicked Christians *sear their consciences against this parable* so as to ignore the threats of Jesus’ coming in judgment on them. Henry insists they will be punished *despite believing* the threat from Jesus on their salvation was *not real*:

The *unbelief of man* shall not make that great promise [i.e., Jesus’ return], or threatening (call it which you will), of *no effect*. The coming of Christ will be a most dreadful surprise to secure and careless sinners, especially to *wicked ministers*. Those that have *slighted the warnings of the word*, and silenced those of their own consciences concerning the judgment to come, cannot expect any other warnings; these will be adjudged *sufficient legal notice given*, whether taken or no; and no unfairness can be charged on Christ, if he come suddenly, without giving other notice. Behold, he has told us before.

Thus, merely because Dillow and MacArthur reassure themselves from the Fable of Cheap Grace that they are outside the reach of Jesus’ warning of hell here, Henry says Jesus will later say this parable was a sufficient legal notice to them. Henry means you can try to *slight* the warnings of Jesus. You can minimize Jesus’ threat as loss of rewards (Dillow). You can claim it was aimed solely at an unbeliever and not at a once *faithful and wise* Christian minister (MacArthur). However, on judgment day, Henry says Jesus will
say you were told beforehand what a Christian minister must not do or otherwise he will be “cut in pieces” and be sent to hell. ‘Your commentaries and rationalizations will be no defense when Jesus reads back this parable to you.’ Henry signifies that Jesus will not permit any of our modern excuses to avoid the clear application to a minister’s misconduct. As Henry says, you were on sufficient legal notice by Jesus’ delivery of this parable.

Aaron Is A Prior Type Of The Good Servant Who Loses Patience

One of the most interesting ways of knowing the meaning of this parable is to see the clear parallels to another believer — Aaron — the High Priest appointed by God in a direction to Moses!

How Aaron sins proves a believer — even one appointed personally by God to lead the people — can fall. When Moses was on the mountain for a long time, the people became impatient.

When the people saw how long it was taking Moses to come back down the mountain, they gathered around Aaron. ‘Come on,’ they said, ‘make us some gods who can lead us. We don't know what happened to this fellow Moses, who brought us here from the land of Egypt.’ (Exo 32:1 NLT.)

Aaron had previously been appointed as a faithful and wise assistant to Moses. Now, when impatience knocked at his door, he succumbed. Aaron told the people to collect their jewelry. Aaron then used it to fashion a golden-calf for them. The plan was to use its image during a Yahweh-centric worship service the next day. Aaron was trying to be syncretic — combining Yahweh-worship with images to be used in wor-
ship. Aaron presented the golden calf and told the people that the next day would be a festival to the Lord. (Ex. 32:5.) When the feast came, Aaron was surrounded by drunken revelry:

The people got up early the next morning to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. After this, they celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry. (Exo 32:6 NLT.)

Remember that in Matthew 24:49, Jesus said the servant who did evil began “to beat his fellow-servants, and shall eat and drink with the drunken.”

Aaron and the servant turned evil were compromised in similar ways. They were caught up with those who get drunk.

Aaron lost patience for Moses’ return. Was Moses a type of Lord to Aaron? Yes. When Aaron was confronted by Moses, he calls Moses “my lord.” Keil & Delitzch agree this is to signify Aaron regards Moses as his lord. Aaron “addresses Moses in this way on account of his office [i.e., Moses’ office] and his anger.” This means Aaron is a perfect example of the Good Servant Turned Evil. Here is Moses’ account:

(21) And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought a great sin upon them? (22) And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on evil. (23) For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him. (24) And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off: so they gave it me; and I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf (Exo 32:21-24 ASV.)
Because Moses comes back at an unexpected moment, Aaron has a particularly pathetic excuse. This reveals a lack of Aaron having planned anything realistic to explain about the golden calf. Aaron simply tries to make it sound like the golden calf supernaturally appeared from the fire. As if he could fool Moses into thinking God had a hand in this mayhem and image used in worship.

Then note that Moses calls Aaron to account when he returned. Moses is angry. (So is God.) Moses is a type of Christ. He will call each of His own to account.

