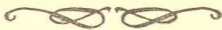


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CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP



BY
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*“Moreover it is required in Stewards
that a man be found faithful.”*

1 COR. 4-2

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By Geo. W. McDaniel



STEWARDSHIP is the duty of dispensing as an accountable person. Christian stewardship means that the individual Christian is intrusted with certain things for which he must account to Christ. Among those are time, talent, influence, power and wealth.

Time is allotted to man by the Creator. Man cannot create time. He has no power to prolong his days beyond his Maker's will. The days of our years are brief, even for the oldest. We live this life but once. This gives to Time an inestimable value; to Life, a peculiar solemnity.

STEWARDS OF TIME

The Bible teaches that we are stewards of our time. An old man, grown wise in the costly school of experience, exhorts: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." (Eccles. 12:1.) The same author said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work*****in the grave whither thou goest." (Eccles. 9:10.) Jesus, under the urgency of duty and the brevity of time, associated his disciples with himself in the pressing importance of being diligent: "We must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." (John 9:4) Paul besought the Ephesians and the Colossians to redeem the time, or buy up the opportunity. (Eph. 5:16, Col. 4:5.)

Numerous Scriptures emphasize the fact that a reckoning will be had with individuals and with groups who abuse or fail properly to utilize their time. The Jews are a case in point. They knew

not the day of their visitation. The foolish virgins could not borrow oil nor call back the wasted hours. The rich fool could not buy one hour in which to prepare to meet God.

A sense of the stewardship of time will supply every church with willing workers for the various departments.

STEWARDS OF TALENTS

Passing with their mere mention—the stewardship of talent, influence and time—let us consider the stewardship of wealth. Power, influence and talent are involved in wealth: for wealth is power; wealth enlarges influence; and wealth where honestly acquired is accrued by a God-given talent. “A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above.” God is the source and bestower of all we have. His ownership is absolute, and His rulership should be supreme. Thomas Jefferson’s favorite psalm was the fiftieth; the cattle on a thousand hills are His. The goods entrusted to the three men in Matthew 25:14 were the Lord’s—“His goods.” The acknowledgment by God’s people of this fundamental truth would speedily evangelize the world.

STEWARDS OF POSSESSIONS

Accountability for our possessions was impressed by Jesus in the parables of the talents and the pounds. One is the proportionate equal increase of unequal talents; the other, the unequal increase of equal pounds. Both emphasize reckoning and rewards; both stress the principle of judgment according to the use of the means at one’s disposal; both portray the tragedy of him who did nothing.

FAITHFULNESS IN STEWARDSHIP

Baptist progress is dependent upon the practice of faithful stewardship, and their ending is sim-

ultaneous. The Primitives failed because, while theoretically they held that God was sovereign, practically they acted as if man were independent; they withheld from God's cause what rightfully belonged to Him, and, consequently lost their influence and power. Spiritual dearth settled upon them. Honesty has a threefold significance—with our fellow men, with ourselves and with God. The Jew recognized that a tenth belongs to God—the Christian, to give in a strict sense, must exceed the tenth, and could he do less, remembering Calvary?

It is gratifying to observe an increasing liberality among our people. A successful business man recently made an engagement for a conference with a minister. The layman began the conversation thus: "I am a defaulter in my trusteeship for God. The defalcation amounts to fifty thousand dollars. Tell me where I can best devote that money that I may square my stewardship account. I have a conviction that God gave me the power to make money, and I must answer to Him for the way in which I used my talent just as you must answer to Him for the way in which you use your ministerial gift." Another layman of large business connection says: "Every dollar I can make or save for the next five years shall be given to the \$75,000,000 campaign." A splendid woman who is now pledged for a tenth of her income has resolved to practice rigid economy and self denial in order that she may increase her gifts by four hundred and fifty per cent—the amount of increase asked from her church and State. Such a spirit as that among Southern Baptists will make us in deed as we are in doctrine—the strongest denomination in the world.

