

The Just shall live by Faith

Volume 2 - Study 10 '**...thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.**' Luke 14:14
C. Ronald Johnson, Christian Wilderness Press: '**...whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased;
and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.**' Luke 14:11

These are brief studies, not
“teachings” or “doctrines.”

Volume 2, Study 10

How does God View and Value Things (from heaven).

**He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; and [therefore] what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?
Micah 3:8**

As noted in other studies and explained in the Note atop the list of short studies, here we will consider a theme by the Apostle Luke in his recording the teachings of Jesus. We will begin in chapter 14 and will be going through and into chapter 17. Instead of Luke writing with his own words, as he did in the Book of Acts, in these chapters he recorded a few incidents when Jesus taught particularly about how *God viewed or valued things*.

We know that many incidents happened between Jesus and men and that Jesus taught many things to men. Jesus had come down from God in heaven; therefore, one of his duties was to inform men of what God thought of them. Yet, to do this then Jesus also had to teach men that *God thought and viewed things differently from them (us)*. Luke tells us of the kind of men to whom Jesus taught and as we proceed we shall make note of them.

Luke's theme: **How God Views and Values Things.**

Jesus' disciples were in attendance in each of these incidents and the theme was primarily for them, for through their years with Jesus a fundamental transformation of their value system was under way from man's viewpoint and values to those of heaven. The disciples, as apostles, could not become Jesus' representatives on earth for God in heaven until they could see and value things as do the Son and the Father.

Of course there is more to this high subject than contained in our little study of these chapters, yet we consider three essential teachings of Jesus: 1) *humility* and 2) *how God expects things of the world to be properly used by the apostles* and 3) *how man's values are opposite from God's values*.

- 1) This has to do with being transformed to a proper attitude (or walk) before Almighty God.
- 2) This has to do with being transformed to a proper attitude (or walk) regarding things of the world and how the apostle's new value of them should relate to fellow children of God and to all humans.
- 3) This has to do with being transformed to an acceptance and understanding of *God's attitude toward the value system of men and their world*.

For indeed, God's values are *righteous* and man's values are *not-righteous*.

Jesus spoke to Pharisees and Lawyers

Luke 14:1-4 And it came to pass, as he [Jesus] went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they [i.e. the kind of people to be invited] watched him. And, behold, there was a certain man [of their kind, perhaps invited to see what Jesus would do] before him which had the dropsy. And Jesus answering [i.e. responding to the situ-

ation] spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? And they held their peace. And he took *him*, and healed him, and let him go;

Jesus 'took him and let him go', thus we see that Jesus had physically handled the man. Yet, Luke did not tell us how, in that *how* was not in Luke's Spirit-led mind when he wrote of this occasion. Often such a healing was accompanied by celebrating and exclamations, but this happening seems to be entirely "clinical"; that is, "clinical" *for the sake of argumentation on two sides of the situation*. Obviously Jesus was in control of the situation during this dinner which had been set up to examine him. Instead Jesus was examining these men.

14:5-7 And [Jesus] answered them, [i.e. responded to their hearts and minds] saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? And they could not answer him again to these things. And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden [i.e. invited], when he [had] marked [i.e. taken note of] how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

These 'chief rooms' mean the *spaces or seats* in such a dinner, which were ranked according to worthiness among the guests. Likely there had been some little adjustments among the guests as they entered and chose their seats.

14:8,9 When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding [a very important occasion], sit not down in the highest room [spot, space, position]; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him [i.e. the host]; And he that bade thee [the host] and [with] him [the more honourable man] come and say to thee, Give this man [this] place; and thou begin [again to find a place] with shame to take the lowest room [which seat now was the only one left].

14:10-11 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room [position]; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship [i.e. the Greek word means 'glory'] in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Luke recorded Jesus' wise advice because it is what God the Father suggests and it is what He will properly reward. Just how, when, and to what degree of reward is left to God and His purpose. Jesus was addressing the religious leaders, but the disciples were paying close attention and Jesus knew they would benefit even more from his advice.

Indeed, such *expectation of the Father* sets the stage for what Luke will be sharing with us in the next several chapters as he informs of *more such essentials*.

In this study, then, 1) *humility* was an essential *value* required by God in the person with whom He works toward becoming an apostle (or other 'exalted' office).

Also Luke passed it on to Christians, for being made '**justified in Christ**' is not enough; for God will work *humility* into His child who wishes to become '**just**' to '**walk justly**' before God and men.

14:12-14 Then said he [i.e. Jesus] also to him that bade him [i.e. the host of this dinner], When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor *thy* rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed [of God]; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Note '**at the resurrection of the just**'. Jesus seemed to sense that this man '**one of the chief Pharisees**' was a '**just**' man and, much as Nicodemus had wanted to investigate Jesus, this man had planned this dinner to invite many high guests to investigate Jesus.

Sadly, today so many Christians think they know the Christ without investigating him for themselves in the Word, knowing only what they are told in church and group studies.

Not only does God expect '**the just**' to live by faith (strongly emphasized elsewhere in scripture), but '**wealthy just**' ones are supposed to direct their focus much more toward

needy folk - a fundamental aspect of the Mosaic Law (elsewhere in scripture referred to as the Righteous Law).

