

Luke 16:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

Analysis

So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? The steward begins executing his plan with urgency—the verb "called" (προσκαλεσάμενος, proskalesamenos, aorist middle participle) suggests he summoned them quickly, exploiting his remaining authority before dismissal becomes public. The phrase "every one" (ἕνα ἔκαστον, hekaiston) indicates systematic action—he's not helping one or two but creating multiple beneficiaries who will feel obligated to assist him.

His question "**How much owest thou unto my lord?**" (πόσον ὀφείλεις τῷ κυρίῳ μου, poson opheileis tō kyriō mou) establishes the debt officially—this is recorded business, not casual inquiry. By referencing "my lord" (τῷ κυρίῳ μου), he maintains his steward identity, acting while he still has authority. The following reductions (vv. 6-7)—fifty measures of oil, twenty measures of wheat—were substantial, representing significant financial relief to the debtors. Whether the steward was forgiving his own commission or actually defrauding his master is ambiguous; some scholars suggest stewards built their own fees into loan contracts, making the reductions legitimate though self-sacrificial. Either way, the steward uses present resources strategically to secure future benefit—the precise lesson Jesus draws in verse 9.

Historical Context

First-century Palestinian economy operated heavily on credit and debt. Landowners loaned seed, oil, and equipment to tenant farmers, who repaid with portions of their harvest. Stewards managed these accounts and could charge commissions. The amounts mentioned—"a hundred measures of oil" (likely 875 gallons) and "a hundred measures of wheat" (likely 1,000 bushels)—represent major agricultural commodities. Such debts could burden families for years. The steward's reductions would create profound gratitude and obligation, ensuring the debtors would remember and repay his 'kindness' with hospitality when he needed it.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does the steward's systematic approach to securing his future illustrate the intentionality Christians should show in eternal investments?
2. What does the steward's use of his remaining authority while he has it teach about redeeming the time and using present opportunities?
3. In what ways can believers strategically use their current resources (time, money, influence) to build relationships with eternal significance?

Interlinear Text

καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος ἔνα ἕκαστον τῶν χρεωφειλετῶν

So he called one every G3588 debtors
G2532 G4341 G1520 G1538 G5533

τοῦ κυρίῳ ἐαυτοῦ ἔλεγεν τῷ πρώτῳ Πόσον

G3588 lord of his unto him and said G3588 unto the first How much
G2962 G1438 G3004 G4413 G4214

όφείλεις τῷ κυρίῳ μου

owest thou G3588 lord unto my
G3784 G2962 G3450

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