

Beware of the Christian Religion - Unfaithful Stewards (Part 1)

by Phil Beach Jr.

The Christian religion can be a snare and a danger if it becomes an outward devotion rather than a personal encounter with God, and we must be aware of the weights that hinder our hearing and respond to God's voice with obedience.

Duration: 1:21:10

Scripture: Luke 13:34, Luke 16:1

Topics: "Religion", "Personal Encounter with God", "Stewardship"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the critical need for personal encounters with God over mere religious observance, warning against the dangers of being unfaithful stewards of God's gifts. He highlights how Jesus weeps for those who reject His call and fail to recognize their need for Him, urging believers to listen for God's voice and respond with obedience. The sermon stresses that true faithfulness involves acknowledging our shortcomings and actively seeking God's grace to fulfill our stewardship. Beach Jr. calls for a deep introspection of our lives to ensure we are not merely practicing a hollow religion but are genuinely engaged in a relationship with Christ.

Transcript

Lord, we stand in your presence, and we need to be low in your presence. We need to be broken in your presence, Lord. How we need to bow so much lower than we have thus found, Lord.

Lord, we pray that this morning you would give us ears to hear the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, and that in giving us ears to hear, Lord, you would have strong dealings with us, Lord, so that we can be able to more fully enter into the cry of your heart in this very critical hour that we're living in. Lord, we are so dependent upon you, and so dependent upon your Holy Spirit and your grace, and we want to acknowledge that this morning, Lord, that we just are so aware, Lord, that without your help, Lord, we most certainly couldn't go on. And we pray, Lord, that if we're not there yet, where we realize that without your help we could not go on, that you would bring us there quickly, because, Lord, we know that's the only place of safety.

The only place of safety, Lord. And so, Lord, we ask for your help this morning. We can't hear unless you give us ears to hear.

We can't speak unless you give us utterance. We can't understand unless you give us understanding. And so we look to you, Lord, for that grace this morning.

And we pray, Lord, in your wonderful name, Lord, amen. It's good to be in the presence of the Lord, and it's good to look to him for our help this morning. The Lord loves us so very much that he thinks about us all the time.

Isn't that a happy thought? He thinks about us all the time. And sometimes he rejoices when he thinks about us, and sometimes he weeps when he thinks about us. This morning, with the help of the Lord's grace, we're going to look at some of the reasons why when the Lord looks at us, he weeps.

We're going to need help this morning by God to hear. We're going to need help. And so we ask again that the Holy Spirit will give us ears to hear.

He weeps because he loves. That's the only reason that he weeps. Luke chapter 16.

Actually, let's begin in Luke chapter 13, excuse me, verse 31. You'll have to forgive me, and I do ask you to forgive me if you've come here this morning. Hoping to hear a traditional Easter message, I do believe we're going to touch on something this morning that will result in our hearts being thankful that our Lord was raised from the dead.

But that'll come at the end. You see, beloved, we sang a song. I believe that was the song that you provided for us.

The guilty ones. Yeah, that we heard Lorenzo saying. You see, dear ones.

Our apprehension and appreciation of the fact that our Lord was raised from the dead hangs upon something that we yet have entered into in the fullest measure that the Lord wants in order to rejoice that Christ has risen from the dead. We must understand that, as the song says, we are the what? The guilty ones. Okay.

Luke chapter 13, beginning with verse 31. This helps us to understand something of the heart of the Lord. All right? The same day there came certain of the Pharisees saying to him, Get out and depart, for Herod will kill you.

And he said to them, Go you and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils and I do cures today and tomorrow. And the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk today and tomorrow and the day following, for cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

Now listen carefully, Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the prophets. Now, a better translation would be this, Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which continuously kills the prophets and stones. A better translation would be and continuously stones.

This is not a one time ordeal here. This is a continuous thing. So let's read that again in light of that better translation.