Tithing is a rule adopted with splendid results by some of our people. It has numerous advantages: (1) The tither has a financial system. (2) It is founded upon Scripture. (3) The tither al-

ways has money on hand for the Lord's cause. (4) Appeals for funds never evoke from him the comment, "Too much talk about money for the church," for his system has provided the funds with which to respond to the appeals. (5) Beginning with the tenth as a minimum, tithers usually go beyond that amount in their contributions. (6) They are almost without exception joyful Christians, informed on missions and delighting to help every good object. (7) They bear wonderful testimony to the temporal and spiritual blessings which accompany tithing.

The government encourages liberality by its citizens in exempting from the income tax 15 per cent of one's contributions to such objects as are included in the scope of our forward movement. This is 5 per cent more than the tithe. The Baptist who gives 15 per cent of his income to the 75 Million Campaign may list that among his exemptions just as he lists taxes and interest. So, apart from love to Christ and loyalty to the Baptist cause, one is not a good business man who does not contribute 15 per cent of his income. The government deliberately stipulated 15 per cent, and doubtless for the purpose of inciting the people to generosity.

INCREASED LIBERALITY

The Baptist 75 Million Campaign calls for increased liberality. It is not an unreasonable task. We have the money. Have we the sense of stewardship? This is our testing time. God is calling upon us to bring all the tithes and offerings into His storehouse. He is calling us not merely to meet an emergency, but to come upon the plane of giving where we ought to live all the time. Already some keen ears have heard and obeyed that call. The other day a prominent judge stood before his brethren and said: "God has been very good to me. He has blessed me with long life, many friends, and

a devoted family. My son returned from France yesterday. As a token of gratitude to God for His mercies I pledge myself to see that our church, though small in membership, gives the large amount asked of it. My boys offered their all for their country, and I here and now dedicate my all to the kingdom of God."

No one among us is giving too much; many of us are giving far too little; some are giving nothing. Those who think they are giving to the limit can find ways in which to give more; those who give below their duty must measure up in this supreme hour; those who do nothing should, by every educational and persuasive method, be enlisted in this campaign. Remember, "The liberal soul shall be made fat," in his own self-respect, in temporal possessions, in the esteem of his brethren, in spiritual blessings, and in the sight of God.

Woe unto him who forgetteth that it is God that "giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deut. 8:15); that a "stranger eateth" of the riches he leaves (Eccles. 6:1); that he is not his own, for he is bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19). Alas, for him in whose heart the Word of God is choked by the "deceitfulness of riches" (Mark 4:19); who thinketh that a man's life consisteth in "the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15); who "layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God" (Luke 12:21); who errs from the faith and pierces himself through with many sorrows through the love of money (1 Tim. 6:10); who labors and accumulates for self and leaves an inheritance to be squandered by a fool (Eccles. 2:19); who "walketh in a vain shew;****heapeth up riches and knoweth not who shall gather them" (Ps. 39:6). Blessed is he who layeth up treasures in heaven "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt nor thieves break through and steal" (Matt. 6:20);

who so uses his wealth on earth that its beneficiaries who have died and preceded him to glory welcome him to everlasting habitations (Luke 16:9); who so invests, for kingdom interests, the talents entrusted to him as to hear his Master say at the end of life's brief day, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25-22).

There are four boxes in the safety deposit vault of Life.

Selfishness

I kept all my wealth—and I mourn my loss;
For gold, in a skeleton hand, turns to dross.
Love, friendship and gratitude might I have
bought—
But I kept my wealth till it mouldered to naught.

Pleasure

I spent all my gold—I danced and I sang—
The palace I built with hilarity rang;
Plays, revels and frolics from even to dawn—
But I lie here with nothing—I spent it; it's gone!

Avarice

I loaned my good money—at grasping per cent—
'Twas I who got all that you kept and you spent;
While I counted my Millions, Death plundered me
bare—
And this grave that I sleep in belongs to my heir.

Charity

It was little I had, but I gave all my store
To those who had less, or who needed it more;
And I came with Death laughing, for here at the
grave
In riches unmeasured I found what I gave!