

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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AS
PRUDENT
STEWARDS

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Living Stream Ministry
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SERVING THE LORD AS PRUDENT STEWARDS

In [chapter fifteen](#) of the Gospel of Luke, the full salvation accomplished by the divine Trinity is clearly presented. But after this presentation the Lord Jesus does not stop speaking. Instead, He goes on to give the Pharisees another parable. In this parable we do not see salvation; we see the prudence of a steward. This indicates that after we have been received into the house of God, we should become stewards. We were sinners, we have been saved, and we have become children of God. Now as children of God, as saved ones in the house of God, we should be stewards serving God in His house. This means that we should serve God in the church.

In the Gospel of Luke we see that whenever the Lord Jesus speaks of salvation, He goes on further to reveal something concerning the service. For instance, the parable of the good Samaritan in [chapter ten](#) portrays the Man-Savior's saving grace in His human virtues expressing His divine attributes. Immediately after this parable, we have the case of Martha and Mary, a case that

shows how we need to serve the Lord according to His desire and preference. The principle is the same in [chapter fourteen](#). First the Lord speaks to us concerning an invitation extended by God to attend a great dinner. This signifies God's salvation. Following this, we have the Lord's teaching concerning following Him at the cost of renouncing all earthly things, so that as good and faithful followers we may enter into the coming jubilee. This teaching is also related to service. Then after a full presentation of God's full salvation in [chapter fifteen](#), the Lord gives us a parable in [chapter sixteen](#) showing us that after we have been saved we need to serve God in His house as stewards.

TEACHING ABOUT THE PRUDENCE OF A STEWARD

The parable regarding the prudence of a steward is simple and brief. Nevertheless, this parable contains a puzzling point, and this is the Lord's using an unrighteous steward to illustrate the service of a steward in God's house. As we shall see, this does not mean that the Lord is teaching us to be unrighteous as we are serving. The important matter here is the steward's prudence.

[Luke 16:1](#) says, "And He said also to the

disciples, There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and this one was accused to him of squandering his possessions.” The steward here illustrates how the believers, saved by the love and grace of the Triune God, are the Lord’s stewards (12:42; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; 1 Pet. 4:10), to whom He has committed His possessions.

In [Luke 16:5-7](#) we see that the discharged steward, while he was still in the house, took the opportunity to do something for others in order that later they might do something for him. This was the steward’s prudence.

Concerning the prudence of the steward, [verse 8](#) says, “And the lord praised the unrighteous steward because he had acted prudently. For the sons of this age are more prudent than the sons of light in their own generation.” Literally, “the unrighteous steward” means “the steward of unrighteousness.” However, the praise here is not for the steward’s unrighteous act; it is for his prudence.

In [verse 8](#) the Lord Jesus explains that the sons of this age are more prudent than the sons of light in their own generation. The sons of this age are the unsaved ones, the worldlings. The sons of light are the saved ones, the believers ([John 12:36](#); [1 Thes. 5:5](#); [Eph. 5:8](#)). The phrase

“in their own generation” refers to dealings with the people of their generation. Here the Lord certainly is not teaching us to be unrighteous. Instead, He is teaching us to be prudent, that is, to do things at the right time, to take the opportunity at hand.

MAKING FRIENDS BY MEANS OF THE MAMMON OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

In [Luke 16:9](#) the Lord goes on to say, “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles.” To make friends by means of mammon is to help others by the use of money to do things according to God’s leading.

Mammon, that is, money, is of the satanic world. It is unrighteous in its position and existence. The steward in the parable exercised his prudence by his unrighteous act. The Lord teaches us, His believers, to exercise our prudence in the use of unrighteous mammon.

The phrase “the mammon of unrighteousness” indicates that money is not in the realm of God. Money is outside the kingdom of God; it is in the world of Satan. Therefore, money

is unrighteous both in position and existence. Actually, as far as God is concerned, money should not exist. In this universe there should not be such a thing as money. If we love money, we love something that should not exist.

