The Stewardship of <u>TRUTH</u>

(I Cor 4:1-2, Luke 12:42-48, Matthew 25:14-30 & other Scriptures)

Singles Meeting – 11/21/09

Introduction:

Definition of "Stewardship": Management of God's Blessings

(Implies Responsibility & Accountability)

Luke 16:1-2

We are stewards of:

Truth (God's Word; "The oracles of God…" (Romans 3:2)
Time (moments & opportunities)
Talent (Gifts; "What do you have that you have not received" (I Cor 4:7)
Treasure (money & possessions; "The earth is the Lord's…")
Temple (Body; "We are bought with a price…")
Tribe (Family; children)

See: I Cor. 4:1

See: Luke 12:42-48

Matthew 25:14-30

***Be faithful with the TRUTH that God has given to you until the Lord returns!**

Be faithful with the TRUTH because. . .

I. The Lord has entrusted you with <u>responsibility</u> (v. 14)

Be faithful with the TRUTH because. . .

II. The Lord has <u>not</u> entrusted you with more than you can <u>handle</u> (v. 15)

Be faithful with the TRUTH because. . ..

III. The Lord expects you to <u>use the "talents"</u> of Truth He has given to you (v. 16-18)

Be faithful with the TRUTH because. . .

IV. The Lord is coming back and will hold you <u>accountable</u> for what you have received (v. 19)

Be faithful with the TRUTH because. . .

V. Faithfulness in little things (in this life) **will be <u>rewarded</u> with greater privilege in the future** (v. 20-23)

Be faithful with the TRUTH because. . .

VI. There are <u>no adequate excuses</u> you will be able to offer the Lord at Judgment Day (v. 24-27)

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VII. There are <u>severe</u> and <u>serious</u> <u>consequences</u> for unfaithfulness (v. 28-30)

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9/8/02

Introduction:

Definition of "Stewardship": Management of God's Blessings
(Implies Responsibility & Accountability)

Luke 16:1-2

And 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 had wasted his goods. [2] 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.

Examples of Stewards: Joseph in Potephar's house
The Kings over Israel (David; Solomon)
Jesus with the Father's will
Paul with the Gospel

We are managers of everything God entrusts to us. Every possession, gift, opportunity, position, person, put into our care.

We are stewards of: Truth (God's Word; "The oracles of God…" (Romans 3:2)
Time (moments & opportunities)
Talent (Gifts; "What do you have that you have not received" (I Cor 4:7)
Treasure (money & possessions; "The earth is the Lord's…")
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Tribe (Family; children)

See: I Cor. 4:1

"Let a man so (in this way) ***account of us" -*** Paul says, "When you think about Apollos, Peter, and me, don't have grandiose, bigger than life, superman images in your minds. Rather, have a mental reckoning of us as servants and stewards.

Just view us as humble servants (serving another Master) and humble stewards (caring for Another's possessions).

"Ministers" - *huperetas* - under-rowers. The word was used to refer to the slaves who would row on the lower part of a ship which had three banks of oars.

Paul says, "View me as a hard-working slave for Christ."

True greatness, according to Jesus, is being a servant. The more you serve, the greater you are (SEE: Mt. 20:25-28).

"Stewards" - *oikonomous* - manager; one who would manage or take care of the household belongings of a master (EX: Joseph in Potiphar's house).

Paul was responsible to manage the mysteries of God (i.e. the formerly hidden, but now revealed revelation of God).

V. 2

The key requirement of a steward is not good looks, charismatic personality, charm and wit, but faithfulness to the task.

"Faithful" - One you can put "full faith" in; reliable, dependable ("The greatest ability is dependability" - Bob Jones, Sr.).

As Christ looks at you, does He find you to be faithful? Can He count on you to get a job done the way He wants it done? Will Jesus say of you, *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant"* (Mt. 25:21)?

To be smart, you must realize that the greatest men of God are great at serving Christ.

God has entrusted us with His Word (His truth).

