

The Parable of the Unjust Servant

Do you remember the mid-term exams you had in school? Do you recall how you crammed for the test? Their purpose was to let you know how you were doing. Unfortunately, there are no midterms in Christian service. God allows us to go all through our entire earthly life before we have our **FINAL EXAM**. That is what "*The Judgment Seat of Christ*" will be - our final exam. Christ's evaluation of our earthly life will appear on our eternal report card. Whatever these grades, they will stand **forever**. These marks will be indelible and their purpose will be to show how well, or poorly, we have executed our stewardship. **These grades will be received when we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and will be ours for eternity!**

It is important for us to consider. "*How will the Judge evaluate us in that day?*" What measuring stick will He use to measure our success or failure? It is important to know in *this life* what really counts with Christ. Jesus Christ has given considerable teaching as to what He expects of His servants. They are found in Christ's parables. The first one I would like to look at is found in Luke 16:1-13. Jesus Christ was an amazing Teacher.

Parables were Christ's favorite device for putting across truths. A parable is a truth clothed in a familiar illustration. Jesus took things from the daily lives of His listeners and used them as vehicles of communication.

People in that day had no difficulty understanding what He meant. But, we live in another day. Customs and habits were different in Jesus' day than they are today. The circumstances which they lived under are centuries old, so everything has to be explained. What was a simple tool then, is sometimes an awkward device for us today. Even so the truth is there for us to uncover and receive.

In this parable of Luke 16:1-13, Jesus is teaching: "*The **WISDOM** of a servant in considering his future and doing what he could to provide for himself after his stewardship ends.* Let's read the parable just as Jesus gave it:

Luke 16:1-13, "*Jesus told His disciples: 'There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' 'The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg - I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' 'So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. 'The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' 'Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' 'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. 'He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' 'The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. 'Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? 'No servant can serve two*

masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." - (Contemporary English Version)

This parable concerns what we would call today, "*a business manager*," and he is very careless in handling his employer's estate. The owner of the estate learns of this business manager's carelessness and, so, he calls his business manager into his office, giving him his dismissal notice.

This parable is a story about a bunch of rascals the likes of which you would have trouble finding any worse. Yet, in their wrong actions and in their dishonesty, there is a *shrewdness*, which reveals a cleverness in one providing for himself for the future.

This **steward** . . . [using the King James Translation] . . . (or "*Business Manager*") was a rascal. He was a servant, in charge of running his master's estate, however, by using his own cunning, he obtained for himself friends for his future situation.

The debtors were rascals too. This business manager knew that he had lost his job. What does he do? He comes up with a brilliant idea. He was clever and he made his cleverness operate for his future. This business manager, realizing that his future was in danger and, knowing that he has but a short time left in his job, he resorts to a scheme. One by one he calls his master's debtors, and he has them change their invoices to show that they owed far less than what they actually owed.

What was this business managers doing? Jesus said, "***He made friends of those debtors, in order to receive their favor when he would be out of a job.***"

Jesus tells us that when the master hears of his business manager's strategy, he could not help but admire this servant for being so clever and wise enough to look out for himself. He even *praises him for his astuteness*.

Notice that there is not a single syllable in this parable that suggests that Jesus approved of the dishonesty of this man.

Jesus did say, "*The people of this world look out for themselves better than the people who belong to the light*" Luke 16:8b. Jesus' purpose was to draw a contrast between the "*sons of this age*," and the "*sons of light*."

Jesus was speaking primarily to the Pharisees. Notices verses 14-15, "*The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus . He said to them `You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.*"

It is important to keep in mind that Jesus was speaking primarily to the Pharisees. Jesus was not commending the action of dishonesty, but, rather Jesus was endorsing the shrewdness of this man to think about the future . . . to make plans to prepare for the future . . . plans that would take care of him when the unknown future arrived.

