

The Shrewd Manager



God's Abundance (Part 20)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you as we draw near to the close of another week. I've been emphasizing that God makes His abundance available to us for two main purposes. First, that God Himself may be glorified through it; not for our own glorification or satisfaction, but that God may be glorified. Second, that we may use abundance not for selfish ends, but for every good work. This is emphasized in the New Testament—God makes His abundance available to us for every good work.

In my previous talks this week I've specified various good works for which God expects us to use the abundance He makes available to us. And these are three good works that are specified: First to help the poor, especially widows and orphans. Second, to repay our debt to the Jewish people to whom we owe our entire spiritual inheritance. Third, to bring the Gospel to all nations on earth. In my talk yesterday I reminded you that the last words that ever fell from the lips of Jesus on this earth were, "...to the ends of the earth."

That's where the heart of the Lord was. That is what He imprinted on the minds of His disciples, that they were not to rest until they had been His witnesses and carried the Gospel message to the ends of the earth.

In my closing talk on this theme today I'm going to illustrate the way God wants us to use money from a very unusual parable that Jesus related—The Parable of the Shrewd Manager. It is sometimes known as the Parable of the Unjust Steward. What's unusual about this parable is that Jesus takes an example of a man who did something that was unethical and wrong and yet in a certain sense He holds that man up as an example that we should follow. So I'm going to read the parable first and then I'm going to try to show you in what way this man is an example for us to follow specifically in the use of money. The parable is found in Luke 16, verses 1–9:

> "Jesus told his disciples: 'There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed

> to beg—I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. That manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' 'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.'" (NIV)

Now that's the application—the last verse. The words of Jesus and it's addressed to us as believers, "I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it [the worldly wealth] is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." It's based on the pattern of the shrewd manager. Because he was going to lose his job and he wasn't going to be able to support himself any longer, he wanted the other people to welcome him into their homes. So he called them all in and he reduced the debt that they owed to his master so that they were, in a sense, in his debt and that when he was fired from his job he'd be able to go and say, "Listen, I saved you four hundred gallons of olive oil, or two hundred bushels of wheat, so now you receive me and take care of me because I'm not able any longer to provide for myself."

Now that's the story. And Jesus said this manager was shrewd. In fact He says, "The children of this world are much shrewder in their own area than the children of light." Now Jesus commended this manager not because he was dishonest, but because he was shrewd. In what way? He recognized that one day his strength and his resources would fail. Now that's true of you and me. One day our strength and our resources are going to fail. One day we are not going to be able to work. One day maybe we will not be able to accept responsibility for ourselves. Now what did the manager do? While he still had money—and it wasn't his money but his master's money but he had control of it—while he still had money he invested it in people who would receive him when his own resources had failed. Let me give you one piece of advice. Ultimately the best investment of money is in people, not in things. Bear that in mind.

Now let's apply this parable to our use of money as Christians. First of all we need to realize that our money is not really ours. We are only managers. It's committed to us by God but it doesn't belong to us. We're in the same position as that manager. Secondly, our money is only at our disposal for a limited time. One day we are going to be like the manager. We're going to come to the end of what we can do for ourself. Thirdly, if we invest our money only in temporal things we will have no eternal return from it. When we're fired from our jobs, in terms of the analogy, we'll have no where to go. We'll have spent our money and there will be nothing left of it. Fourthly, if we invest our money in the eternal welfare of other human beings, they will be there to welcome us when we pass from time to eternity. Jesus said, "They will receive you into eternal dwellings."

This is the real essence of this parable; that we can invest our money in people now in time in such a way that they will be in our debt and one day when we pass out of time into eternity, they'll be there to welcome us. They'll say, "It was you money that made it possible for me to get to heaven. I'm here before you to welcome you. Thank you for the way you used your money." Can you see the principle? Invest your money in people and their eternal welfare. One day when you're out of a job and you come to the end of your own strength and your own resources, when you step out of time into eternity, there will be people there to welcome you, because you invested your money in people—not in things, not in yourself, but in the eternal welfare of people. That's the best investment any of us can ever make of our money.

Let me just recapitulate briefly the ways that I've suggested out of scripture in which we can legitimately and scripturally invest our money in people. First of all, in helping the poor; especially the widows and orphans. You can invest in an orphan. You can save a life, maybe from degradation and shame. You can perhaps provide a Christian home or a Christian education. That young boy can turn out into a man, a servant of God, who maybe will win many souls for the Lord. And one day in eternity those souls will be credited to your account. It was your investment that made them possible. I'm talking from a particular situation in my life in which that happened.

Secondly, we can invest our money in people by repaying our debt to the Jewish people. Bear in mind that what we do for them will be reckoned as done to Jesus Himself. In the story at the end of Matthew 25 when the King comes to judge the nations, He judges them by the way they have treated His brothers. And it says in Matthew 25:40:

> "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you

did for me.'" (NIV)

Whatever we do for the Jewish people of good and with a right motive, with a pure heart, one day will be reckoned to our account as having been done to the Lord Jesus Himself.

The third way I spoke about was taking the Gospel to all nations on earth. Let me just read to you John's vision of the redeemed in the 5th chapter of Revelation, verses 9 and 10. This is his vision of the redeemed in Glory.

> "And they sang a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with you blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will) reign on the earth.'" (NIV)

For many years it's been impressed upon me that when the company of the redeemed is complete, there must be representatives among them from every tribe and language and people and nation. The Church of Jesus Christ cannot be complete until there is at least one representative in it from every tribe, language, people and nation. If we invest our money in conveying the message of the Gospel, especially to those tribes, languages and nations that have never yet received the Gospel, then out of them will come those that will be redeemed through their faith in Christ. And one day in the presence of God in eternity they will be reckoned to our account. They'll be there to welcome us into eternal homes, because we wisely invested our money in people.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday. I'll be sharing with you on another rich and inspiring theme from God's Word.

Radio Program

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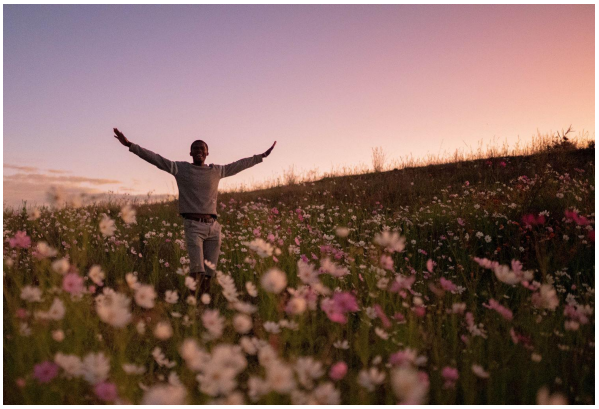

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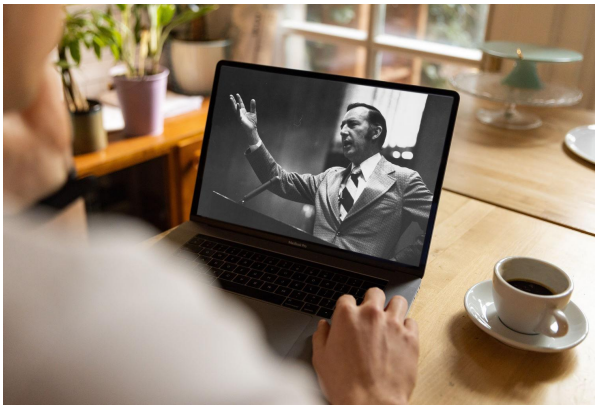

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