

## THE UNJUST STEWARD.

– LUKE 16:1-8. –

THIS parable furnishes a text for a discourse on the claims of God and Mammon upon Christians. (Verses 9-16.) The parable is plain, if it be borne in mind that stewards in olden times had much greater power and authority committed to them than now. They had all the authority of the master himself to make and to settle accounts. The steward of this narrative, when informed that he was about to lose his situation, used the power still vested in him to make personal friends out of his master's debtors, by treating them leniently. When the master of this worldly-wise steward heard of his course, he commended it as a stroke of worldly wisdom and prudence. Nor are we sure that the steward's course was one working injury to his employer's real interests: in view of the disproportionate reductions of twenty per cent on one account and fifty per cent on the other, it seems not improbable that the steward saw that the one never could pay more than fifty per cent of his debt, nor the other more than eighty per cent of his.

This illustration of worldly wisdom or prudent thought for his own interests in the future was our Lord's text for a little discourse to his disciples. They were each stewards of certain talents, opportunities, money, etc. Two masters claimed their allegiance; viz., Sin and Righteousness, and they must choose to which they would be loyal; for they could not serve both. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

Sin claimed them and all of Adam's race, with all their talents, as his servants, since all had been "sold under [captivity to] Sin." They knew, however, that Sin had no just, no true right of control, but merely one of *force*: hence in every way that they could they had a right and privilege to divert their talents from the service of Sin and to devote them to the good of others. Wealth and influence in the present time are properly reckoned as the *mammon* of Sin. Sin, at present the master

of the world, is represented as having control, not only of the people (Rom. 6:12,14,17,18,22,23; 7:14), but also of all the wealth-talents of the present; so that he claims each individual to be merely his steward, and demands that he use his mammon in his interest, else he will dispossess him. But our Lord taught that allegiance really belonged to another Master, even God, and that they *should not serve Sin*; that our Lord, as God's representative, was about to set up God's Kingdom, and overthrow Sin – binding the strong Master of the present time and spoiling his arrangements. (Matt. 12:29; Mark 3:27.) In view of this knowledge, our Lord said to his disciples: –

"I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends out of [or by means of] the mammon of unrighteousness [the earthly wealth or valuables under your control now, which at one time **[R1626 : page 70]** were in whole or in part controlled by Sin, your long-time task-master]; that when ye fail [when the present life ends], they may receive you into lasting habitations," into heavenly conditions – the using of our talents, once active in Sin's service, in the Lord's service being counted as laying up treasures in heaven.

This is the wise, proper course, whether you have little of earthly riches – honor, money, talent – or whether you have much; for "he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and [knowing to which master his allegiance and talents really belong] he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

If, to please "the prince of this world" and to be in harmony with those who serve him, you own Sin as your master and selfishly serve him, using time and talents as his steward, for the short time of the present life, and for the small advantages which such a course would bring **[R1627 : page 70]** you, your unfaithfulness in these respects would prove you unworthy of the share promised to you in real riches of the real kingdom soon to be set up. – Rom. 6:14-18.

As those who have deserted the service of Sin the Usurper, and who have consecrated their all to God, you have been appointed by him

stewards of those consecrated talents, with a promise that if faithful he will in the world to come make you more than stewards – kings and priests unto God. But if you prove unfaithful to your stewardship, if you love and serve mammon [wealth, either honor, money or other wealth of this world, highly esteemed by all natural men], can you hope that God will give you the true Kingdom riches which are yours conditionally? Be assured, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

This was our Lord's discourse to his disciples respecting their proper course in life as stewards of the manifold grace of God. "And the Pharisees who were covetous [who dearly loved the riches and honors of this present time] heard all these things; and they derided [ridiculed] him. And he said unto *them*, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men [you succeed in getting men to think you very holy]; but God knoweth your hearts [that much that you do is merely of outward show, mock humility and pretended self-denials]: for that which is highly esteemed among men [which deceives the natural man, which he thinks very praiseworthy] is abomination in the sight of God." – Luke 16:14,15.

The Law and the Prophets were until John, – but now a new dispensation is being ushered in; and if you were wise you would see the change at hand and begin to act accordingly. Now the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man desires to get into it. You therefore should begin at once to so dispose of the stewardship yet in your hands that you might at least be on favorable terms with those who shall so soon possess the power of the Kingdom. This, to the Jews, was not a case of deserting the Law Covenant to which they were married; the Law Covenant was fulfilled, died a natural death, which permitted them to give their allegiance to Christ and the New Covenant. – Verse 18; Rom. 7:4.

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