

Luke 16

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Title: Understanding our accountability to God!

Most Christians realize we're accountable to God. Many of us are mistaken as to what that means. The good news is God is not going to list our sins and ask how we plead? I'd argue the only correct answer is, "I am pleading His grace alone!" Trying to argue how worthy we are is always the wrong answer no matter how many good deeds we have done! I suspect most of us know that, but it was necessary to get that out of my system. So, are believers judged? Yes, but the issue is what have we done with our faith in Jesus' payment? I realize many people got saved at or close to the moment of death and I am willing to bet God judges all people fairly. Our judgment affects our eternal rewards so there is motivation for us to use our lives for His glory! As I learned a long time ago, salvation costs us nothing, but the rest of our lives after that will cost us everything!

The reason I am getting into all this is the text in Chapter 16 is all about accountability to God. Realize Jesus does not just say, "Believe in my sin payment and I'll see you in the next life!" Instead, Jesus tells us a lot about accountability in the text here. I encourage you to read further as it'll affect us in the next life. I admit, I ponder how God can judge all the world at one time? I figure if God's god we don't have to worry about how He works.

With that said, let me discuss Chapter 16. The first story is about a dishonest manager for his boss. He got caught cheating and pondered what will I do after I'm fired? To secure another job he talks to those who owe money to his boss. The cheater figured maybe he'll get a new job with someone he conspired with! I realize the story has a bunch of dishonest people, and Jesus doesn't condone the dishonesty. The issue is the fact that non-believers are smart on handling being fired! Jesus is teaching wisdom on how we should deal in "business" (without cheating) to be witnesses to others. The issue is accountability as we will be witnesses to nonbelievers, as again we're accountable to God how we lived as believers.

By Verse 10 Jesus "pounds the pulpit" about being honest in life. The Old Testament book of Proverbs has some versus dealing with honesty in the world. His point is if we can't be trusted with money, then how can we be trusted with what matters eternally (being a good witness for God)? For the cheater we read about in the opening verses will those cheated with him trust him discussing eternal matters in the future? I realize no one is perfect and apologizing for mistakes is necessary. Jesus ends that four verse section by saying we can't serve God and money. Jesus gets that people need to make a living and He's not against enjoying life or planning for retirement. The issue is what are our obsessions in life? Is our primary concern being a good witness for Jesus or just making money? In Chapter 12, Jesus made up a story about a rich man wanting to build a bigger barn as he was out of space to store his stuff. Again, it is not anti-planning for our future, but to keep God in mind because we're accountable to Him!

At that point Jesus turns his attention to some devoutly religious people in the audience. Apparently, it hit hard (the parable about the dishonest manager) because the religious leaders thought making money is proof of a successful life! There is nothing wrong with being financially successful and some people in the bible had great wealth. Jesus is condemning putting wealth ahead of one's relationship with God. Jesus condemns such thinking because we must remember God is perfect and none of us are, so it does not matter how many good deeds we have done in terms of our entrance into heaven. Such deeds must only be considered as a witness to God as believers and that's what we're accountable for!

In Verse 16, Jesus makes an interesting point about life up to John the Baptist. Now that Jesus is here, He's preaching salvation by trusting in His sin payment alone. Jesus then says, everyone is forcing their way into heaven! Let me explain that one: Jesus doesn't mean one has to work hard to be saved! That's a contradiction of the Gospel message of salvation by faith alone. What He's referring to by struggling, is religious people struggling with hard works, thinking that's what salvation requires. Too many of the "religious people" in the world ignore the Gospel and falsely think hard work is needed to be saved.

Jesus then adds the point that every point of the law is necessary to be saved. To use a classic Christian expression, there are two ways to get saved, never sin once in one's entire life and the other is to accept Jesus perfect payment for our sins.

Of all things Jesus in Verse 18 jumps into a quick line about divorce. A little background would help at this point. There was an ethics battle among religious Jewish people at that time. One view was a man could divorce a woman over the slightest thing. The other extreme no divorce for a religious Jewish man is allowed (I'm oversimplifying it). Jesus used this illustration as I suspect many there were divorced as their wives "didn't please them", so Jesus used that as an illustration, of why being devoutly religious isn't the right way to be saved!

The last 12 verses is a famous bible story of "The Rich Man and Lazarus (a beggar)" Some argue that's not a parable and it is an actual story. I lean towards actual story, but if I'm wrong, so be it. The basics of the story is an unnamed rich man had a very good life, and Lazarus hung out outside the gate of that rich man. One of the things that fascinates me about the story is the rich man is never named by name! Some argue it represents condemnation after being judged. The fact Lazarus was named indicates that he was saved. It is important to understand the Christian concept that no one was admitted into heaven until after Jesus paid the price for sin. Therefore, people saved before then were kept in a safe place till Jesus did His deed!

The next thing that fascinated me was even though they were both taken by angels to that place, there's a big separation (deep canyon) between where the rich man was and where Lazarus was. Jesus said the poor man was in "Abraham's bosom". The idea was Abraham is the father of the Jewish people so that means he's in charge of protecting the saved until again Jesus paid the price for sin! What is interesting is the rich man was in shouting distance of Abraham, and he could hear and respond to the request that the rich man was making! It also implies people can talk in hell!

What is also fascinating is even though the rich man was in pain in hell, he demanded Lazarus come to relieve him of his pain as if the rich man was still superior to Lazarus. Let me pause to state Lazarus is not saved because he was a beggar nor was the rich man condemned for being rich. As we know Jesus paid for all our sins. Apparently, Lazarus is saved due to trust in God and by implication of what Jesus will do, while the rich man only cared about his wealth. Again, the issue is salvation based on what we trust in for that. This story shows God's judgment and consequences of ignoring God one's whole life.

One final thing about the story. The rich man also asks Abraham to send Lazarus back to earth to warn the rich man's brothers (again as if the rich man could order anyone around). Abraham says, if the rich man's brothers cared about salvation they should read the bible because if someone came back from the dead, people still won't be convinced just as those who saw Jesus alive and even saw Lazarus raised up from the dead (no relation) they're still not convinced. This in effect is a reminder that salvation comes by hearts being open to God's truth and our faith in Him!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on the link for the detailed study. It's still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for everyone who reads this.