



Editorial...

STEWARDSHIP AND WILLS

Garland M. Robinson

Do we use what we have to the glory of God or to the glory of ourselves?

In Luke 16:1-16, Jesus relates to his disciples what we call the parable of the unjust steward. Our purpose in this article is not to examine the parable line by line, but to simply learn the lesson that God requires all men to one day stand before Him in judgment and give account of our stewardship.

In this passage, the Lord speaks of a steward who was accused of wasting his master's goods. "And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? **give an account of thy stewardship**; for thou mayest be no longer steward." This is representative of the reality that all humanity will one day stand before the Lord in judgment, one by one, and give account of their life and how they chose to live it while on this earth. This principle is shown in so many other passages as well.

In Matthew 12:35-37 Jesus said, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. **36**But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, **they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.** **37**For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Paul wrote in Romans 14:11-12, "For it is written, [As] I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. **12**So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

First Peter 4:5 reveals that sinners (and by extension all men) "...shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

Matthew 18:23, "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would **take account of his servants.**"

Second Corinthians 5:10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that **every one may receive the things [done] in [his] body, according to that he hath done, whether [it be] good or bad.**"

We are told in Hebrews 13:7,17 to submit to the rule of elders in the Lord's church because they watch for our souls "...as **they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [is] unprofitable for you.**"

Ecclesiastes 11:9 speaks of this very sobering truth, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that **for all these [things] God will bring thee into judgment.**"

Every human being is a steward. A steward is one who manages that which is in their care. What has been placed in our care? This involves every facet of our life and literally every choice we make; what we do or don't do, what we say or don't say, how we act or don't act. Colossians 3:17 says, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

It is not possible to avoid the responsibility of that which has been entrusted to us. Our very life is a reality. We did not ask to be born, but we are here just the same. We have to eat, sleep, work, live and die. No one can say "I'm not responsible," "I refuse to choose." Many may try, but they will never be successful.

The focus of this lesson is regarding the stewardship we have in relation to our possessions — the material goods of this life. How we use them or do not use them is of utmost importance. Do we use what we have to the

glory of God or to the glory of ourselves or some other? When we give of our means on the Lord's Day (1 Cor. 16:1-2), do we spend more on a movie, eating out or a new gadget than we put in the collection plate? Such is a terrible commentary on our stewardship if that's the case! Is it good stewardship of the material possessions the Lord has entrusted to us to spend the money we make on ourselves? No! When we do, how are we acting? Selfishly! Selfishness is exactly what it is. Though we certainly cannot buy our way to heaven, the point is, we won't go to heaven if we are like the "steward" in Luke 16. The Lord referred to him as "unjust" (Luke 16:8). Though his action (shrewdness) was commendable in the eyes of men, his unjustness was not praiseworthy in the eyes of God. He was acting as men would do — trying to secure himself favor among men. The proper action would be to seek God's favor. He's the judge. It matters not what men think. God is the one we must please. Paul wrote, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). "So [is] he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21).

Jesus gave eternal counsel in respect to the stewardship of our lives in Matthew 6:19-21, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. **20**But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: **21**For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." In light of the Lord's words, Paul wrote by inspiration, "...seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. **2**Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2).

In contrast to the sobering words of the Lord to set our mind on things above, things heavenly, Paul warns Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; **18**That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; **19**Laying up in store for

themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Moses heeded these words when it is said that "...when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;²⁵ Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;²⁶ Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (Heb. 11:24-26).

We all have possessions. How are we using them? What is our attitude toward them? Have we considered what will become of our possessions (our estate, property, riches) after we're dead and gone? Concerning all humanity the Holy Spirit wrote, "...we brought nothing into [this] world, [and it is] certain we can carry nothing out" (1 Tim. 6:7). We won't be able to take it with us when we die. It would be of no use to us or anyone else even if we could. So, what will happen to our estate? Where will it go? How will it be distributed? How will it be used? What will it support? Would we approve of how it will be used? Why not consider these things while we're still alive and leave instructions (in our will) where and how we would like portions of it to be used. Will the state get it? Will heathens receive it? Will it be used to support and promote every evil way? It will if the wrong people and/or organization get control of it. Do you want that to happen?

If you know anything about the Bible you know what the Scriptures say about going into all the world and preaching the Gospel to every creature (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). If the Lord tells us how to live and use what we have to his name's honor and glory in this world, shall we not desire to do the same with our possessions after we're gone from this world? If we are to be good stewards of what we have been entrusted while we're living, shall we not be prudent to do the same when we're gone? Yes, verily. The only way that will be done is if we leave instructions for it to be done.

Shall we let the world decide how to use our money after we're gone? What about heathens? What about the state? Should we let our unfaithful children decide? The Lord's work will not be done if any of these individuals get control of it. Faithful

members of the Lord's church need to think about these things.

Consider what became of that which belonged to Judas Iscariot after his death. Brother Ben F. Vick, Jr. wrote the following words in the 34th Annual Lectureship book (2015) of the Stop 11 Road Church of Christ, in Indianapolis, IN.

"When Judas had seen that Jesus was condemned, he regretted what he had done. Matthew records (27:3-10): 'Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 'Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.'⁵ And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. 'And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. 'And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. 'Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. 'Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; 'And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me."

"Judas regretted what he had done, but it was too late. The King James Version uses the word 'repent,' however, it is from a different Greek word than the one used in Acts 2:38 and elsewhere. The idea is remorse or regret. He went back to the chief priests and elders and confessed his sin of having betrayed innocent blood. But they did not care. They said, 'What is that to us? See thou to that.' So, Judas threw down the thirty pieces of silver in the temple and left. He then went out and hanged himself."

