

# A Christian Approach to Wealth

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Now this evening we're going to turn back to Luke chapter 16, looking at the passage we read, verses 1 to 18, looking mostly at verses 1 to 13, but the other part of the passage to verse 18 is tied up with it as well, because in fact throughout the whole of this chapter, right through to the end of the chapter, including the next very solemn part of the rich man and Lazarus, the theme of wealth and a believing or a Christian attitude or approach to wealth runs right through these passages in the chapter. And that is part of Christ's teaching with regard to discipleship. You notice that at the beginning of the chapter it's to the disciples particularly, to his disciples, not just the twelve, but those who were followers of him at that stage, it is to them especially that he turns and says these words.

Now this is a very difficult passage. It's a difficult passage to try and bring out the teaching in it because it is actually a passage that has a lot of what would then have been the case with the kind of transactions in terms of what this manager was involved with.

A lot of the background to that is to do with the practice of the times. For example, you can see that the bills that were owed by those people to his employer, they were in terms of oil and wheat and so on.

And that explains something of the background to the passage, explains something of the way in which the teaching comes across to it. They weren't just in debt to him in terms of money because in those days loans were made in terms of commodities like oil and wheat.

And so these were very prone to sometimes cheating or adding extra interest or commission or whatever. As we'll see, that was behind the way this man dealt with his own difficulty when he was found out to be something of a squanderer with his master's money.

[ 2 : 1 0 ] Now, verses 1 to 7, first of all, we'll take verses 1 to 7 because these are the verses that tell us about the wasteful manager and his response to being found out.

And then from the remainder of the passage, from verse 8 onwards, the Lord brings teaching out of that incident. It doesn't say that it was a parable, although it's headed there, the parable of the dishonest manager.

The Lord may have known indeed this was a real event, that this was something that had actually happened. And it certainly wouldn't have been a rare event, even if he had built it into a parable.

But in any case, out of this incident, let's call it this incident, the Lord brings this extended treatment of the subject of wealth. But he deals with it very interestingly in a way that relates our approach to wealth to our entrance to heaven.

And it's important that we look at our attitude to wealth anyway as Christians, because the Bible has a number of places where that is specifically dealt with.

[ 3 : 2 3 ] But although the passage is somewhat complicated and difficult, the main teaching of it actually is fairly clear. That in the way that this manager dealt with his situation, there is a lesson for us in how we are to treat wealth in regard to preparing ourselves for heaven.

For everlasting, for the everlastingness of, as it calls us there, eternal dwellings in verse 9, by which he means heaven, by which he means the world to come.

And so that's basically the situation that you find it. But let's look at the wasteful manager, first of all, and what we find here said about his mismanagement, and then his response.

This rich man had a manager. And it's about the manager, really, that the rest of the passage deals with, and it's that that Jesus uses to bring out his teaching. There was a rich man who had this manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions.

Now a manager such as this man here in those days would have virtually complete control of his bosses' or his employers' accounts.

[ 4 : 42 ] Like we said, the accounts were largely made up of goods like oil and wheat and so on, so that this man, as he lent out these to others, he would get a greater return back and therefore increase in his wealth.

And this manager, this person who was commonly employed by these rich people, they would have virtually complete control over these dealings.

And that's why it was very easy for someone in the position of a manager either to misappropriate the goods, to charge a lot for himself, or as we'll see here, to just mismanage it by sheer wastefulness.

And the employer wouldn't necessarily know much about that until eventually by some way or other it came to light. And it doesn't mean that this man was particularly dishonest in what he was doing.

I think the heading that you have here in the ESV, which isn't part, of course, of the original text of the Bible, it's just there as a kind of guidance to us regarding each of these passages.

[ 5 : 44 ] But the dishonest manager, well, I'm sure he was dishonest, but we're not specifically told that he was actually a rogue, that he was guilty of misappropriating deliberately his employer's goods.

All we're told is that he was wasting his possessions. And interestingly, the word wasting is the same word that's used in chapter 15 and verse 13 of the young son who left home and he squandered his property in reckless living.

That's exactly the same word, so it gives you the idea of what's meant. He squandered it. However he was actually squandering it, we're not told. But it means he was not careful how he was managing it.

And instead of actually managing it efficiently, he was just wasting it. Maybe he was using some of it for himself. Probably he was an extra commission, as we'll see in a minute.

But in any case, what his employer, the rich man, was told, what came to light is that he was wasting his possessions.