Moreover, note that *God Himself will bless such a one who gives his worldly possessions in a manner that pleases Him*. I repeat; this man was probably a '**just**' man, but he needed to be reminded from whence his worldly possessions flowed. If you are such a man or woman, perhaps you also need reminding.

Ah but sadly, we Christians think so much in terms of "our possessions are blessings" that we seek such blessings "as we live for God in this world". Indeed, many Christians consider good worldly blessings to be "a witness" to others that *God is good* and that *the person thus blessed is in good standing with God*. This chief Pharisee probably was caught up in this concept.

However, the Christian allowing God to work in him to make him truly '**just**' shall become *a yearning one toward God* such that he or she will be looking mostly past this life (and its good things) toward '**the resurrection of the just**'. For then he or she will receive the great lasting blessing. This chief man of the Pharisees knew the Law and he knew the Promise; therefore, Jesus spoke directly (perhaps privately) to him.

The thing for us to note here is how God expects 2) *the things of the world to be properly used* by the Christian whom He molds as clay toward becoming '**just**'. We will see more of it as Luke takes us further into his gospel. To continue with the theme of *humility* and *proper use of the things of this world* we now skip to how Luke ended this chapter.

14:34-35 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. (For more on '**salt**' see Volume 2, Study 8.)

God will salt the person being molded toward becoming '**just**' with *heavenly salt toward others* and it was constantly being worked in Jesus' disciples. To become even slightly like Jesus (i.e. a disciple) one must be salted from heaven with Jesus-type-salt. We see it in Jesus' compassion and meekness. Such inner God-pleasing characteristics come only from heaven, from whence Christ came and where he has returned.

Jesus spoke to Publicans and Sinners; also to Pharisees and Scribes -

Luke 15:1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

This passage records another time and place. Luke switched environments of men for to continue with his theme.

15:2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and [he even] eateth with them.

Jesus allowed wealthy *high religious men of the Law* to gather around him and to be questioned by them and sometimes he ate with them, as in the chapter above.

Jesus allowed publicans and sinners also to gather around him. Sometimes he ate with wealthy men in their homes who were wealthy by working for the Roman government which controlled the land.

However, this occasion was in public and not at a meal. Therefore, some of the Pharisees and scribes were pressing in to investigate how Jesus was conversing with low society. In fact, every Israelite loyal to the Mosaic Law classified such workers for the Romans as '**publicans and sinners**'. These are not "the poor and the downcast".

Wouldn't it be great if present day government workers would '**draw near unto him ...for to hear him**'?

15:3 And he spake this parable unto them [i.e. all were listening], saying,

The disapproving murmuring words of the Pharisees were not soft murmurings. Jesus,

the disciples, and the publicans and sinners were aware of the disapproving religious men. Jesus responded to the murmurings and spoke to all present.

15:4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over [even] one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Everyone understood and appreciated the compassion of a shepherd for his sheep. Moreover, the religious ones agreed with the need for sinners to repent and they likely agreed that there would be joy in heaven when it happened. And they surely agreed that '**just persons, which need no repentance**' were appreciated in heaven such that there was no need for continual rejoicing for them.

In this then, Jesus was referring to Jews *who had not strayed away from God's Law*. Indeed, how many Christians today (faithful ('**just**') to God and His word) are as faithful to the Written Word as were most of the Pharisees and scribes. Yet in Jewish faithfulness, most of them could not get past their faithfulness to God's Written Law to go on to God's love and compassion for lost sheep.

If Jesus ate with the poor and outcast of society then these '**just**' Pharisees would be commending him. Today we also commend religious leaders, churches, and organizations that focus on the poor. Yet, are we not also as these Pharisees? I think so. To a large degree we judge those whom Jesus does not judge. We devalue what Jesus does not devalue. We classify as "sinners" those whom Jesus does not so classify.

Here we are beginning to see 3) in that *we miss what God values because we are caught up within our own (self) righteous value system*. The three 1), 2), and 3) together make up Luke's theme.

15:8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

15:9 And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over [even] one sinner that repenteth.

Jesus brought it into focus before religious (and perhaps '**just**') men who were judging those they considered low '**publicans and sinners**'. Jesus had not come to judge religious ones or '**publicans and sinners**' and God in heaven was not judging them.

Judgment for each person was (and is) on hold until the Day of Judgment. Moreover, Jesus' disciples were taking all of this in and digesting it.

What was valued in the parables? Sheep were valued, but with an *emphasis* on the value of the particular sheep that had gone astray. Much labor was expended to gather in a lost sheep. Therefore, that labor became added to the initial expense of that particular lost sheep (perhaps making him even more special to the one that had lost him). Silver coins also were valued, especially when they were lost and much labor was expended in searching for them.

The things we value (such that we will expend even more than the usual labor on them) identify *value system*. It also reveals how we value some valued things over other valued things (in our value system). Jesus compared man's valued things to God's valued things. Jesus also demonstrated how God's valued things differ, one valued thing from another valued thing (in His value system).

The priorities in our value systems are at odds with the priorities in God's value system.

