

Luke 16:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

Analysis

And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. The first debtor owes "a hundred measures" (ἑκατὸν βάτους, hekaton batous) of olive oil—approximately 875 gallons, representing the production of about 150 olive trees or substantial commercial quantity. The steward's command is decisive: "Take thy bill" (δέξαι σου τὰ γράμματα, dexai sou ta grammata, literally "receive your contract"), "sit down quickly" (καθίσας ταχέως, kathisas tacheōs, emphasizing speed and urgency), and "write fifty" (γράψον πεντήκοντα, grapson pentēkonta)—a 50% reduction.

The urgency—"quickly" (ταχέως, tacheōs)—reveals the steward's awareness that his window of authority is closing. He must act before his dismissal becomes public and his authority evaporates. The debtor himself rewrites the contract (γράψον, grapson, imperative "write!"), making him complicit and ensuring gratitude. This detail illustrates Jesus' point: **use present resources urgently and strategically before opportunity ends**. For believers, life is brief, death is certain, Christ's return is imminent—we must act now to invest earthly resources for eternal dividends. The steward's shrewdness lies not in his ethics but in his recognition of crisis and decisive action while time remains.

Historical Context

Olive oil was a staple commodity in ancient Palestine—used for cooking, lighting, anointing, and religious ritual. The amounts mentioned indicate commercial-scale

debt, likely involving tenant farmers or merchants. Written contracts (γράμματα, grammata) were standard for significant transactions. By having the debtor rewrite the bill himself, the steward creates a legally binding document that reduces the obligation. Whether this represents the steward forgiving his own commission or defrauding his master is debated, but the cultural impact is clear—the debtor receives enormous financial relief and becomes indebted to the steward personally.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the steward's urgent action 'quickly' challenge believers to act decisively with their resources before opportunity passes?
2. What 'contracts' or commitments might God be calling you to revise in light of eternal priorities?
3. In what ways does this passage illustrate the principle that temporary earthly resources can be converted into eternal spiritual capital?

Interlinear Text

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν Ἑκατὸν βάτους ἐλαίου καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ
G3588 **And** **he said** **An hundred** **measures** **of oil** **And** **he said** **unto him**
G1161 G2036 G1540 G943 G1637 G2532 G2036 G846

Δέξαι σου τὸ γράμμα, καὶ καθίσας ταχέως γράψον
Take **thy** ^{G3588} **bill** **And** **sit down** **quickly** **and write**
G1209 G4675 G1121 G2532 G2523 G5030 G1125

Πεντήκοντα
fifty
G4004

Additional Cross-References

Luke 16:12 (Parallel theme): And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

Titus 2:10 (Parallel theme): Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.