Aaron, however, was not watching and waiting. Instead, Aaron must have felt Moses was tarrying, giving him enough time to pull off the image-device to soothe the people’s own impatience before Moses ever returned to catch him.

What underscores this is that earlier Moses tells us that God’s purpose of the thunderings and noises from the mountain was deliberately to engender fear so the people would not sin. The people begged for Moses to intervene and stop this proximity to God. They begged him to go up to meet God alone.\(^8\) When the distance was put between Moses speaking to God and the people, they fell in sin. This then explains what is the cause of Aaron’s fall: it was the distance and lack of proximity to God which led him to think he could sin and not get caught.

Hence, Aaron is virtually indistinguishable from the faithful and wise servant in the Parable of the Good Servant Turned Evil. Aaron is put over the household of his lord until he returned. Like the good-and-faithful servant in the parable, Aaron begins to doubt the prompt return of his master.

---

8. “(19) And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. (20) And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before you, that ye sin not. (21) And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.” Exodus 20:19-21 ASV.
Did Aaron like the good servant turned evil also end up participating in drunken revelry with his fellow-servants of his lord Moses? Yes. It is implied that he had put on the worship service to Yahweh using the golden calf in the midst of the service. It ended up in drunken revelry, just as befell the good servant turned evil.

Thus, it appears when Jesus tells the Parable of the Good Servant Turned Evil, Jesus is using terminology to invoke the memory of Aaron — Moses’ servant. Aaron is the object lesson to illustrate the application of the parable. This is something never mentioned by commentators. Nothing seems to explain this other than lack of knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. Let’s make a table comparison. From this, one can see Jesus is likely drawing an analogy to Aaron. Thus, no matter what status God gives you, you can fall just like Aaron did into sin — into blatant violation of God’s Law, and into apostasy.

**TABLE 3. Aaron Compared To The Good Servant Turned Evil**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aaron</th>
<th>Good Servant Turned Evil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God personally selects Aaron to help Moses.</td>
<td>Good and wise servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron speaks of Moses as “my lord.”</td>
<td>“that servant” later calls the lord “my lord.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses leaves for the mountain to be with God, leaving Aaron in charge of the household of God.</td>
<td>The good and wise servant is appointed to feed and care for the household of his lord after his lord’s departure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron is led into temptation by losing concern for the prompt return of his lord’s return.</td>
<td>The good and wise servant is led into temptation by losing concern for the prompt return of his lord’s return.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron puts on a worship service with the people that endorses their sinful use of images (the golden calf).</td>
<td>The good and wise servant becomes evil by, among other things, beating fellow-servants of his lord.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron ends up surrounded by people in drunken revelry.</td>
<td>The good and wise servant ends up drinking with those involved in drunken revelry.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

So what happens to the once good servant — the Christian faithful servant — who later commits grievous sin? He is “cut in pieces” and assigned to a place of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” with unbelievers, so says our Lord. It clearly is contrary to the modern Fable of Cheap Grace. Yet, this refutation of our favorite fable comes from no less a figure than our Lord. Those who persist in the Fable of Cheap Grace do so at their peril. For their Lord has been warning them from the pages of His word that they are to be on guard, and not forget He can come at any time and hold them to account. They must remain morally vigilant. They must not fail like Aaron did.

Why did Jesus illustrate this fall by mentioning a good and faithful servant who was put over the household of God, like Aaron? Jesus’ subtle point is that it will not earn you any credit that you did a good job for a long time. Aaron had a great track record too prior to the calf incident. It does not even matter you have been elevated by God’s decision to be the head of His household. Indeed, Aaron was previously made the high priest over all other priests. Thus, Jesus reminds us all the good you do is like filthy rags when you sin.9 If you fall by sinning (e.g., oppressing your fellow servants), you will fall very hard on the rock of God’s judgment seat. Hence, you must repent and stop sinning.

9. Often the “filthy rags” quote is taken out of context to suggest repenting persons who obey God have good deeds which are even filthy to God. Not so, says Deuteronomy 6:25. Instead, Isaiah 64:5-6 must be read in its full context: “Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou wast wroth, and we sinned: in them have we been of long time; and shall we be saved? (6) For we are all become as one that is unclean, and our righteousnesses are as a polluted garment: and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”