

Using Unrighteous Wealth?

Q: How do you interpret Luke 16:1-9, the Parable of the Dishonest Manager, especially Jesus' final comment: "make friends of yourself by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings?"

Answer:

- This is a difficult and interesting parable. "Unrighteous wealth" in this context simply means earthly riches. Here is what I wrote in my book on the parables:

"How is this done? According to verse 9, we are to *use money to gain friends*. It is hard to tell to whom this refers; it may point to needy persons who will go ahead of us into heaven and receive us with gratitude. It may also refer to God himself, whom we befriend with our good and generous stewardship of the resources he gave us to use.

Does this, therefore, teach that salvation is gained by works, by the wise use of money? No. Jesus simply says that those who wish to anticipate eternity in heaven, and who would be shrewd and diligent in preparation for it, will certainly use their money with an eternal end in mind, gladly and enthusiastically giving it for the spread of the gospel and the relief of the poor and suffering. We are saved by faith, not by money or good works; yet our use of money and our works demonstrates whether or not we have real faith and they secure for us "treasure in heaven" (Mt. 19:21). Some people think that a pursuit of heavenly gain is an unworthy motive for godliness in this world, but Hebrews 11:6 assures us that believers who seek to please God do so because they "believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

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