Rev. 3:10

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

See: Luke 12:42-48

Luke 12:48

But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

The nation of Israel failed in their stewardship of God's Word (by ignoring it; adding to it traditons) (Rom. 9:4-5; Matt 15:3)

Judas Iscariot failed in his stewardship

Mark 14:21 The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

2 Peter 2:21

For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

Matthew 25:14-30

INTRODUCTION: The tragedy of a wasted life vs the blessedness of a faithful life.

John Greenleaf Whittier wrote the well-known lines, "For all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: *It might have been!*" (MacArthur, p. 96)

"The three servants fall into 2 categories: faithful & unfaithful" (Wiersbe, p.92)

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Be faithful with the TRUTH because. . .

I. The Lord has entrusted you with <u>responsibility</u> (v. 14)

The subject of the *"Kingdom of Heaven"* is continued from verse one.

This parable cannot be disconnected from the parables and teachings preceding it. It ties in with the Lord's teaching about His second coming.

The parable of the virgins (vv. 1-13) focuses on readiness manifested in <u>waiting</u>, whereas the parable of the talents focuses on readiness manifested in <u>working</u>" (MacArthur, p. 97).

On an earlier occasion Jesus gave a similar parable (Luke 19:12-27) in which He said *"occupy till I come"*.

"A man travelling into a far country" - An allusion to the <u>ascension</u> of Christ, who has *"gone into Heaven and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him"* (I Pet. 3:22; cp. Mk. 16:19; Lk. 24:51; Acts 1:11).

"Called" - The fact that one of the servants mentioned in vv. 24-30 ends up going to Hell (v. 30) proves that the Lord's *"calling"* is not necessarily efficacious (*"<u>Many</u> are <u>called</u>, but <u>few</u> are <u>chosen</u>"* - Mt. 22:14).

"Servants" - Slaves; not everyone who serves Christ is saved.

"His <u>goods</u>" - His property, his possessions

That which Jesus has left is His <u>Word</u> - the Bible. He also has *"given gifts unto men"* after ascending up on high to heaven (Eph. 4:8).

A spiritual gift is simply a <u>crucified talent</u> (an ability we had prior to salvation, but energized and utilized by the Lord when He saves us and we surrender to him)

Be faithful with the TRUTH because. . .

II. The Lord has <u>not</u> entrusted you with more than you can <u>handle</u> (v. 15)

"Talents" - (*talanta)* - a talent was a weight of money equalling about 20 years wages in the days of the Roman empire. The talent was "money" in the form of <u>silver</u> (*argurion* - v. 18).

"To every man according to his several ability" - the Lord, knowing the <u>abilities</u> of each steward, gave them just talents that they could handle, properly manage, and use for Him.

The Lord never gives us more than we can handle.

--This is true of the tests we face
(I Cor. 10:13 - *". . . God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able"*)

--This is true of the doors of opportunity He opens for us (Rev. 3:8 - *"I have set before thee an open door, and no many can shut it: for thou hast a little strength."*)

"No one received more or less than he could handle. If he failed in his assignment, his excuse could not be that he was overwhelmed" (Life Application Bible note)

Be faithful with the TRUTH because. . ..

III. The Lord expects you to <u>use the "talents"</u> of Truth He has given to you (v. 16-18)

V. 16

The steward with five talents immediately went and traded with them and fruitfully doubled that which the Lord gave him.

"Traded" - It took:

<u>risk</u> (faith)
<u>time</u>
<u>effort</u>
<u>wisdom</u>

. . . to invest and use what the Lord gave.

V. 17

In the same way, the one with two talents put them to work, investing them for his Lord and also doubled their value.

Although this steward had less than half of the talents that the man with five had, he was faithful with what he had.

It's not how much you have but what you do with what you have that counts.

(Never despise a small ministry - just be faithful and God will double it!)

V. 18

Like a dog hiding its bone in the ground, this unfaithful steward dug a hole and buried his one talent.

"His lord's money" - Note: Even though he was entrusted with the talent, it was not his. It belonged to the One who trusted him with it.

