

STEWARDSHIP

September 8, 2006

Luke 16:2, *“And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be not longer steward.”*

The word “steward” in one form or another is found in the bible 20 times. But what does it mean? And how should we look at it as it pertains to God and His word? The word steward means, “the manager of a house”. The word is often used in the bible to describe one who has been made the manager over someone else’s house or belongings. The steward does not own the possessions but merely manages it for someone else: the owner. The owner entrusts his good to the steward and a faithful steward is servant to the owner.

In the forestry field where I work we have an incentive program for landowners called a “stewardship plan”. What does that term mean? It is a plan that landowners can follow out that includes a variety of objectives resulting in proper management of their land. The concept is that the land will be turned over to the next generation to continue in the care. The landowners have an earnest desire to care for something that they feel is not really there’s.

I don’t have enough land to qualify for a stewardship plan, nor do I have enough riches and goods to have a steward over my things, but does that mean I am not a steward? I have a small house with all the amenities that come with it. At times I feel that I own them. After all, I have worked hard to get the few things that I have. If I decide to buy a pair of pants then I have a right to say they are mine, because I purchased it! I also feel that I am my own. I can make my decisions to do or not to do what I please. We sometimes fall into deception by saying, “I can do what ever I want, and this is my life”.

But who really is the owner? 1Corinthians 6:19-20 states, *“What? Know ye not that our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”* He said, ye are not your own! The elect of God belong to him. We at one time were left to our own, “we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his OWN way.” That “way” was against God. Psalms 24:1, *“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”* The bible starts off with, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”. He owns all that is around us. God didn’t have to put his signature in the sun set, but it belongs to him. God didn’t have to put his brand upon the cattle of a thousand hills, but they belong to him. God didn’t have to put his seal on all the gold and silver in this earth, but it belongs to him. God didn’t have to put a copyright on the songs that the birds sing, but it belongs to him. And thanks be to God, we belong to him! Luke 18 “and shall not God avenge his OWN elect which cry unto him day and night”.

We are God’s own because he said we were, because we were bought with a price. The price wasn’t silver or gold but the precious blood of Christ. It was the death of his only begotten Son. What a price was that! It was a great price when you see our state that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, the just for the unjust. We are indebted to Christ for what he has done for us.

He bought us off the slave auction block and brought us into his loving and everlasting arms by his marvelous grace and wonderful mercy.

Even with those precious truths, man is selfish and prideful, not willing that any should rule over him. The Pharisees said in Luke 19, "This man is not going to rule over us". But my friends, the truth of the matter is: someone will rule over us. Romans 6:16, "*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*" If we are not servants to God then we are servants to Satan. We will serve one or the other whether we acknowledge it or not. A teenager who decides not to follow the instructions and disciplines of his parents may one day find himself following the instructions and discipline of a jail guard.

God has made us stewards. Not of worldly riches or fame, but stewards of the things that he owns and that was bought on Calvary. We will attempt to look at a few of the things in which we are entrusted in to be faithful stewards.

We are stewards of our body

As mentioned earlier, we do not own our bodies but God does. We are stewards of our body. And God has told us what do with our body, "Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." He owns our spirit and soul and he also owns our body. Paul said in Ephesians 1:14, "...*Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory*". That purchased possession is speaking of your bodies. This commandment is plain but at times hard to follow. We believe God's word and understand what we should do, but often we walk different. We believe the truth but don't live the truth. The reason is simple. A child of God is a dual complex creature. He has within him the desires and abilities to do that which is pleasing to God while at the same time he still has that Adamic nature that desires to live to the pleasures and lusts of the flesh. Paul said in Galatians 5:17, "*For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would*".

There is a warfare in the child of God and the more he tries to follow God, the greater the warring with the flesh. It is so easy to walk in the flesh and to not abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. But a child of God is called to worship his Lord and to walk according to his statutes. We find a sobering verse in Psalms 118:27, "*God is the Lord, which hath showed us light: **bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the alter***". This is not speaking of Christ, for Christ was as a lamb led to the slaughter and as a sheep is dumb before her shears; so he openeth not his mouth. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Binding the sacrifice with cords unto the horns of the alter is speaking of the child of God. At times it is hard to offer to God our gratitude for redeeming love. The sacrifice is speaking of us. And it includes our lives, and our manner of walk. In the Old Testament it was often necessary to bind the sacrifices to the alter because they were unwilling and would fight to be kept from being sacrificed. Often times the allure of worldly pleasures such as wealth and fame can remove us from our walk with God. Temptations and trials that come along can often cause us to forget about God, to forget about how our bodies are his and we are only stewards. We can

find it hard at times to be willing to follow God. There are so many worldly attractions carnal desires that would keep us off the altar. But God demands a full sacrifice, not just a contribution. One day a farmer was about to lose his farm. When the chicken and hog heard of the bad news they decided to do something about it. They agreed to hold a benefit breakfast to raise money for the farmer. The chicken had a great idea for the meal, “we will hold a breakfast benefit, and for breakfast we can serve eggs and ham”! The chicken was only willing to contribute to the cause, but for the hog it would take a full and complete sacrifice!