Oh, Jerusalem, wait, wait, wait. Who is Jerusalem here? God's people, right? Is he talking about the heathen nations now? Is he talking about people who had no knowledge of God's law and God's word and God's heart? No, he's talking about those who had been entrusted with the very oracles of God. Now listen, listen, brothers and sisters, we're touching on something that makes Jesus weep.

Remember earlier we mentioned that he loves us so much he always thinks about us. And isn't that true? When you love someone a lot, you think about him a lot. We've all experienced that.

You think about him a lot. You daydream about him. Well, Jesus thinks about us a lot.

He thinks about you a lot. And sometimes he laughs and sometimes he rejoices and sometimes he weeps. This is what makes him weep.

Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which continually kills the prophets and continuously stones them that are sent unto thee. How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not. Now Jesus here is giving us an illustration.

And I have read that when there's danger, a chicken will open up her wings and all her little chicks will come and run under there. And it has been reported, according to the book I read, that if the barn where they live was on fire, the mother hen would open up her wings and all the little chicks would come under and she would burn to death and her little chicks would stay alive. This is what Jesus is saying here.

I would have been your shelter. I would have been your everything. I would have I would have taken you.

Listen, listen, young people. I would have taken you and I would have placed you under my wings and there you would have been safe. And I would have taken the brunt of the danger and the pain and the fire.

But ye would not. You would not behold, because you would not. Here's what Jesus said to Jerusalem.

Your house is left unto you desolate, desolate. You remember last week we touched on the beginning of a series of messages entitled Beware of the Christian Religion. And we saw how last week God always begins when he starts to move with calling our name.

It is a personal call from God to us. We learned how God called Abraham's name. God called Isaac's name.

God called Isaiah's name. God called Paul's name. God called Peter's name.

Everything starts in our journey with the Lord, not with joining a religion called Christianity, brothers and sisters. It's not religion. This is a concern on the Lord's heart, because religion is a great snare and a great danger, even lurking in our very midst.

It's religion. It's a Christian religion. The beginning of God's dealings is not committing yourself to some kind of a Christian religion, brothers and sisters.

It's hearing God call your name. It is a personal encounter with God. And without it, devotion to an outward religion is mere lip service.

It's lip service. You remember the prophet's heart cry to Israel? Let's go there for a few moments. We're not going to even have time probably to get into what we want to talk about this morning if we go too much into detail over review.

But review is so important. Let's just go to Isaiah real quick. This is such an important matter, brothers and sisters.

The Spirit of God wants us to be alert. Do you hear your name being called? I'm not talking about weird audible voices where you wake up in the night and you hear God speaking to your ear. No, I'm talking about, is the hand of the Lord upon your life? Do you hear Him call your name? Do you hear Him say your name and question you and ask you, what are you doing? Do you hear Him rebuke you and say, this is all wrong? Do you hear Him say, your attitude's all wrong, your words are all wrong, your priorities are all messed up, your pride is out of control? Do you hear Him say, if you don't, you have no basis of hope or confidence that He's with you? Adam, where are you? Adam, remember? The very first revelation we have of God.

And when He made Himself known to Adam was He called Adam's name. Adam, where are you? What are you doing? What's going on? What happened? Adam, talk to me. Adam, tell me.

Tell me what's going on inside. Tell me what's going on inside. The Christian religion doesn't care what's going on inside.

The Christian religion just wants you to look good on the outside. Isaiah 58. Cry aloud.

Spare not. Lift up thy voice like a trumpet and show my people their transgression and the house of Jacob their sin. But every time God tried to show Israel their sin, what did they do? They killed the prophets and they stoned the prophets.

When does Jesus think about you and I and cry? When He sees the same reaction in our hearts when He tries to show us our sin and He tries to show us our unfaithfulness. He loves us so much. Remember, why does He want to show us our sin? So we could come to Him and He can lift up His wings and we can find a shelter.

Now watch. Yet they seek me daily. Beware of the Christian religion, brothers and sisters.

Please pray together with me and ask God to spare us from religion, to keep us from religion. Jesus didn't come to start a religion called Christianity. He came to make Himself known to a people, to make them alive, to make them alive to Him so that in being alive to Him they would die to all other masters and become the slave to Him alone, a love slave.