The word “fails” in [verse 9](#) indicates that when the Satanic world is over, mammon will be of no use in the kingdom of God. The eternal tabernacles are the eternal habitations into which the prudent believers will be received by those who share the benefit of their prudence. This will be in the coming kingdom age ([Luke 14:13-14](#); [Matt. 10:42](#)).

FAITHFUL IN THE UNRIGHTEOUS MAMMON

In [Luke 16:10](#) the Lord continues, “He who is faithful in the least is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in the least is unrighteous also in much.” “Least” refers to mammon, the possessions of this age. “Much” refers to the rich possessions in the next age (see [Matt. 25:21, 23](#)).

In [Luke 16:11](#) the Lord says, “If therefore you have not become faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true?” The “true” refers to the true possessions in the coming kingdom age (see [Matt. 24:47](#)).

In [Luke 16:12](#) the Lord goes on to say, “And if you have not become faithful in that which belongs to another, who will give to you that which is your own?” It is not God’s intent in His New Testament economy for the New Testament believers to care for material possessions. Though the material things in this world were created by God and belong to Him ([1 Chron. 29:14, 16](#)), they have been corrupted by man’s fall ([Rom. 8:20-21](#)) and usurped by Satan the evil one ([1 John 5:19](#)). Hence, they belong to fallen man and are unrighteous ([Luke 16:9](#)). While God does supply the believers with their daily necessities from the material things of this age ([Matt. 6:31-33](#)) and commits to them as His stewards a portion of these material goods for their exercise and learning that He may prove them in this age, none of these goods should be considered theirs until the restitution of all things in the next age ([Acts 3:21](#)). Not till then will the believers inherit the world ([Rom. 4:13](#)) and have an abiding possession ([Heb. 10:34](#)) for themselves. In this age they should exercise to be faithful in the temporary material things God has given them so that they may learn faithfulness toward their eternal possession in the coming age.

[Luke 16:13](#) continues, “No household servant can serve two lords; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will cleave to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” In this verse the Greek word for “serve” means “serve as a slave.” Here the Lord indicates that to serve Him requires us to love Him, giving our hearts to Him, and cleave to Him, giving our entire being to Him. Thus we are released from the occupation and usurpation of mammon so that we may serve the Lord wholly and fully. The Lord emphasizes here that to serve Him we must overcome the enticing, deceitful mammon of unrighteousness.

In [verse 13](#) we see that mammon is in rivalry with God, competing with Him. Because mammon is in rivalry with God, it is evil. On our part, we cannot serve two lords. We serve either God or mammon. This matter is very serious.

THE JUBILEE, THE KINGDOM, THE GOSPEL, AND THE MAN-SAVIOR

In these chapters the Lord’s word is based upon the jubilee He declared in [chapter four](#). In Luke the jubilee is revealed as having two aspects: the aspect of the jubilee in this age and the aspect of the jubilee in the age to come. In other words,

the Lord refers to both the present jubilee and to the jubilee in the coming age. The present jubilee is the jubilee of grace. But in the coming age the jubilee will be the jubilee of the kingdom.

The jubilee both in this age and in the age to come is actually the kingdom of God. Furthermore, the kingdom of God is the Man-Savior Himself. Moreover, the jubilee is the gospel. According to Mark and especially Luke, the gospel is the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the Savior Himself, the all-inclusive One coming in His status as both God and man, with the divine attributes expressed in His human virtues, to sow Himself as a seed. The Lord Jesus sowed Himself as the seed of the kingdom of God. His goal is that the seed sown into those who receive it may grow and develop into a kingdom. This is the genuine kingdom of God. This kingdom is the gospel that frees us from every kind of bondage and recovers our right to the lost inheritance to enjoy God in Christ through the Spirit. This is the jubilee.

The basic element of the Lord's speaking on the way from Galilee to Jerusalem is the jubilee. The jubilee is also the governing principle of His teaching. Everything in [Luke 9:51—19:27](#) is related to the jubilee.

STEWARDSHIP AND THE HANDLING OF MONEY

In [chapter fifteen](#) of Luke we see the salvation accomplished by the divine Trinity. God's salvation issues in the stewardship. As saved ones, we should now serve our saving God as His stewards. A steward is one useful in a household. This indicates that after we have been saved, we should serve God in His church, which is His house on earth today, as good stewards.