Ultimately, everything we have is a gift of God. As believers, our bodies don't belong to us (I Cor. 6:19-20). Neither does what we possess (I Cor. 4:7).

Psalm 24:1 - *"The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."* (cp. I Cor. 10:26, 28)

Be faithful with the TRUTH because. . .

IV. The Lord is coming back and will hold you accountable for what you have received (v. 19)

"We are living in the time period between Mt. 25:18 & 19" (Wiersbe, p.92)

"After a long time" - after much time; so far, the Lord's tarrying has been nearly 2,000 years.

"Reckoneth" - settled accounts; a day of reckoning is coming. Everyone will be held accountable for what they did with what the Lord gave them.

Everyone will be held accountable for the Light (Scripture) . . . opportunities. . . gifts (abilities). . . time. . . which they had while they lived.

Be faithful with the TRUTH because. . .

V. Faithfulness in little things (in this life) **will be <u>rewarded</u> with greater privilege in the future** (v. 20-23)

V. 20

"Behold" (cp. behold - v. 22) - Look! With excitement and confidence, the steward says, "<u>Look</u> at what I did with what you gave me."

Will you be able to face the Lord with optimism or regret?

"I have gained" - Although it is the Lord who gives us the desire and ability to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13), we are responsible to take the steps of faith to utilize what is given to our care and to work it!

--As you look over your life, what have you <u>gained</u> for Jesus Christ with the talent or talents He has given you?

V. 21

"Well done" - <u>good</u> (job); <u>good</u> (work); <u>acceptable</u> (task). Just to hear the words *"Well done"* will make all of our efforts for Christ worthwhile.

"Thou good and faithful servant" - By God's grace, the moral <u>good</u>ness of this servant had enabled him to be faithful (his <u>love</u> for his Master was no doubt his motive).

He is called ***"faithful"*** because he was "full of faith" and trust in God to prosper him in the risks he took in investing the talents.

This servant was faithful right up until his Lord returned (cp. 24:45-47 - READ).

"Faithful over a few things" - Even though he had <u>more</u> talents than anyone else in this parable, he is still considered faithful over a *"<u>few</u> things."*

The little we do now will have great reward in the future.

"Ruler" - The two faithful people went from *"servant"* to *"ruler"!*

"Ruler over many things" - This rule will happen in the millennial kingdom, when God's people will rule and *"reign with Christ a thousand years"* (Rev. 20:4, 6) Rev. 2:26-27 - *"And he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father."*

"The joy of thy Lord" - a reference to the kingdom of God. *"In thy <u>presence</u> is fullness of <u>joy</u>"* (Ps. 16:11).

Note: The exact same words are repeated to the servant with two (four) talents as the servant with five (ten). Again, rewards are not based on volume but faithfulness.

"Just as the angels serve God in ranks, so will redeemed men and women, and the degree of their heavenly service will have been determined by the devotedness of their earthly service." (MacArthur, p. 104).

Be faithful with the TRUTH because. . .

VI. There are <u>no adequate excuses</u> you will be able to offer the Lord at Judgment Day (v. 24-27)

V. 24

The unfaithful servant is <u>excusing</u> himself (and in a sense blaming his master for his failure).

"An hard man" - He had an inadequate view of God. He is like the person who sees God only as stern, rigid, and ungracious.

Most people in the world fail to see God's grace and trust Him to extend that grace to them.

"Reaping where thou hast not sown" - He knew that God could do miracles. god could reap without ever planting (but has God chosen to do this? No. *"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."* [I Cor. 3:6] God has chosen to use us to plant seed [God's Word] [cp. Ps. 126:6]).

"Gathering where thou hast not strawed (scattered seed)" - A synonymous re-statement of the first phrase (the Lord's doesn't need us to restate something tot plead our case, as if He didn't "get it" the first time).

Technically, God does not need us (for Him to get the job done right), but He has chosen to use the instrumentality of men to accomplish portions of His plan (EX: Romans 10:14 - *"How shall they hear without a preacher?")*.