Jesus was showing that the shrewdness of the "*sons of this age*" is wiser in their generation, than the "*sons of light*." The sons of this age are more shrewd in carrying out their

enterprises than the sons of light are in carrying out theirs. Jesus was teaching that the Christian should be as eager and ingenious in his attempt to attain treasures for the future, as a man of the world is in his attempt to attain money and comfort in this life. Jesus tells us, "*The Christian will be a better man in eternity, if he provides for treasures there now.*"

Jesus is teaching that, if we would only give as much attention to the things which concern our soul . . . as we are for the things which concern our business . . . we will be a better person, here in this life and in eternity.

It so often it true that Christians extend twenty times the amount of effort on worldly activities, contributing their time, money and effort on pleasures, hobbies, gardening, or sports as they do on God's business.

Christ's purpose in this parable was to draw a contrast between the diligence between the men of this life who shrewdly prepares for the future and Christians who fritters their opportunities away, taking no thought about the future.

Jesus was saying, "*Don't hang onto your money until you are dead, but make use of it now. Make friends by means of it, and when it fails . . . in that moment, when you can not longer sign checks . . . the friends you have acquired will greet you in your eternal home. Measure your money, not by the measurement of sons of this age, because it will fail when your generation fails. but, rather, measure your money by the measurement of sons of light.*"

*The sons of this age are wiser **in their generation.*** Notice the limit of their wisdom, they are clever for today, but fools for eternity.

Jesus says, "*You make such use of your money, that, when it fails, the friends you have made of it, will receive you.*"

A song Christians use to sing says:

"Will anyone at the beautiful gate, be waiting and watching for me?"

Are there those who have gone on ahead, who want to see you when you arrive, because of the use you have made, on their behalf, of your wealth?

Luke 16:10-12 state, "*Anyone who can be trusted in little matters . . . [meaning the things in this life] . . . can also be trusted in important matters . . . [meaning the things of eternity] . . . But anyone who is dishonest in little matters . . . [things of this life] . . . will be dishonest in important matters . . . [things of eternity] . . . If you cannot be trusted with this wicked wealth, who will trust you with true wealth. And if you cannot be trusted with what belongs to someone else, who will give you something that will be your own?*"

The Christian whose spirit, mind, and body - whose whole personality has an equilibrium . . . a gravity toward eternity . . . will treat every opportunity with great value to "*lay up for himself treasures in heaven.*" The man who is "*laying up treasures in heaven,*" is the man who will know how to use the mammon of unrighteousness.

Jesus sums up the meaning of the parable in verse 13, "*You cannot be the slave of two masters. You will like one more than the other or be more loyal to one than to the other. You cannot serve God and money.*"

Jesus draws attention to the fact that this "*Business Manger*" was desperate because he was about to lose his job and, so, he does what is necessary to provide for his future.

Christ is **NOT** teaching it is wise in resorting to dishonesty, but, rather, the point of the parable deals with wisdom in this servant *thinking about his future* - and in his *doing something about it!*

The application of the parable is obvious: **THE CHILD OF GOD SHOULD REALIZE THAT HE WILL ONE DAY BE THROUGH WITH HIS EARTHLY STEWARDSHIP, THEREFORE, HE SHOULD BE WISE IN "LAYING UP TREASURES FOR HIMSELF IN HEAVEN."**

Just as this Business Manger used his master's goods to win favor with the debtors, the Christian should use this world's opportunities and treasures to secure a future position in eternity.

Jesus Christ bought us with His Own blood. Our time and money are not really our own, but, rather, they belong to Him. We can use it to advance our future status and, when we do, we show the same wisdom as the business manger in this parable.

That is the reason Jesus gave this parable. It is His teaching! We know that this is the correct interpretation, because the Lord did not stop with just the giving of this parable. Christ stated in verse 9, "*I say to you . . . [Christians] . . . make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness . . . [earthly wealth] . . . so that when it fails; they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.*"

Who will receive us? Those whom we have made our friends through the use of mammon. By use of our time, our efforts and our money, we have advanced the kingdom of Christ. = "*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven!*"