

THE UNRIGHTEOUS STEWARD

Jon Macon

Luke 16:1-8 says, “There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord’s debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely.” There is much to learn and remember from this parable of Christ, and at least two major lessons taught by it.

Beware of covetousness

Perhaps the most important lesson to learn is to turn away from covetousness. Covetousness is the root problem in the heart of the unjust steward. He was unfaithful with his master’s goods because he loved mammon. Jesus explained the lesson of the parable in Luke 16:13 by teaching that it is impossible to serve two masters, and, specifically, we cannot serve God and mammon (material things). When the Pharisees heard this doctrine, they derided Jesus because they were covetous (Luke 16:14). In Luke 16:15, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for deriding him. First, Jesus pointed out that the Pharisees’ derision of him did not change the truth. They were only making themselves feel better about not believing and obeying the Lord’s word. Jesus said to them, “*Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts.*” God knew they had covetous hearts and would judge them for it, regardless of how much they derided the truth. Secondly, Jesus said in his reply, “*For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.*” This is an important principle. What man esteems, God hates. The Pharisees were covetous and God hates that, as the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Tim

THE UNRIGHTEOUS STEWARD

(continued)

6:10). The Pharisees were of this world (John 8:23), but the things of this world are not of the Father (1 John 2:15-17). Therefore, the Pharisees were God's enemies (Jas 4:4). Therefore, instead of loving and serving mammon, we should be faithful to God. Jesus says, "*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much*" (Luke 16:10). If we are not faithful to God in this life, down to the very least things, then we will not be faithful to God in the next life, when He will give His children eternal responsibilities and works (Rev 7:9-17; 22:3-5). If we are not faithful now with the things God has made us stewards over (including our money, time, and everything He has given us), God will not commit to our trust the true riches (Luke 16:11) or give us what will be our own (Luke 16:12). The principle of stewardship is well stated in 1 Corinthians 4:2: "*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*"

The life to come

For those Christians who ignore the first lesson and the warning of Christ not to become choked by the cares, riches and pleasures of this life (Luke 8:14), Jesus advises them to do what the unjust steward did. The unjust steward did not do what was ultimately wise for his soul, as in the same sentence in which it says he had "done wisely" it also says he was "unrighteous" (Luke 16:8). But he did act "wisely" in a worldly sense. He made friends for himself so that he would be received by them when his master thrust him out. In this way, Jesus says, "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Luke 16:8). The Lord then says, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations" (Luke 16:9). Jesus is speaking here to unfaithful Christians, those who will "fail" (the same Greek word is found in Luke 22:32 concerning a faith that fails). They should make friends so that they will have someone to receive them into torment in Hades. Apparently, having friends in torment is better than not having friends there. Obviously, it is best not to go there at all. That is why we need to remember to love and serve only God, and not to love this world.