

Commentary on Luke chapter 16, by Chuck Smith 9.25.22

Pastor John Donovan, cell phone 508-380-0471

Pastor Terry Gerlarneau, cell phone 603-455-4399

Web site todbc.org email us at opendoorbiblechurch@todbc.org

September memory verse: Romans 6:14-18 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?

Certainly not!

¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?

¹⁷ But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

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Jesus speaks on two unpleasant subjects, to a lot of people. Not unpleasant to me, but to a lot of people. Talks about hell. That's not unpleasant to me, not worried about it at all.

Now Jesus is at a supper with the Pharisees; it's on the Sabbath day. And this particular section that we are now in is still in that supper that Jesus was invited to, beginning the fourteenth chapter, where the Pharisees invited Him to the house, set Him up with fellow with dropsy, and so this whole interchange of thought and all is going on there. At times He is addressing the Pharisees, at times He is addressing His disciples. And at this point, beginning of the sixteenth chapter, He is now addressing His disciples.

And so he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he wasted his goods. And he called them, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? giving account of thy stewardship; for you may no longer be steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord is taking away from me the stewardship: and I cannot dig; and I ashamed to beg. I know what I'll do, so that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they will receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much do you owe my lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, sit down quickly and write fifty. He said to another, And how much do you owe? And he said,

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A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take your bill, and write eighty. Now the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world or in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by the use of the unrighteousness of mammon; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations ([Luk 16:1-9](#)).

So Jesus tells a story, it's to His disciples, and it's a story about stewardship.

Now, the thing to notice, first of all, about his steward was that everything he possessed belonged to his master. And in his waste he was actually wasting his master's goods. In the application of this, of course, God has made us stewards and everything that we have really belongs to God. Bible says, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." It all belongs to Him. Now God allows me that privilege and opportunity of overseeing that which belongs to Him. But God also holds me responsible as to what I do with it when it is under my care. So, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, everything we have is our Lord's. But I am responsible to Him.

In Corinthians, chapter 5, Paul said that we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We are also told that we are going to be judged according to our works and many of the works will be burned by fire, but those that remained we will be rewarded for. So, we will all one day give an account to the Lord of our stewardship, how I managed the Lord's properties. How I managed the Lord's resources that He placed at my disposal. I have that responsibility, then, of proper management whenever God places anything in my power. And so he was called to give an account.

Now this particular steward knew that he was in trouble. When the audit was made, the accounting was to be made, he knew that he was guilty of wasting his master's goods. He knew that he was going to lose his job. And so he was concerned because he felt that he was just too frail to dig ditches and he was ashamed to beg. And then he hit upon an idea, a very dishonest idea. In which he began to call in his master's debtors. And he began summarily to discount their obligations to his master. Now the master, in this case, was probably a landlord. And so often the landlord in renting out his property would take instead of rent some of the produce from the land. It was very common for the people to pay their rent in wheat that had been produced on the land. Or in the oil that have been produced on the land or in some of the products of the land itself. And this was a very common thing. And so the first one, he brought him in, and he said, "How much do you have to pay?" And he says, "Well, I pay a hundred measures of oil," and he says, "Here, take down, write fifty." And to the one who owed... a hundred measures of wheat, he said, "Write eighty."

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Now, what he was seeking to do is to make these people obligated to him. So that when he was fired from his job, he would be able to come back to them and sponge off of them for a while because of the favors that he had granted to them in discounting their bills. As he was the steward managing his owner's affairs, he was setting himself up using this position of authority. Using this opportunity that he had to set himself up for the future. Which he knew was going to be very grim once he was fired, because he wasn't a ditch digger and he was ashamed to beg.

