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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Luke 16.

(2013)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Luke 16.

Topics.

- The parable of the wise servant.
- One who is faithful in little is faithful in much.
- You cannot serve God and money.
- The Good News is preached and people force their way into it.
- It is easier for heaven to pass away than for the law to become void.
- Whoever divorces his wife and marries commits adultery.
- The parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

The Previous Chapter: in the previous chapter the Pharisees and scribes accused Jesus of receiving sinners and tax collectors so Jesus told them the parable of the lost sheep, the woman who loses one coin and the prodigal son.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

The Parable of the Wise Servant.

Luke 16:1-9 ----- ¹He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. ²And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.' ³And the manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.' ⁵So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' ⁷Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' ⁸The master commended the dishonest (unjust in KJV) manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. ⁹And I tell you (the disciples) make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

The word dishonest (unjust in KJV) comes from the Greek word (adikia) which can refer to any of the following, legal, injustice, moral wrongfulness of character, iniquity, unrighteousness and wrong. It is most likely the manager in this parable is not deliberately stealing from the rich man, but lacks good management skills or is not giving the rich man's investments the attention he should be. The rich man is told that his manager is running his investments into the ground so he gives the manager notice.

During his final hours of work the manager considers his fate. He knows he cannot do physical work and will not beg, but that it is going to be near impossible for him to live without a job, so he schemes a clever plan so that people will accept him into their homes when he is unemployed. He tells the rich man's debtors that they only need to pay part of their debt.

NOTE: this does not necessarily mean they won't pay the rich man the balance of the debt later.

What the manager is doing could be similar to what our courts today allow those who cannot pay the full amount of their debt, rather than put them in prison they allow the person to pay the debt off in instalments when they don't have the full amount available. When the manager takes the money to the rich man instead of firing the manager he commends him for his shrewdness. (If this manager had been a thief it is hardly likely the rich man would be commending him no matter how shrewd he was, he would have been locked up in prison not just fired from his job).

When Jesus said: -

- The sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light (v8).

Jesus is not commending the manager for his poor management skill but for his shrewdness in being able to restore his relationship with his master and make friendships with the debtors. The manager when convicted sought a way to restore his name and make peace with his master and friendships with others so they would accept him. Jesus is teaching his disciples to have the same mental attitude as the manager (i.e., to be cunning in seeking ways to restore broken relationships). To be always asking ourselves, "What can I do to make myself acceptable to those in the Kingdom of God so that they will receive me in eternity?" And always thinking, "If I am going to be in eternal homes with my brothers and sisters in the future what can I do to make peace and friendships with them now?"

One who is Faithful in little is Faithful in Much.

Luke 16:10-12 ----- ¹⁰"One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"

Jesus words in these verses are obvious if a person is not faithful and honest in even the smallest things they will not be faithful or honest in the bigger things and if they are not faithful and honest in the secular world they will not be faithful or honest in God's Kingdom. If a person is not honest when dealing with the secular world they cannot be trusted with the things of God (the true riches). The principal Jesus is teaching here is to be faithful and honest in everything whether it is the things of the world or the things of God.

You cannot Serve God and Money.

Luke 16:13-15 ----- ¹³No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." ¹⁴The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. ¹⁵And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

How amazing is this even the prideful and hypocritical religious leaders of Jesus generation (the Pharisees) were lovers of money so of course they hated what Jesus was saying and their only defence was to attack him personally by ridiculing and making fun of him.

NOTICE: the Pharisees found ways to justify themselves before their followers but they are only deceiving themselves because God sees the motives and intents of the heart.

Jesus words: -

- What is exalted among men.

Refers to money, it is money the world exalts, almost everything in this world is motivated by money, countries go to war for money, adults use child labour to make greater profits and companies oppress their workers to increase their bank balance.

Young girls are kidnapped and sold as sex slaves for money, drugs that destroy human life are sold for money and manipulative religious ministers use guilt and mood music to extract more money from those in their congregations (many of who are struggling to financially support their own families) and the list goes on.

NOTE: it should be mentioned that money in itself is not evil, but the love of it is, because people who are driven by the love of money will live their lives solely for money, they never give a thought toward God or consider helping the poor and needy but instead store up their wealth for their own selfish desires. This is not to say that everyone who has money is selfish with it, not all who have money are driven by the love of it there are those who have money that are rich toward God and use their riches to help the poor and extend the Kingdom of God in many countries.

The Good News is preached and People Force their way into It.

Luke 16:16-17 ----- ¹⁶The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces (presseth in KJV) his way into it. ¹⁷But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.

Forces: (biazo) (bia) (Presseth in KJV) means to force, seize or suffer violence and crowd oneself into. In Greek it carries the idea of vital activity. The King James Bible gives a clearer understanding to the verse by using the word presses rather than forces.

