

20 October 2013

## The Stewardship of Real Riches (Money & Riches Pt 7)

This is our seventh study on the topic of money and riches. In our previous study we established the relationship between riches and deceit. In doing so we identified two points; 1) false brethren are full of deceit & become fat with riches, and (2) riches can choke the word of God causing young believers to become unfruitful. In this study we will look at the parable of the unjust steward in Lk.16: 1-13 and cover three points; (1) how we treat unrighteous riches will determine how we treat true riches, and (2) God will test us with the little things before He trusts us with much, and (3) we will give an account of what we have done with the riches we have been given.

Let us add a little more detail to our three points:-

### 1. How we treat unrighteous riches will determine how we treat true riches.

Lk 16: 11 *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. If therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon who will commit to your trust the true [riches]?*

I have struggled with this parable so turned to Dr. P. Ruckman's commentary to validate my interpretation.

Ruckman points out that the word 'least' in verse 11 is a reference to the unrighteous mammon (worldly riches).

And the parable provides a comparison between the unjust and the faithful of verse 10. Our verse says, that he that is unjust in the least (unrighteous mammon) is also unjust in much (true riches).

Hence our point; how we treat unrighteous riches will determine how we treat true riches. And we know from the context of the parable that the reference to the unjust is in relation to him wasting his master's goods (verse 1).

Most believers and non-believers spend their hard-earned money on what they need or want. It is generally those who steal money that spend it frivolously, as if it has no value because they put little effort into acquiring their wealth. But just because a person does not spend their hard-earned dollars on \$200 bottles of wine or exorbitantly priced jewels does not automatically mean that they are faithful with the unrighteous mammon. To the contrary, there are people who have things they *want*, that they do *not* need, but their heart lusts for, and so they spend their money on such desires. I remember when I was at Cory's as branch manager and one of my customers who was doing well financially would spend his money on going on European trips. All very nice, and lots of people do it, but it is not exactly putting our money to good use, whether we are saved or lost. Yet there are couples who have acquired wealth and are happy to use their unrighteous mammon on yearly trips overseas. For the unsaved I can understand that they have no, or little concept of what is 'good use' of their money, so they spend it on entertainment, they spend it on having fun or enjoyment. The unsaved today are compared to the unjust steward who wasted his master's goods. And yes, the unsaved does not recognise that they have been given their money, their wealth, by God, but that doesn't mean they have not. What they do with their riches when they get saved is a big factor in revealing to the Lord and themselves, how much of their "old man" (see Eph.4:22) remains. Because when a person gets saved and that part of their old man (the lust of money) is not crucified with Christ (see Rom.6: 6), then those trends of their old nature will more than likely continue in their new life.

So, if a man treats his unrighteous mammon unjustly then that is more than likely how he will treat true riches that he is given. The Lord proves this in our next point.

### 2. God will test you with the little things before He will trust you with much.

Lk 16:10, 12 *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... And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's who shall give you that which is your own?*

Our verses 10 & 12 make our point, but then so does the whole parable provide an example of God testing us, whether we can be trusted with true riches. What are the true riches? It is using what we have been given by God, whether gifts, talents or money, and using them as the Lord directs us in the battle. Even though verse 10 could be used to support our first point, we will apply the verse to God giving us small tasks (that which is least), and how we use those riches, the skills and talents in the small tasks for Him, will determine whether He trusts us with that which is much in the work. Because whether it is money or talents, or skills, we receive them all from God, and if we use them unjustly, if we waste them, then the Lord will not give us more. He will not give us more responsibility if we shirk the small jobs.

Some examples from the Scriptures include:-

i) Moses was given the job of going to see Pharaoh and convincing him to let the people of Israel go. And although he started off by questioning who he was to be chosen (Ex.3: 11), and he was not a good speaker (Ex.4: 10), he clearly was obedient in the small tasks because the Lord used Him to lead His people Israel, out of Egypt and into the wilderness for 40 years. But, even though he was being used of God, as soon as he disobeyed God, he was not allowed to complete the mission and enter into the promised land (see Num.2: 10).

ii) Joshua and eleven others were sent out to spy on the land (see Num.13: 2-16), and those of them that turned the hearts of the people away from the land were not used by the Lord. Whereas Joshua clearly passed the test, and

was given the leadership-role when Moses died (see Jos.1: 1-9). God tested him in the little things before he trusted him with much.

It doesn't matter what task we are given, small or big, it is what we do with it that matters. It is our attitude that counts, as to whether or not we will be used again.