[ 6 : 53 ] He wasn't managing them properly. He was squandering them. So he called him in and said, what is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be managed.

In other words, he called this manager in and said to him, that's it, I'm sacking you. And because I'm sacking you, you have to give over, you have to give back to me your portfolio.

These accounts that you are managing for me, square them up. You're not going to be in charge of them any longer. You're not going to pass them on to another person the way they are.

Square them up. Get them settled. And then that's it. And of course that would mean that for this man, he would have no roof over his head. Because part of his conditions of employment would be that he'd be given a place in the rich man's home.

Either a room or whatever it would be. Maybe more than one room. But being sacked meant that came to an end. There was no place to live anymore. And that's why he said, what shall I do?

[ 8 : 00 ] Since my master is taking the management away from me. I'm not strong enough to dig. I'm ashamed to beg. I've decided what to do so that when I'm removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.

In other words, he said to himself, what am I going to do in my situation? I'm sacked. I don't have a home to live in. How am I going to deal with this emergency?

I can't do manual work. I'm not cut out for that. I'm not strong enough. I'm not going to beg. I'm too proud for that. I'm too ashamed to go out and beg.

And then the words that you have there, I've decided what to do. Literally it means something like just a flash of inspiration. All of a sudden it came to him.

I know what I'll do. I'll go to those who owe my master certain things. And if I deal with them in a way that gains their favor, they'll be able to give me a roof over my head.

[ 9 : 08 ] They'll be able to take me in. I'll make friends with them and therefore I'll be alright when I'm kicked out of my employment. And that's what he did. He went to his master's debtors one by one.

He said to the first one, how much do you owe my master? He said, a hundred measures of oil. He said to him, sit down quickly and write fifty. In other words, the first one he called in that had an account with his master owed his master a hundred measures of oil.

And this manager said to him, how much do you owe, right, instead of writing out the account for the full amount, just write fifty. And if you pay the fifty, that's it.

And of course, that person will be extremely pleased. Because his debt had been cut in half. And that was an end of it. And then he went to the next one and said to him the same thing.

He said, a hundred measures of wheat, well take your bill and write eighty. Don't know why it was different here to the first one, but in any case, that's how it was.

[ 10 : 16 ] And then you write that, you read that the master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. So his response was that he locked off these amounts from what they owed to gain their favor.

Then he went back to his manager and said, that's it, I've settled the accounts for you. Here are the proceeds. And what he probably had done was, the amount that he had locked off was probably his own commission.

In other words, a hundred measures of oil. When he had actually initially made that deal, it would have been for fifty, but he added on fifty for himself.

So what he did when he went to settle it was, so that he could actually make this deal, he decided, well I can do without my commission this time. And that'll settle it for my master, and I'll gain the favor of the debtor, and that'll be it.

And then you find the Lord's application. Now we're taking verse eight, that the master here, it could be translated, the Lord commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness.

[ 11 : 24 ] It might mean his employer, but it's certainly Jesus himself actually coming to say that this man was commended. Now it's important that we make a distinction here.

He was not commended for his dishonesty, or for his way of dealing with the management of the accounts and the wastage and all the rest of it.

He was not actually commended for that. What he was commended for was his shrewdness. In other words, his way of actually dealing with the emergency in terms of preparing something for himself for his employment, when his employment came to an end.

And it's that tactfulness, that shrewdness, that prudence, that way of dealing in wisdom in its own way, with his situation, that's commended.

He's not commended for anything else. He's not commended for his character. He's not commended for having wasted his master's goods. He's not commended for any of that. But he's commended for the way he handled the situation.

[ 12 : 34 ] And for the way that he managed to provide for himself out of a very difficult circumstance. And then Jesus makes particular application on that.

And the first thing you notice he said about it was, after commending this man for his shrewdness, for he says, the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of life.

Their own generation there means their own kind. And this is a very challenging thing for us Christians, for us as believers, for us as people who would follow the Lord.

Because effectively what the Lord is really saying is, when he saw this, he said that, the people of this world, the people who are not my disciples, the people who live for this world, the people who don't have a Christian view of wealth, and who live for how much they can get out of it while they're in this life, they are actually more shrewd, he said, in dealing with their own things than the sons of light, the sons of God, the people of God, the disciples of Christ, than they are with theirs.

