

The Christian Stewardship

Introduction

1. In 1 Peter 4:10 Peter clearly describes the Christian's relationship to Christ and our obligation to serve Him Because of that relationship.
2. "Stewardship is the management of another person's property, finances, or household affairs. As far as Christians are concerned, stewardship involves managing God's work through the church." (Nelson's Bible Dictionary)

Discussion

I. Stewardship in the Kingdom of God

- A. Within God's kingdom there are several different types of stewardships. The following are stewards specifically over the household of God – His church.
 1. Apostles: To reveal the mystery and all truth to the whole world by the power of the Holy Spirit as ambassadors of Christ to the world: 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:4; Eph. 3:1-4, 8.
 2. Elders: To shepherd, guide, and rule over the flock, which is the church: Acts 20:28; Tit. 1:7.
 3. Evangelists, preachers: To proclaim God's word to the world and to the church which has been established by Christ: 1 Cor. 9:16-17.
 4. Teachers: To teach god's word in edification of the church: Eph. 4:11
 5. Deacons to serve the physical needs of the church: 1 Tim. 3:8-10.
- B. Many people are aware of these. However, there is one stewardship that most people who claim to be "religious" are unwilling to acknowledge.
 1. When a person is baptized they are purchased by the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7).
 2. Our bodies then belong to God and are meant for His use (1 Cor. 6:19).
 3. Because of this unique relationship, which we enter into at baptism, we become God's servants (Rom. 6:3-8, 22).
 - a. This fact must be clearly understood.
 - b. The denominations wish to do away with this particular aspect of Christianity while claiming freedom to live as they would like.
 - c. But God demands more; He deserves more!
 4. Because we have been purchased by Christ's blood we have become His own stewards (1 Pet. 4:10).

II. As Stewards of God.

- A. What is our responsibility as Stewards?
 1. Just as the Apostles were ambassadors of Christ and stewards of over the mystery of the gospel, just as elders are stewards over the flock of God and evangelists and teachers are stewards over the word of God, every Christian is a steward over the grace of God which is given them (1 Pet. 4:10, 11).
 2. We are servants whom God has given charge over His grace which He has bestowed on each and every one of us.
 3. We will expand on what it means to be stewards of God's grace in a moment, but first let us consider the parable of the talents.

B. The Parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-23).

1. Three servants were given a portion of their master's money (vs. 14, 15).
 - a. We must note that the master gave each servant a portion of what belonged to him.
 - b. Though the talents belonged to the master the servants had them in their possession, they had control over what was to be done with them and had the power to use the money for whatever purpose they desired, as if the talents belonged to them. But...
2. In the end each servant was expected to give an account of how they used the master's money (vs. 19).
 - a. In the end, they were required to have used that money to create profit for their master (vs. 20-21, 25-26).
 - b. Their faithfulness as stewards of their master was tested (1 Cor. 4:2).
3. When the master saw that the first two servants bore fruit with what He had given them he praised them and blessed them (vs. 21).
4. But, when the master inquired after the third servant he found that he had not used the talents for his benefit. He had not profited the master and that servant was rebuked and punished (vs. 26, 30).

C. As stewards of God's grace.

1. We must apply what we learn from this parable to our own stewardship, for it represents the kingdom in which we now stand (vs. 14).
2. Just as the master in the parable gave a number of talents to each servant, God has given numerous gifts to every Christian.
3. Like the three servants in the parable, everything we have as Christians was not earned by our works; rather it is given to us by the grace of God.
 - a. By His unmerited favor,
 - b. As a free gift as Peter says,
 - c. *"As each one has received a gift"* (1 Pet. 4:10).
4. Our talents therefore are everything we have. Every spiritual gift, every physical gift, and every ability that we have. All things must be used to benefit God.
 - a. 1 Pet. 4:11: *"Minister it to one another."*
 - b. 1 Pet 2:16: Use liberty to do good.
 - c. Rom. 12:6-8: Our ability whether by possessions (rich serve the poor – Luke 3:11) or laboring Gal. 5:13.
 - d. Even our bodies and our possessions belong to God (we have been purchased) 2 Cor. 6:19; Prov. 3:9; 1 John 3:16, 17.
 - e. Matt. 25:34-40: Good works are how we bear fruit (giving, clothing, visiting, comforting:).
5. This is why it is so important that when we know to do good we do it! When we fail to do this we fail in our stewardship. (Jas. 4:17).
 - a. It is not only the preacher's job; if you have the ability, do it.
 - b. When encouraged to grow some have asked, "Why, am I not good enough?" If we hold true to the gospel then no! A good steward never ceases to grow in his ability to prosper his master.
 - c. The servants in the parable were expected to multiply their talents, and so are we.

D. Overcoming the greatest challenge:

1. One of the greatest challenges Christians have in being faithful stewards is that of parting with their physical positions in order to do the Lord's work.

- a. My money, my car, my house, my clothes: I need these things.
- b. My time, my energy: I have to use them on me.
2. However, we must understand that everything we have been given, both physically and spiritually, is not our own. We have it by God's grace and are therefore stewards, not owners (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
3. In order to fulfill our stewardship we must do as Paul instructed in Phil. 2:5-11 and "*have this mind in you which was also in Christ.*"
 - a. Christ humbled Himself to the point of death on the cross to fulfill His charge.
 - b. In the end we see that He was glorified by the Father.
 - c. Christ is the first born (Rev. 1:5). That He is the "first" means that more will follow Him into heaven.
 - d. We will be those who follow Him if we hold fast our charge and prove ourselves to be faithful stewards of the manifold grace of God.
4. This will require great sacrifice on our part. But Jesus shows us that it is all worth it.
5. Therefore Paul comforts us in 1 Cor. 15:58, "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*"

Conclusion

1. If you are not a Christian today you may be wondering, "Why would I want to become a Christian if it means that I will have to use my life to serve God?"
2. Please consider the fact that if you are not serving God there is only one other person whom you can serve – Satan (1 John 3:8). When we become servants of God by obeying His gospel we have the hope of eternal salvation. As Jesus said in the parable of the talents, we can "*enter into the joy of the Lord.*"
3. However, if we do not become servants of God, but remain servants of Satan, we can do all the good works we want to and there will still be no joy. The only end to those who are not Christians is to be cast into the fiery pit (2 Thess. 1:7-10).
4. If you wish to avoid that terrible fate will you be baptized into Christ today and serve the living God?

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