

Unjust Steward

*'And he said unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his 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. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?'*¹

Many have misinterpreted this parable to think that deviousness and deceit are somehow or sometimes sanctioned under certain circumstances, in short, that Christ was sanctioning 'situation ethics,'² a patently oxymoronic description of what are, in fact, fixed ethical standards.

Rather, the parable of the unjust servant shows what the Judæo-Christian should do with money. After-tithe income is to be used wisely and fruitfully. *'And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.'*³ The worldly,

¹ Luke 16:1-12

² Barclay, William, *Ethics in a Permissive Society*, p.69 (with added comment and clarification in square brackets): '[I]n 1966AD an American professor called Joseph Fletcher wrote a book called *Situation Ethics*, which has proved to be one of the most influential books [in a negative sense] written this century. Fletcher's basic principle is that there is nothing which is universally right or universally wrong; there is nothing which is intrinsically good or intrinsically bad [Satan's policy, exactly!]. Goodness and badness are not built in, essentially, unchangeable qualities of anything; they are only things which happen to actions in different situations; they are only descriptions of things in different circumstances; they are not properties, they are predicates. According to this theory of ethics, there is no such thing as a predefinition of goodness or badness. What we have to take to any situation is not a prefabricated decision, but an act of [personal, subjective] judgement.'

Rees, Laurence, *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the 'Final Solution'*, pp.21,22:

'It is not hard to agree with the verdict of Else Baker, sent to Auschwitz as an eight-year-old, that 'the level of human depravity is unfathomable....Human behaviour is fragile and unpredictable and often at the mercy of the situation. Every individual still, of course, has a choice of how to behave; it is just that for many people the situation is a key determinant in that choice.'

³ Luke 16:9; K.J.V.'s *'friends of'* is better, *'friends through.'*

unrighteous servant sought to insulate himself from looming privation through unjustly benefiting those he hoped would receive him into their houses when he was put out of his stewardship.⁴ Christ's injunction to His people, however, concerns making friends through the judicious use, or the use beneficial to those in need, of mammon, or money, in order that when, in the course of time, the Judæo-Christian '*fails*'⁵—or, more easily understood, '*dies*'—then the Father and Son may receive him or her into their '*house*,' an everlasting habitation: the kingdom of God. Money may be used to good or ill; the Judæo-Christian must use it for good, to the help of others.

⁴ Luke 16:4b

⁵ Greek: ekleipo, '*to pass by*,' '*to leave*,' or '*to quit*.'