



"I wasted time, and now doth time waste me."
—William Shakespeare

29-Mar-19

The Peter Principle (Part Three)

In Parts One and Two, we learned about the two kinds of Peter Principles, the Physical and the Spiritual. The Physical Peter Principle maintains that a person rises to the level of his incompetence, whereas the Spiritual Peter Principle asserts that [God](#) has provided each of His people with undeserved gifts, talents, and other blessings, and it is the Christian's job to use and grow them—manage them—in a proper way. We also investigated the New Testament Greek word for "steward," *oikonomos*, which describes either the manager of an estate, a treasurer, or a director of public works, all of which are positions of high responsibility.

Jesus spoke a fair amount about stewards. Notice [Luke 12:43](#): "How happy that servant is if his master finds him doing this when he comes home!" [*Good News Translation® (Today's English Version, Second Edition)* Copyright © 1992 American Bible Society. All rights reserved.]. Doing what? His job! Which is what? Managing what has been given to him. This Greek word underlying *doing* means "to make, to produce, to bear, to construct, to lead, to do rightly." All these activities are part of being a good steward, a good manager.

Jesus continues in verse 44: "A servant who is always faithful will surely be put in charge of everything the master owns" (*Contemporary English Version* ® Copyright © 1995 American Bible Society. All rights reserved.). Instead of "everything the master owns," other translations read, "all that he has." This extravagant reward would appear to be somewhat out of proportion to the role of a lowly servant.

God has called us to be His servants. This fact is absolutely true; there is no question about it. We are always to have the humble attitude of a servant, as Christ did in His time on earth, but we are also expected to grow beyond that low-level position, gaining the skills during our Christian walk to enable us to perform well in our next job. In a spiritual sense, we cannot rise to our level of incompetence. Out in [the world](#), millions of people fill jobs for which they are ill-suited. They are everywhere, both in government and private enterprise. While they seem not to be held accountable for poor performance, God holds us to a much higher standard.

In the September 24, 2018, *Wall Street Journal* (p. A-11) appeared a full-page ^{AD} from an organization called OpenTheBooks.com. The ^{AD} carried the headline, "America Needs a War on Waste!" Its subtitle read, "100 Examples of Federal Taxpayer Abuse." Reading them, I became alternately angry and amused.

For instance, many times, in the last week of a budget year, money will remain unspent. A good manager would return that money to the general fund. After all, as a nation, we are running a deficit beyond belief, close to \$800 billion each year. But that is not how things work in Washington. If a department fails to spend all its budgeted money, next year's budget may be reduced. Heaven forbid that the department manager's petty little kingdom may shrink.

Federal agencies call this situation "use it or lose it." From all combined federal agencies, this "use it or lose it" spending spree in the last few weeks of the most recent budget year totaled \$50 billion. The actual 2018 United States budget deficit comes in at \$779 billion. It appears the nation could use that \$50 billion!

Instead, the excess monies were spent on things like the State Department buying \$79,000 worth of booze for the embassies around the world. The Department of Defense—those magnificent managers of the taxpayer dollar—spent \$6,600 on fidget spinners, the little spinning toys that sit on every kid's fingertip these days. In the overall scheme of things, \$6,600 does not seem like much, but on the other hand, that sum represented a hard-working taxpayer's yearly contribution to the upkeep of our government. His or her entire tax bill disappeared in an instant for "fidget spinners"! A good steward would not allow that.

Even normal spending items of our government can make a sound-minded person shake his head. The section of the Veterans Administration that serves blind veterans spent \$670,000 on two sculptures that its clients will never see. Rolex Jewelers received a \$21 million Small Business Administration loan. The National Foundation for the Arts spent \$55,000 on a feminist book of pornography and another \$20,000 for a mime troupe. They also spent \$10,000 for something called "Dancing with 15-foot Fish." Finally, the Environmental Protection Agency spent \$92 million on high-end luxury furniture, which included an \$800 pencil holder.

These are just a handful of examples of the poor management that runs rampant throughout the government. We can be sure that the same kind of foolishness occurs in private enterprise. During Jack Welch's tenure as CEO of General Electric, aside from his huge salary, his benefits included an \$80,000/month Manhattan apartment and courtside seats to see the New York Knicks and U.S. Open Tennis Tournament. He also received tickets to Wimbledon, box seats at Red Sox and Yankees games, his country club fees paid, his restaurant bills covered, and more. When he retired in 2001, his severance payment totaled \$417 million. Was he *that* good at managing? Arguable, probably doubtful. If nothing else, we can see that General Electric is today in such dire financial trouble that its board is considering dismantling the company and selling the pieces.

Still, even with those big numbers, that is nothing compared to our potential promotion. [Jesus Christ](#) says that His faithful brothers and sisters will be rulers "over all that He has"!

Next time, we will conclude with lessons we can learn from our Savior's comments during His ministry about both faithful and unfaithful stewards.

- Mike Ford

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Christian Service](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Although service is not a highly-valued trait in a land that values rugged individualism and self-reliance, selfless service is at the core of God's very character and a trait that we must emulate to go to a higher level of Christian living. God's love is not a commodity that can be bottled up or put into storage. It must be manifested or demonstrated in good works- service to God and service to others. Our Christian liberty obligates us to perform works, not for our salvation, but as an outward demonstration of our love for God. This service must be rendered after a sober reflection or honest assessment of the gifts God has given us to render service. Following Christ's example, we must live our entire lives in a perpetual state of sacrificial servitude - teaching, listening to, encouraging, and physically helping people to live God's way of life. Sacrifice is the essence of Christian service.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Parable of the Faithful and Evil Servants](#)

by Martin G. Collins

Jesus teaches His disciples to be ready at all times for His return. We show how well prepared we are by the quality of our service to the brethren.

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