Now listen. Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinance of their God. They ask of me the ordinance of justice.

They take delight in approaching God. And so what we saw last week was that Christ speaks our name. It's a personal encounter with the living God.

Not only do we hear our name, loved ones, but we are given by God's grace the capacity to respond. Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord.

Remember we looked at Samuel? Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord. When God called Samuel's name, at first he turned to what? Religion.

He turned to the system, the established system. He turned to Eli. He didn't know what else to do.

And then finally Eli recognized it and said, listen, when you hear your name being called in the middle of the night, don't run to me. Just say, yes, Lord, thy servant is listening. Thy servant is listening.

And then, of course, we know the story. The third time God called young Samuel and finally Samuel said, yes, Lord, your servant is listening. And what happened? The word of the Lord was revealed to Samuel.

The word of the Lord was revealed to Samuel. And it changed Samuel's life forever and it changed Israel's life forever. One person, one person hearing God changed the course of history.

What would it be like if a company of people would hear God? What would it be like if a company of people would start hearing the voice of God? And so we learned God speaks our name. He gives us the capacity to hear. And then lastly, we learned that with the word of the Lord coming to us, hearing our name and having the capacity to hear comes the call to obedience.

Obedience, obeying the word of God. And we saw this in the characters of the Old Testament, a number of them that we mentioned. Then we looked in Hebrews chapter 12 and we saw the warning, the solemn warning, that in light of the fact that we are compassed about by such a great cloud of witnesses, we were encouraged and admonished by God in Hebrews chapter 12.

There's got to be a divine alerting that occurs in us when we realize that it's not about externals. It's not about devoting yourself to an external religion. It's not about devoting yourself to an external form of Christianity.

It's not about appearing outwardly that you delight to know the will of God, that you delight to come into His presence, that you delight to sing songs. It's not essentially about that. It's about the Lord speaking to you through His word and by the Holy Spirit and your life suddenly belonging to someone else.

Someone else. You don't have rights to your life. Brothers and sisters, beware of the Christian religion.

As long as you look good outwardly, you can maintain rights to yourself. That's what the religion says. Hebrews chapter 12.

We're trying to move along here so we can get to what we want to look at this morning. In light of the fact that the Lord is after a company of people who will hear His voice, we go to Hebrews chapter 12. Wherefore, seeing we are compassionate about what is so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight.

And we learned last week that we need to see this weight in relation to what we just learned in Hebrews chapter 11. We read about many, many, many men and women who were free. Listen, they were free from weights so that they were able to hear their name.

They were able to say, yes, Lord, I'm listening. And they were able to obey. And so the weight and the sin that so easily entangles us should be connected to what is it that is keeping us from hearing the Lord.

What's keeping you from hearing the Lord? What's keeping you from looking into God's Word and no longer reading it as a theology book or a story book or a history book or a book where you try and get teaching for other people? But what's keeping us from going down before God on our knees and opening up God's Word and hearing our name in the pages? What's keeping us? That's what the Lord's after. The weight. What's weighing down upon us? What's weighing down? And it's making our ears dull of hearing.

Right in the same book. Chapter 6. Chapter 5, verse 11. Chapter 5, verse 11.

The weight that so easily besets us. The sin, the besetting sin. Listen.

The thing that has gotten in between your ear and your heart. Beware of the Christian religion. Because devotion to the Christian religion is not dependent upon hearing God.

So it's okay to be devoted to a Christian religion that's all outward. It's okay if your heart's not hearing or not right with God. It's okay.

Because it looks good. Jesus weeps. When any form of this religion gets into our lives, He weeps.

And He weeps because we are at risk of forfeiting the call of God on our lives as the church. And the call of God in our lives, that's what we want to get into if we can get there, is the incredible call of being earthen vessels through whom the glory of Jesus Christ is made known to the world. Let me tell you brothers and sisters, if you don't see the purpose of your existence today to be nothing more than an earthen vessel through whom Christ is revealed, you are not hearing God.

