

Titles of Christians (13)
Stewards of God
1 Peter 4:10 – 11
Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

Last time we studied the title “Farmers”; today we are going to study another title of Christians, the 13th title, which is based on 1 Peter 4:10–11:

^{NASB} **1 Peter 4:10 – 11** As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹ Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (NASB 1Pe 4:10-11)

Here Apostle Peter says that each Christian has received a gift from God, and we ought to use that gift to serve one another. And we are to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

Yahweh God grants us different gifts, and they are not for us to boast about or to gain benefit for ourselves, but these gifts are to serve fellow Christians, and to bring glory to God through Jesus Christ.

For example: Some people have the gift of preaching; they can preach the word of God clearly and powerfully, so they can use this gift to proclaim the word of God. Some people have the gift of administration to take care of the administrative work in the church. Some people have the gift of music and dance, and can lead people to worship God with music and dance. Some people have the special gift of encouragement, so they can encourage and comfort those who are devastated and demoralized.

Many years ago Pastor Bentley and I were preaching the gospel in Asia, and there was a brother in the church who was very good in cooking. He liked to invite non-Christian friends and church brethren to come to his place for dinner. While he was preparing the dinner, the church brethren would share with the non-Christians about their experience in Yahweh God. That is how this brother reaches out to the non-Christians.

I knew a Christian sister who liked to take care of the weak and the sick. She was full of compassion, and she would always try to find ways to help people who are in need. She worked in day time, in the evening she would go out to visit the weak and the sick. She would clean up the house for them, sometimes even cooked for them if they were too weak to cook. If someone was very sick, she would even take days off from work to visit them or take them to hospital. Some of the sick people she helped were Christians, and some were non-Christians. She wanted to spread the gospel of Yahweh God to everyone with love and care, not just by words.

You may think that this sister must be quite rich and very strong physically. No, definitely not! She was not rich at all, indeed she was poor, she was just a cleaning lady who cleaned houses for people. And she was not strong, for she herself was weak and had all kinds of sickness. But she would never let her physical sickness hinder her from caring for other people. She was always full of love and the power of God; surely she had glorified Yahweh God through the work she did.

After you have heard these two stories, do you want to be a good steward of the grace of God? What kind of qualities does a good steward need to have?

1. A good steward has to be wise

^{NASB} **Luke 16:1 – 13** Now He was also saying to the disciples, “There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and this *steward* was reported to him as squandering his possessions. ² And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’ ³ And the steward said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg. ⁴ I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the stewardship, they will receive me into their homes.’ ⁵ And he summoned each one of his master’s debtors, and he *began* saying to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶ And he said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ ⁷ Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ And he said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’ ⁸ And his master praised the unrighteous steward because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light. ⁹ And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. ¹⁰ He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. ¹¹ If therefore you have not been faithful in the *use of* unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true *riches* to you? ¹² And if you have not been faithful in *the use of* that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³ No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and

love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Luk 16:1-13 NASB)

Please refer to Pastor Eric Chang’s sermon on this parable at www.christiandc.org for a detailed exposition; I will not repeat his exposition here.

Here the Lord Jesus is using this parable to teach us. This steward had reduced the amount that the debtors owed his master but he did this without telling his master. When the master found out, he could have put the steward in prison, but he did not. Instead he even praised the steward in v.8, “And his master praised the unrighteous steward because he had acted shrewdly.” I was very surprised when I first read this parable many years ago. I wondered why it was like that. This is very strange! Are you surprised?

In order to understand this parable, we have to look into the Law in the Hebrew Bible. The Law stated specifically that when the Jews lend money or other things to their fellow Jewish brethren in Israel, they were not to charge any interest at all, because it was their responsibility to take care of the Jewish brethren. They charge interest only when they lend to Gentiles, the non-Jews.

^{NASB} **Exodus 22:25** If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest. (Exo 22:25 NASB)

^{ESV} **Leviticus 25:36 – 37** Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you. ³⁷ You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit. (Lev 25:36-37 ESV)

^{NASB} **Deuteronomy 23:19 – 20** You shall not charge interest to your countrymen: interest on money, food, *or* anything that may be loaned at interest. ²⁰ You may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your countrymen you shall not charge interest, so that the LORD (Yahweh) your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess. (Deu 23:19-20 NASB)

These three passages state specifically that Israelites are not to charge interest from their fellow Israelites. It is only when they lend to foreigners that they could charge interest.

In the parable in which the steward reduced the amount of debt for the debtors, he was only reducing the interest, but did not touch the capital. The debt of 100 measures of oil was reduced to 50 measures, because the capital was only 50 measures, the other 50 measures was the interest. The

debt of 100 measures of wheat was reduced to 80 measures, because the capital was only 80 measures. When the master found out, he couldn't do anything about it because he himself had violated the Law by charging interest to his fellow Jewish brethren; that's why he didn't do anything against the steward. And when he saw that the steward had made friends with the debtors by reducing their debt, he simply commended the steward for his wise move.