In other words, let's simplify it, let's put it in more simple language. When you look at the efforts to which people go to make wealth just for the sake of it, to look after their wealth just for the sake of having more, when you look at the worldliness of the world, and how people set about adding to that worldliness, they are far more zealous in it, far more efficient in it, than Christian people often are in the things of the kingdom of God.

[ 14 : 18 ] That's what the Lord is saying. And that's the great challenge to ourselves, as you look at the world tonight and its business, so busy that people have to spend every single moment, virtually so many people have to spend every moment worrying about or looking after their worldly goods, and their worldly income, and their investments, and all the rest of it, because that really is what they live for, sadly, in a materialistic age.

That's how you get to be. And the Lord is challenging us tonight, and saying, as you see all that, can you match that in your spiritual application?

Can you match that in the way that you're setting about your business in the kingdom of God, in pursuing the riches that are eternal in heaven? Is our heart tonight as much set on the riches that we have in the kingdom of God, as the worldly person is in his heart set on worldliness and on worldly things?

That is really what the Lord is saying. The children of this world, the sons of this world, or of this age, it's really this generation in terms of comparing the world with that which is spiritual, that which belongs to the people of God.

They are more shrewd, they are more applied, they are better able to match things together, so as to achieve what they want to achieve, than the sons of light.

[ 15 : 57 ] And that's a very devastating thing to say, and a very challenging thing to set before ourselves tonight. As you look at the effort, and the zeal, and the thought that's put in, and the planning, and all the things that come together in order to make the worldly person such a worldly person.

Well, we as Christians should outdo that. Because we have better riches. We have abiding riches. We have better motives than to please ourselves, or to please others in the world that we work for, or have working for us.

We have the motive of pleasing God. We have the motive of pleasing our Lord as his disciples. Better riches, better motives, a better outcome.

We have eternal life to look forward to. We have heaven with the Lord to look forward to. It's the basis of our hope, founded on the resurrection of Christ. We have a better quality kingdom altogether than the sons of this world.

But the thing is, Jesus is saying, how do we compare? How do we measure up? In terms of our commitment, our seeking, our putting things together spiritually, all that we have as means to help us achieve, ultimately, the goal of eternal life with Jesus in heaven.

[ 17 : 28 ] I know it's all of grace. That it's God who gives us eternal life. That he is sovereignly in charge of directing our lives. But in terms of our responsibilities and what's required of us, this is what Jesus is drawing from this incident that he mentioned with his manager.

The second thing he says is an imperative. Make for yourselves, he says here in verse 9, make for yourselves friends of unrighteous mammon.

The word literally is mammon and it's translated like that in the authorized version. Mammon really means primarily money, but really affects, includes all kinds of wealth as well.

The well-known statement there in verse 13, you cannot serve God and mammon. Translated here as money, but it's the same word that you find there, unrighteous mammon, unrighteous wealth.

What he's saying is that make for yourselves, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth. Now there are different ways of translating, that's what makes this passage so difficult because there are different ways in which these words can be translated and it's really difficult to be precise about what the Lord meant precisely or in detail.

[ 18 : 54 ] Make for yourselves friends of unrighteous wealth. mammon, or here, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth. So that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

Again, there's a difficulty there. Who are they? They may receive you into eternal dwellings. And most commentators take it that that's a reference ultimately to God, perhaps to the angels, because they're mentioned in the next part of the passage dealing with a rich man and Lazarus.

When Lazarus died, he was taken by the angels to Abraham's bosom to be at rest with God. In any case, whatever we make of the details of it, the main parts of it we can try and bring out more clearly.

What you can say it's a summary of really is that when he's saying make for yourselves friends of unrighteous wealth, he's really essentially saying be sure that when you're using your wealth, you're making it your servant and not your master.

That you're using it in a way that a Christian should as a person who's traveling through this world and has of necessity to use wealth in different ways as you're passing through it, but make sure that the use you're making of your wealth is the kind of friend who will help you get to where you want to go, not as a master who will become your tyrant and to whom you will give yourself in your service.

[ 20 : 32 ] That's essentially what the Lord is really saying here. Just like the manager here when he was sacked, acted the way he did with prudence, with application, with worldly wisdom.

So he says these people of God as they handle wealth must likewise prepare for themselves or show that they're preparing for themselves an eternal dwelling place.

That they are in fact a people who are traveling to heaven. In other words, he's saying how we view wealth, how we handle wealth, what our relationship with wealth is will itself go towards determining what sort of home we expect to have at last.

