

The Steward's Sermon

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. Luke 16:1-13

1. Clever, shrewd, and ingenious often imply sly dishonesty and underhandedness. Yet the idea common to all of them is skill, and this is a good quality.
2. In the Parable of the Unjust Steward, Jesus taught that faithfulness to God includes a certain level of cleverness, shrewdness, and ingenuity.

I. THE CRISIS

A. Stewardship - Luke 16:1-3

1. A steward is one who manages another's property, finances, and organizes his local activities.
 - a. Abraham's steward was sent to get a wife for Isaac - Gen. 15:2
 - b. Joseph was Potiphar's steward responsible for everything in his house except his wife - Gen. 39:4-9
2. Often stewards were slaves, but this steward was neither punished nor sold, simply dismissed, so very likely a hired man

B. Mismanagement: "wasted" his master's goods; dissipated, squandered, and may have embezzled his master's money

1. Perhaps similar to the prodigal son who wasted his inheritance with uncontrolled spending - Luke 15:13

C. Accountability: the master demanded an account of his stewardship and dismissed him

D. Predicament: he was unemployed and too weak or aged for manual labor, and too proud to beg

II. THE CLARIFICATION

A. Resolution - Luke 16:4

1. The steward settled on a specific plan involving thought and cleverness

B. Action - Luke 16:5-7

1. The master's debtors perhaps were tenants, sharecroppers.
 - a. A measure of oil = Hebrew batos = 8.75 gallons; 100 measures = 875 gallons. The debt was reduced 50%.
 - b. A measure of wheat = Hebrew kor = 14.5 bushels. 100 measures = 1450 bushels. The debt was reduced 20%.
2. This was dishonest on the part of both the steward and the debtors.

III. THE CONSEQUENCE

A. Commendation - Luke 16:8

1. The steward's master commended the unjust steward, not for his unjustness and dishonesty, but the fact that he had dealt shrewdly.
2. He was about to lose his future income and security in his old age and acted quickly and shrewdly to ensure that he would have a living

- a. Greek - phronimos is astute, intelligent, wise, prudent (Strongs)
 - b. Such a person is mindful of dangers and enemies
 - c. It is the opposite of moros - foolish man - Matt. 7:24-27
 - d. The wise and foolish virgins waiting for the wedding - Matt. 25
- 3. The steward had acted with shrewd regard for his future welfare.
- B. Application: Christian prudence. This is not an endorsement of dishonesty
 - 1. The sons of light are urged to be as wise in pursuing their eternal security as the sons of this world are in pursuing their worldly security
- C. What is Christian prudence?
 - 1. Christians are not naïve or simple-minded - Matt. 10:16; 1Cor. 14:20
 - 2. Prov. 1:4, 22, 8:5, 14:18
 - 3. We must be willing to cast aside every profit, every material thing, every security, even relationships so that we might secure our eternal future
 - 4. What could be accomplished if we spent as much time, money, effort, and ingenuity in the Lord's work and for our eternal lives as we do in our secular jobs, worldly relationships, and diverting hobbies?
 - 5. "If only the Christian was as eager and ingenious in his attempt to attain goodness as the man of the world is in his attempt to gain money and comfort, he would be a better man. If only men would give as much attention to the things which concern their souls as they do to the things which concern their business, they would be better men" (Barclay).

IV. THE CONCLUSIONS

- A. The proper place and use of money - Luke 16:9
 - 1. Money is temporary when contrasted with eternal, true riches
 - a. It is unrighteous in that it is uncertain and transitory - 1Tim. 6:17
 - 2. Money and material goods do not belong to us - 1Chron. 29:14
 - a. "We have no real title to [money]. Its tenure is precarious; we cannot count on it for a single day. We did not bring it into the world, nor will we take it with us when we leave. It is not a part of us; we are not a part of it. It may go any day; it will go one day" (Neil Lightfoot).
 - 3. Money must be used wisely; it is a tool, either good or bad depending on the use to which it is put.
 - a. One can allow material wealth to master him, or he can master it, using it for moral and beneficial purposes - Matt. 25:31-46
- B. Faithfulness in stewardship and service - Luke 16:10-13
 - 1. Faithful means trustworthy, dependable, working with diligence and integrity (Strongs) - 1Cor. 4:1-2; 2Tim. 2:2

Conclusion:

- A. We can learn from the dishonest steward; not to imitate his dishonesty, but to adopt his shrewdness and cleverness, applying it morally to spiritual ends.
- B. Like the steward, we will eventually be audited by our Lord - Matt. 25:21