

Luke 12:59

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

Analysis

I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite (λέγω σοι, οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθης ἐκεῖθεν, ἔως καὶ τὸ ἔσχατον λεπτὸν ἀποδῶς)—Jesus concludes the legal parable with finality. The double negative οὐ μῆ (not...not, absolutely will not) emphasizes impossibility of escape. Ήεος (until, till) sets the condition: payment of to eschaton lepton (the very last mite). The lepton was the smallest Jewish coin (the widow's mite, Luke 21:2). Complete payment required before release.

This terrifying conclusion depicts eternal judgment's finality. Those entering God's tribunal without Christ's righteousness face impossible debt. The 'last mite' suggests a debt that can never be fully paid—eternal condemnation. The parable's urgency: settle accounts through Christ before reaching judgment, because after, escape is impossible. This anticipates Jesus's teaching on eternal punishment (Luke 16:26—unbridgeable gulf).

Historical Context

Debtors' prison was common in Roman legal system—creditors could imprison debtors until full restitution. For those unable to pay, this meant indefinite imprisonment. Jesus uses this familiar reality to illustrate eternal judgment's inescapability. The 'last mite' (smallest coin) emphasizes absolute completeness—no debt overlooked, no penalty reduced.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the impossibility of 'paying the last mite' drive you to Christ's substitutionary payment rather than religious self-effort?
2. What does this parable teach about the urgency of accepting God's offer of reconciliation through Christ?
3. How should awareness of inescapable future judgment affect present priorities and eternal preparation?

Interlinear Text

λέγω	σοι	οὐ	μὴ	ἐξέλθης	ἐκεῖθεν	ἔως	οὐ	καὶ	τὸ
I tell	thee	G3756	G3361	depart	thence	till	G3739	G2532	G3588
G3004	G4671			G1831	G1564	G2193			

ἔσχατον	λεπτὸν	ἀποδῷς
the very last	mite	thou hast paid
G2078	G3016	G591

Additional Cross-References

Mark 12:42 (Parallel theme): And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

Matthew 18:34 (Parallel theme): And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.