My wife and I '**live by faith**' and that may classify us as '**just**' Christians before the Lord. God expended a lot of labor through the years in pushing us little-pitiful-ones to-

ward His desired-end-for-us. He is still pushing and pushing; thus we know that He really values us. Even so, it takes much time in the Word for His Spirit to poke at us with His Word. More often than not, He knocks us in the head with His Word to gain our attention to His priorities and to His value system, for our flesh wants attention and strives to get it.

Sadly within our '**living by faith**' we get so focused on where to place each step (i.e. is the next step proper according to our knowledge of right and wrong?) that we ignore faith when it says, "Just look up." Yes, in our labor *to walk rightly before God* we typically place a *high value* on our walk simply because we *labor so much at it*. Yes, to *walk rightly* is labor. To *simply look up* is faith within rest.

Furthermore, within our labor we place a *high value* on our *knowledge of right and wrong*. Knowledge of right and wrong *has to do with living in this world*. The Tree of the Knowledge of Right and Wrong was in the Garden of Eden; yet, it was only when Adam and Eve ate of it (thus they had taken forbidden fruit within themselves) that they were put out of the garden and into the world *where there was need to know right from wrong*.

In heaven there is no need for such fruit, for such knowledge. It is for this world. Therefore, Jesus taught that the things of this world are *not highly valued* by God and in fact they are *lowly valued* by God, and thus they are things '**not-righteous**' (as Luke will tell us later).

God *lowly valued* the Tree of the Knowledge of Right and Wrong. So why was it even in the Garden of Eden? I think that God knew that Adam and Eve, with the *right to choose*, would one day *choose to do something against Him*. Therefore, they would be put out of the garden, and in the world they would need such knowledge within them.

Ah, but being in the world and choosing right-over-wrong is a '**not-righteous**' action and it is lowly valued by God. Jesus pleads to us religious-ones that we get past dwelling upon right-over-wrong and get on to that which God values.

Is there still the rebellious nature in Barbara and I as we become so very sidetracked by trying to be good that we miss the fact that '**our righteousness is as filthy rags**'? The fallen flesh in every Christian is still convinced that its best tool to please God is the working out of our Knowledge of Right and Wrong.

It was the continual problem of so many of the Pharisees, lawyers, and scribes. In their striving to become '**just**' before God, most of them missed that which God valued (as Paul in his Letter to the Romans emphasized to Christians regarding their problem).

The things that you labor for (or toward) become more and more valuable to you even as you continue laboring in them. Even though I can buy potatoes cheaper from the store, I prefer those grown in my garden. My labor in them makes them more valuable to me. What I like, I will labor toward it. That which I labor toward, I like.

That which God labors toward, He likes.

Now again consider Jesus' parable. How can one sheep of God be more valuable than another? It cannot. God expends labor for a lost sheep due to His Love and not due to one sheep being more valuable than another sheep. Everyone listening to the parable "got it"; that the nature of a loving shepherd is to expend great energy trying to find a lost sheep.

Ah, but I am a sheep and I labor much to please the Shepherd. Therefore, I find myself thinking that I am rather valuable to God and *thus very valuable in my own eyes* (the problem of the Pharisee.) But then when I spend time in the Word, and the Spirit manages to gain my attention, I really do pay attention. This, then, is my main Hope.

We are continuing with Jesus' advice for becoming '**just**' in God's eyes: 1), 2), and 3).

15:11-13 And he [i.e. Jesus] said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

You likely know the parable well and so I will leave to you to read if you like.

15:25-30 Now his elder son was in the field [working according to his father's will]: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy [righteous] commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

15:31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet [i.e. proper in the father's eyes] that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

The elder son was correct in what he said, but he was *not humble* in how he said it. This was because he was correct in his *work ethic for the father*, but *not humble toward the inheritance*. Indeed, he believed that his work ethic and attitude toward '**thy commandment**' *deserved* the inheritance and that the party given for the lost-and-found son (who had become *very humble*) demonstrated a lack of proper respect from the father toward the elder son's *faithful service*.

Consider that the inheritance to each son was due to *being born of the father* and did not depend on *good or bad work ethic*. *Faithful service* did not gain the elder son's inheritance. Yet, lack of faithful service would disqualify him from operating in his inheritance (and so there were many warnings to Jesus' disciples).

Here we also see how things of this world can be valued (and should be valued). The things that this father owned were of the world, and he well valued them. Yet, the father was willing for some of his worldly things (for which he had worked hard and which he well valued) to be squandered in the hope of saving the rebellious younger son. All that remained in the father's possession (the inheritance) belonged to the faithful elder son, as it should be.

God's desire for His children regarding earthly things is seen here -

- The elder son had *always honored* the earthly things of the father, which one day would come under his authority.
- The younger son *dishonored* the father's earthly things and demonstrated as much in squandering them, even when some of them had been given to him to do with as he pleased.
- The father *honored God in the proper use of earthly things*: 1) in giving away some of them in the hope of saving the younger son and 2) in saving and passing on most of them to the faithful and deserving son who had long demonstrated his high value of the father's things. Indeed, the elder son would become head of the family's lineage, wealth, and good name.

