

31.03.2018 THE RESULTS OF STEWARDSHIP

Having your conduct honourable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:12.

This is our last study on stewardship and we look at the witness, the influence and the final destiny of a faithful steward.

We saw in earlier studies that being a faithful steward is integral to living out the truth of the gospel in our lives and thus giving glory to God.

Faithful stewardship results in godliness, contentment, unwavering trust in God and a positive influence (witness) to the society we live in.

Godliness

Godliness is described as having reverence towards God and seeking to live in relationship with Him. In contrast, the ungodly desire to live without God, to live as if He did not exist. One who is a faithful steward has a revelation of who God is (His character) and what God can do (His power). He recognises that God has loved him unconditionally and God is the Giver of every good gift he possesses. He responds with praise, gratitude, humility and generosity to the God who has thus loved him.

The ungodly are described thus by Paul in his letter to Timothy:

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” 1 Timothy 3:1-5.

Faithful stewardship results in godliness. A faithful steward seeks to know God’s will in every aspect of life; for his possessions, for his growth in grace. The promise is sure that as he is led by the Spirit, he will reflect his Master’s character.

“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18.

“For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.” 1 Corinthians 1:12.

“Wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” Hebrews 12:28.

Contentment

“Now godliness with contentment is great gain.” 1 Timothy 6:6.

In the above statement Paul contrasts those who are godly and content with another group of people who claim to be godly but who use godliness as a pretext to gain benefits for themselves...

“Men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.” 1 Timothy 6:5.

A faithful steward is one who, like Paul, has learned to be content in every situation. He has learned by experiencing God’s faithfulness to him through all the changing scenes of life. Because he has learned to know God, he is never anxious and is always content. He believes the God who says, *“I will never fail you or forsake you.” Hebrews 13:6.*

“For I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.” Philippians 4:11.

We recognise that His thoughts and His ways are not our ways (*Isaiah 55:9*), and we believe and obey Him when He asks us to do something that seems foolish from a human point of view (*1 Corinthians 4:5; 13:2*). We know that He will work out all things for our ultimate good (*Romans 8:28*). We also learn through experience not to trust in our own intelligence, our own reasoning and wisdom, but to trust God with all our hearts.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5, 6.

“The LORD redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.” Psalm 34:22.

As we thus grow, there is a qualitative change in our faith. We start our journey having faith IN Jesus. But as we grow in grace, our goal is to have the faith OF Jesus. This is a faith that depends totally on God, a faith that obeys God unquestioningly and unconditionally and is faithful even unto death. It is a faith that works through love (*Matthew 22:37, Galatians 5:6*).

It is this quality of faith and trust that God’s people will have in the end-time.

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12.

And they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die. Revelation 12:11 (NLT).

Influence

“We have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.” 1 Corinthians 4:9.

The two metaphors that Jesus used to describe our influence are: light and salt.

As salt prevents decay, so our presence in our family, workplace and community will retard moral decay. As the life of Christ is manifested in us, we will see that men and women alter their behaviour in our presence. There are many who are dissatisfied with the life they live and the society they live in. When they see one in whom the Spirit of God dwells, there will be a hunger awakened in them to know the secret of our joy and contentment.

“He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.” Psalm 37:6.

“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honourable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” 1 Peter 2:11, 12.

We are called to be the light of the world (*Matthew 5:14*), as we let the Sun of righteousness (who is Himself the Light that lightens every man) reveal Himself through us. We do this to glorify God.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16.

Within the church community, there will be true fellowship as each member walks in the light of God.

“If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7.

The silent witness of a true, unselfish, godly life carries an almost irresistible influence. By revealing in our own life, the character of Christ, we co-operate with Him in the work of saving souls. It is only by revealing in our life His character that we can co-operate with Him. And the wider the sphere of our influence, the more good we may do. When those who profess to serve God follow Christ’s example, practicing the principles of the law in their daily life; when every act bears witness that they love God supremely and their neighbour as themselves, then will the church have power to move the world. *EGW: Our Father Cares. p 309.*

The Words We Want to Hear

A faithful steward lives life only for God's glory. He loves God supremely and the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit (*Romans 5:5*) is manifested to all he comes in contact with, friend or stranger, friend or enemy.

A faithful steward therefore, will always be distrustful of self; of anything that takes away the glory of God. His life is lived continually on the principle laid down by Paul:

"For of Him (God is the initiator) and through Him (through God's power) and to Him (for God's glory) are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen." Romans 11:36.

Jesus says that there will be many at his second coming who call Him Lord, but have done things through their own power and for their own glory (*Matthew 7:21-23*). They did not know Him, and His condemnation is that He does not know them.

In contrast, the faithful steward who has lived life for God's glory, knowing Him personally and doing everything according to God's will, through the power of the Spirit, so that all the glory goes to God, such a steward will in that glad Day, be welcomed into the joy of His Lord. There will be joy for the Master and joy for the steward.

'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' *Matthew 25:21.*

Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ. Often it is presented and enjoined in language that seems authoritative, because there is no other way to save man than to cut away those things which, if entertained, will demoralize the whole being. When Christ's followers give back to the Lord His own, they are accumulating treasure which will be given to them when they shall hear the words, *"Well done, good and faithful servant; . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."* *"Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."* *Matthew 25:23; Hebrews 12:2. The Desire of Ages: p. 523.*

"Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." *Matthew 25:34.*

O Thou who camest from above
the fire celestial to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
on the mean altar of my heart!

There let it for Thy glory burn
with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work, and speak, and think for Thee;
still let me guard the holy fire,
and still stir up the gift in me.

Ready for all Thy perfect will,
my acts of faith and love repeat;
till death Thy endless mercies seal,
and make the sacrifice complete.

Charles Wesley

God Bless!

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