

## 06.01.2018 STEWARDSHIP: MOTIVES OF THE HEART

**What do you have that you did not receive? Now, if you have received it, why do you boast? 1 Corinthians 4:7**

*“Blessed be Thou, Lord God of Israel our Father, forever and ever.*

*Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and power, and the glory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.*

*Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious name.*

*But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? **For all things come of Thee and of Thine own have we given Thee.***

*For we are strangers before Thee and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.” 1 Chronicles 29:10-15*

The passage above which is the prayer of David perhaps best encapsulates the principles of stewardship. True stewardship arises from the understanding that God is the owner of the universe and everything in it. The goal of true stewardship is to honour God by managing and utilising His gifts wisely for His glory.

True stewardship occurs when:

1. There is a revelation and recognition of who God is... *Blessed be Thou, Lord God of Israel our Father, forever and ever.*
2. There is a revelation and recognition of God’s power; what God can do... *Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and power, and the glory, and the majesty.*
3. God is the Giver of every gift we are born with and every possession we receive on earth... *Both riches and honour come of Thee and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.*
4. There is a human response of:
  - Praise and gratitude... *Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious name*
  - A recognition that all that we have we have received from God...
  - Humility - all that we ‘give’ God is but a portion of all that He has given us in the first place... *But who am I, and what are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? **For all things come of Thee and of Thine own have we given Thee.***

Definitions of Stewardship:

- to manage or look after another’s property.
- Utilizing and managing all the resources God gives us for the glory of God.

Stewardship begins with the understanding of God’s ownership of all, of every creature and everything (Psalm 24:1, Deuteronomy 10:14, Leviticus 25:23, Job 41:11). This understanding is crucial to being a good steward.

Once we understand the basis of Christian stewardship, we recognise that stewardship is a responsibility. It is the responsibility that Christians have in managing wisely the gifts God has given them in order to bring glory and honour to God’s name. It is therefore, an integral part of living the gospel; for the goal of the gospel is the glory of God.

*My Maker and my King, to Thee my all I owe,  
Thy sovereign bounty is the spring whence all my blessings flow.*

*Lord, what can I impart when all is Thine before?  
Thy love demands a thankful heart; the gift, alas! how poor.*

## **THE INFLUENCE OF MATERIALISM**

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:2*

Definition of Materialism:

*-The tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.*

Satan is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4, John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, 1 John 5:19).

One of his most successful weapons to draw men away from God is materialism.

The love of money is the root of all evil...for money is the means by which man satisfies his desires ...the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

In contrast, the godly man recognises that all he possesses belongs to God and therefore all his possessions, including his money is subject to the will of God. A godly man delights to do the will of God. His money is spent as God wills, not as he wills. Therefore his life is a life of contentment.

The first defence against materialism therefore is to repent and be converted. A converted person has a converted mind, which refuses to be moulded by the world's attitudes, but rather seeks to be transformed by the in-dwelling Holy Spirit. Everything he possesses, whether it is wealth, intelligence or talents, is used only as God wills.

### **Love Not the World: 1 John 2:15-17**

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

John is telling the believers that if they love the things of God, because they belong to the kingdom of God, **they cannot at the same time love the things of the world**, because the principles of the kingdom of this world are diametrically opposed to that of the Kingdom of God.

What does John mean by 'the world'?

John is describing the world system or order that is governed by Satan. Worldly affairs, riches, goods, pleasures, and advantages, which though we know are transitory, nevertheless seduce us away from God.

- a. 'Things that are in the world' 1 John 2:15.
- b. 'the world's goods' 1 John 3:17
- c. 'gain the whole world and forfeit his life' Matthew 16:26
- d. 'worldly lusts' Titus 2:12
- e. 'the spirit of the world', 'the wisdom of this world', 'the fashion of this world' 1 Cor 2:12, 1 Cor 3:19, 1 Cor 7:31
- f. 'the corruption that is in the world' 2 Peter 1:4
- g. 'lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father, but of the world' 1 John 2:16

h. The Christian is to keep himself 'unspotted from the world' James 1:27

### **Warnings against Materialism:**

*"Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Deuteronomy 8:11-14*

*Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. James 5:1-3*

God has promised that He will provide us with abundant life (John 10:10) and abundant provision for our earthly life (Matthew 6:33). If we choose to live in unbelief of these promises, we shall depend on ourselves to gain wealth – either through business or ownership of land or through education and professions that have the potential to provide material security.

To all who seek wealth as a priority over the righteousness of God, James has a dire warning. Misery awaits them – their riches, fine clothing, gold and silver will be corrupted, corroded and destroyed. They have not heeded the words of Jesus to lay up for themselves treasure in heaven, where *'neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal'* Matthew 6:20.

Because our hearts go with our treasure (Matthew 6:21), every one whose treasure is on earth will be driven to despair and wail in misery as they lose their earthly treasure. The words in the original Greek suggest excruciating grief and anguish. In contrast, those who have laid up for themselves treasure in heaven by using their wealth to provide for a world in need, will never be moved by loss of earthly possessions.

*Indeed the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth (Hosts). You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you. James 5:4-6*

The rich are condemned for greed and injustice. Their greed leads them to live lives of pleasure, luxury and indulgence. Great wealth brings power and the evil rich abuse this power. They show no justice to their employees and to the poor. Their abuse of power leads even to the murder of the poor, either directly or indirectly. The latter was done by manipulating the legal system to condemn the innocent, or by withholding wages (and therefore food) from the very poor.

*But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 1 Timothy 6:9, 10*

*He who lays up treasure for himself is not rich towards God. Luke 12:21*

### **God's promises to those who seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness:**

*Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to*

*you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?*

*“And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.*

*“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where neither thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Luke 12:22-34*

*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. Matthew 6:33*

*Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 1 Timothy 6:8-10*

*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19*

*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. 2 Corinthians 8:9*

**Conclusion:**

Our highest priority must be to keep our eyes fixed on the Kingdom of God; the kingdom that now is within us by the grace and power of the in-dwelling Spirit of God and which in the glorious eternal future will be the final destination of our journey. God Himself will provide with all we need for the journey – we need take no anxious thought for food and clothing and shelter.

*“Jesus says: ‘Don’t run after food and clothing etc. but seek first the Kingdom of God’. He says, ‘Fix your sights on your journey and think about the destination. Don’t focus on the provisions and supplies for the journey. That’s My business. Don’t worry about it. Don’t lose your sleep over it’. Jesus is saying: ‘ Seek God’s Kingdom - that is the journey and its destination.’”*

Naught that I have mine own I call,  
I’ll hold it for the Giver,  
My heart, my strength, my life, my all  
Are His, and His forever.

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