God does not require a dead sacrifice; that was accomplished on Calvary. God requires a living sacrifice. Romans 12:1-2 states, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”*. Paul had a great burden for these people, as every God called preacher should. And he told them that it should be by the mercies of God. It is looking back at all of God’s mercies and grace that Paul had alluded to in the previous chapters that he was referring to. To present our bodies a living sacrifice is to show up on Sunday morning at church. It seems such a small thing to come to church every time the doors are open, but there are so many things that can pull us away from our service to God. But Paul says it is our reasonable service. That is to say it a starting point and the least we can do.

We are not to be conformed to this world, but transformed. He tells how it is that we are transformed. It is by the renewing of your mind. It is repentance that renews our mind; it is a turning away from the things of this world and turning to God. To renew our minds through repentance is to have knowledge of Gods word, Psalms 119:9 says, *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word”*. David also said in Psalms 119:105, *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”*. For one to renew his mind he first has to see his need. A drunkard must first admit he is a drunk before he can begin to help himself, and if not careful it is easy to fall off the wagon. So too it takes one that sees and admits his sin to himself before he can find help. And if we are not careful we too can fall off the wagon and once again be drunk on the corrupt things of this world.

Paul also said, *“that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God”*. But to whom do we prove it? It is not to God. For we have nothing to prove to him. It is proving it to others around us. What we do, our sacrifices that we make in our lives and in the church for God have a great bearing on what others see. Parents have great weight on their children. If a parent doesn’t sacrifice himself to God, chances are the children will follow. Sisters in the church have a bearing on the other sisters as well as brothers in the church have a bearing on the other brothers in the church. Deacon carries a heavier weight than most realize. Their actions in the church are seen by all and can have a huge influence on the other members in the church. Likewise the pastor carries a large responsibility for how others act in the church. I pray that all church members would prove to one another what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Our bodies are God’s and we are stewards of those bodies. May we strife to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God in his church. May we give ourselves to prayer and meditation and

always be mindful that we do have something to prove to others. What we have to prove is that perfect will of God.

We are stewards of our money

The bible says that the love of money is the root of all evil. And how true that statement is! We have become covetous with the money that God has blessed us with. We feel that we have worked hard for our money and we should decide what to do with it. But it is God who has blessed us to have money. He has blessed us with the ability to work and given us a job to work so that we might be able to provide for our families and care for the church of God. If we have anything it is because we have received it from God. 1Cor.4:7, *“for who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it”*?

The Old Testament speaks of tithing. And certainly there was a command to tithe. But in the 7th chapter of Hebrews Paul tells us that there has been a change in the law. Tithing is no longer a commandment of God. But does that mean it is wrong to give that much or more? No, we ought to give according to as God has blessed us. 2Corinthians 9:6-7 states, *“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”*. To give to the church is to give to God. His promise is that He will reward you according to what you give. It was the woman who cast in all her living that pleased the Lord (Mark 12:41-44). There is a great blessing when we give generously to the Lord.

Money is needed for the ministry, for the operation of the meetinghouse and for other things that might arise, but that is not the reason to give. It is also not to see how big of an account you can manage to save. We are to give cheerfully, knowing that the more we give the more blessed of God we will be. You can't out give God. Malachi 3:10 states, *“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it”*.

God not only owns what we give to the church but he owns all that we have. We should be careful and consider how we spend the money that God has blessed us with. It is a terrible waste of God's blessings to gamble your money away hoping to become rich with money. For it is not money that we should desire to be rich in, but rather to be rich in God's truth and grace is far better. The bible says that where your riches are, there will your heart be also. Our heart should be on God and not on the vanity of this world.

We are stewards of our time

Time is something we all have. We may say we never have time to do this or that but time isn't the issue. The issue is are we making time to do the things that are most important. Paul said in

Ephesians 5:15-16, *“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil”*. It is God who has given us our time, time to pray, read, meditate and worship him. Psalms 1:1 says, *“Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. For his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night”*. How much time do we spend for the Lord?

If you received \$1440 dollars every day and you had to spend it before the end of the day or else the money would be gone, how hard would you try to get it spent? There are 1440 minutes in a day. When they tick by they can never be brought back, they are gone forever. How zealous are we to use those minutes in our service to God. We ought to be sincere in trying to use every minute we have for the Lord. When we look at our time in the worship service is that enough time spent for God? In an average week we have 112 waking hours. Approximately 17% of that time is used watching television. That doesn't seem like much until you look at how much time we actually spend in a week towards God if church is the only time we use. It would only be about 1.3% of our waking time! What a short amount of time this is indeed to spend on the one who redeemed you from hell and has reserved a place for you in heaven.

I pray that we may be faithful stewards of our body, money, and time to the Lord. And may he be pleased with us in our endeavors to serve him.