And hopefully, with his father's teaching and his own maturity, later as patriarch of the family the elder son would also honor God with *proper humility* and *proper use of earthly things*. Hopefully he would understand that *humility* and *proper usage* are the very *heart attitudes* that God looks for in regards to earthly things. Even so, that which is good (i.e. *righteous*) in man's eyes, is *not-righteous* in God's eyes.

Then Jesus said to his Disciples

Luke 16:1-2 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; 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 thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

In this parable the '**certain rich man**' (he will also be mentioned as '**lord**') is not the Lord Jesus or the Lord God. Even so, some similarities can be noted.

Jesus' disciples would become apostles of the Church. They would become stewards of many of the righteous things of heaven. Indeed, Jesus gave them 'keys of the kingdom' (Matthew 16:15-19, 18:18-20, and Revelation 1:18).

As apostles working on earth and in the world, if they had been *in* the kingdom of God then they would not have needed keys to get into it or to lock its gate so nothing could get in, for they would have already been inside.

As I see it, keys had to do with *authority* for the going in and going out and binding and loosing. Therefore, the kingdom of God (in other passages it is 'the kingdom of heaven') is an entirely Secure Place. Like with secure places and businesses today, the people who work there come and go having security passes, security keys, etc.

This steward had keys and had authority for going in and going out regarding the rich man's things. He had been removing some of those things into his modest abode where he fared well upon them. How often through the ages has authority bestowed upon a man or a woman been used by them to fare well on the earth, yet the authority was supposed to be for God's work toward the welfare of His children?

16:3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

There have been TV and Mega Church preachers and leaders that have thus fallen (recently a Mega Church declared bankruptcy). Then they try to return to ministry work because they can do nothing else well. In attempts to remove their shame they began a new ministry. And knowing nothing else, perhaps they are not so ashamed as to beg brethren to "save God's work".

16:4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

16:5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

These debtors owed the servant's lord who had loaned them some of his earthly goods. I find it interesting that modern preaching in many and varied ways implies repeatedly that *God owes His people* when *we are the debtors to Him*. It is not preached so simply or straightforward as stated here... but I will leave that to your consideration.

16:8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light [in their generation].

Note that acting in such a manner defined this steward as '**unjust**' (i.e. **not-righteous**, the Greek for each English word is the same). Such action did not make the steward '**unjust**'; instead, '**unjust**' persons naturally do such things. For some time this steward had been self-serving with the rich man's earthly goods.

The rich man understood men and understood the values that men put upon earthly goods. He understood the men indebted to him. He understood his own value system and their value system. He possessed many earthly goods and therefore he had become even more appreciative of *security in the world* than of the earthly goods themselves. Why work so hard to get them if they could so easily be stolen by a trusted servant?

The rich man was wise as a fox; therefore, he smiled in appreciation of the '**unjust**' doings of the '**unjust**' steward; and he commended him even as he fired him.

How, then, is this rich man and this steward (i.e. '**children of this world**') '**wiser than the children of light**'? Answer: They knew how *the things of the world* could be *properly used wisely*. The steward used the rich man's goods unwisely for himself; yet, when "push came to shove" his survival instinct took over and he wisely used the rich man's goods (though, yes, he use them '**unjustly**') to *secure* for himself welcome into the homes of the rich man's debtors. The rich man, though firing the steward, nevertheless approved of his methods.

Jesus advised that the important thing about earthly goods is *how they are used*. *Value* in God's eyes is not in the goods themselves.

Therefore, how '**just**' are Christians as they use (i.e. borrow) money from rich men (i.e. banks, family, etc.) and then when in trouble with their finances they desire to pay back as little as possible, perhaps using government invented schemes to do so? Is it '**just**' to be in debt, especially the kind that we cannot pay back in times of trouble? Many brothers and sisters in Christ (though justified in Christ before the Father) do not '**walk justly**' before Him. Many Israelites, though walking according to the law, found ways to justify in their hearts and in their society "acceptable ways" to '**walk unjustly**' before God. The Church has accepted too many of the ways of the world, and in so doing have "justified" those ways.

16:9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

Here is Jesus' teaching to his disciples. It is his teaching to you and me. Here are some definitions -

- in the Greek, '**mammon**' means *confidence based upon wealth*
- in scripture, such confidence is *of* '**unrighteousness**' ('**unjustness**') (i.e. **not-righteous**)
- in the Greek, '**fail**' actually means *omit*,
- *omit* means *to leave out*; thus, for an apostle *to be left out* (i.e. *taken out*) means that he *is no longer in the work, for he has gone to his reward in heaven* (i.e. received '**into everlasting habitations**', he is home).

To repeat: That which is *of* God and *of* heaven is '**righteous**' and '**the just shall live by faith**', etc. Here is where '**children of light**' (verse 8) become confused: we naturally think of the good things of the world (which God placed in the world) as good in God's eyes because they are good in our eyes. Jesus' disciples also were guilty of this, but by the time they entered the work of their apostleship their internal *value system* had been upgraded.

Jesus said that he had no place (home) to lay his head. He said that he was going to be with the Father and would make homes for each apostle to be there with him.

I am earthly and my '**righteousness is as filthy rags**'. Yet, that of me which is '**righteous**' rests not in my earthiness, but in my Father and in His Son and in my home awaiting me; even as it awaited each disciple to whom Jesus was speaking.