Where our home is, where our heart is. As Jesus said elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount, lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. And this unrighteous wealth, he's calling it unrighteous, I think, because by and large, although money itself and the possession of money and even the very possession of wealth is not in itself wrong.

[ 21 : 55 ] Abraham was a very wealthy man. So was Job. The Lord didn't criticize them for that. The Lord gave them that wealth. But he's calling it unrighteous wealth because by and large in people's use of it, it's used so much for unrighteousness.

For that which is not right. For that which is corrupt. And of course, you remember Paul's letter to Timothy, 1 Timothy 6, verse 10, which sometimes you find people quoting wrongly.

And saying that money is the root of all evil. That's not what it says. What it says is the love of money is the root of all evil.

The love of mammon, same word as used. The love of wealth is the root of all evil. That's how far Paul went. That's how strongly he put it when he wrote to Timothy.

Advising Timothy when he was preaching and when he was preaching on things like wealth to make sure that he preached to people that the greatest wealth was the spiritual wealth. That that's what they had to set their hearts on.

[ 23 : 04 ] Not material wealth. Not the mammon of this world. Not unrighteous mammon. Well, he's saying make friends with it in this sense.

Make it your assistant. Make it your friend in terms of being of service to you. Use it on the way to heaven in a way that shows that your life is not going to end in this world.

That you're not living for this world. That as you use your wealth you're showing that your heart is set on greater wealth, on better wealth, on spiritual wealth, on the wealth that is in Jesus Christ as your saviour.

And that's where we just mentioned verses 14 to 17 because the Pharisees were actually when they heard this they just ridiculed him.

They just said about his teaching on wealth here that that was just simply ridiculous. And one of the reasons they said as we're told they were lovers of money.

[ 24 : 11 ] And if you read a bit about the Pharisees there were various groups of Pharisees but Pharisees made lots of money for themselves or most of them did anyway.

Not by handling money themselves but actually at a kind of distance from it. It was rather dirty for them to handle money themselves or be directly involved in monetary transactions so they got others to do the dirty work for them.

They actually defiled themselves but the Pharisees reaped in the benefits. The money came to them and the other poor guys did all the dirty work. They were regarded as unclean.

the way they were handling the money but the Pharisees had no scruples about receiving the return. They were lovers of money so when they heard these things of course they ridiculed him.

They were offended at this. They couldn't accept this. Nobody who was a lover of money could accept this teaching of Jesus that you have to make money your friend your helper rather than your master.

[ 25 : 15 ] and that's why the other verses are tied on to it. He mentions here the law and the prophets were until John that's John the Baptist.

Now of course the Pharisees were scrupulous about certain aspects of the law or at least the laws they had added themselves. And they had no scruples about other aspects of God's law.

but what Jesus is saying is that although he has come and John the Baptist is the end of the Old Testament the end of the age of the law the law still stands.

It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one daughter of the law to become void. It's not been done away with just because Jesus has come.

And then he adds the bit about divorce because the Pharisees found it very easy to divorce their wives. Certain groups of Pharisees actually had rules that said if your wife doesn't prepare your meal the way you like it you can divorce her.

[ 26 : 30 ] And Jesus spoke these words knowing full well that this was the kind of attitude the Pharisees had not just to money and to wealth but actually to people.

they regarded their very wives as chattels to be disposed of. And the Lord was saying to them yes you Pharisees you are saying that you are so strict about the law of God the law of God which still stands tells you about what marriage is and you dismiss that very lightly in order to actually pursue your love of wealth and your love of money.

Make for yourselves friends he is saying of this mammon of unrighteousness this unrighteous wealth make it your servant not your master.

So what practical lessons then can we draw from that? That has really been dealing with mainly an exposition of the passage as you find it there and trying to bring out some of the sense of it looking at it in a context in which Jesus was speaking it looking at some of the ways in which the meaning comes across in the way he used the story this incident of the manager who was caught in this situation.

Well what is our relationship with wealth? What do we take from this passage is important for us in a Christian approach to wealth and how we view it and how we use it?

[ 28 : 03 ] Well let's just confine it to two things. How we acquire it and how we actually use it. How we acquire wealth is in many ways as important as how we spend it or how we use it and the two things are very often tied together.

The squandering may very well have an impact on how we actually get it because if we squander it we need more of it and in order to need more of it people can turn to dishonest ways in which to acquire it.

That's how it ties up together the using and the acquiring of it. But there are three things that we must remember in acquiring wealth. The first thing is that what Jesus says in this passage actually goes against a common emphasis that you find in certain kinds of preaching and certain kinds of churches today and I mentioned this already but you'll find it especially if you're given to watching TV channels and preacher on TV channels.

