

THE CHRISTIAN'S STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship Involves Partnership

I Corinthians 3:9

We have all heard about the flea who hitched a ride on the elephant. When they crossed a bridge the flea said, "We really shook that bridge didn't we?"

When the Bible says, "We are fellow laborers with God" it is not saying we are equal in our impact but that we are necessary for God's work in this world. He has chosen to allow us to help accomplish His purpose.

What a privilege this is! What an honor! A relationship with Royalty! The Lord God who created and sustains this universe is ready to join hands with us to do His work today. We enter into a partnership relationship with the Christ who loves us and gave himself for us. This is our stewardship responsibility. You know the poem that begins: "He has no hands but our hands to do His work today." What a responsibility!!

Oh but the problem comes when we fail in our part. Remember this parable of Jesus. The father tells the first son to work in the vineyard. The son says, "Yes, I'll go" but he never goes. To the second son He says, "Go work in my vineyard." This son says, "No I won't work" but later he changed his mind and worked in the vineyard. Jesus asked the question, "Which one did the will of the father?" The one who worked!

Jesus is saying that uselessness, the failure to serve, is a sin. We make mistakes but even the worst of mistakes can be rectified. We may fall into serious sin but God is merciful and will forgive. If however, we do nothing, achieve nothing, are good for nothing then His work goes undone and we stand condemned.

The real enemies of the church are not those "outsiders" who do evil but those "insiders" who fail to do good. The priest and Levites in His parable of Good Samaritan were not condemned for abusing the man but for failing to help. This was their condemnation.

In the parable of the talents the same truth is obvious. The one talent man was cast into outer darkness not for abuse of his talent, but that he made no use of it.

We face the same accountability in our service or lack of it. We should have given sacrificially but didn't. We would have served but didn't. We often are like the

"barren fig tree" (Mark 11:13,14) Jesus spoke of. It was all leaves, but no fruit. It offered great promise, but no performance. It was all show and no go.

In our sacrificial giving we are in partnership with Christ. We give and He blesses us and uses the gift for His glory and the enrichment of His church.

When Charles Fuller was pastor of First Baptist Church in Roanoke, Virginia he wrote this article, which speaks to us during our **STEWARDSHIP ENRICHMENT** program.

There is a sizable addition to the First Baptist Church in Roanoke, Virginia, which had its financial beginnings with a five-dollar gift and an attached note written by a seven-year-old boy who had earned the money helping a friend on a paper route. The note and gift were placed on the pastor's desk.

The message in the note was simple. It read, "For building."

The meticulous grammarian would insist that the lad omitted an article, "the," but perhaps the statement was more accurate without the article. The lad was for building...for building a plant...for building a ministry...for building a fellowship...for building a people...

When the congregation was challenged by that seven-year-old's spirit of giving, it developed a new countenance on the face of its stewardship. As a result there is a building today...fully paid for...being used to minister in the name of Christ...and there is another building already under construction.

This is being in partnership with God. This is being His fellow laborers. This is stewardship, which results in our growth and His glory.

Someone once said, "I would have been proud to have picked up the brush that fell from the hand of Michelangelo, to have carried the pen and ink of Milton, to have held the telescope for Columbus, to have run errands for Shakespeare, or to have pumped the bellows of the organ as Handel played his majestic music. Oh to have been a part of those great men."

But wait how much more wonderful to do the same for Christ today. How exciting to be His partners – to be His hands to do His work, to be His voice to tell His story, to be His heart to give and sacrifice for His glory.

Lord, thank you for allowing me to be your partner. Help me to be neither a silent nor a passive partner, but an active worker - a positive part of this team.