

PARABLE OF THE UNJUST MANAGER: MAN AND MONEY LUKE 16:01–13

Introduction: Unjust Manager

This passage is looked upon as one of the most difficult passages in all of Scripture to understand. Verse eight is the primary reason. In studying the passage, two overall approaches can be taken. A person can read the parable and the comments about the parable made by Christ and take it only for what it says, that is, without adding any comment or seeing any application in it. However, a person can also see application in the parable as well as in the points taught by Christ. Here, some application is given to the points of the parable.

The manager was a trusted slave who was put in charge of the landowner's estate. He was highly regarded and esteemed, considered to be completely trustworthy. The term "manager" is applied to ministers (1 Cor. 4:1) and to believers in general (1 Pet. 4:10; Lk. 16:1).

- I. The unjust manager (vv. 1-7).
- II. The worldly are more wise in their material pursuits than God's people are in their spiritual pursuits (v. 8).
- III. The Christian is to use material wealth for good (v. 9).
- IV. The Christian is to be faithful in handling possessions: how he handles his possessions will determine what he will be trusted with eternally (vv. 10-12).
- V. The Christian cannot serve two masters: he must choose God or money (v. 13)

I. *Luke 16:01–07 Parable of the Unjust Manager*

In the parable itself Jesus said four things about the unjust manager.

1. The manager was charged with embezzlement, with *wasting the Lord's "possessions."* The manager was in charge of the Lord's property, of all the Lord's possession. Therefore, it was easy for him to use the possessions for his own purposes just as he desired. The point is, God has given every man some "possessions": life, talents, house, property, money, duty, a sense of responsibility, conscience, family, opportunities and a host of other possessions. Every man is charged with embezzlement, with misusing the possessions to some degree.

Mat 25:14-15 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey." (see Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:7f)

Luke 19:13 So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'

1 Cor 4:2 *Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*

1 Pet 4:10 *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*

2. The manager was required to prepare a final accounting. Two facts are important in this point.
 - a. The Lord hears that the manager has been misusing His “possessions.” Note: the Lord had only heard about the embezzlement. The full evidence against the manager was not yet fully known. The Lord gave the manager a chance to prove his trust and faithfulness. The accounting did not mean that the manager would be dismissed from the Lord's estate (heaven, Kingdom of God), only that he must prove his trust and faithfulness. Of course, if the manager had not been faithful in looking after the Lord's possessions, then he would be dismissed: “You cannot be manager any longer.”
 - b. The final accounting is at death (Heb. 9:27). If the manager is found to have been untrustworthy, he will be *dismissed and discharged* from the Lord's estate (kingdom, heaven, eternal life. See *Kingdom of God*, Mt. 19:23-24).

Thought 1. Death will take us away from all our earthly possessions. If our accounting justifies us, then we shall be given a much greater responsibility, an eternal responsibility, for the Lord.

Mat 18:23 *“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.”*

Mat 21:34 *“When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.”*

Mat 25:19 *“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.”*

Luke 19:15 *“He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.”*

Rom 14:12 *So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

Heb 9:27 *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*

1 Pet 4:4 *They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.*

3. The manager knew he was guilty and was unwilling to change or ask for mercy. Note two things.
 - a. The words “What shall I do...?” The manager knew he was guilty and that the Lord was going to dismiss him.

- b. The manager thought over what he should do. He reasoned out two courses of action.
 - => He could dig. However, he was not willing to dig, not willing to be demoted to a field labourer and to serve in such a low capacity.
 - => He could beg. However, he was too proud to leave the Lord and openly beg. He would be ashamed.

Now note something not mentioned. He was too proud to beg forgiveness of the Lord, too proud to be known as a repentant embezzler (sinner). This is the dominant point, although not mentioned. Begging for forgiveness was the manager's only hope. He considered every course of action but this one.

Prov 28:13 *He who conceals his sins does not prosper; but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*

Isa 29:15 *Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the Lord, who do their work in darkness and think, "Who sees us? Who will know?"*

Isa 30:1 *"Woe to the obstinate children," declares the Lord, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin."*

- 4. The manager decided what to do: he would forget the Lord and court the favour and returns of men. He did what he could to secure the acceptance and favour of men.
 - a. He led them to be dishonest, to dismiss and lower their debts to the Lord. They were led to embezzle and hold back some of their possessions. Note: the manager was in a responsible position (a religionist) and misled others.

