

THE CHRISTIAN'S STEWARDSHIP

Frequently I am asked, why do churches have such a difficult time filling leadership positions, committee personnel, teaching opportunities, etc. Why are there always money problems in the church? (Actually churches do not have money problems. They have spiritual problems). Consider the following.

Stewardship Pre-supposes Sonship

The scripture has relatively little to say about raising money, but much to say about using money. It is clearly taught and/or basically assumed that one who is a Christian is by nature a steward of everything that he is or that he possesses.

He has been redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. He has received a new life. He is indwelt by the Spirit of God and is empowered by His presence. He is a steward whether he wants to be or not.

My father used to say, "Son, you can't pick up one end of a stick without picking up the other end." He simply meant that every choice has consequences. When one chooses Christ as Savior, he also chooses to be a faithful steward, and to hear the Master say, "Well done, good and faithful steward," or be an unfaithful steward and hear him say, "Depart from me, I never knew you."

I'm convinced that the reason many people have a problem with stewardship is that they are Christians, but are not committed to Christ. They accepted Christ as Saviour, but not as Lord. They have never responded to the claim Christ has on their lives – their time, talent, and treasure. They ignore the Scriptural teachings concerning a Christian's life and presenting their lives a living sacrifice to Jesus Christ.

When it comes to giving they are like the little boy whose mother had given him two nickels. One was for church and the other for candy. When he got out of the car at church, he dropped one of the coins and it rolled in the drain. He looked down the grate and said, "Goodbye church nickel."

In such a life there is no place for Christ and certainly no place for the church. There is no recognition that a Christian's life is to be lived in a stewardship relationship to Christ.

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There is another group. These study the Bible, attend the seminars, and never miss a lecture series. They listen to every tape that comes their way and read all the new books on spiritual living. They lift their hands in prayer and their voices in praise. The problem is that is all they do. This is inadequate! They forget that "faith without works is dead."

They are like Wahlstrom's wonder:

A mechanically minded man named Wahlstrom loved to tinker with gadgets. He would attend army surplus sales and come home carrying boxes filled with cogwheels, bells and lights. He converted one room in his home into a mechanical marvel. Press a button and small, intricate wheels rotated. Their gears meshed with other wheels until all around the room wheels would be whirring. As the last wheel turned, a light flicked on. Gradually, other lights flashed on and off like one gigantic Christmas tree. As the lights beamed brighter, a bell began to ring. Then other bells chimed in until the entire room became a huge carnival of whirring wheels, flashing lights and ringing bells.

One day a visitor said to Wahlstrom, "What does your contraption DO? What's the sense of it?" To which Wahlstrom replied, "Well, when you press the button, wheels turn, lights flash, and bells clang." "Yes, I can see that," replied the visitor. "But what does your fascinating invention do?" Wahlstrom could only reply, "Well, when you press the button, wheels turn, lights flash and bells clang."

Actually, there was nothing more to be said about the contraption. It had no other purpose than to whirl and flash and clang.

It makes a lot of noise and show but accomplishes nothing. No money is given. No work is done. No need is met. No ministry is performed. Nothing but noise!

Suppose as a father, I am going to be away for the day, and I leave a note for my son. I tell him to mow the yard, edge the drive, weed the hedges, sweep the driveway and bag the cuttings. When I return at the end of the day I find him reading and rereading my letter. He is diagramming the sentences, defining the words, and analyzing their meaning. He even sings songs to me and tells me how much he loves me.

What should I say? One phrase should cover it. "Son, prove your love by doing my work!" Sonship demands service. Valid Christianity results in sacrificial living. Paul expressed it this way – your giving is a proof of your love." (II Corinthians 8:24) It includes time, talent, touch, thought, treasure and testimony. Valid Sonship means valuable stewardship.

In other words, Sonship presupposes stewardship, and we prove our Christianity and our love for Him by what we give of ourselves. Paul said that our giving of self and substance "proves our love! (II Corinthians 8:8).

*Lord, my prayer is that I too may be about
my Father's business and prove my love by doing so.*