'**Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness**'. Jesus told his disciples to be friendly to (and with) earthly goods. How should they '**justly**' *the use* of '**not-righteous**' things? The entire Bible (and especially the Mosaic Law) gives proper instruction. That is, I am to desire *righteous* things of heaven and not *unrighteous* things of earth, but as long as I am earth bound I am to *justly use* earthly things. And the best way (and perhaps the only way) that I can do that is *as God humbles me before Him*. I have found that the '**walk of faith**' is more about *humility before God* than about anything else.

16:10 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.

As much as they could be, Jesus' disciples were '**faithful**' in the little things of faith and of heaven. In their apostleship they became '**faithful also in much**' in the things of God.

Eventually the unjust steward proved his unjustness; yet, he was commended by the rich

man (who nonetheless fired him) and he was welcomed into the homes of the rich man's debtors. Listening to the news lately, does this remind you of anything?

16:11-12 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon [to use it properly before God], who will commit to your trust the true riches [of heaven]? And if ye [i.e. the disciples] have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

Ah, now these two verses are scary to Christians and to their leaders (or these verses should be scary). What did Jesus' disciples take from his words about '**true riches**' and '**that which is your own**'? We know that they would receive *heavenly authority* and have access in Jesus' Name to things in God's heavenly storehouse. Yet, at the time of these words they did not know or understand any of it. So often with them, as Jesus spoke marvelous truths *they had not a clue*. But in their *God-worked humility* they simply *received Jesus' words*.

We Christians think (in our man-wrought knowledge of scripture) that we know what Jesus was talking about. But what has the modern Church comprehended of Jesus' words? Do Christians *long for and look to* our heavenly home? It seems to me that we are busy gathering good earthly (but '**not-righteous**') things and storing them in earthly ('**not-righteous**') buildings. I am not against silver or church buildings and the programs that we work in them, but where is our emphasis? Jesus said that it is a matter of *value*.

God would give the apostles heavenly authority (i.e. keys). They could take from heaven God's '**righteous**' things for God's people. In many ways Jesus did this; healing and the casting out of demons were only a few such things. Prophecy and knowledge also are such things. Yet, in the end these shall no longer be needed by God's people and only '**faith, hope, and love**' will remain (1Corinthians 13:8-13).

Also at the end: that which belonged to each '**just**' apostle had been stored away for him in heaven and he would receive it '**at the resurrection of the just**'.

16:13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate [i.e. detest, cannot abide] the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise [i.e. think against or thing lowly of] the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [i.e. 'confidence based upon riches'].

Barbara and I have come to realize that our *love for God* (whatever it has been over many years) has become simply *to hold onto Him* with His help. Many years ago a verse in Isaiah caught our attention; it goes something like '**I shall draw near unto you with my righteousness**'. Our desire for righteousness has become only somewhat realized as He is *near us with His righteousness*. In this, then, we '**hold to**' Him.

I ask every morning, "Father, be very very near us with your righteousness. We need it so much." It is our *confidence* through the day, based not upon the riches of this world, but *based upon the riches* of His righteousness. We are his little children and as much as possible we wish to sit in His righteous lap. In an insecure world, and in our aging years, His righteous lap is where we want to be.

16:14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous [the Greek means 'a fondness for silver'], heard all these things: and they derided him.

The Law's temple, priesthood, good works, etc.,etc., could not function at all if it were not for silver. If one has a fondness for the Law then one must also need a good degree of fondness for silver. Is it not true also with the Church? Yes, of course.

Jesus was speaking here expressly to his disciples. However, as in the above chapter, Luke had mentioned that the Pharisees, scribes, and lawyers were listening as well and they understood that Jesus was stating some real truths to his disciples. Now consider that these men were law-men (comparable to church-men in our day) and that they responded to Jesus' words from within their own *value system* of the law.

Jesus was speaking to his disciples who, as apostles, would only have their home in heaven and heaven's things to work with on earth. Ah, but these law-men were respons-

ible for the olden things of God upon the earth, and so they were having difficulty in comprehending the new things of heaven, which were in the very process of descending down to the earth. These men were of the old blanket of the Mosaic Law. Thus, in trying to understand the new things of Jesus' words, it was like stitching new patches on an old blanket, which patches could only tear at the old blanket and not fix it. This is why Jesus said that new had to be poured into new wine skins, for pouring the new into old wine skins would only burst them, spoiling the new and the old, which God did not want.

The vital living spiritual Church is of heaven. Yet, the earthly body of the Church (which houses the spiritual Church) is very much like the old blanket of the law in the day of Jesus. In the end, both shall be done away and the Spiritual aspect of both shall remain. Moreover, today for Christians, *the old of the flesh* strives against *the new of the spirit* in all of us.

16:15 And he said unto them [i.e. the Pharisees], Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Here is the dilemma facing all such Jewish and Christian leaders: They must value at least to some degree some things of the world so that they can lead the people in the synagogues and church buildings; and also provide buses for picking up the children, etc. Jews and Christian people want such earthly things and we want leaders that help provide such earthly things. Does not the need for silver seem obvious?