Up to this point, we can follow the story rather clearly. But at the next scripture, when the lord commended the unjust steward, that's where the problem arises. Why would he commend the unjust steward? Why would the lord commend him? Now I can understand if the lord said, "Cast that unjust steward out. Put him in the debtors' prison until his obligations have all been taken care of." But the lord commended him. For what? Not for his actions, not for his honesty, but for his wisdom. **The wisdom of using his present position to set himself up for that uncertain future that he knew was coming for him. That's what the lord was commending.**

Now as we go to the proverbs, Solomon said, "Go to the ant, thou slugger, to you lazy bum. Learn of his ways and be wise" ([Proverbs 6:6](#)). Again, he said, "There are four things upon the earth that are exceedingly small, but exceedingly wise. And among these four things the ant, is but a feeble folk. Know that was a conies is a feeble folk. The ant lays up its meat in the summer" ([Proverbs 30:25-26](#)). The wisdom of the ant laying up its food supplies during the summer. The ant somehow knows that the weather isn't always going to be this nice. Somehow there's recorded information in that little brain of the ant, that the winter is coming it's gonna to get cold, it's gonna get rainy, and he won't be able to get out and forage for food. Therefore, it is necessary while it is still summer, while he can get out, to get out and to gather together all of the food that he'll need to survive during the winter season. **In other words, take advantage of the** present situation to prepare yourself for what you know is coming in the future.

Now, this is the wisdom that was manifested by this steward. And that's why he was commended. **Because he took advantage of his present situation to help set himself up for what he knew was coming in the future.** That is always very wise, but it isn't wisdom that we always follow. We know that one day we are going to die. We know that when we die we can take nothing with us. **We know that any treasure that we lay up in heaven we have to lay up now. We've got to take advantage of our opportunities now to lay up heavenly treasure. We know that we came into the world naked we're going out of the world naked. We brought nothing into the world and it is certain we are going to take nothing out. So if I'm going to set my self up in the heavenly kingdom, I must do it now and I must take advantage of the opportunities that I have now in order set myself up for the heavenly kingdom.** And this is exactly what Jesus is saying. Make use of the unrighteousness of mammon. Make use of this filthy loker. This money that God places at your disposal, make use of it in such

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a way that you will be reaping eternal benefits from it. Invest it in the things of the kingdom in such a way that when you failed, when you come to the end of the road, you might be received into the everlasting habitations.

God, I am certain, keeps a very interesting set of books. Paul the apostle, when he was writing to the Philippians, thanked them for the gift that they sent to him. He said, "Not that I particularly needed it, but I desire that fruit might abound to your account" ([Philippians 4:17](#)). Thank you for what you sent to me. I wasn't particularly in need, but I'm grateful for it because the fruit of my labor. Those people that I won to Christ will abound to your account because of the fact that you supported my ministry there. So money is a tremendous outlet of spiritual power if we use it right. Money can be a blessing; it can be curse. It all depends on how a person uses it. Make use of the unrighteousness of mammon, so that when you fail they might receive you under the everlasting kingdoms.

There is, to me, one interesting aspect of arriving in heaven. Something that you don't hear of much, but I expect to meet a lot of people that I have never seen before. Who, though I have never seen them, I am responsible for their being there in the heavenly kingdom. Maybe some native from Africa when he gets to heaven will say, "Now how is it that I heard the gospel?" and God will go through the books and say, "Well, actually, that missionary that was out there was supported by Chuck Smith. So when he arrives that's the one you one to look for." And so this fellow come up to me and say, "Hey, I want to thank you, brother. Oh I so appreciate what you did." "Well, who are you?" "Oh man, I was a Ubangky. But you brought me the gospel." "What do you mean I brought you the gospel? I've never been in Africa." "Oh, well, I checked the records up here and you where the one that was supporting that missionary over there that brought me to Jesus Christ."

How can they believe unless they hear, how they can hear except there be a preacher? How they can preach except they'd be sent? As it is written, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those that carry the gospel of peace." But that part of being sent, and that's where we can come in. Make use of the unrighteousness of mammon. So that when you fail they might receive you into the everlasting kingdoms.

And now the Lord goes on in verse 10 to make the application of the parable, as He relates it now to your place in the kingdom of God, when you come into the kingdom of God.