According to [Luke 16](#), our stewardship has much to do with the handling of money. In a sense, all of us are "bankers" who deal with money day by day. Daily you may consider how much money you have in your possession.

A time is coming when money, the mammon of unrighteousness, will fail. This means that there will be a time when money will be useless. Today's world is the system of Satan, and money belongs to this satanic system. But when the millennium comes, the satanic system will be terminated and replaced by God's kingdom. Then money will no longer have a place in human society.

Some may think that it will be a long time before the millennium comes and money is useless. But have you ever thought that when a

person dies his money becomes useless to him? At the time of death a person's relationship with his money is terminated. Someone may have a great deal of money, but it will all be useless to him when he dies.

USING OUR MONEY TO BENEFIT OTHERS

I mention this to point out that we need to take the opportunity to use our money prudently to benefit others. Try to use your money to benefit others so that when it is out of use, others will do something for you.

Those who have been benefited by our proper use of money will welcome us into the eternal tabernacles. This will be in the coming age of the kingdom. When the Lord Jesus comes back and we are received into His kingdom, some of us will have a number of people welcoming us. Who will be these welcomers? They will be those who have received benefit in this age by our prudent use of money.

Let me give a simple illustration of this. Suppose you use an amount of your money to publish gospel tracts for the purpose of bringing people to the Lord. Those who have been benefited by this use of your money will welcome you in the future. They may say, "Brother, we want

you to realize that we were saved through one of the tracts paid for by you.” This is an example of being welcomed into eternal habitations by those who have shared the benefit of our prudence.

Today, while we are still on the way to the kingdom, we should use our money for the benefit of others. We should not use it for ourselves, for our luxury, amusement, pleasure, or indulgence. On the contrary, we should use our money for others’ benefit. There is a great deal of need, and there is much that we can do that will be a benefit to others. This is to be prudent in serving the Lord.

We cannot serve the Lord faithfully without using our money for the right purpose and at the right time. If we claim that we are serving the Lord, but use our money in the wrong way, we are not honest. The first thing an honest steward will do is handle his money properly and prudently.

GIVING FAITHFULLY

Those who give to the Lord faithfully and consistently can testify that the more they give, the more they receive. For us Christians, to be rich is to give. The way to receive is to give. The Lord Himself said, “Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together,

running over, they will give into your bosom; for with what measure you measure, it will be measured to you in return” (6:38). Here we see clearly that giving is the way to receive.

I encourage you to keep a record of your giving. During the course of a year, keep a record of everything you give. Then at the end of the year consider what percentage you have given to the Lord of what He has given you. I urge you all to practice this.

When some hear this word about faithfulness and giving, they may say that they do not have enough faith to give consistently. Actually, this is not a matter of our faith; it is a matter of our practice, and our practice is based on the Lord’s faith and His faithfulness.

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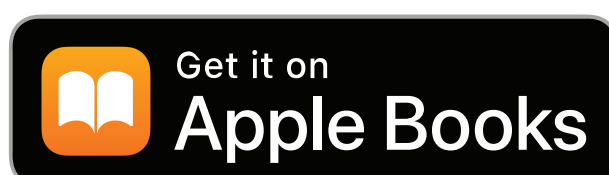
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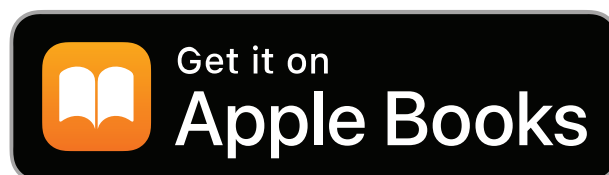
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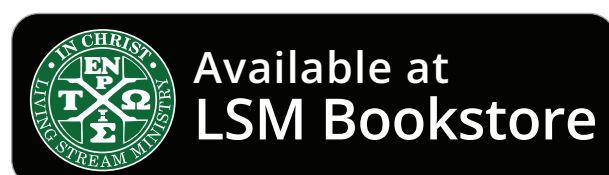
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