

## **Luke Chapters 14-16: The Parable of the Shrewd Manager**

### **From the Theology of Work Bible Commentary on Luke**

The key to security about the things we need is not anxious earning and saving, but trustworthy service and spending. If God can trust us to spend our money to meet the needs of others, then the money we ourselves need will also be provided. This is the point of the parable of the shrewd manager. In it, a manager squanders his master's property and, as a result, is notified he will be fired. He uses his last days on the job to defraud his master further, but there is a strange twist to how he does it. He does not try to steal from his master. Perhaps he knows it will be impossible to take anything with him when he leaves the estate. Instead, he fraudulently reduces the debts of his masters' debtors, hoping that they will reciprocate the favor and provide for him when he is unemployed.

Like the shrewd manager, we cannot take anything with us when we depart this life. Even during this life our savings can be destroyed by hyperinflation, market crashes, theft, confiscation, lawsuits, war, and natural disaster. Therefore, building up large savings offers no real security. Instead, we should spend our wealth to provide for other people, and depend on them to do the same for us when the need arises. "Make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth, so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes" (Luke 16:9). By providing for his master's debtors, the shrewd manager is creating friendships. Mutual fraud is probably not the best way to build relationships. But apparently it is better than not building relationships at all. Building relationships is far more effective for gaining security than building wealth is. The word eternal signifies that good relationships help us in times of trouble in this life, and they will also endure into eternal life.

This suggests that if you do not have enough money to feel secure, the answer is not trying to save more. Instead, spend the little you have on generosity or hospitality. Other people's responses to your generosity and hospitality may bring you more security than saving more money would. Needless to say, this should be done wisely, in ways that truly benefit others, and not merely to assuage your conscience or flatter people targeted as future benefactors. In any case, your ultimate security is in God's generosity and hospitality.