



The Christian's Attitude Toward Stewardship

By Keith Greer

Every Christian must have a proper understanding of, and a good attitude toward, stewardship. The word "steward" means: "the manager of a household or estate; the management of a household; to direct the affairs of another." Basically, a steward oversees and cares for something that belongs to another person or persons. We have been given only temporary care over whatever we attain in this life. Those things belong to God. Whatever position man may fill in the church, or prestige he may enjoy, belongs to Him to whom all things belong -- the Lord. All of us will give account of our stewardship over the things with which we've been blessed. It is a sobering consideration to which we must all give serious heed.

As a preacher, I am a steward of God's word. "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." {1 Corinthians 4:1,2} Elders are caretakers of the church, which belongs to God. "For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money." {Titus 1:7} These are sacred trusts given to us by God. Christians in these positions would do well to remember the church doesn't belong to us -- it belongs to Christ (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:19-23). In this life, when man abuses a trust given to him, it is considered a grievous action of misconduct toward another. It is even worse spiritually speaking. Why? This is a God-given trust over things that belong to Him (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 16:1-9).

Where there is stewardship, there is also ownership. Christians are, because He paid the purchase price for us, God's right. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit,

which are God's." {1 Corinthians 6:19,20} Who created us? In whose image were we created? God's -- Genesis 1:26; Acts 17:28. Who paid the price of our redemption, buying us back from sin? "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." {Ephesians 1:7} "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." {1 Peter 1:18,19} God protects and sustains us by His providential care over us (Matthew 6:26-30).

The Lord has employed us in His service -- our time, resources, and abilities are gifts from Him. Who controls this world's time? Surely, we don't believe time is on our side! "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." {James 1:13-15} What about those abilities with which I've been blessed that allow me to make a comfortable living? "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." {James 1:17} Sadly, anything one gives to another can be abused and misused. God gives us control over the choices -- good, bad, or indifferent -- we make in using His gifts! What about the resources we gain from our labors? Do they belong solely to us? This is the fatal mistake made by the farmer who had a great harvest. "But God said to him, Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" {Luke 16:20} Without God's blessings, there would be no harvest. Who sends the rain and sunshine that make the crops grow? Who gave man the wisdom to know how to till the ground to produce the crops that help sustain his life? Do you see where man would be if God were left out of the equation? Yet, men continue to believe they do it all by themselves -- such is wishful thinking!

Men forget that the goods associated with this life are temporal. "Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." {1 Timothy 6:6,7} Why does man have such a grave lapse in his thinking?

Forgetfulness. Man forgets that God has made possible everything he has.

Selfishness. A selfish person concludes that only by his own ability and effort does he gain wealth and prosperity.

Misunderstanding. Many do not understand the fleeting, temporal nature of "things." They believe they will find true, lasting happiness in materials and pleasures. Unfortunately, they go to their graves believing this to be so, only to discover the folly of their thinking.

Christians must realize that stewardship involves accepting and understanding some things. What are some of these things.

Faithfulness is a must! What grave mistake did the one-talent make in our Lord's parable about the talents? (Matthew 25:24-30) He wasted his master's goods and violated His trust. Instead of taking the talent and earning gain for his master, he did nothing. Sadly, Christians today repeat this same mistake when they believe that somehow, God will be pleased with "status-quo" service. God demands that we be faithful in the things He places in our trust. Since we have all things because of Him, it goes without saying that we must be faithful in all things.

Obedience -- the ability to take orders and carry them out. God demands unwavering obedience. Stewardship requires hearing orders and instructions and then obeying them. "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." {Matthew 7:21} "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." {Ecclesiastes 12:13,14}; "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." {Hebrews 5:9} A steward cannot be successful in his work if he is unable to care for the goods over which he is given responsibility.

Priorities must be in order. My first obligation is not to family, job, friends, or even to myself. My highest responsibility is to the Father in heaven! "Then He said to another,

"Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God." And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house." But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." {Luke 9:59-62} If we have to choose between man and God -- we must choose God. (Acts 4:18-20). We all make choices, and we establish our priorities by our choices. The Christian's first duty is always to God -- all else is second.

When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:12), we will give account of our stewardship during our time here on earth. God has entrusted us with many rich blessings. But with those wonderful blessings come grave responsibilities. All the things we have been fortunate enough to accumulate are direct blessings from God. He expects us to use them in wise, acceptable ways as we serve Him. Since we are creatures who have free moral choice, we can choose to abuse and misuse God's gifts. "And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes." {Luke 12:42,43} Dear reader, when you stand before the judgment seat on that fateful day, what will the Lord say about how you handled His goods? Will you be blessed -- or condemned as an unjust steward? Give sober, prayerful consideration to how you answer that question. Where you spend your eternity depends on your stewardship!