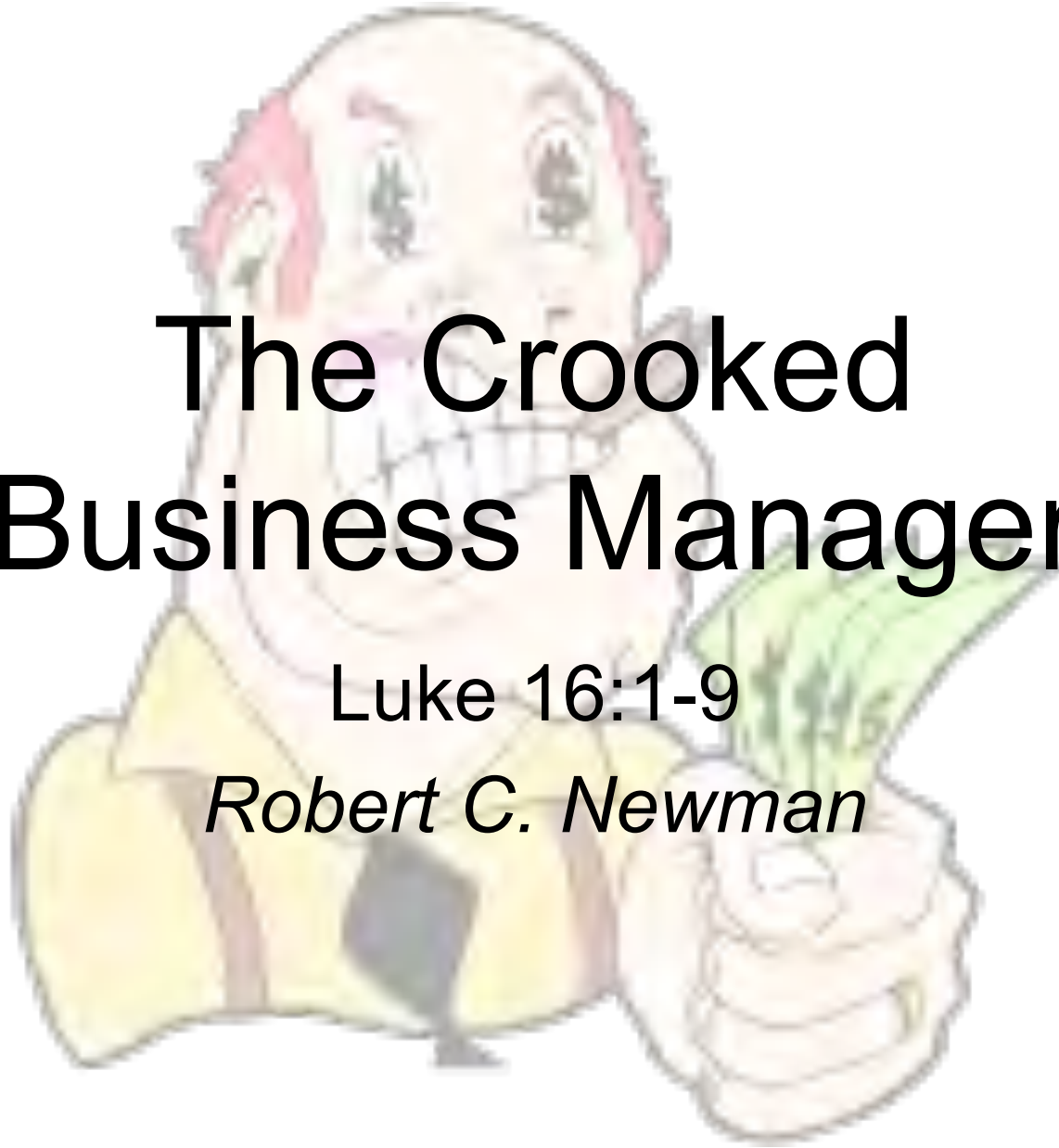




The Crooked Business Manager

Luke 16:1-9

Robert C. Newman



The Text

Luke 16:1 (NIV) Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. 2 So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' 3 "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg — 4 I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' 5 So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

The Text (continued)

6 'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' 7 Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' 'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' 8 The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. 9 I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings."