If you have been faithful in least, [in these little things that God has placed at your disposal,] then you will also be faithful in much [in those great things of His kingdom]: but if you have been unjust in the least then you'll be unjust in the greater things ([Luk 16:10](#)).

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If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, then who is going to commit to your trust the true riches? ([Luk 16:11](#))

Now this unrighteous mammon is not true riches. Moth and rust can corrupt it. The banks can fail. There's just many ways that this unrighteous mammon can suddenly disappear. It's not true riches. **The true riches are the things in the kingdom of God. They're the eternal riches.** Yet, if you've not been faithful in this unrighteous mammon, then who is gonna commit to your trust the true riches?

If you have not been faithful in that in which is another man's ([Luk 16:12](#)),

You see, I'm a steward; whatever I have belongs to God. It's not mine. And if I'm not faithful in taking care of what belongs to God,

then who is going to give that which is my own? No servant can serve two masters: he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon ([Luk 16:12-13](#)).

You can't serve them both. Divide in loyalty, it just won't work. You cannot have God as your god and money as your god at the same time. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money ([Luk 16:14](#)),

They were covetous, they loved the money.

They heard all of these things that he was saying to his disciples: and they began to deride him ([Luk 16:14](#)).

And so He turned on them. Now He's talking to the Pharisees,

And he said unto them, You are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knows your hearts ([Luk 16:15](#)):

There are so many times when a person comes up and tries to justify before me something that they have done. I say, "Hey, man, it's cool; doesn't make any difference. I'm not the one who is going to be your judge. You don't have to justify your case before me; I'm not your judge. God is the one. He knows your heart. He knows what the motive was." And the Pharisees were those who love to justify themselves before men, but God knows their hearts.

for that which is highly esteemed among men ([Luk 16:15](#)),

Talking of the Pharisees who were highly esteemed by men, He says,

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is an abomination in the sight of God ([Luk 16:15](#)).

Men may highly esteem you, but as far as God is concerned you're an abomination.

The law and the prophets were until John: and since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it ([Luk 16:16](#)).

So up until the time of John you were under the law you were under the prophets. Now the kingdom of God, John came preaching what? The kingdom of God. Saying, "The kingdom of God is at hand." And Jesus preached of the kingdom of God, and so, since the coming of John, the kingdom of God has been preached. And every man must press into it. The word *press* is a intense word in the Greek. It's *agonizo*, must agonize into it.

And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail ([Luk 16:17](#)).

Now, He said, you know, the law was until John. Now the kingdom of God is being preached, but heaven and earth will pass but not one little part of the law is going to fail.

Now evidently there was a running battle between the Pharisees and Jesus over the issue of divorce. For there was a school of thought followed, following Rabbi Hillel, which was the popular school of thought, who interpreted the law of divorce. If a man finds an uncleanness in his wife, let him give her a writing of bill of divorcement. He interpreted that uncleanness to, if she put too much salt in his soup, grounds for divorce, salty soup again. And so they had liberalized the law of divorce. A man can put away his wife for just about any cause in which he just was displeased with her. It was almost as bad as it is today. Look how we liberalized, you know, you don't need any excuse now, just go to court and say we're incompatible.

So it was much that way in the day of Christ by the liberal interpreting of the law by the rabbis who followed the school of Hillel. And so Jesus, taking a more literal view of that law, and no doubt it was a running battle with Him, so He says, "Hey, not one little tittle of the law is going to fail, you know, easier for heaven and earth to pass than one of this little marks in the Hebrew to fail." And then He sticks the knife in, this particular issue that they were asking Him about and, no doubt, arguing with Him about, He said,

Whosoever puts away his wife, and marries another, commits adultery: and whosoever marries her that is put away from her husband commits adultery ([Luk 16:18](#)).

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I mean, He lays it out straight, hard, and just nails them. And then He goes right on and He said,

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar name Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores ([Luk 16:19-21](#)).

So we have a very vast contrast of lifestyles. A rich man fairing sumptuously everyday, and there at his gate a poor beggar covered with sores, begging and seeking to eat the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table and dogs coming and licking his sores. Some have said that this is a parable. Jesus didn't say it was a parable. I do not think it was a parable. For in all of the parables never was a person named. In this story the person is named, Lazarus, the poor man. The rich man isn't named.