The Old Testament Law of Moses and the Old Covenant was proclaimed up to the time of John the Baptist, from John's time on the Good News of the Gospel of Christ has been proclaimed. Under the Old Testament law and the religious leadership of the scribes and Pharisees people were not excited about the Kingdom of God or even God Himself, they were not keeping the holy days, the feasts, the ceremonial rites etc., nor were they flocking by the thousands to listen to the words of the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes, but when they heard the Good News of the Gospel of Christ the crowds were suddenly excited and literally thousands continually came to hear the words of Jesus and be healed.

Multitudes travelled from great distances and went without food and sleep to see, hear and touch him and simply to be with him they would press or force their way to Christ and even suffer hardship or violence to get to him so much so that many times neither Jesus or the apostles had any time to relax, eat or even sleep.

It is easier for Heaven to pass away than for the Law to become Void.

Jesus words, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void," means even though the ceremonial law and the Prophets are not being proclaimed and multitudes are continually receiving the Good News of the Gospel of Christ does not mean that the Ten Commandments are done away with or will ever be done away with. This is because the spirit of the Ten Commandments is love because each commandment protects the innocent from physical and emotional harm.

The Ten Commandments.

Jesus summed the Ten Commandments up in the words: -

- You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and you shall love your neighbour as yourself (Matt. 22:37-39).

These are the commandments that will never become void simply because if a person loves God and their neighbour as themselves they will never hurt or harm another human in anyway therefore no other commandment would ever be broken.

"Love your neighbour as yourself" means do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself.

The thing God hates the most is when we do harm to another person, physically, financially, sexually, verbally, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do-good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land.

Leviticus chapter nineteen makes it clear that our neighbour is every other person, showing that the law requires justice to all people. The six commandments regarding mankind should be applied to everyone and we must abide by them ourselves. To love in the biblical sense is not an emotional attitude, but the keeping of these laws in relation to our neighbour. This is the general law of justice, beyond that; our conduct is to be regulated by relationship. We must render honour and justice to all people wherever due, but we have a particular responsibility to care for our families and those who belong to Christ.

Whoever Divorces his Wife and Marries another commits Adultery.

Luke 16:18 ----- 18"Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

This verse taken at face value firstly shows the importance Christ places on marriage and his abhorrence toward adultery and divorce, but it should never be used as a blanket statement to be fired as a judgmental bullet to condemn all those who have experienced the emotional and painful horror of divorce and have now found happiness and joy with a spouse who treats them with respect and kindness. Obviously God is not going to condemn anyone for leaving a spouse who violently or verbally abuses them (Christ has called us to peace not emotional torment or physical suffering) so perhaps it is the motive of the divorce that should be looked at rather than using it to judge and condemn all those who have remarried.

Jewish Law, Marriage and Divorce.

Jesus has just said, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void (v17)," and now focus' on adultery and divorce showing that the law of marriage and divorce is still valid and adultery is still grossly wrong (Exod. 20:14). To put the verse into some form of context it should be noted that it was not that long ago when in the Middle East a Moslem husband could verbally say to his wife, "You are loosed, you are loosed, you are loosed," If he said this out loud three times the marriage was ended.

I suspect Jewish husbands had a similar power over their wives because in ancient time Jewish religious law permitted a man to divorce his wife at any time for almost any reason, because of this a formal Jewish betrothal and marriage contract called the Ketubba was introduced. It protected the woman and guaranteed a bride certain future rights before her marriage and made divorce a costly matter for the husband. Conditions stipulated in the document also guarantee the woman's right to property when her husband died. In orthodox and conservative congregations, the Ketubba is a prerequisite for marriage; two witnesses not related to the couple or to each other and, in some congregations, the bridegroom also must sign it. A Jewish wife carefully preserves the Ketubba, not as evidence of marriage but for its future value (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

Adultery: in its full meaning is not just having a sexual relationship outside the marriage; it is destroying a marriage and by extension the family.

Another perspective to Jesus words: Jesus words, "Everyman who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery (v18)" could be stated, "Everyman who divorces his wife to marry another woman commits adultery." The context seems to imply that the married man is divorcing so he can marry another woman. Perhaps Jesus is saying, even though the man is divorced when he marries the other woman he is still committing adultery because he is divorcing his first wife is so that he can marry another woman that's why he is committing adultery. The man is trying to make an affair lawful by divorcing his first wife to marry another woman (most likely a younger one), but it is still adultery thus you cannot make an affair lawful by divorce and remarriage.

A Man who marries a Divorced Woman commits Adultery.

Jesus words, "He who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery" (v18). The same law for the husband applies to the woman if a wife divorces her husband to marry another man then the man she is marrying is committing adultery because he has caused the destruction of a marriage.