You've lost touch with Him. You've got distracted. There's a weight.

There's an entanglement. And this is what the Lord wants to rescue us from. He wants to rescue us.

Verse 11, chapter 5, Hebrews, referring to the Melchizedek priesthood, a priesthood that Christ fulfilled and a priesthood that is yet to be fulfilled in the church. But the same problem that the Holy Spirit had with these Hebrew Christians is the same problem that He's having today. And hence, when the whole topic of the Melchizedek priesthood comes up that Christ has fulfilled and is offering to the church, we come to a brick wall.

We can't, it can't be uttered. Why? Verse 11, of whom we have many things to say and are hard to be uttered. Seeing you are dull of hearing, seeing you're not hearing your name anymore, seeing that your walk with the Lord, Hebrew Christians, is slowly degenerating, slowly degenerating into a commitment to a system.

Now the snare that these Hebrew Christians were continuously being entrapped into was the snare of trying to make their life in Jesus that they had at the new birth somehow fit into devotion to the Judaistic system, the outward system of religion. That was their snare. And they slowly were departing from Hebrews chapter 1 where it says God has spoken to us in His Son.

The whole book of Hebrews is about God speaking in His Son. God is speaking in His Son. The place to go to know what God is saying is His Son.

His Word. It's as we come to the Word and we are looking at the Son of God that we hear God's voice. But they had departed.

They were taking the living dynamic relationship that God wanted to establish with them and substituting it and forfeiting it for something else. Hence, they had become dull of hearing. Dull of hearing.

Something got in between their ear and their heart. For when the time you ought to be teachers, the Holy Spirit said, Hebrew Christians, you ought to be teachers. Expounding by both doctrine as well as your life the reality of Jesus Christ.

Your life at this time ought to be a living testimony, a living expression of the Son of God with ever-increasing expression of His holy, radiant life. Being demonstrated in a lifestyle that is wholly devoted to Christ's interests. Wholly devoted to the things that concern God.

Wholly devoted to the travail. You should be travailing now, Hebrew Christians. You should be weeping.

You should be travailing for your brothers and sisters that Christ would be formed in them. You should be travailing at night. Your mind should be preoccupied with God's interests.

He said, but you've gotten dull of hearing. You've got distracted. Something got in between your ear and your heart.

Something personal. Personal has come in. Personal.

It's my life. I'm going to live it the way I want. Personal.

Personal interests. Personal desire. Personal goal.

We're going to pick up the stones. We're going to kill this word. Something personal.

An idol. Oh yeah. An idol.

An idol that God says, go ahead and serve. And in your day of calamity, what will I do? Laugh. Call on your idol.

Call on that thing. Right now, in your life, that's bigger than God's interests. Go ahead.

Call on it. Call on it. When your children are being sifted by the devil, and their souls are lusting after the things of this world.

Go ahead. Call on that idol. Call on that God that you've been serving the last ten years.

Go ahead. See if that God will help. For when the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again.

Hebrew Christians, you have forgotten what life's all about. Hebrew Christians, you've become deceived. Hebrew Christians, your religion looks really good.

Your devotion to prayer and the Word of God looks good. But your heart is far from me. And I love you too much to ignore it.

This brings us to Luke chapter 16. While you're reading there, I'd like to... While you're turning there, I'd like to read a scripture in 2 Timothy chapter 3, chapter 2. I feel the Holy Spirit is after something with our hearts this morning. But I fear that there are stones within our reach that we may pick up.

Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest and stone. And then God says in a parable, I know what I'll do. I'll send my son.

They've stoned the prophets. They've stoned... But they'll have regard on my son because he's the heir. And so God says, I'll send my son.

And what does the parable tell us? They said, oh, look, the son, let's kill him. So not only are we guilty of stoning the prophets and the messengers, but the son has come. The son, the beloved son, the son that loves the father and the one that the father loves.

The son in whom there's no guile. You say, well, I haven't stoned. 2 Timothy chapter 2. Now we're going to go to Luke.