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angel into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried ([Luk 16:22](#));

Notice it didn't say the poor man was buried. In those days when the poor people died, they just throw them into Gehenna. Into the valley just outside of Mount Zion, Valley of Hinnom, where they put the refuse from this city. And there was constant fires burning there in the Valley of Hinnom, and they would just cremate the bodies, throw them in the fires in the trash heap. They wouldn't bury the poor people. So the poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried and in Hades.

He lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and seeing Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. He cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his fingers in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that you in your lifetime received the good things, and likewise Lazarus the evil things: but now he is comforted, and you are tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf that is fixed: so that they which would pass over from here to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from there. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house: for I have five brothers; that he may testify to them, less they also come to this place of torment ([Luk 16:23-28](#)).

Now Jesus is teaching here concerning Hades, which is translated for the most part in the New Testament *hell*. A place that is located in the center of the earth. When they asked Jesus for a sign, He said, "A wicked and an adulteress generation seeks after a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah, for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale so shall the Son of

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Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." So Jesus located it in the heart of the earth, because we are told that Jesus descended into hell when He died. But God had given Him the promise, "Thou will not leave my soul in hell, neither will you allow the Holy One to see corruption, and Peter said God fulfilled the promise and He did not leave His soul in hell, neither did He allow the Holy One to see corruption, but this same Jesus hath God raised from the dead. And Peter, in Acts chapter two, bear witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in his message to the throne.

Later, Paul the apostle tells us in [Ephesians 4](#), "He who has ascended into heaven is the same One who first of all descended into the lower parts of the earth, and when He ascended He led the captives from their captivity." Peter tells us that He went down and preached to those souls that were in prison, who in one time were disobedient. So according to the scriptures and according to the teaching of Jesus here, prior to the death and burial of Jesus Christ and subsequent resurrection, Hades a place in the center of the earth, was divided into two compartments. In one compartment Abraham had charge of comforting those who came into that particular compartment, as the poor man was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. What a fitting person to be comforting them. The father of those who believe. What was he comforting them with? The promise of God to send the Messiah to deliver them.

In Hebrews chapter 11, as it talks about the faith of Abraham, it said these all died in faith. Abraham and Enoch and all of the rest of these all died in faith not having received the promise but seeing it afar off they embraced it, they held to it, and they claimed that they were just strangers and pilgrims here; they were looking for a city which have foundation who's maker and builder is God.

So Abraham was saying, "Hey, look, God is true to His word. He'll keep His promise. You're not gonna have to stay here forever, just don't worry about it. Just, you know, Lord is gonna do it. The Messiah is gonna come; He's gonna deliver us out of this place." And one day into hell there came a burst of glory as Jesus came in and said, "Hey, I did it. It's finished; the price has been paid. You've been redeemed from your sinful state." And He broke the bars of Hades, and when He ascended, He led the captives from their captivity. Part of the prophecy of Jesus Christ in [Isaiah 61](#) is He would open the prison doors and set at liberty those who are bound. That's exactly what He did. And He led the captives from their captivity. That's why Matthew's gospel records that after the resurrection of the dead, after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, many of the bodies of the saints were seen walking around the streets of Jerusalem. "Hey, what's Moses doing walking over there?" You know. "David, oh." Then Jesus ascended and He led the captives from their captivity as He ascended into heaven. So that the one compartment of Hades at that point was emptied.