The Story

- Steward
 - business manager for owner of some sort of agricultural business (1,5-7)
 - size of debts suggest size of business:
 - 800 gallons olive oil @ \$20 per gal = \$16K
 - 1000 bushels wheat @ \$4 per bushel = \$4000
- Steward dismissed for incompetence or dishonesty (1-2)
- Final Account: being in total charge, he must make acct to turn in to boss (2,5-7)

The Story

- His Dilemma (3-4): what to do for future?
 - Manual labor? (not strong enough)
 - Beg? (ashamed)
 - Suddenly he gets a good idea
- His Idea: Discount Debts (5-7)
 - Calls in debtors to business and does each a favor by reducing his bill (5-7), e.g.
 - Olive oil bill reduced by 50%: about \$8K favor
 - Wheat bill reduced by 20%: about \$800 favor
 - Then they will owe him a favor, put him up.

The Story

- Owner's Reaction:
 - When he later finds out what happened ...
 - Praises business manager for shrewdness (certainly not for honesty!)
- A Humorous Story
 - But doesn't sound very promising as a lesson for followers of Jesus.
 - How are we to understand the lesson?
 - Jesus tells us in verses 8b & following.



Its Application to Us

Verse 8b-13

Verses 10-13

- In verses 10-13 Jesus tells us how we should be different from crooked business manager, but we'll not focus on this here.
- Essentially, verses 10-13 tell us that we should differ from the crooked business manager by being trustworthy.

Luke 16:10-13

10 (NIV) Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? 12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? 13 No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Verses 8b-9

- Instead, let us look at vv 8b-9, in which Jesus tells us how we should be like the crooked business manager.
- This is part of the difficulty of this parable:
 - We are to be like the crooked business manager in some ways, verses 8b-9.
 - In other ways we are to be unlike him, verses 10-13.

Be Shrewd in Relation to This Age

Verse 8b



Be Shrewd

- Business Manager suddenly saw two lives ahead of him:
 - (1) A short life as a BM, to end as soon as he turned in his account
 - (2) A long life as a non-BM (if he didn't starve to death first!)
- Seeing end of his life as BM coming soon, he took what steps he could to provide for his future life.

Be Shrewd

- We Christians claim to believe this life is not all there is, but do we live like it?
- Would our friends, co-workers, children, spouse... ever guess from our actions that we believe this life is just a preparation for the real life to come?
- If not, aren't we living as hypocrites?
- Be shrewd in relation to this age!

Make Friends by Means of the Wealth that Fails

Verse 9



Make Friends

- BM used wealth he was about to lose control of in order to make friends who would help him later.
- We are to do the same.
- What is this wealth?
 - All the wealth we now have on earth (time, talents, money, etc.)
 - It too will one day fail.
 - If we have used it only for ourselves, trying to hold on to as much as possible, we will be in real trouble.

Make Friends

- Who are these "friends"?
 - God? No!
 - He doesn't need anything, and has loaned us all we have anyway.
 - Rather those we have helped come to Jesus and grow as Christians.
 - Some of these will die before us and go to heaven to await our arrival.

Remember Jim Eliot?


- He and some other missionaries were killed by the Auca indians when trying to reach out to tell them about Jesus.
- Did he (& they) waste their lives? No!
- Jim Eliot said: "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."
- He was right!

Putting It Together

- Do you know Jesus as your boss?
- Even if you don't, that's what He is.
- You will still have to give an account to Him one day for what you've done with your life.
- If you do know Him as your boss, are you living for Him?

Putting It Together

- Did you know that you are a Business Manager too?
- You are the CEO of a charitable trust:
 - The (Put Your Name Here) Foundation
 - Its assets are all the time & talents you have, all the money you will ever make.
 - You are responsible to see that these assets are used for the benefit of other people, for the glory of our Creator.



The End

**May You Manage
Your Charitable Trust Well!**