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. You see here, the writer of Hebrews was concerned because the Hebrew Christians ought to be teachers.

They weren't teaching. They were too busy living, too busy living, but they weren't teaching. They weren't imparting.

They weren't passing on the truth. Something was more important to them. And now Timothy is being told by Paul, Timothy, Timothy, pass on.

This is, listen, this is not a passing on of doctrine. This is not a passing on of right theology. Although God knows there's a place for right doctrine in theology.

Not minimizing that. This is the passing on of something that goes far beyond right doctrine. It's the passing on.

It's the teaching of a life that has been apprehended by God, that exists for God and His interests alone. It's a life that first needs to be passed on from mother, father, to children, and then from brother and sister within the body. This isn't cute Bible studies.

This isn't cute Bible stories we're talking about. This is travail. This is weeping.

This is the lives, lives that have been ruined by the cross, devastated by the cross, lives that have been crippled by the cross, lives that can't move unless God moves, lives that can't make plans unless God reveals them. What are you passing on? What are you passing on? What do you feed in the little ones? What do we feed in the little ones? Oh God, oh God help us. Verse 3, Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

A good what? Soldier. A soldier. Well no, that's only Timothy.

He's a preacher. Is that true? No. Soldier.

Let's learn something about a soldier. Verse 4, No man that wars. Now again, no man that is continuously warring.

Continuously. What's the war here he's talking about? The war, the antagonism, the hostility that is against Christ. That is against those who see Christ as the reason to live.

And those who by grace and mercy and the Holy Ghost attempt to find their existence and meaning of life in Christ Himself as the reason why I live. The warfare. It's not a warfare to maintain an external Christian religion.

It is a warfare to maintain a heart where Christ is enthroned as Lord and King and Christ and God and Master and Chief Executive Officer. Where He calls the shots. And it's His government in our lives.

Oh, but I've lost sight of that warfare. Have you? Okay. For no man that wars entangles himself.

Uh-oh. Entangle. That's the same idea as in Hebrews chapter 12.

The sin that so easily, what? Besets. Now here we have an entanglement. What's going on here? There's a great, great issue at hand here brothers and sisters.

A great issue. There's a, listen, listen. There is a war for your soul.

Even if you're a Christian, we're going to learn that in a few moments. Even if you're a Christian, it's more than just entering into the Kingdom. It's possessing the Kingdom.

And we're not talking about possessing cities for Jesus. No. That's not what the Lord's after.

It's laying hold of and pressing toward the mark. Now that I'm in the Kingdom, Christ is my inheritance. Christ in His fullness in my life.

But not only in my life, in the life of the body together. Christ. That's the battle, the war.

And anything, anything that the enemy can use to distract us from that goal. Anything he can use to distract our hearts from seeing Christ is our goal, he will do. No man that is warring entangles himself with the affairs of this life that he, okay, we're going to read this parable, and we're going to make some observations.

And this is going to help us understand what the Lord is after this morning. What he's after in the, in our hearts. What he's after for his people.

Luke chapter 16. And he said also unto his disciples. There was a certain rich man which had a store.

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 you? Give an account of your stewardship. For thou mayest be no longer store.

Then the store said within himself, What shall I do? For my Lord taketh away from me the stewardship. I cannot dig and I'm ashamed to beg. I am resolved what to do.

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. And said unto the first, How much owest thou my Lord? And he sent a hundred measures of oil.

And he said to him, Take the bill and sit quickly and write fifty. Then said he to another, How much owest thou? And he said a hundred measures of wheat. And he said, Take your bill and write fourscore.

Verse eight, The Lord commended the unjust store, because he had done wisely. For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. First of all, the key verse in understanding what the Lord is after here is verse number eight.

The key verse, The Lord commended the unjust store, because he had done wisely. For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. The key thought is in verse number ten.

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. Verse twelve, And if you have not been faithful in that which is another man's, how shall you be given that which is your own? Verse thirteen, No servant can serve two masters.

For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Let's just make a few observations here.