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Now the other compartment in Hades will also one day be emptied. It, as is described here by Jesus and who would know better than He, was a place where the rich man was in torment. He asked that Lazarus be sent to dip his finger in water and cool his tongue. He was tormented in the flame. One day at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ, death and Hades will give up the dead which are in them, and they will stand before the Great White Throne judgment of God, Revelation chapter 20. And whosoever's names are not found written in the Book of Life will be cast into Gehenna, this is the second death. So hell... someone says, "Well, hell isn't eternal." That's true; it will disgorge itself of its inhabitants at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ. It is Gehenna, which Jesus described as being a place of outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Where there worm dieth not, neither is the fire quenched. And in Revelation concerning Gehenna it says, "And the smoke of their torment ascends from the ages throughout the ages" ([Revelation 14:11](#)). Now you interpret that however you want, but don't ask me to modify it. Because God says if any man takes away from the words of this book, that is modifies them, his name will be taken out of the Book of Life. You do with it what you want. I'm not gonna to modify it; I'm just gonna leave it be. Let the Word of God speak and let it be. You say, "Oh, that's horrible." I agree. That's why I have no intention of going there.

Common fallacy is often expressed in the question, "How can a God of love consign a man to eternal punishment, send a man to hell?" The question is a fallacy because, first of all, the God of love that we serve has never sent one man to hell nor will he ever send one man to hell. In fact, the God of love that we serve has done everything short of violating man's free will to keep him out of hell. The God of love that we serve sent His Son to die on the cross so men wouldn't have to go to hell. Jesus came to seek and to save those which are lost and God has done everything short of violating man's free moral agency. So man, by his own choice, goes to hell. Never sent there by God. So rather than saying, "How can a God of love send a man to hell?" just say, "How can a man be so stupid as to chose to go to hell when God has made all of the provisions to keep him from it?" Because that's what the truth actually is.

Now, couple of more things that we notice about Hades: there's no transferring from one side to the other. Those that are on this side, if they want cannot come over there, Abraham said to him. Neither can those that are over there come over here. The boundaries are set; there's no transferring back and forth. There is consciousness. There is remembrance. "Son, remember you in your lifetime lived in luxury. You had the good thing, Lazarus the evil." Remember, he could remember, he remembered his brothers. "If he can't come and comfort me a bit, please send him back to my house, my five brothers I don't want them to come to this place."

Abraham said, They have the law and the prophets; let them hear them. He said, No: they don't listen to that but they will listen if someone comes back from the dead.

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Abraham said, If they won't listen to that, they won't listen even if someone comes back from the dead ([Luk 16:29-31](#)).

Abraham was right. They will not believe even if they see one who has come back from the dead. Lazarus came back from the dead. It did not make believers out of the Pharisees. Oh, there were many who, when they saw him, believed. But if you are predisposed to unbelief, all of the proof in the world isn't going to change you. You see, believing in Jesus is a matter of choice. And if you've chosen not to believe, I don't care how much proof or evidence is offered to you, you've chosen not to believe and you won't believe. Believing is matter of choice, I choose to believe in Jesus Christ. I choose to believe that He is the resurrection and the life, and by believing in Him I expect never to die. "Oh, oh," you say, "I knew you were weird." Never to die from a scriptural definition. I'm gonna to move out of this old tent into a beautiful new house that the Lord has been preparing for me. He said, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. And I'm going to prepare one for you. And if I go and prepare one for you, I'm going to come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" ([John 14:2-3](#)). "For we know when this earthly tent, our body, is dissolved, but we have a building of God not made with hands that is eternal in the heavens. So then we who are in these bodies do often groan, earnestly desiring to move out, not to be an unembodied spirit, but to be clothed upon with a body which is from heaven. For we know that as long as we are at home and living in these bodies we are absent from the Lord, but I would rather be absent from this body and to be present with the Lord" ([II Corinthians 5:1-8](#)). So some day if you read in the paper, "Chuck Smith died," don't believe it. Poor reporting. If they're gonna to be accurate they're gonna to have to write, "Chuck Smith moved out of an old worn-out holy tent into a beautiful new mansion. A building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

So here Jesus is telling them a little bit about what's going on. And this is interesting to me as Abraham responds, if they will not believe, if they chose not to believe the law and the prophets, they have predisposition themselves not to believe, they won't believe even if they see a miracle of someone coming back from the dead. They'll say, "Oh well, he must have swoon, he really wasn't dead, and isn't it fortunate that he revived."