I remember as an unsaved youth I went to outward-bound and the group I was in decided to go around the mountain that we were supposed to walk over, because it was easier. And that set the tone for how I handled things when I became a man, I sought the easy way to the point of cheating. Clearly God changed me into a new creature when I got saved (see 2Cor.5: 17), because when Karen and I were at BCNZ working on our assignments, I would often start the assignment *again* with only two or three days out from when it was due, if I did not think I had answered the question correctly in my first attempt. Given that the work I was doing at college hardly carried much theological value, it was my attitude to work that changed overnight from being lazy, or even cheating to being quite different.

The same happens on the street with the work of the gospel. When a person goes out and hands out tracts with an attitude of doing it to be seen by their friends, then God is not going to use them to preach, knowing that they will not give *Him* the glory.

Let us all be aware of the tasks that are given to us by the Lord. Let us take up each task, whether we know it to be of God or not, as if it was of the Lord. Such that, in our jobs, in our homes, in our relationship with our friends, we show faithfulness, honesty, charity, meekness and a desire to know the truth. Then we are not trying to be one person in the work for the Lord and another at home or work. But rather we are seen to be trustworthy in all that we have, such that if, and when, God uses us to speak with someone about Him, hand out a tract, or simply give our money for the work, we do so with the right attitude. We use what we have, we use His skills to His glory. And with that attitude, whether we are being called to preach or clean rubbish bins, those that we encounter in the world may see something of Christ in us and ask us for the reason of the hope that is within us (1Pet.3: 15). Then once we can be trusted with little, we show that we can be trusted with much.

### 3. We will give an account of what we have done with the riches we have been given.

Lk.16: 2 *And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship;*

This parable of the unjust steward, may be a parable that Jesus spoke to His disciples, but the instruction is equally valid for this age. Whatever God gives you to steward, you will have to give an account of at the judgment (see 2Cor.5: 10). Paul in his letters to the churches makes it clear that those who are saved in this dispensation will also give an account of themselves before God (see Rom.14: 12). In 1Cor.4: 1, through the Holy Spirit of God, Paul writes to the churches saying, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God". In this verse, the 'us' is referring back to himself, Apollos and Cephas in 1Cor.3: 22, and it is they of the early church who were trusted to be stewards of the mysteries of God. Paul mentions six mysteries:- (i) the mysteries of godliness - 1Tim.3: 16, and (ii) Christ in you the hope of glory - Col.1: 27, and (iii) Christ and the church - Eph.5: 32, and (iv) blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in - Rom.11: 25, and (v) the rapture - 1Cor.15: 51, and lastly vi) the mystery of iniquity - 2Thes.2: 7, 8. In addition there is the mystery revealed to John in Revelation, the mystery of Babylon the Great - Rev.17: 5. And the ministers today, those who are stewards today, are called to feed their flocks and are responsible before God for how faithful they have been (see Lk.12: 42 & 1Cor.4: 2) in teaching these mysteries. So for those ministers who have not been called by God to preach or to be a minister of God, are unlikely to grasp this point. Hence, you have ministers like Archdeacon Cardy who encourages sodomites to marry, and the lesbian minister in Wellington, Margaret Mayman who wrote to government proclaiming that the ungodliness of Sodomy is godly. It is not our task to judge these ministers of the church, but let us not be silent on what Scripture teaches compared to what the ministers are teaching. Because it is not up to us to give an account of their behaviour, but they have to give an account of their own stewardship. And so every man will give an account to God of what they have done with what He has given them, whether they be riches like talents or physical riches.

How do you know whether you are being faithful with what God has given you to steward? You certainly don't know from me, or what ideas and thoughts come into my head, but only by reading the Holy Scriptures. And given that some things are hard to understand (see 2Pet.3: 16), then come under the instruction of a teacher or minister of God who first has a copy of 'The Holy Scriptures', and then receive their instruction *if* it is from the Scriptures. But prove to yourself whether you *are* faithful with what God has given into your trust. And whatever the Lord has given you to be a steward of, whether it be administration, giving, tracts, tapes, preaching, or anything else, you are encouraged to stop from time to time and take account of how faithful you have been with your stewardship, whether in the small things or in much. It is not what you have been trusted with that is important, but rather what

you do with the riches whilst they are in your care. Whether the Lord has given you riches, as in the parable of the unjust steward in Luke, or whether a skill or talent, be ye faithful in what you have been given (see 1 Cor.4: 2). For we must all give an account of what we have done with the riches we have been given.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this study we have looked at the parable of the unjust steward in Lk.16: 1-13 and covered three points:-

1. how we treat unrighteous riches will determine how we treat true riches, and
2. God will test us with the little things before He trusts us with much, and
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