Listen, Jesus was dealing with the people. And in the context here, he's talking about the lost coin. He's talking about the lost son.

He's talking about the lost sheep. He just got done talking to Pharisees who he said justify themselves before men. But God knows your hearts.

Listen, he's talking about people who say, I'm okay because I'm devoted to a good religion. He's talking to people who say, Hey, I thank God that I'm like the publican because I am devoted. That's what he's doing now.

Now watch here. This parable is so powerful and just filled with ministry that the Lord would want to give to each one of our hearts if we don't pick up the stone. First of all, these are the main, there's four main points to the parable.

Break it down so very easily so you can meditate on this and get something from the Lord's heart. The first is, number one is, this man was a store. A store.

Now a store is a manager. Someone who has been appointed to manage another person's goods. He was a store.

Okay. Now, the Holy Spirit takes the word store and in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, 1 Corinthians chapter 4, Paul uses the identical word to describe himself and all believers. 1 Corinthians chapter 4, Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Now in Titus chapter 1 verse number 7, we have the same word used. Titus chapter 1 verse 7, I'm just going to turn to this if I could please real quick and read this. For a bishop or an overseer or someone who bears, listen, this is not a professional thing, this is not a hierarchical thing, this is not something that a man is appointed to by a committee.

This bishop is an overseer. It represents something that God has done in the heart of someone. It gives them the capacity to be concerned for and care for other people.

The very thing that the Hebrew Christians weren't doing, that God said they should have been doing. You should be caring for others, you should be bearing them in your heart. That should be your heart's cry.

He said here, the bishop must be blameless as the what? Steward of God. Okay, so our first point is that Jesus here is telling a parable about a stewardship that was entrusted to a certain man. Paul tells us that we have been given a stewardship.

What is our stewardship? We have been given the place of being vessels that are to what? Manifest, display, reveal. The beauty of Jesus Christ. Number two, this man had a stewardship, but he had wasted his goods.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, that it was expected that a steward should be what? Faithful. This man was unfaithful. He, listen, he wasted his goods.

His master's goods. Listen, he wasn't a proper manager of that which did not belong to him. Now it doesn't say why, but I can guess why.

Something of a personal interest got into his life. And that personal interest conflicted with his stewardship. Whenever we start viewing life with personal ownership in view, we become this unfaithful, unjust steward.

Because when we claim ownership of our lives and everything that has to do with our lives, we are wasting our stewardship, which is being a manager of what? Another man's property. The only way by the grace of God to be faithful, never claim ownership, because you're the steward of another man's goods. That's the second key thought.

You put these key thoughts together and it will help you understand the heart here of the Lord. He's unfaithful. He's a steward.

Now I just want to make note real quick. What did he say when his master said, you've become unfaithful. What shall I do? The third point, listen, the third point.

This man accepted the truth that he had become unfaithful. And number two, this is part of the third point. He accepted the truth that he'd become unfaithful and that he no longer could be steward as an unfaithful steward.

He can no longer be steward. All right, listen, brothers and sisters. We have here a man who is acknowledging the truth and accepting it.

Now listen, this is just something we don't want to dwell on, but you meditate on this. What he says, my Lord takes away my stewardship. Verse three, he says two things about himself.

And this tells us something about why he was unfaithful. This is why. Number one, I cannot dig.

Now remember when the Lord teaches about these parables, he has in view a greater meaning than the natural, something spiritual. I cannot dig. I cannot work.

I cannot labor. I cannot be diligent. No, not talking about wheeling and dealing in the business world either.

He that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is what? I can't dig. I can't be diligent. I can't work.

No, because I've claimed ownership. So therefore, my digging and my working is for what? You're digging for someone, brothers and sisters. You're laboring for someone.

Who? Who are you digging for? Then what did he say? I can't beg. I'm ashamed. Unfaithful storks, men and women who can't beg, who can't come to God.

I have nothing. Brothers, sisters, I have nothing. I need help.

I need help. Let's get together. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Maybe the Lord will minister to us. Not talking about some religious thing.

