

Stewards

Harmony M.B.C., January 27, 2019

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Luke 12:42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of meat in due season?

Luke 12:43 Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

Luke 12:44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

Luke 12:45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

Luke 12:46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

Luke 12:47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.

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.

Human responsibility as a doctrine has been chased up and down the halls of opinion for generations, and there is as much or more controversy in religious circles today about it as there was at the beginning of the Christian era. We find Christ explaining an aspect of it to his disciples, and in it we find first of all a caution to ministers over the flock of God, then also a warning to all believers concerning their stewardship of any and all things that God has given them.

We ministers often read this portion of the infinitely wise teachings of our Savior and conclude that since this is largely an address that looks like it speaks to spiritual leaders, it does not have too much for those who do not presume to be leaders. If we follow this line of reason, we may become guilty of depriving all believers of every spiritual station a blessing, because we will fail to use the carefully crafted teaching of Christ to guide them into facts about their responsibilities as caretakers of those things in the Kingdom of God that they have charge over. So, to avoid doing that, I want, this morning to bring a message about a principle taught from Christ's own words on stewardship. I want us to notice in

this parable that Christ speaks about two extreme responses to stewardship to God.

The parable discusses the **two possible responses** of a given steward in the first part. But, Jesus discusses **two possible levels of knowledge** of any given two servants in the last part of the parable. I want to make this clear, because we are going to look at the distinctions of behavior by the one proposed servant in the first part of our message, then at the distinctions of responsibility or culpability (blameworthiness) of any given two servants who are contrasted by Christ as the last part of our message.

I. The Starting Point - v. 42

- ❖ Two Extremes of Service are Identified: The **service rendered by the faithful and wise servant** and the **service rendered by a servant who seems** to pass from a responsible behavior pattern to an **irresponsible** one.
 - The first thing we notice is that the approved actions of faithful stewards arise from the fact that they are (at the beginning of Christ's summation about them) "faithful and wise." This is very important to note when teaching about the response of a human to the Lord because:
 - It teaches that people who execute their responsibility to the Lord in the right way do so because they possess faithfulness or fidelity and wisdom;
 - that is, they do not become faithful and wise because they execute their responsibilities appropriately,
 - nor does executing their responsibilities appropriately **MAKE** them faithful and wise
 - Most birds will reach out with their beaks and roll one of their eggs back into the nest and under them each time one may drift out of the nest. But, research has shown us that these birds never gain understanding (wisdom) about eggs from all that correct action (you can put a golf ball beside a setting hen's nest and she will roll it into the nest just as quickly as she would an egg...it is a fixed action pattern done right every time, without any understanding being gained about the difference between a golf ball and an egg).
- ❖ This distinguishes grace, not works, as the starting point of getting approval from the Lord
- ❖ Why do we say this? Because the bible teaches that this faithfulness and wisdom spoken of here are from God, not from the human spirit or human intelligence:
 - **1Cor 3:19** For the **wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.**
 - In Paul's explanation to the church at Corinth about what led to their conversion he says, (**1Cor 2:4-5**) And my speech and my preaching *was* **not with enticing words of man's wisdom**, but in demonstration of the

Spirit and of power: 5 That your **faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.**

- **Eph. 1:15-17** Wherefore I also, after I **heard of your faith** in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, 17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, **may give unto you the spirit of wisdom** and revelation in the knowledge of him:
- James 1:5 If any of you **lack wisdom, let him ask of God**, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.
- ❖ So, God discounts human wisdom, but provides wisdom for his people. So, if this servant in our parable had wisdom that Jesus approved of, it must have come from God.
- ❖ Like godly wisdom, faithfulness comes from God also. It is born of our FAITH in God, which of course is the gift of God.
- ❖ So, the beginning of Jesus' lesson also teaches that grace is essential **before the works are done appropriately**
- ❖ But I do want to point out that Jesus placed faithfulness before wisdom here. Why did he do that? I think it was because faithfulness enhances and grows a person's wisdom in the things of the Lord
 - I may have the responsibility to change the oil in my car, but if I never do the job, will I ever get any wisdom about how to do it? On the other hand, if I do it every time it needs it, I can't help but gain understanding about how it is done, and an understanding about problems with getting it done, etc.

II. The Point of Departure - v. 45 - "But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken"

- ❖ This attitude by the servant highlights a symptom of disrespect for his lord
- ❖ The two conditions described here (the faithful and wise versus the wayward, disobedient and abusive) are characteristics of two possible behaviors of any would-be servants of the Lord. The behaviors clearly define a) the presence of grace that gives faithfulness and wisdom, or b) the lack of it. (Read the characteristic behavior of the faithful and wise one in vv. 42 and 43, then reread v. 45 for the contrast)
- ❖ We can note that when Christ begins to identify the outward evidence of the righteous and the unrighteous, or the faithful and the unfaithful, of the wise and the unwise, He simply puts before us examples of behavior as all the evidence we need to be able to identify each.
- ❖ From this and so many other teachings of the bible we may learn that faithfulness and wisdom, or the lack of it reveals itself in people's behavior
- ❖ the statement of Jesus in **Mat. 7:20** is a biblical axiom we can depend on: "...by

their fruits ye shall know them.”

- ❖ The behavior is the fruit of the person’s character, not the determiner of the person’s character; this is the separation point between grace and works.

III. Christ Discusses Discrimination In Divine Punishment Against a

Backdrop of The Two Previous Extremes - vv.47-48 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. 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.

- ❖ I believe He did this so that all believers could know that the Lord uses divine wisdom and mercy in meting out judgment in dealing with human failure and success
- ❖ It teaches:
- ❖ Those who have understanding about what the Lord wants them to do, and yet refuse to move in that direction can expect a lot of painful intervention by the Lord
 - Back in the day, I had the opportunity to get birds out of buildings for our Wildlife Services customers. Invariably, a lot of these buildings had multiple windows. I would open a garage door, or a main entrance door, turn out the inside lights, and then try to herd the bird through the open door. Almost always, most of those birds would fly to the nearest window and crash into it getting banged up by the collision. Often, they would repeat that again and again, being beat up each time before they finally responded to my herding enough to find the open door. This is a real good illustration of how some folks respond to the Lord's herding! They take the wrong path, try to fly through the wrong exit.
- ❖ The Lord indicates (concerning this kind of servant) that getting to the right spiritual place can be both a process and an act of obedience (“...prepared not himself, neither did according to his will....”)
 - When we come suddenly upon a truth from God that says to us, “you need to start doing this, or stop doing that” and we don’t start seeking God’s help to move in that direction, we are failing to prepare ourselves
 - When we have already come to a realization that there is something we are supposed to be doing, or not doing, in obedience to God and yet have dragged our feet all the time, we have not done according to His will
 - This is part of the responsibility we have as obedient servants. We have the tools to realize spiritual advancement in our lives. The question is, will we use them?
- ❖ Those who lack understanding and perception about what is to be done in

service to their Lord, and do things worthy of punishment will not be as severely punished.

- Some people don't have the opportunity to be taught God's word;
- believers with no bibles;
- believers with no standing teacher or preacher;
- believers in an environment in which spiritual teaching has digressed into error
- some have mental incapacities that prevent them from getting a grasp on the deeper meanings of God's word