

CHRISTIANS AND MONEY

The world thinks Money is Power. Sometimes the church thinks the same thing. If our pastor were to be unjustly put into jail, then we would hire the best lawyer to represent him — the best money could buy. However, consider what the church at Jerusalem did when Peter was unjustly imprisoned. They prayed and tapped into the real power that had nothing to do with money.

LUKE 16:1-8 Important to note that Jesus is NOT commending the actions of the dishonest steward. There are several things to learn: A day of accounting is coming. There will be no defense, no way out, and all other alternatives will be blocked or unavailable. Just as the dishonest steward had a scheme, many people will attempt to find a scheme rather than admit to the wrongness of their ways. We are constantly trying to rationalize our sinful ways and we attempt to provide our own security (salvation). The debtors to which he went for help were people of financial means. His trust was in the power of money.

The lesson for all of us is that all of us have sinned — that is, we have misused our stewardship. Because of sin there is death — we will all leave the earthly realm. What must we do? Invest for the future. Jesus said, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth but treasures in heaven.”

Even when confronted with the fact and enormity of his sin and the consequences, the dishonest steward continued to be dishonest and used his own way to prepare for his future. He was wise in the ways of the world.

We need to be applying the principles of the Kingdom of God in our lives as diligently and shrewdly as the dishonest steward applied the principles of the world’s ways in his.

LUKE 16:9 The Living Bible renders Verse 9: But shall I tell you to act that way, to buy friendship through cheating? Will this ensure your entry into an everlasting home in heaven? The KJV uses the phrase “mammon of unrighteousness” rather than “cheating.” (The question is what is meant by “mammon of unrighteousness”? Does it mean by wealth gained by dishonest means OR

anything that which is considered riches by the world?)

If Jesus meant wealth gained dishonestly, then the Living Bible makes sense. If it is just earthly riches (not by dishonest means) then the idea may be that “wherever you make your investments is where you will be attracted.” “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be, also.”

LUKE 16:10 One way to invest is by being honest (faithful) in the small things.

LUKE 16:11 Not only must we make a distinction between worldly riches and true riches, we also need to see this world as a testing ground. How will you use your opportunities? How will you use your set-backs?

LUKE 16:12 It is important for Christians to look beyond our present world in which we have stewardship and focus on what will be our ultimate position in which we will have ownership. Rom 8:17 tells us that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. People don’t inherit stewardships. An heir becomes an owner. We are stewards now (experientially). If we are heirs by faith (now) and experientially will be later, then we will be co-owners of all. The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein.

LUKE 16:13 Everything eventually come around to a question of faith and faithfulness. Are riches an end in themselves or for the purpose of advancing the Kingdom of God. If our attitude is that they are an end in themselves, then they will rule us and become our master.

LUKE 16:14-18 As Jesus told the story of the unjust steward, He was overheard by the Pharisees. They considered His teachings to be too idealistic and impractical. There are many “Pharisees” still around today and they are saying the same things. The Pharisees were described as “lovers of money” and the parable was addressed to them. The Pharisees were fixated on keeping the law (as interpreted by them) as a means of salvation. They failed to realize the impossibility of making that work. It was not only salvation by works, it also proved they were attempting to

function under the principle of “the knowledge of good and evil.” This is the very thing by which sin was initiated. A new revelation of God’s eternal truth was there before them in the person of Jesus Christ. Many of the common people recognized and associated what Jesus taught and crowded around to know more. However, the Pharisees, in their positions of authority, were preventing many from fully committing by their attitude of contempt for what Jesus was saying.

Though a new, fuller revelation of God’s Plan of Salvation was being demonstrated, not changed relative to the validity of the word of God they already had. God intent and standard was not going to change and any attempt to get around the truth by redefining the terms and conditions of the law to suit their own purposes (such as they had done with the laws concerning divorce) was rejected by God.

We see additional instruction from Jesus regarding the proper use of wealth in the parable He told of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

Luke 16:19-21 You have heard about people who have so much money they don’t know what to do with it. Many will adopt an attitude of “If you have it, spend it.” Many people who don’t have much money seem to have the same idea. The basis of what they buy is no longer “need” and even has (in some cases) gone beyond “wants” to just plain wasteful spending.

We can contrast this to the totally impoverished poor man covered with sores. The rich man had plenty and the poor man had little. Unto whom much is given, much is required. God provides each of us with resources. From other parables we see that God wants us to invest our resources. Spending our resources on ourselves is like burying them — it provides no return. We need to invest the resources God has given us in the Kingdom of Heaven. You can follow several investment plans:

1. As ye sow, so shall ye reap.
2. Give and it shall be given unto you.
3. Go and sell what you have and give to the poor and you shall have treasures in heaven.

There are other scriptural investment plans. There is one suited for your resources and your needs.

Lazarus was the rich man’s opportunity to

invest in the Kingdom of God. You’ve heard it said that opportunity knocks at your door. In the case of the rich man, opportunity was “laid at his gate” everyday. God brings the investment opportunities to us. We don’t have to look half way around the world for opportunities.

Luke 16:22-30 The story of the rich man and Lazarus is one of the many, many side-lights on the hereafter to be found in Jesus’ teachings. Some of the things we learn from the parable:

1. Angels accompany us as we transition from this life to the next.
2. Death is not a respecter of rich or poor.
3. The lost are in torment.
4. Beyond this life there is communication and there is memory.
5. The gulf between Paradise and Hades is impassable — when our life ends, the opportunity of salvation ends, also.
6. The standards of this world do not apply in the after world.
7. The Holy Scriptures are sufficient to persuade people to turn to God.

Luke 16:31 It is interesting that Jesus had Abraham say that the people would not be persuaded if one arose from the dead. Combine this with the situation that this parable is the only one in which a character is given a name and then compare that to what happened in Bethany just two months after He told this parable. You recall that Jesus called Lazarus back from death. Earlier Jesus had raised a widow’s son from death. Were the people really persuaded by these two people rising from death?

How do you suppose the story would have worked out if the rich man had received Lazarus into his home and cared for him? We must ask ourselves the question: Do our possessions allow us to help the helpless or do they prevent us from helping? In other words, “Is our money a barrier or a bridge?”