Thought 1. How many religionists mislead others through false teaching, causing so many not to use their lives and gifts for God.

- b. This act stole from the Lord; it stole the possessions (life and gifts) of others from the Lord.
- c. The manager misled others to benefit himself, to secure his position and livelihood. And he did it in a most shrewd way, a way that was pleasing and profitable to the debtors. Anyone of them would gladly help the manager when he needed their support.

Mal 2:8 *"But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi," says the Lord Almighty.*

Rom 14:13 *Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.*

LUKE 16:06–07 MEASURE OF OIL, WEALTH

Eight hundred gallons of oil. Therefore, the payment was a sizeable 800 gallons. The measure of wheat (koros) was about 10 bushels. This too was sizeable, about 1,000 bushels. □

II. *Luke 16:08 Dedication of the Worldly, Materialism*

The worldly are more wise in their material pursuits than God's people are in their spiritual pursuits. Note two points.

1. Jesus said the unjust manager acted "shrewdly."

=> He looked out for himself, his personal welfare. In this he was very wise.

=> He was dedicated and sold out to taking care of his future.

Jesus was not commending the manager for his cunning deceit. He commended him for his concern about the future and his dedication and energy. The manager was sold out to pursuing a goal, and that part of his life was commendable. His mistake was being sold out to pursuing material wealth and comfort instead of Christ.

2. Jesus said the worldly are more shrewd in dealing with the world and its wealth than believers. Why? Because they dedicate so much energy and effort to caring for their earthly welfare.

The point is clear. Every disciple should be just as dedicated and sold out in spiritual pursuits as the worldly are in their material pursuits. The disciple is not to be outdone in the exertion of energy and dedication.

Thought 1. Note how much more initiative and energy this man of the world exerted in his pursuits than many Christians exert in theirs.

Mat 13:23 *"But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."*

Luke 9:23-24 *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."*

Rom 12:1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Prov 3:5 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.*

Prov 23:26 *My son, give me your heart and let your eyes keep to my ways.*

III. *Luke 16:09 Management of Wealth and Riches*

The Christian is to use material wealth for good. The Christian is not being told to seek the friendship of the wealthy; he is being told to use his wealth to help others. By so helping, the disciple will gain friends and influence them for Christ. Then when the disciple finds himself without resources in this life, he will more likely be helped by those whom he helped.

Mat 6:33 *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

Luke 18:29-30 *“I tell you the truth,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.”*

Exo 23:25 *Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you.*

Mal 3:10 *“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”*

Note another significant point: if the Christian is not helped in this life, then at death he will certainly be welcomed abundantly into heaven. His compassionate initiative in helping others will assure God’s approval. (See Jas. 1:10-11.)

Mat 6:20 *“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.”*

Mat 19:21 *Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

Luke 12:33 *“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”*

Luke 14:33 *“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”*

2 Cor 5:1 *Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.*

Phil 3:8 *What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*

1 Tim 6:19 *In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

2 Pet 1:10-11 *Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

Rev 3:18 *I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.*

IV. *Luke 16:10–12 Reward for Faithfulness*

The Christian is to be faithful in handling possessions, for his faithfulness determines what he will be trusted with eternally.

1. Money and possessions are the least trust given a person (v. 10). They are nothing compared to eternal salvation and to love, joy, peace, and the absolute assurance and confidence of life eternal. They are nothing compared to the presence and companionship, the power and leadership of the Holy Spirit. They are nothing compared to possessing the Word of God and the promises of God. They are nothing compared to knowing God personally and to being made an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ.
2. Unfaithfulness in the use of money and possessions disqualifies a person from true, heavenly riches. A person may think his life and possessions are his own to do with as he wills, but they are not. His life and possessions are God's. God has trusted the person with life and possessions only as long as he is on this earth. The holder is only a manager of all he is and has.