"The hypocritical chief priests and elders could not put that money into the temple treasury. Why, that was blood money! It

was still Judas' money because they could not taint their hands with it, even though they had given it to him. So, what could they do? They used Judas' thirty pieces of silver, the betrayal money, to buy the potter's field, called *Acelandama*, which means 'The field of blood'."

"Luke by inspiration says that Judas purchased the field (Acts 1:18). How did he purchase the field if he was dead? It was his money. Since the chief priests and rulers did not accept the money back, it still belonged to Judas. So, it was purchased with his money after his death. A lesson from this is that one should be careful as to whom or for what he wills his money or estate after his death. Judas had no intentions of buying that field with that money. He threw the money down, but it was used without regard to his will. So, one should be careful about the causes one may end up supporting, even after his departure."

Our estate is ours to do with as we chose because we are stewards of it. The Lord allows us that privilege in this world, but that does not mean we are using it in accordance with His will. That does not mean we're using it wisely. We must make sure we're using it to support and defend the Lord's cause.

The Bible teaches that the Scriptures are to govern our lives. This includes that which is entrusted to our care. Why not therefore consider putting the Lord's work in your will? Have you thought about that? We can preach the Gospel even after death. Able is said to be doing so even now (cf. Heb. 11:4).

It ought to go without saying, but needs to be said just the same. We should take the greatest care to make sure (as much as we are able) that the work(s) we include in our will is faithful to the Lord's word and cause. Just because it has the name "Church of Christ" attached to it does not guarantee it is faithful to the Lord's cause and worthy to be supported. Millions of dollars have been left to churches, missions, schools, periodicals, etc., that are not worthy because they are not sound. We must not support the devil's work! Don't leave money that will be used to destroy everything the

Lord stood for. Be careful not to do that while you're living or even after you're dead. Instead, take great care to make sure the work(s) you leave money to is faithful and sound. These works need our support, both while we're living and after we're dead. What greater way to leave a legacy

behind than to support the Lord's work — the greatest cause that has ever existed on earth. King David once said, "is there not a cause?" (1 Sam. 17:29). Yes, there is a cause, the Lord's work!

The Lord's people are looking for "...an inheritance incorruptible, and

undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). Can this be said of you?

Make sure you read the article by Ron Gilbert in the Elders' Column regarding "estate planning" below.

Elder's COLUMN

ESTATE PLANNING

Ronald D. Gilbert

You may read this and say "what estate?" But, believe it or not, you do have an estate and it may be larger than you think! Everything you own is your estate, house, property, cars, checking, savings, retirement, life insurance and personal belongings. No matter how small or large, everyone has an estate. We have all heard for many years, "you can't take it with you" so what will happen to your estate when you die, notice I said "when" and not "if" you die (cf. Heb. 9:27)!

Surely most people would like for their estate to be handled according to their own wishes rather than by the courts. Most would also like for their estate not to be cut down unnecessarily by taxes, legal fees and court costs. As parents of small children, making arrangements as to who would become the legal guardian of them in the event of both parents death is also important. When our children were small, my wife and I talked about this and decided we did not want family members who were not members of the Lord's church or family members who were not faithful Christians getting custody of our children. We prepared the legal documents and selected who would become their guardians in the event of our deaths. If we had failed to do this, the state would have appointed a guardian for our children and may have even paid them from our small estate to do that work.

I am not a lawyer or estate planner, nor have ever played one on TV, but I do suggest that you find one that you can trust and make preparations for your death. If you do not plan your estate, then your "state" has a plan for

you, but it's not going to be what you want! Some states divide your estate equally between your spouse and your children which may not leave enough for your spouse to take care of himself or herself. Stats say that about 55 percent of individuals do not have wills. Do you have one?

I read somewhere what I thought was some good practical advice for all to consider:

1. Make a will.
2. Make a living will.
3. Create a durable power of attorney.
4. Create a letter of instruction, location of your valuable documents, deeds, titles, etc., and give a family member a spare key and security codes and passwords.
5. Create a list of your financial accounts, account numbers, Social Security number and other important numbers.
6. Make a list of names and phone numbers of family members, contacts to make when death occurs.
7. Make arrangements for family members to have access to your safe deposit box.
8. List of all loans and monthly bills, many times only one family member knows about debts.
9. List of all organizations where you have membership, some of them may have death benefits, life insurance company names and policy numbers.
10. Write something down concerning your funeral and where you

want to be buried and what you want done or not done at your funeral.

One other area to consider is your stewardship concerning spiritual matters. The New Testament has much to say about Christians being good stewards. In Luke 16 in dealing with the unjust steward this man was asked in verse 2, "Give an account of thy stewardship." We also one day will be called upon to give an account of our stewardship. Most of us as Christians have tried in life to give as we should and be good stewards of that with which God has blessed us. But why not consider being a good steward, even in your death, by giving part of your estate to the work of the Lord? You should consider making a will and leaving a portion of your estate to a good work such as a Gospel paper, a school of preaching, a mission effort, or to your local congregation for their ongoing works. I am not asking you to consider doing something that I have not already done. Several years ago my wife and I had our wills drawn up and we plan to be good stewards of what we have even in our deaths. By having a will, your funds go where you want them to go and you decide what amounts to give to various works. Some Christians do not have children or may not have faithful children and may want to consider where portions of their estate should go.

Many of you have been good stewards in life, so why not consider being a good steward even in death? What about you and your estate?

3017 Deerhaven Dr. S
Cookeville, TN 38506