Relationships outside of marriage: in real life it is possible that marriage partners can have an emotional, physical or spiritual attraction with men or woman outside the marriage, but when that happens they should not divorce and remarry but remain faithful to their spouses and children and simply remain friends with those outside the marriage and have a mutual respect for each other and their families. But if they cannot restrain their sexual desires or attraction to each other they should sacrifice the friendship rather than their family. It maybe that in the above verse this is what Jesus is implying (i.e., it is not right to forsake the family to marry another).

Conclusion: however a person wishes to interpret Jesus words it is clear that God values marriage and by extension the family and hates adultery. Nevertheless the following words of John should be remembered before anyone points a finger to condemn: -

- If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, Christ is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, but if we say we have not sinned, we make Jesus a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).

And when the religious leaders of Jesus generation brought a woman they condemned and wanted stoned because they had caught her in the act of adultery rather than condemn the woman Jesus said: -

- Let those who are without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her (John 8:3-11).

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

Luke 16:19-26 ----- ¹⁹There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, ²³and in *Hades* (the grave) being in *torment* he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side ²⁴And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this *flame*. ²⁵But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶And besides all this, *between us and you a great chasm has been fixed*, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.

Hades: (Hell in the KJV) Hades is of Greek origin it means unseen and refers to the grave.

Torment: means suffering extreme agony and pain or torture.

Sadly because the King James Bible has translated the Greek word Hades to hell instead of the grave many have believed the sadistic teaching that the dead outside of Christ will go to a place called hell were they will live forever in an eternal state of consciousness not only be sadistically, brutally and cruelly tortured by evil eternal spirit creatures called demons (or devils) for all eternity, but will also be surrounded by burning flames of fire.

Consider for a moment: if this story of Lazarus is to be taken literally then it means that those who are resurrected to eternal glory will literally be able to look upon those outside of Christ who have been buried in their graves (including loved

family members and friends) and see them in absolute torment because they are surrounded by fiery flames of fire. It is hardly likely that those who are dwelling with Christ in glory will be so sadistic that they will want to view the terror of people being tormented by fire this would be more like a horror movie than glory. Added to this when the rich man was extremely thirsty all he asks for is a tiny drop of water on the end of Abraham's finger surly if this was a literal story the man would have asked for a glass of water at the very least. Therefore we can conclude that Jesus is using lofty and graphic language to not only teach, but engrave into our minds a moral that he considers enormously important for us to learn.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PARABLE: prior to this parable Jesus told the Pharisees it is impossible to serve God and money, no-one can serve two masters because they will favour one over the other. In response to this the Pharisees ridiculed him because they were lovers of money. Jesus tells them that their exaltation of money is revulsion in the sight of God and though they justify themselves before men God knows their heart (v13-15).

After this conversation with the Pharisees and rebuking them for their love of money he now tells this parable of a, rich man and a poor man which clearly shows how God views money.

The rich man: is a symbol of the Pharisees.

The gate: refers to the gate of the temple.

Lazarus: is a symbol of the poor and suffering.

The rich man (Pharisees) never lacked for anything whereas Lazarus lacked everything, but even though he had nothing he daily sat at the gate of the temple (the House of God). The Pharisees who had an abundance of everything never once offered Lazarus any kind of help.

They most likely considered him unclean and certainly not worth giving any of their time too. Lazarus desire to be close to the temple shows his heart felt passion for God so in this sense though by worldly standards he was poor he was nevertheless rich toward God. (No-doubt he was also sitting at the temple gate to collect alms, but there were many other places in the city of Jerusalem that he could have chosen to beg).

The Importance of Abraham to the Jewish Nation.

God made the promise of an eternal kingdom to Abraham and his seed, Abraham gave birth to Isaac who gave birth to Jacob who had the twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel thus the nation of Israel came from the loins of Abraham, he is the father of the Jews. Jesus has not yet been resurrected to eternal glory so he uses Abraham as the example of those who will be in eternity because all Jews love Abraham and look up to him as the head of the Jewish race and the father of faith.

The Poor man is carried by Angels to Abraham's Side.

The rich man is buried in Hades (the grave) while Lazarus is carried to Abraham's side. To be carried to Abraham's side would be considered the greatest honour a Jew could attain to. Jesus is using the expression, "Abraham's side" as a metaphor to show how delighted God's heart was toward the poor man Lazarus and he uses the phrase torment and flames to show God's absolute disapproval toward the rich man. Figuratively the angels carrying the poor man to Abraham's side is a symbol of the faithful being resurrected to eternal glory (v22).

A Great Chasm has Been Fixed.

The great gulf between Abraham and the rich man refers to the Pharisees (symbolised by the rich man) rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the great chasm without faith in Christ no-one can enter into his eternal Kingdom. Added to this everyone's eternal destination is determined while they are alive once a person has died they cannot alter their eternal fate.