Ah, but how easy it is to gravitate from *needing* silver toward '**highly esteeming**' silver? How many Christian businessmen and church leaders see the need to possess fine and good earthly things so as to demonstrate "God's blessing upon us" to the world so as to attract people to our blessing-and-giving-God?

In verse 14 Luke stated of the Pharisees that they had '**a fondness for silver**'. The word '**covetous**' makes us think that the Pharisees were "bad", but Luke was not saying that; he was giving the reason why the Pharisees '**derided**' in their misunderstanding of Jesus.

As Jesus spoke about *his value system* to his disciples, the Pharisees were listening from within *their value system*. '**Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness**' Jesus also had said to his disciples (verse 9); now this the Pharisees understood. No wonder they were as confused as were the disciples.

'**Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness**' is to have '**a fondness for silver**'. Would you like a person to make you his friend without having a fondness for you? Of course not! Ah, but the Pharisees '**justified themselves before men** [of the world]'. To do that, the Pharisees had to convince men of the world that they *shared a common value system*. If you and a person become friends in the Lord, then the two of you have convinced each other that in the Lord you *have a common value system*.

'**God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.**' In making a person your friend, then, you need to be fond of him; but you do not need to '**highly esteem**' him. '**Fondness**' in making friends, even making friends with '**mammon**', is necessary. Therefore, the whole of scripture encourages it. Ah but in this process, where is one's '**heart**'; what is of highest *value*?

'**...that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God**'. The transfer from man's value system to God's value system, see 3) mentioned above, had to be worked in Jesus' disciples by the time they would become apostles.

Here, then, is stated the reason. It is not the person that is abomination; nor is it the earthly things. '**Abomination**' is the '**highly esteeming**'. If '**highly esteeming**' is toward God then it is blessed. If it is not toward God and His things of heaven then it '**is abomination in the sight of God**'. The disciples when considering some of the things of the world to be good, was that an '**abomination in the sight of God**'? Yes. Would it remain so by the time they became apostles? No.

Do Christians have such a problem with God? I know that Barbara and I struggle with it. Yet, one day we will be at home with Him and the struggle will have ended.

16:16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

- The prophets of the law *preached the law*.
- John the Baptist *preached Jesus as having come as Christ the Messiah*.
- Jesus Christ and his disciples *preached 'the kingdom of God has come nigh unto Israel'*. Where the KJV has 'every man' the Greek has 'all'. I suggest that this means **all that are attracted toward the kingdom, are drawn to it, and must have it; it is these that do press themselves into it**. This is like the women in the crowd (Mark 5:27,28) listening to what Jesus was saying. She decided (or was drawn) such that she must '**press**' through to touch the hem of his garment, because faith was inspiring her that there she could be healed.

16:17-18 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. [It remains true that] Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

Consider (i.e. study) all of the occurrences of the word '**law**' in scripture and you find it said that the law is '**the righteous law**'. As a law-for-Israel-in-this-world, the law pointed to and identified '**righteousness**'. If by faith an Israelite would faithfully live by the righteous-law then he or she would be pleasing in God's sight (see Hebrews 11:6).

The putting away of a wife has to do with *value*. God *values* the covenant of marriage. The man that puts away his wife *devalues* her and *devalues* what God values. It is '**adultery**' and it is '**abomination in the sight of God**'.

Here is my estimation: the man (*not previously married*) who marries the woman (whose husband devalued her and put her away) is *greatly valuing* the devalued woman. If such a marriage is inspired by God, then it is nonetheless blessed. God allowed Moses to make an attachment to the Law *that a man putting away a wife must give her a letter of divorcement, witnessed by a priest*. This letter attached to the law was to make a devalued woman nonetheless acceptable for a good and righteous man to covenant with her, to rise her up in the sight of society, and thus to save her from degradation in law-society.

Can such a situation of adultery be covered by Christ's Blood so as to receive God's compassion of approval and His blessing? It seems so to me.

With a man putting away a woman, we see '**high esteeming**' according to the world's value system. Yet, God '**highly esteems**' the woman, and so does the righteous man who would marry her. In the very midst of sin, God provides a way when one (or two in this case) is willing to seek it and is willing to '**press**' into it.

The woman who pressed in toward Jesus was healed as she followed her faith. Even so, she still had the scars left on her body. Therefore, on the one hand she had a great testimony of healing; but on the other hand she may have continued with a psychological problem in thinking herself to be unattractive. The disease of sin was gone, but perhaps not the scars of sin.

Scars may trouble the marriage I just described. But if the two seek the God of blessing then surely He will continue working that which He had begun. The God of covenants can maintain their covenant with each other and to Him, scars notwithstanding.

It has to do with *values*. And it has to do with *humility*. The *humbled* woman was made so by her husband. The righteous man in marrying her *humbly* joins her in the *humility* of living before God *in the condition of adultery - yet blessed of God*. For God will take on all that comes in the future of such a couple. (*This is my estimation.*)

Christ came down to a sinful adulterous world as the Righteous Son of God and he took on all that awaited him. He became frustrated at times, angry at times, and saddened at

times, but the Joy of his choice and his purpose was always with him. He would have it no other way.

We are still considering 1) *humility before God* and 2) *the proper use of earthly things according to God's values* and 3) *the differences between God's value system and man's value system*.

