

The Bible and Investing

The words ‘trade’ and ‘trading’ are used in the Bible a number of times. According to the commentators, the original word is used in the sense of making money. For example, in the Parable of the Talents found in Matthew’s gospel, the two profitable servants went at once and traded, both doubling their master’s money! Each was praised for their efforts, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” It’s a great story worth reading – full of wisdom and truths:

¹⁴“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’ ²¹His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²²And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.’ ²³His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²⁴He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’ ²⁶But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” —Matthew 25:14-30 (ESV)

Notice the key points Jesus is making in these verses. The two servants who received the five and two talents (a talent is worth approximately 1.4 million dollars based on current values – big bucks) went out and ‘traded’ immediately and doubled their master’s money.

The wicked and slothful servant, on the other hand, was condemned by his master for not properly investing the talent that was entrusted to him. In fact, the contemporary English Version of verse 27 says, *You could have at least put my money in the bank, so I could have earned interest on it.* If the least he could have done was a bank account, then the implication is he should have invested (traded) in more profitable vehicles like stocks, bonds, mutual funds, precious metals, real estate, etc. There are two additional stories told by Jesus in the book of Matthew which talk about profiting from buying and selling:

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The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Value

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Matthew 13:44-46 (ESV)

In fact, that’s exactly how the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines trading – the business of buying and selling commodities or commerce.

Trading is first mentioned in the Book of Genesis.¹ “Let them dwell in the land and trade in it.” Even the Proverbs 31 woman,² the wife of a noble character, is praised because “She sees that her trading is profitable.” Clearly a woman to be admired and respected.

Finally, in the parable Jesus tells in Luke 19:11-16,³ about the ten pounds, one of the servants produced a 5-fold increase by trading, and another managed to gain a 10-fold increase by trading as well. No doubt the Warren Buffett of his day.

So, there you have it, a brief sermonette on what the Bible has to say about trading, investing, and commerce.

I truly hope you found it useful and informative.

Thanks, and Blessings!

Richard Everett

¹ 34:21 (ESV)

² Verse 18 (NIV)

³ (RSV)

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