

this manner. When he ought to have done the best he could with everything belonging to his master, he was careless. He did not give his mind to his duty. He suffered others to rob his master.

Honesty requires that care should be taken of whatever we may be entrusted with. The greater the confidence reposed in us, the more should we aim to be honest.

The master heard that his steward did not act faithfully, and called him to account. The steward had nothing to say, and was deservedly dismissed, losing both his character and his livelihood.

If dishonesty escape detection for a time, it is almost sure to be found out and punished. If it never be found out, it is none the less sinful.

Observe what this steward did to mitigate his penalty. He falsified his accounts, and thought so to make friends. This was adding one act of dishonesty to another. There was, however, what the world often regards as prudence or forethought in what he did. Creditors were directed to alter their bills, so that the owner might not be able to recover what they owed. The thing somehow came to be known, and the master looked upon the conduct of the steward as an ingenious device, Psalm xlix. 18. Would that Christians had an equally strong regard for their spiritual interests! ver. 8.

#### Secondly. THE STEWARD, AND THE LESSONS HIS CONDUCT TEACHES.

We may be quite sure that the Saviour did not intend the steward's dishonesty to be imitated. This is plainly the meaning of ver. 10-12. Fidelity in little things will create confidence as to great things, ver. 10. Dishonesty will bring with it its own punishment, ver. 11. A dishonest servant seldom thrives. God does not give His blessing to a dishonest man. And if we do not use faithfully what God entrusts us with, the happiness which His favour secures, and the blessedness of heaven, which only deserves to be called true riches, never can be ours.

Thus the Saviour guards the parable from being misapplied. There are three practical points in the parable.

1. The steward's forethought. When he was in difficulty he employed ingeniously what was within his power. He made provision for the future while he could. He did this dishonestly, and was therefore utterly wrong. Still his master, or lord, looked upon him as a shrewd, cunning, forethinking man.

Prudence and forethought are right always. Never act dishonestly.

The lesson in ver. 9 has often been interpreted as if it had relation to such a use of

the things we possess in this world as may provide for us happiness in the world to come,—an interpretation to which the teaching of Christ, and indeed of the whole New Testament, is opposed. Heaven is not to be purchased by what we do on earth. But we may lessen sorrow by a judicious and kind use of what we have.

2. The steward's folly, in thinking to serve his employer and himself at the same time, ver. 13. Had he given faithful attention to his lord's interests, his own would have followed, but by thinking to serve both he lost all, Matt. vi. 24.

True as this is in every-day matters, it is especially true in respect to religion. We cannot serve the world and God. We cannot care supremely for the things of time and the things of eternity. The two are opposed.

3. The steward's conduct was hateful in God's sight, ver. 15. He can never approve of dishonesty. He requires benevolence, but that we should be benevolent with our own. And what is the good of men's approving if God disapprove? We may think to do well for ourselves, and those about us may think we are doing so, but the time will soon come when our mistake will be found out.

Use faithfully and benevolently all that God may trust you with. Choose His service before that of self or of the world. Remember in every situation that honesty is the best policy.—*Sunday School Union Scheme of Lessons.*

#### PRAYER AND PRAISE.

In a recent address the Rev. William Arthur remarked: "There was one line of James Montgomery's glorious hymn on 'Prayer' which he always disputed—

'Prayer, the sublimest strains which reach  
The majesty on high.'

"No, no. 'He that offereth praise glorifieth God.' Praise was sublimest strain which went up to heaven, and when it was educed from human hearts by the love of God and the grace of the Holy Spirit, of all things rich and happy, that praise was the highest and the most acceptable to the Redeemer."

SIN.—The only disturber of men, of families, cities, kingdoms, worlds, is sin: there is no such troubler, no such traitor to any state, as the wilfully wicked man; no such enemy to the public as the enemy of God.—*Wogan.*