I'm desperate for God. I need the Lord. I need my brothers and sisters in my life.

I need the blessing that God commands where there's like-hearted men and women gathering because they're desperate. But we're not desperate. No.

And Jesus weeps, but he'll show us. If we don't take up those stones, I'm the unjust stork. Lastly, this man, after he realized he was a stork, he had become unjust and he accepted the fact that his master spoke the word to him.

He took action. Now remember what Jesus said. The children of this world are what? Wiser than the children of light.

And he used this parable to show why they're wiser. Listen, he took action and here's what was behind his action. Oh, brothers and sisters, listen carefully.

He took action because he accepted the fact that he'd become unfaithful. He accepted the fact that in his unfaithfulness, his Lord said, you can no longer be my stork. And he accepted the fact that because of this, he was going to be out of a job.

And so in light, listen, in light of the truth of his present situation, he took action to prepare for the future. He took action to prepare for the future. And we know what he did.

Why are the children of this world wiser than the children of light? Because when they're told by their earthly masters that they've been unfaithful in their storkship, what do they do? They go around to their friends and say, my master's wrong. My master's wrong. I'm not been unfaithful.

They say, okay, okay, I've been caught. I accept it. But I better think about what I'm going to do for the future.

And he took action and he was shrewd because when he got thrown out, he made friends with his master's debtors. And they said, hey, guy, you cut my debt in half. Come on, live with me.

I'll take care of you. And if that wouldn't run out, then he's got other debtors too. He thought ahead.

The children of this world are wiser than the children of light because when God comes in the person of his son and speaks to his church, the children of light, and says to us, you've been unfaithful in your storkship, the holy commission that I have given you, we stone the message. You don't want to hear it because our religion tells us differently. We've not been unfaithful.

And our Christian liberty doesn't trouble our conscience and trouble our hearts. Well, I don't feel I've been unfaithful. I feel pretty nice.

But the unjust store said, okay, now what am I going to do? Listen carefully. Listen carefully. Luke 16, 16.

Same chapter, same context. Same chapter, same context. The law and the prophets were until John.

Since that time, the kingdom of God is preached and every man presses into it. Another version. Luke 16.

Is it 16? Luke 16, 16. I like this version a little better. I think it seems to be a little more accurate to what the words actually say.

16, 16. The law and the prophets were until John. From that time, the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached and every man enters violently into it.

Brothers and sisters, when we understand the word of the Lord to our hearts from this parable, God will birth a violence into our spirit. And here's the nature of that violence. The kingdom of God suffers violence.

That does not simply mean that it permits violence. It really means that it calls for violence. It is men of violence that take it by force.

Luke puts it, enters violently. Now remember, why are the children of this world wiser than the children of God? Because when the children of this world are told they've been unfaithful and they're going to be taken out of their stewardship and it's going to be given to another, they take action and prepare for the future. What did Israel say when God said, you've been unfaithful in your stewardship and I'm going to take the kingdom that belongs to you and I'm going to give it to a nation that wasn't seeking me? They stoned them.

They said, we're the chosen. We're the elect. We're the ones that have God's oracles.

That's not so. We've never been in bondage to men. That's what they said when Jesus accused them of being in bondage.

We've never been in bondage to men. They were blinded by their sin. They were blinded by their pride and they rejected the message.

But when God daunts into our hearts and gives us the grace and humility to see the way he sees, this is what starts happening. And this is how we can become like the children of this world. Here is the spirit of citizenship in that kingdom by force.

Why? That is not merely an appeal to be in earnest, though it certainly includes that, seeing what a tremendous thing this kingdom is and what an immense loss will be suffered if we take it not seriously. But you see, the Lord Jesus is speaking as in the midst of things which are constantly opposing. There is a whole organized system expressing tremendous prejudice.

He said to them on one occasion, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut the kingdom of heaven against men. You enter not in yourselves, and neither do you allow those who want to enter to enter. There is everything from the devil and men to obstruct.

