

Luke 19:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

Analysis

I feared thee, because thou art an austere man (ἐφοβούμην γάρ σε, ὅτι ἄνθρωπος αὐστηρὸς εἶ, ephoboumēn gar se, hoti anthrōpos austēros ei)—the servant blames his inaction on the master's character. Austēros (austere, harsh, severe) appears only here in the NT, describing someone exacting and stern. This accusation is revealing: the servant fundamentally mistrusts and misrepresents his master.

Thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow (αἴρεις ὃ οὐκ ἔθηκας καὶ θερίζεις ὃ οὐκ ἔσπειρας, aireis ho ouk ethēkas kai therizeis ho ouk espeiras)—he accuses the master of unjustly profiting from others' labor. This reveals his heart: he views God as a cosmic tyrant demanding the impossible, reaping benefits without sowing investment. This false theology produces paralysis: 'Why try? I'll fail and be punished.' Satan peddles this lie to neutralize believers. The truth: God is generous, providing resources, opportunities, and power for fruitful service (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Historical Context

The accusation of reaping unplanted crops and gathering what wasn't deposited described exploitation—wealthy landowners profiting from sharecroppers' labor. If the master truly operated this way, giving the servant a mina to trade would contradict the accusation: he did 'lay down' capital. The servant's excuse was

internally inconsistent. Fear-based religion that views God as harsh and demanding produces either paralysis (this servant) or mechanical works-righteousness (Pharisees). Both miss the gospel.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do false views of God's character (seeing Him as harsh and demanding) paralyze spiritual fruitfulness?
2. Where has Satan convinced you that God expects what you cannot produce, so why try?
3. How does understanding God's generosity (providing resources, power, opportunities) liberate you for bold service?

Interlinear Text

ἐφοβούμην	γάρ	σε	ὅτι	ἄνθρωπος	αὐστηρὸς	εἶ
I feared	For	thee	because	man	an austere	thou art
G5399	G1063	G4571	G3754	G444	G840	G1488

αἴρεις	ὃ	οὐκ	ἔθηκας	καὶ	θερίζεις	ὃ	οὐκ
thou takest up	that	not	down	and	reapest	that	not
G142	G3739	G3756	G5087	G2532	G2325	G3739	G3756

ἐσπείρας

sow

G4687