You'll very often find that these channels present what's called a prosperity gospel. And the essence of the prosperity gospel is really that God intends every Christian to be rich.

God intends every single person who follows the Lord to have lots and lots of wealth lots and lots of this world's goods. He doesn't intend you to go without lots of luxury goods.

[ 29 : 39 ] They're for you. They're there so go for it. And if you can help your pastor get a million dollar mansion and a Cadillac and a private jet that's even better.

that's what's behind a lot of the emphasis in the prosperity gospel. That God's will for his people is that they should be rich.

Don't believe that. It goes against the teaching of Christ elsewhere. He didn't say blessed are the rich for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

He said blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And there are many many people tonight who are poor in this world.

Poor in this world's goods. Who hang very loose by their wealth. Who are not interested in gaining more and more wealth just for the sake of it. Who don't have wealth as their master.

[ 30 : 46 ] But they are rich towards God. They are rich in grace. They are rich in the relationship with God. They are on the way to heaven. And that's the important thing.

So it's against the prosperity gospel. It's against that emphasis that tries to get you into the way of thinking. Yes, but materialism is actually one of God's great benefits.

One of the things that God intends that you pursue. No, says Jesus. Make friends worth wealth only to the extent that you actually have it as a help, not as a master.

Don't live for it, live by it. Secondly, it's a counter to our prosperity culture. We're coming to a time of year when many people buy gifts.

And when many people sadly get into huge debt just to try and keep up with other people or just simply to try and provide for their young people, their children, their teenagers, whatever, in a way that they deem as fitting in this present day.

[ 32 : 00 ] Buying really, really expensive things which they can't afford, therefore it goes on credit, therefore they get into debt. We live in a world of very easy acquiring of money, credit cards, easy bank loans, Wonga loans where you pay massive interest which to my mind at least is a corruption and a cash again on people's plight in lack of money.

Why would you charge over 4,000% APR just to lend money to someone? That's not right.

it transgresses proper boundaries of dealing with people who are in need. It's greed, it's get rich quick, it's cashing in on people's misfortunes, and so many people find themselves in such debt that they can't keep up with the debt, and they don't have the facility that this manager had of actually dealing with the debt quickly.

we live in a prosperity culture where you find thrown at you on TV adverts. You need this. This is the latest version.

It doesn't matter if the older version is just a few months old or a year old, you can't actually keep that version because another version, whether it's a phone or a television itself, or whatever else it is, you have to have the latest model to be really with it.

[ 33 : 38 ] We've come to the stage where things really are so sophisticated in the way they're presented to us, that we have become so used to it that people by and large will say, yeah, that looks good, I really need to think about that, and okay, I can't afford it, but I'll put it on a credit card and I'll pay it up after Christmas or whatever, and then of course something else happens and you never manage to pay it up, and you're in debt and you're in trouble.

Therefore you find a culture, a prosperity culture, that throws at you ways of acquiring money by gambling.

Have you noticed how much of an increase there is in TV adverts for gambling? You can actually now take it out on your mobile phone, I'm not suggesting for a moment people even think about doing that.

You young people especially, please don't get into that world. It's a world that is highly dangerous, it's a world that is addictive as well.

It's designed to suck you in and keep you there, because one thing is sure, the gambler never ultimately wins. Yes, you might get one or two winnings along the way, but what do you do with them?



[ 34 : 57 ] You put them to worst time to get more and then you get into trouble. I've never seen a committed gambler yet, that didn't bring misery to himself and to his family or herself and her family.

But that's what's projected at us, and it's put in such nice terms. Join up today, we'll give you a first ten pound to use. And it's all glossy and it's all attractive, and it all is presented as if it were just innocent pastimes, and a bit of fun, and a good recreation, and you can make money as well out of it as it happens at the same time.

And Jesus is telling us, in a Christian view of wealth, you have to acquire your wealth in a way that's morally acceptable, and gambling is not.

It gets you into that murky world of making lots and lots of money for the people who run these things, but it's at other people's expense. It counters the prosperity culture that you and I live in, and it gives disciples of Christ a view of how they should approach wealth, and how they should actually use it, acquire it as well as use it.

In other words, it commends to us an ethical, a morally acceptable way of acquiring our wealth. Let's just leave it at that. The second thing is how we use our wealth.