Send Lazarus to my Father's House.

Luke 16:27-31 ----- 27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father to send him to my father's house 28 for I have five brothers —so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of *torment* 29 But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' 30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 He said to him 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.' "

Here is the majesty beauty and brilliance of Jesus, he drops Abraham's name from this verse, so it reads: -

- The rich man begs the Father to send Lazarus to his brothers (v27).

God the Father did send a man named Lazarus to the rich man's brothers (the Pharisees) and Jesus raised him from the dead and yet the Pharisees still refused to believe not only that, from that day on they made plans to have Jesus put to death. How true were the words of Jesus: -

- They will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead (v21).

(Read John chapter eleven and see how absolutely prophetic Jesus words were).

Abraham told the rich man: -

- His brothers have Moses and the Prophets (v29).

Moses spoke of the law of love because each one of the Ten Commandments regarding mankind protects the innocent from harm (i.e., do not steal, do not commit adultery and do not murder etc.). The rich man's brothers did not listen to Moses, but instead had Jesus killed and those who followed the Lord put in prison, beaten and slaughtered. The rich man's brothers did not listen to the prophets since they clearly spoke of the coming of the "Anointed One," Israel's Messiah, and the rich man's brothers blatantly rejected him.

It is interesting to notice: Christ spectacularly raised Lazarus from the dead and still the Pharisees did not believe in Christ proving miracles as amazing as they maybe do not bring a person's heart to repentance, people may believe in the miracle, but that does not always translate into repentance.

The Resurrection and the Place of Torment.

Some who believe in hell as an eternal place of torment use the rich man's words, "Lest they also come into this place of torment" to support their mistaken theory that those who deny God will be brutally and cruelly tormented in flames and fire by eternal evil spirits called demons, but it must be remembered this is a parable that Jesus is using to teach an enormously important moral principal.

The place of torment will be when Jesus returns King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth those who belong to Christ will be gathered together to be with Christ to rule and reign with him as kings and priests to God (1 Thess. 4:15-18) (Rev. 1:5-7) (Rev. 5:10), but there will be others who will be rejected (in this story of Lazarus it is the Pharisees who will be rejected) when they see the poor and those they despised and looked down upon as being worthless sitting with Abraham in the Kingdom of God that will be the moment of their mental torment.

The Pharisees were so full of pride, loved money more than God and were in the ministry not to serve God, but for their own selfish ambition and gain. They were full of self-righteousness and not only believed they deserved entry into God's eternal Kingdom, but also believed they were worthy of it, but Jesus rejects them saying that they were workers of iniquity. The place of torment (v28) is standing before Christ and being rejected especially if a person is so self-righteous they believes they are far more worthy than others. The eternal torment is being cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal death (i.e., total extinction) this is why it is

referred to as eternal torment their judgment is sealed it cannot be changed they are eternally cast away from the glorious light of the eternal Kingdom of God by the darkness of eternal death.

It is interesting to notice: that there is no mention of heaven in the entire parable it simply states that the rich man saw Lazarus in a far off place. This parable cannot be used to teach doctrine as that is not the purpose of a parable. A parable is mostly a short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or teaches a religious lesson or principle. To build doctrine from a parable will only lead to false teachings.

The Moral of the Parable.

Jesus is speaking to the very rich Pharisees who were the religious leaders of Jesus generation they had enormous authority and power over the entire nation of Israel, but were consuming their abundant wealth on themselves, oppressing the people for their own gain and never offering any help to the poor and needy.

Jesus is using biblical lofty and graphic language in this parable to teach the following two truths: -

1. That the prideful, self-righteous and hypocritical religious leaders, who believed they were right with God, were in reality an absolute offense to Him.
2. To teach and comfort all the faithful in Christ who like Lazarus are less fortunate and suffering hardships that they are worthy in God's eyes and will be highly exalted at the return of Christ.

The practical application of the principal taught in the parable is that no matter how famous, powerful or successful a person's ministry appears they themselves will be cast down to the grave if they have used their ministry to fulfil their own selfish ambition and oppressed their follows to increase their own wealth. On the other side the story is a tremendous comfort to the faithful in the Lord who are lacking the riches of this world and in deep grief, suffering extreme sickness or agonising famine and hunger because Jesus in this parable is clearly teaching that they will be resurrected to eternal glory and everlasting life.

The flowing are other verses that picture people weeping and gnashing their teeth because they have been rejected entry into the eternal Kingdom of Christ.

(Matt. 8:10-12) (Matt. 13:40-43-50) (Matt. 22:11-14) (Matt. 24:45-51) (Matt. 25:29-34).

For further information see, the titles: -

- Hell or the Grave (Final destination of humans without Christ).
- Heaven.

Both titles are in Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

End