To enter in requires a holy and godly violence. Why does it require that? Because our Lord says we're unfaithful. You will have to make, listen, you will have to make it a desperate matter because there will be everything to stop you.

The kingdom means a very great deal more than merely getting into it, for more than being converted. There is a great deal more in the purpose of God in our lives than we have ever imagined. And if we are to enter in, violence has to characterize us.

We must desperately mean business and come to the place where we say, Lord, I am set upon all that thou dost mean for me in Christ. I'm set upon that and I'm not going to allow people, suspicions, criticisms, or anything else to get in my way. I am not going to allow any man-made thing to hinder me.

I'm going right on through with thee by thy grace for all thy purpose. I am going, here it is, here's the heart of the matter, brothers and sisters. I am going by your grace to do violence to everything that would get in the way.

Everything that would get in the way. And now, in closing this thought, the Lord Himself experienced this kind of violence and He said the kingdom suffers violence. It calls for violence.

You will not get in to begin with, and you will certainly not get in in its growing fullness unless you are one of those people who do violence to everything that stands in the way of God's full intention as revealed in Christ. You will not even know what that purpose is. God will not be able to reveal it to you, the next part of it, unless He finds that you are one after this kind entering violently.

Are you like that? Well, if we are passive, there is everything to be lost. But if we mean business by the grace of God, there's everything to be gained. The Lord make us men and women like that, lest we be numbered among those of whom it is said that they have ears to hear, but they hear not.

All right, brothers and sisters, this has been much today, I know. It's been hard, I know. But it's necessary in order for us to understand how much God loves us.

Because remember, we learned, love always tells us the truth. Now, we ran out of time, and this is only the introduction. Because now, what we'll do next time we get together by the grace of God is we're going to begin to pin down the things that are causing the condition of wasting our Master's goods.

Why are we being unfaithful to the stewardship that God has commissioned to us? And what is God's remedy to the problem? What is God's remedy? But before we go there, we want to just now spend a few moments before the Lord in prayer. Let's just bow our hearts for a moment, okay? We have a few moments. These next few moments, beloved, let's ask the Lord to help us.

Let's ask the Lord to help us to just come before Him and show us this great calling. We have been called to be stewards of Jesus Christ. But like the word says here, brothers and sisters, we are guilty of being wasters of our Master's goods.

And so let's just ask the Holy Spirit now to deal with us. And let's ask Him to begin to prepare our hearts so that we can be as wise as the children of this world, who when they are told they're unfaithful, they find out what they need to do. Do you know the Lord has a word for us? If we'll accept the fact that we've been unfaithful and we'll call our unfaithfulness what it is, and we'll confess it to Him and confess it to our brothers and sisters, God has a word for us that will make merry our sad hearts.

But we can't hear that word until we are pierced through and through with the overwhelming truth that when called to give an account of our stewardship, we have wasted our Master's goods. So Lord, in this moment, we just pray that the Holy Spirit would speak to us by Your Word and help us, Lord. Prepare our hearts, Lord.

Prepare our hearts, Lord, to receive Your truth, work deep repentance in us, Lord. And most importantly, Lord, bring our hearts back to You. Back to You.

Back to You, Lord. Lord, as You would speak to us in our hearts and You would begin, just to begin to go deeper into our lives and to begin to show us where our personal interests, something personal has gotten into our heart and it's way too big. And that's why, Lord, we've become unfaithful to Your stewardship.

Lord, I pray that You would help us as You would begin to show us this, Lord, as You would begin to reveal this to us. Help us, Lord, to see the hope that we have to come as sinners. As sinners, Lord, confessing our sins, asking for the deep work of repentance and the grace that comes when we come as

sinners.

Lord, please do this work deeply. We pray in Jesus' name. Brothers and sisters, I encourage you to read through Luke 16 over and over again and ask the Holy Spirit to extract the life and the encouragement that comes out of what seems to be a discouraging message.

It's very encouraging. It's encouraging when we come and realize the truth and then look to Jesus for help. God bless you.

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