[ 36 : 32 ] I've already mentioned that we must not actually run up unnecessary debt. This manager was accused of squandering his money. And we must never find ourselves, although it's sometimes the case that we unavoidably get into debt, and we need to take out loans, and there's nothing wrong with our loan in the proper way.

But unnecessary debt is something else. Getting into debt just because we want something that we can't afford, or getting into debt that's greater than we can really ever hope to pay back.

Unnecessary debt is one of the ways in which we actually have to be careful how we use our money. money. And as this man was accused of squandering it, so we also can very easily find ourselves squandering money.

In other words, you buy lots of stuff you don't need, you're squandering money. And if you're squandering money, let's remember, the money we have, the wealth we acquire and the wealth we use, whose is it?

Where has it come from? Ultimately, it is God who has given us the wealth that we have to use, and he has made us stewards of it, he's made us managers of it.

[ 37 : 56 ] And as he's made us managers of it, so he is actually concerned with how we use it, and that we use it in an ethical way, as well as acquire it in an ethical way.

In other words, we are not to squander it like this man did. The second thing is, in our use of it, we have to use it while we have it. There's nothing wrong with making investments.

There's nothing wrong with putting wealth aside for those who are coming after us. But that's different to the kind of person who just heaps up lots and lots of wealth and hardly uses any during their lives.

And when they have done with their lives, they then set up some kind of monument to themselves, and they say, I'm leaving my wealth to such and such, and you'll build me this monument, and you'll call this after me, and give it my name.

While we've got our wealth, let's use it while we've got it. Let's use it while we live. Because it will be no good to us when we're dead. However many other people will use it, we are told by the Lord that the right use of our wealth is using it while we're living.

[ 39 : 11 ] In other words, we have to use it for all kinds of proper ends. To look after ourselves, to look after our families, all the things that you know already are obvious ways in which our wealth is to be rightly used.

Not squandered, rightly used. And we have to use it according to this passage for spiritual gain particularly. That may be a difficulty for us to conceive of how do we use wealth for spiritual gain.

It doesn't mean that we buy our way into heaven, obviously. And that's what happened in medieval times before the Reformation. One of the things that Luther, Martin Luther, came to detest when people were told by the church in which he was a monk at the time, if you pay so much money to the church, such and such a priest will do prayers for those who are dead to get them out of purgatory or even in advance for yourself to make sure that you don't spend too long in purgatory, pay so and so, such and such to the church and that will ensure that that will be done for you.

That is corruption. It's unbiblical corruption. It's deceiving corruption. The Lord doesn't intend that we use money in any way that's suggestive that we can buy a place in heaven.

And we don't believe in purgatory anyway. So that takes care of that. What he means is that, as we said already, in verse 9 there and in verse 11 as well, if you have not been faithful with the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?

[ 41 : 01 ] Our handling of our wealth, our acquiring of it, our use of it, has to serve spiritual ends. We have to act as Christians with our wealth as we do with all other things.

We do it as the people of God. We do it as disciples of Christ. We always have to remember that we're not serving the wealth that we have, whether it's small or great.

We are serving God. we cannot serve God and money and wealth. And when we do give our wealth to the church, that's not so that the pastor can get rich, like in the prosperity gospel.

It's so that the gospel of Christ can be supported as it needs to be supported by financial means. So there's the challenge for us this evening from this passage, a difficult passage.

I hope I've managed to explain some of it in a way that has brought out the main points of the teaching. We are not to be undone, outdone by the world in the way that it uses its own ends for worldliness, by the way that we are to use spiritually, things for our spiritual gain.

[ 42 : 28 ] We are to make friends with wealth only to the extent that we have it to our spiritual advantage and don't actually damage ourselves spiritually in the use of it.

We have to be careful how we acquire it in accordance with the principles of God's word. We have to be careful how we use it in a way that fits in with the emphasis that Jesus gives to making friends of unrighteous wealth.

May he bless these thoughts to us. Let's pray. Lord, our God, we give thanks that you have given us direction regarding even these practicalities of life.

And we thank you that in terms of wealth in this world and the things that we need to have in order to live in it, that you have given us the direction that we find in these words, so that we are to exercise care and watchfulness in how we approach these things.

We thank you, Lord, that you have given us this so that we might find that we apply these principles there as in every other aspect of our lives spiritually. Bless us now, we pray, and continue to bless us for Jesus' sake.

[ 43 : 48 ] Amen. Amen. Thank you.