In Luke 16:8 the Lord Jesus said, "And his master praised the unrighteous steward because he had acted shrewdly." This steward was unrighteous because he had squandered his master's money. Certainly the Lord would not want us to imitate the way he squandered the money, but the Lord says this steward had acted shrewdly, and the Lord wants us to learn from his shrewdness. But what is his shrewdness?

According to the Bible, shrewdness is not simply being smart and fast; a shrewd person is someone who fears Yahweh God and obeys Him.

^{NASB} **Proverbs 3:7** Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear Yahweh and turn away from evil. (Pro 3:7 NASB)

Both the word "wise" here and the word "shrewd" come from the same Greek word "φρόνιμος" (*phronimos*); it is translated into two different English words, but the original meaning of this word is unchanged.

This passage, Proverbs 3:7, says that you shouldn't think you are smart, that's not wise in the Bible. A truly wise person fears God and turns away from evil.

^{RSV} **Matthew 7:24** "Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock (Mat 7:24 RSV)

Here the Lord Jesus says that a wise man is someone who hears his words and does them. Such a person builds his house upon the rock; his foundation is rock solid, and cannot be removed.

Now we consider the steward in the parable. When his master charged interest to his fellow Jewish brothers, this steward had certainly assisted his master, but that was against the Law of Yahweh God. When he knew that he was going to lose his job, he quickly reduced the interest for each debtor's debt, that was his repentance.

In Luke 16:9 the Lord Jesus says, “Make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.” Because his master was doing things against the Law, therefore the money was unrighteous. Now this steward used the unrighteous mammon to make friends with the debtors, which is a wise move for his own future.

Actually not just money, even our health, our wisdom can pass away. I have been serving God since thirty some years ago; at that time I was translating from English to Chinese and Vietnamese for the old aunties and uncles during the Sunday worship. I was able to translate fast and accurately, all the aunties and uncles liked me a lot. But nowadays, my health is weak, my mind is slow, and quite often I even forget words. I can no longer translate as fast as before, so even the gift of translation is passing away.

Today I preach the gospel online in three different languages, and my messages reach a lot of people in many different countries. Even though one day I myself will also pass away, I have used the gift to help a lot of people; but the work I have done will never pass away, it is stored up in heaven.

Now let’s sum up the points we have studied. The first quality of a good steward is to be wise. In the Bible, to be wise is to fear Yahweh God and to live according to His word. A good steward has to use the gifts from God wisely, which means to use them for the work of the kingdom of God and according to God’s will.

2. A good steward has to be faithful

^{NKJ} **1 Corinthians 4:2** Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. (1Co 4:2 NKJ)

The second quality of a steward is to be faithful. How is a faithful steward like? In verse 10 of the parable, Luke 16:10, the Lord said, “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.”

Here the Lord teaches us to be faithful in everything that Yahweh God entrusts to us, whether it is a small thing or a big thing. We shouldn’t think that something is a very minor thing, so that we don’t have to work too hard on it. No, the Lord says he who is faithful in a little thing will also be faithful in a big thing. He who is unrighteous in a small thing will also be unrighteous in a big thing. In this verse the Lord points out that faithful is the opposite of unrighteous.

The Love of money

At the end of the parable of the unrighteous steward, in Luke 16:13, the Lord says, “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

We have to watch out for the love of money. The Lord Jesus says we cannot love both God and mammon. If you love money, you will hate God. If you hate God, you definitely cannot serve Him, and you would become a servant of unrighteousness

^{NASB} **1 Timothy 6:10** For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1Ti 6:10 NASB)

The love of money is very dangerous; Judas was one of the twelve apostles, yet he rebelled against the Lord Jesus, betraying him for just 30 silver coins.

Conclusion

Now let's sum up everything. Today we have studied the title “Stewards of God”. Christians are to be stewards of God. Yahweh God has granted us different gifts; we are to use these gifts to serve one another. It is in serving one another that we serve God, and then Yahweh God will be glorified through Jesus Christ.

A good steward needs to have these two qualities:

1. First we have to be wise: we use the gifts that God gives us for the work of the Kingdom of God, and we use them according to His will.
2. The second quality is being faithful: we don't use the gifts of God for our own benefit, but to serve His will.

^{NASB} **Matthew 24:45** “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? (Mat 24:45 NASB)

If Yahweh God sees that you are faithful, He will give you the task of feeding His household with the spiritual food at the proper time. What an honor!

We should never love money, for the love of money is the root of all evil. If you love money, you will wander away from the faith and pierce yourself with many griefs.

Stewards of God

All my sermons transcriptions are uploaded to
www.gospelandsalvation.com