16:19-20 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

Interesting. Jesus has changed from the relationship of marriage between man and woman to a relationship between a rich man and a beggar (also between a healthy man and a beggar full of sores).

16:21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

Seeking compassion, the beggar received it from the rich man's table (crumbs) and from the neighborhood dogs (licking his wounds); and God was watching.

16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

The beggar was buried in the world-field reserved for dead bodies and the rich man was buried in his costly world-tomb. Both places of burial were '**not-righteous**'. Abraham's bosom is '**righteous**' and it is '**highly esteemed**' of heaven.

16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments [i.e. plural], and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

16:28 ...I have five brethren; [send] that he [i.e. Lazarus] may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

16:29,31 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. ...If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

God's *valued instrument* for man's salvation (at that time) was by *faith in 'Moses and the prophets'* as they dealt with God's Righteous Law, which Moses and the prophets in faith fully accepted and in the law they faithfully walked.

A man rising from the dead to again walk on this earth to give witness for God was (and is) *not of value* as an instrument of salvation to men. In fact, Jesus raised Mary's brother Lazarus from the dead; though he had an excellent testimony, God's *valued instrument* of salvation to men was not in a raised-up Lazarus or in his testimony.

God's *valued instrument* to men was the sum total of a) Christ arrived to earth, b) his walking and talking, 3) his raising, and 3) his being seated at the Father's right hand.

Moreover, on the earth and among men is the Spirit of Prophecy, which through the ages has been and is the Testimony of Christ Jesus (Revelation 19:10), which Testimony is of heaven and is directed from heaven continually.

Jesus continues speaking to his Disciples

17:1,2 Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

Note that Luke's theme began in an incident explained in 14:1. At the time there were present Pharisees, scribes, lawyers, and Jesus' disciples. All were intently listening; and after the resurrection some of them would be joining with Jesus' disciples and some would be trying to kill the disciples. Thus, here is forewarning to both.

As Luke's theme progressed in the next chapters, Jesus spoke to the disciples of the '**offenses**' that would be coming to them. So who were '**these little ones**'? Often Jesus en-

daringly called the twelve disciples '**little ones**'. Even when he would chastise them for their 'little faith' it was always endearingly '**little faith ones**'.

17:3,4 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

It is easy to recognize a brother who is a lot like us who believes as we do, though it is not always so easy to forgive according to these verses. You and I can testify to that. Ah, but who does God consider our brother and for whom does He hold us responsible? Saul who became known as Paul was persecuting Christians; thus, to them he was far from a brother. Yet, regarding Saul, God had plans for him, and for the early Christians, and for all the Church throughout the ages. Only God knows all of '**thy brothers**'. Perhaps it is why Jesus said: Matthew 5:44-48 and Luke 6:27-38.

'**Offenses**' will come to the twelve disciples from outside the Christian family and from within the Christian Family. There will be '**woe**' from God unto them who '**offend**' the apostles. Therefore, Jesus compassionately stated to the disciples that they should compassionately forgive '**the brother that offends**'. In this, then, it would be likely that God would forgive them, or at least He would lessen the '**woe**' to them whenever they, too, might offend others. (Jesus' disciples were continually being warned.)

This is so important that Jesus said '**seven times in a day**'. Elsewhere Jesus said '**seventy times seven**'. Furthermore, if a Christian forgives like this, then God is very likely to forgive him in his offenses. Here is the kind of *Christ likeness* that Jesus wanted for the apostles, as they would become examples within the early Church. How lacking is it in churches today?

We are still into what God *values*; here again is real *forgiveness which is true humility*.

17:5,6 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

Being with Jesus, the disciples by this time understood that all of it was by faith (especially since so much of it they did not understand) and they thought that they were lacking in faith. But Jesus pointed back to the parable he had taught them about the grain of mustard seed, which when planted had to grow from little unto its greatness.

'**If ye had faith**' in the Greek is better translated '**If ye hold faith**'. That is, "If ye *hold* faith even as good ground *holds* the newly planted mustard seed." Each of the disciples was presently holding newly planted faith. In their days of apostleship these words of Jesus would come true. Moreover, in heaven the Son and the Father would make it so.

Here also is God's *value* upon a Christian's *little faith*, which if he holds it dearly and lives by it; only God knows what will transpire in maturity.

If you need encouragement toward your faith then you might read my book, God's Hook "a book about Biblical faith". Download it free on this website.

Therefore and especially for apostles (no less for Christians) it was important to forgive brothers even as Jesus forgave. Not doing so throws a very large wrench into the life of a '*just*' apostle who *would live by faith* (no less for every Christian).

17:7,8 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?

17:9,10 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow [i.e. I think] not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

The Greek of '**unprofitable**' means *useless*. Consider the landowner and the servants.

The landowner is *profitable* by what he does in farming and raising and selling cattle, etc. In that sense, then, the landowner is *profitable* and the servant is *not-profitable*.

God's saving the world (by sending His Son to earth, who now sits by the right hand of the Father) is *profitable* unto Him and to mankind.