He cannot take his life or possessions with him out of this world when he dies. He has both life and possessions only temporarily — as a trust. If he handles his life and possessions badly, he shows he is not fit to be trusted with responsibility in the new heavens and earth.

Scripture says that the true heavenly riches and rewards are beyond comprehension:

Rewards Dealing with our Nature or State of Being

- => Being adopted as a son of God (Gal. 4:4-7; 1 Jn. 3:1).
- => Being made blameless and harmless (Ph. 2:15).
- => Being given eternal life (Jn. 3:16; 1 Tim. 6:19).
- => Being given better and lasting possessions (Heb.10:34).
- => Being given a glorious body (Ph. 3:11, 21; 1 Cor. 15:42-44).
- => Being given eternal glory and honour and peace (Rom. 2:10).
- => Being given eternal rest and peace (Heb. 4:9; Rev. 14:13).
- => Being given the blessings of the Lord (Prov. 10:22).
- => Being given the knowledge of Christ Jesus (Ph. 3:8).
- => Being given enduring wealth and prosperity (Prov. 8:18).
- => Being made priests (Rev. 20:6).
- => Being given a crown of that will last forever (1 Cor. 9:25).
- => Being given the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8).

=> Being given the crown of life (Jas. 1:12).

=> Being given the crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:4).

Rewards Dealing with Work or Position or Rule

=> Being made exalted beings (Rev. 7:9-12).

=> Being put in charge of many things (Mt. 25:23).

=> Being given the Kingdom of God (Jas. 2:5; Mt. 25:34).

=> Being given a position or rule and authority (Lk. 12:42-44; Lk. 22:28-29; 1 Cor.6:2-3).

=> Being given eternal responsibility and joy (Mt. 25:21, 23)

=> Being given rule and authority over cities (Lk. 19: 17, 19)

=> Being given thrones and the privilege of reigning forever (Rev. 20:4; 22:5).

=> Being given the privilege of surrounding the throne of God (Rev. 7:9-13; 20:4).

=> Being made priests (Rev. 20:6).

=> Being made kings (Rev. 1:5; 5:10).

Rewards Dealing with our Inheritance or Wealth

=> Being made an heir of God (Rom. 8:16-17; Tit. 3:7).

=> Being given an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade inheritance (1 Pet. 1:3-4)

=> Being given the blessings of the Lord (Prov. 10:22).

=> Being given enduring wealth and prosperity (Prov. 8:18)

=> Being given unsearchable riches (Eph. 3:8).

=> Being given treasures in heaven (Mt. 19:21; Lk. 12:33)

3. Unfaithfulness disqualifies a person from all he would receive. The other man in verse 12 refers to God. Our lives and possessions are His. If we are not faithful in using them, how can we expect to be compensated? Note: a person never has all he would have if he fails to pursue God and to give others what is due them. (See Mt. 19:29; Mk. 10:29-30; Lk. 18:30.)

Mark 8:36 “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”

Mat 25:27-29 “Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.” “Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.”

Mark 8:36 “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”

1 Cor 3:13-15 His work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

Jer 5:25 Your wrongdoings have kept these away; your sins have deprived you of good.

V. *Luke 16:13* **Decision, Spiritual Struggle**

The Christian cannot serve two masters; he must choose God or money. Note three significant points.

1. There are two masters in life, either God or the things and money of this world.
2. A person serves one of the two masters. He gives himself either to one or the other.
 - He focuses himself upon the things and money of the world or upon God.
 - He turns himself over to the things and money of the world or to God.
 - He thinks primarily upon the things of the world or upon God.
 - He gives his time, energy and effort to the things of the world or to God.
 - He allows his worldly pursuits to control Christ, or Christ to control his pursuits.
3. A person struggles against God or else struggles against the things and money of the world. No man can serve both God and money.

⇒ He hates the one and loves the other.

⇒ He holds to one and despises the other.

Mat 4:10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan: For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Mark 10:21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

1 Cor 10:21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

James 1:18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of all he created.

James 4:8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Deu 30:15 See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.

Josh 24:15 "But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served

beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

1 Kng 18:21 *Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing. ■*