What this man is saying to His Lord is this: "You could have done it without me. You didn't need me." (EX: Hyper-Calvinism - Since god is going to save only the elect, He can do it without me).

V. 25

"I was afraid" - Afraid to take the "<u>risk of faith</u>." Afraid to lose or unfaithfully use what the Lord had given him.

*Remember, whatever God calls you to do, He will enable you to do.

V. 26

"Thou wicked and slothful servant" - the Lord saw through to the heart of the problem. His problem was not really a "fear" of displeasing his Lord. His problem was:

1. <u>Wickedness</u> - Moral evil. A life of <u>sin</u> kept him from being a good steward of what God entrusted to him (this man wanted <u>sin</u>; he didn't' care about pleasing his Lord).

2. <u>Slothfulness</u> - Laziness. A life of ease and laziness kept him from being faithful. He wanted to sleep rather than serve.

Perhaps the unfaithful servant "did not purposely do evil. But by doing nothing, he was committing sin and robbing his lord" (Wiersbe, p. 92)

Sins are of Commission (when we do that which is forbidden) & Omission (when we do not do that which is commanded).

"It is possible that the one-talent man thought that his one talent was not very important. He did not have five talents or even two. Why worry about one?...(however), were it not for the one-talent people in our world, very little would get accomplished" (Wiersbe, p. 92).

V. 26-27

"Thou knowest . . . thou oughtest" - If you really knew My power, you should not have feared to at least deposit what I gave you into the lives of others so they could have produced dividends and interest with them.

Be faithful with the TRUTH because. . .

VII. There are severe and serious consequences for unfaithfulness (v. 28-30)

V. 28

"Use it or lose it!" - When you are unfaithful with what God entrusts into your care, He may just take it away from you and give it to someone who is faithful.

V. 29

"Unto every one that hath" - To the one who "hath" been faithful, more will be given. But to the one who "hath not" been faithful, that which was entrusted to him shall be taken away.

V. 30

"Unprofitable" - Useless, worthless

As God measures your life, is it being useful for His glory?

Note contrast:

Little faithfulness (I Cor. 3:15) result = "Suffer lost...saved yet so as by fire"
No faithfulness (Matthew 25) result = Hell

"Servant" - does not imply salvation. For Christ is Lord of all; therefore, all are supposed to serve Him (Judas was a servant, but was unsaved).

Four words or phrases reveal that Jesus is speaking of hell:

1) ***"Cast"*** (throw; hurl - Rev. 20:10, 15)

2) ***"Outer darkness"*** (Mt. 8:12)

3) ***"Weeping"*** (emotional suffering)

4) ***"Gnashing of teeth"*** (physical suffering)
SEE: 24:51

Although some commentators argue that Jesus was not describing such a horrible fate for this man, in the context, the outcome of this unfaithful servant (corresponds to) is the same as the outcome of:

The evil servant (24:51)
The 5 foolish virgins (25:10-12)
The goats on the Lord's left hand (25:41,46)

CONCLUSION:

One is not saved by how he manages the talents entrusted to him. However, how he manages the talents reveals whether or not he has been saved.

Outward works are a demonstration of inward character (Ja. 2:20, 26)

What have you done with the TRUTH God has given you?
Did you believe it?
Did you live it?
(cp. Rev. 3:10)

We must:

1. Love the truth -

   Prov. 8:7 - "For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abonomination to my lips."
   We are to "buy the truth and sell it not" (Prov. 23:23); we are to "love the truth" (Zech. 8:19).

2. Read the Truth & Hear the Truth
   John 17:17-18
   Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

   Memorize the Truth of God's Word

3. Share the Truth to others

   Tell the truth to your children -

   "Preach the Gospel to every Creature)
   Is. 38:19 - "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth."

4. Live your life according to the truth - Ps. 86:11
   "I will walk in thy truth" -- II Jn. 4; III Jn. 4.

5. Worship in "spirit and in truth." - Jn. 4:24

6. Our church must uphold the truth.
   We are the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15).