And yes, God often involves his people in the process (men, women, boys, and girls). Jesus told the soon to be apostles that in God's process of *Salvation to the World and to Mankind* that only He is *profitable*. The landowner did not need any particular servant, and indeed he could replace all of them if he wanted to. God is not just a landowner. He is Almighty God, Creator of all things. He can speak and anything He wants is done.

Ah, but does the Creator *love* His servants? His Son came and died for them! So where are God's *values*? He *values* the world and mankind; He *values* you and me. But the Son has warned us about *how much we value ourselves* if perhaps God should insert you or me in a small way into His Salvation of the World.

Humility is the way in which we should walk, for God places much *value* upon it. For *true humility* is not of man; it is of God. If God has put something of heaven in you (Biblical faith is one such thing), and if you honor and walk by that something, then God will honor it even as it motivates you. In this, then, He honors you.

17:11-16 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up *their* voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on *his* face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

17:17,19 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine? There are not found [them] that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

All of the lepers had *faith enough* to cry out to Jesus. All had *faith enough* to rush over to the priests to give testimony. But only one *in faith* turned to glorify God and worshiped at the feet of Jesus in thanksgiving. Here is a clue to that which is *profitable in the eyes of God*.

Jesus said that the landowner's servants were *not-profitable* by *doing their duties well*. But what if they *loved* the landowner in all that they did? Would it please him? And what if they praised the landowner whenever they were sent out into the world on errands? Would this put the thought of the good landowner into people's minds, recommending the landowner as a good and fair man? Would this profit the landowner? Yes, and it might encourage some folk, but infuriate others. However, the landowner can handle himself.

A *walk of duty* to God is the Christian's duty. But the *walk of faith in humility* (when energized by *the Spirit*) points to God as *the Source* of such *humble faith*.

Some folk, then, are encouraged by it and some are turned off by it. Yet, know that *it is the Spirit that is doing it from heaven*. In regards to Biblical faith, this is wholly true for you as well. It is why I wrote God's Hook, to encourage brethren in their faith.

When I am working things then I may receive praise of men and my little head swells. Jesus warned me about that.



The things of the world, which we consider good (and are described as good for us in the Bible), are nonetheless *not-profitable* in God's eyes. What is *profitable to God*? It is when, as the Spirit might lead, we give good but *not-righteous* things of the world to others. In other

words, not things, but *the giving* as energized by the Spirit *is profitable in the eyes of God*.

What you do for God is not-profitable; but what you do as energized by the Spirit is profitable, for such actions are *mostly of the Spirit*.

In other words, God brings glory to Himself. If He uses you in the process then it is He that is profitable and not you. Here is *heaven's humility worked in you*. And here is *God's benevolence to the brethren* as worked through you. Both are to His glory.

Doing good is your *duty*. Being good is your *duty*. God doing Good through you and Being Good within you... that is *profitable in God's eyes*.

Inspired by the Spirit, as a theme Luke wrote the New Testament passages above, which contain the words and teachings of Jesus for religious men, for lost men, and for his own disciples.

Inspired by the Spirit, Micah wrote in the Old Testament -

Micah 6:3-8) [God speaking] **O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam [to lead and teach you]. [And] O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; [so] that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.**

[Micah speaking] **Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? [or any of my good works?] ...**

He hath shewed thee [by Moses' Law], O man, what is good; and [therefore] what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Jesus constantly hammered away with this very theme to his disciples, to the men of the law, and to anyone following him. Study the book of Genesis and you will find God stressing the theme to men and God working the theme into men.

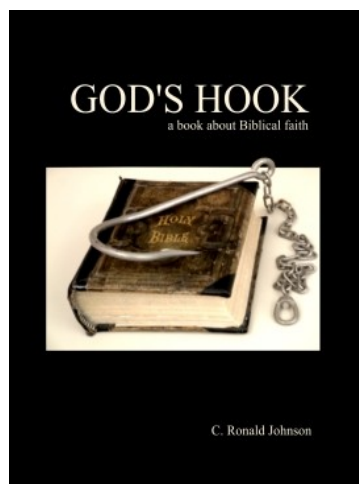
Is God seeking great things from you, great sacrifices, great buildings, great programs? Ah, but **...the just shall live by faith** (Habakkuk 2:4); it is the first thing required.

All true greatness is of God.



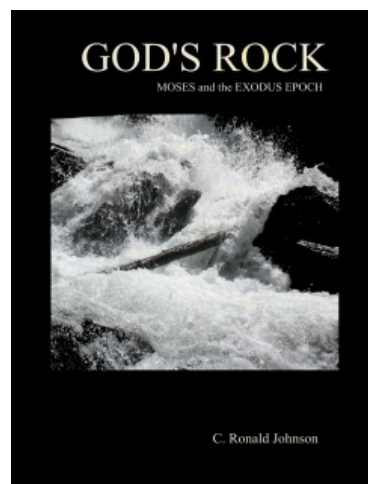
God's theme, Jesus' theme, and Luke's theme contains -

- 1) *Humility* before God and with the brethren
- 2) *Proper use of worldly goods* before God and toward the brethren
- 3) *Distinguish* between the not-righteous things of the world and the righteously valued things of heaven



a book
about
Biblical
Faith

the life of
Moses
and the
Exodus



C. Ronald Johnson