

- p¹) This solution is problematic because it would essentially be stealing from his master. This approach would have been condemned, rather than praised.
- o²) The manager was stealing from his master, which was admired. The master was involved in a mafioso-styled business extorting money, like a loan shark. Within these circles, the most conniving plan was admired.
- p²) This solution is improbable, since it again results in the master losing money. In addition, this approach would probably not ingratiate the manager to the clients of his master -- thus becoming self-defeating.
- o³) The manager was overcharging a large percentage to his master's clients, which is what got him in trouble in the first place. Essentially, the forgiveness of debt was a removal of his outrageous personal commission.
- p³) No real problems with this solution. In fact, given the audience and the response of the rich master, this solution has the greatest plausibility.

5) Shrewd Investing In Eternal Things

- A) Jesus teaches that His followers need to use money, even made or invested in places or people who are unrighteous, in a way which is generous and encourages relationships with those who are unrighteous (16:9). But why?
- B) Simply, the unrighteous do not have the "key" to heaven (eternal dwellings, 16:9), but our behavior in their midst reveals a heart which is either faithful or unfaithful to the Lord, who unlocks our eternal dwellings (heaven).
- C) Simply, true prosperity comes through investments which exchange temporary pleasure for eternal security (16:9).
- D) Thus, Jesus calls on His followers to be faithful in small things (money, resources -- 16:10), to be faithful with others' things (work -- 16:11-12), and be exclusively faithful to God in all things (16:13), especially with our finances.

Shrewd Investing

Long Beach Alliance Church • August 10th, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**AND I SAY TO YOU, MAKE
FRIENDS FOR YOURSELVES
BY MEANS OF THE WEALTH
OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, SO
THAT WHEN IT FAILS, THEY
WILL RECEIVE YOU INTO THE
ETERNAL DWELLINGS.
~LUKE 16:9 (NASB)**

1) Money, Money, Money...

- A) Luke's Gospel contains more parable material than any of the four Gospel narratives. Of this material, 36% has to do with "riches" and "wealth." These are significant themes in Luke's Gospel account and the teaching of Jesus Christ.
- B) Interestingly, Luke always used "riches" and "wealth" in a negative sense in his Gospel account.* Whenever we encounter riches or wealth in Luke, the references have an inherently negative assumption of unrighteousness.

* It is notable that in the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) that "wealth" (NASB); "property" (NIV, ESV); or "livelihood" (NKJV), is from βίον, normally translated "life." The word carries ideas of wealth/property, as expressions of that which an individual has spent their life achieving. This word (βίον) is not always used negatively (cf. Luke 21:4), but is often (as with πλούτου, πλουσίους & μαμωνᾶς) used as being a barrier between man's fellowship with God (cf. Luke 8:14; 15:12, 30). We can observe a semantic similarity between βίον & πλούτου, πλουσίους and μαμωνᾶς which maintains Luke's perjorative emphasis, even in the Prodigal Son pericope.

- C) It is important to note that Christ's audience in Luke 16 of Jesus' own disciples (Luke 16:1), the "tax collectors and the sinners," and "the Pharisees and the scribes" (Luke 15:1) are present† for Christ's teaching on the "Unrighteous Manager."

2) A Pathetic Character Caught In His Deception

- A) Each instance of "manager" (Luke 16:1) in the book of Luke had a financial manager in view. Thus, the manager in charge of financial matters had squandered his master's wealth and is called out for "an accounting" (Luke 16:2).
- B) Clearly, whatever information the "rich man" (remember the negative connotations this would carry) has on his manager is conclusive, because despite his request for accounting -- he fires his manager on the spot (16:2).
- C) Interestingly, the manager neither admits or denies anything. Rather, we are given an omniscient view of the manager's guilt and panic as he considers a life without his stewardship for the rich man (16:3)
- D) The manager's aversion to hard work and his shame at the thought of begging illustrate his pathetic state of being (16:3) and grip the listener with the obvious question, "what will the manager do now?!"

† The "tax-gatherers" were an ideal audience for teaching about riches and wealth. They were a group with a reputation for fraudulent monetary practices. The tax gatherers were among the most hated people in the Roman provinces (e.g. Judea & Galilee). The tax gatherers routinely charged commissions on top of the required tax in order to increase their own wealth. A tax gatherer often depended on "suspicion, intrusion, harassment and force" for success, which attracted unsavory characters for the job. It is no wonder that the popular view of tax gatherers (cf. the Pharisees in Luke 15:2) was that they were the "embodiment of dishonesty." A parable about deception, money, accusation, and over-charging would be ideal for this type of an audience. The Pharisees and scribes, who Luke reports "were lovers of money" (Luke 16:14) would have been another ideal audience for Christ's teaching. Finally, Christ's disciples, to whom the parable is directed (Luke 16:1), were being instructed in the priorities/values of God's Kingdom. Their presence was equally significant, as part of God's special inclusion of them in the "mysteries of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:10). Collected from various resources, of particular importance is Schmidt, Thomas E., s.v. *Taxes*. Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, ed. J.B. Green. I. Howard Marshall (Consulting Editor), Scot McKnight. 1992, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. Pages 805-806.

3) A Shrewd Move By A Sober Character

- A) The manager hatches a plan, no doubt preposterous to the listener, to use his previous "squandering" for some sort of personal gain (16:4), but what is his plan?
- B) Without explanation, the manager summons his master's clients (16:5) and makes **dramatic reductions** (20% - 50%)^Ω to their debt (16:6-7)!
- C) Certainly, the manager would be as good as dead when his master discovers that the money which the manager has already squandered is now being **given away!** At the very least, we expect the manager to go to jail for his offence.
- D) The master, however, has a **radically** different response to the situation (16:8). Why would the master praise his renegade manager? How were the actions of the manager "shrewd," in light of his apparent theft (by reduction)?
- E) Further, Jesus supports the positive estimation of the manager's actions, noting that the unrighteous manager distinguished himself as being more "shrewd" than those who were followers of God (16:8)!

4) Some Possible (Not All Plausible) Solutions

- A) Why was the manager complimented in both the parable and by Jesus? Some of the possible explanations are:
- o¹) The manager was reducing the debts of his master because it was within the discretion of his job.

Ω The amounts reported here give us a better picture of the manager's job, and of the wealth of the rich man. "The quantities involved are quite huge. The oil involved would represent the annual yield of a very large olive grove. Similarly, the annual yield of wheat would represent twenty times the size of an average family plot. The master is dealing with large-scale business associates here, not with ordinary people and ordinary economic levels." Nolland, John. Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 9:21-18:34. Vol. 35b, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. Bruce M. Metzger (General Editor) & Ralph P. Martin (New Testament Editor): Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993. Page 799.