

Stewardship Article XIII

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21, 42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

Key Text:

Deuteronomy 8:18: “And you shall remember the LORD your God, for *it is* He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.”

Malachi 3:8-10: “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, *Even* this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,” Says the LORD of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you *such* blessing That *there will not be room* enough to receive it.”

Matthew 6:1-4: “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.”

Matthew 6:19-21: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither

moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 23:23: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.”

Matthew 25: 14-29

Acts 2:44-45: “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.”

Acts 20:35: “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

2 Corinthians 8-9

2 Corinthians 8:9: “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 9:6-8: “But this *I say*: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. *So let* each one *give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work.”

2 Corinthians 9:15: “Thanks *be* to God for His indescribable gift!”

Philippians 4:13, 19: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

General Theological Observations

Several truths can be highlighted from this important article and much neglected doctrine.

- 1) God owns everything, and therefore we are to be stewards of all he gives us. God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. As Creator he owns all that is or ever will be. He owns our lives and bodies, our goods and possessions. He owns us all!

In his wisdom and providence, he has placed in our hands and at our disposal certain blessings and gifts for our use for his glory. We are responsible for using his blessings for His glory, our good and the welfare of others.

Matthew 25:14-29 makes clear that our responsibility is to multiply the gifts given to us by God. Being a responsible steward of all that we have is part of our Christian discipleship.

- 2) Scripture teaches us to give “cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally ...” to the Lord’s work. Second Corinthians 8-9 is the clearest text on this. Now, the command to tithe is clearly given in the Old Testament. Some have argued that since the tithe is not mentioned in a positive way in the New Testament, tithing does not apply to Christians. How should we respond to this argument?

In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Paul says, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of the week each of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collection be made when I come.” And again in 2 Corinthians 9:6 he writes, “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” I believe the tithe to our local church is a good place to begin in principle but a terrible place to stop in terms of our giving. It is a valuable and worthy principle to follow.

The New Testament teaches that Christians should give even as God has blessed them in Christ. So, look to the cross and give! The tithe is not done away with in the New Testament, but a greater principle of giving is placed upon the disciple of Christ. Christians are to give sacrificially as God gave sacrificially when He gave His Son (2 Cor 9:15)!

- 3) A final topic mentioned in Article 13 is the motivation for our stewardship — the glory of God and the benefit of others. Stewardship obviously involves more than our income or possessions. It refers to every aspect of our lives.

Giving of our means is part of true Christian worship. Taking care of our bodies likewise is part of our stewardship so that we can serve God with all of our might. We work in order to be able not only to provide for ourselves and our families, but so that we might give to the Lord's work.

In our materialistic society we must challenge believers to work so that they might give to the Lord's work around the world. God's glory should be the driving force behind how we use all the gifts and possessions that God has placed in our care. At the end of our lives our goal should be that we are found as faithful stewards of all that our Lord has entrusted to us.

Practical Theological Observations

Stewardship often is not a popular topic among the people of God, yet it is central in Christian discipleship. Further, stewardship provides the means by which the church finances ministries at home and around the world.

The Baptist Faith and Message highlights 5 additional aspects of stewardship in a practical context for our careful consideration.

First, according to the BF&M, stewardship begins with an affirmation of the nature and character of God. Without this perspective of the nature of God, stewardship often descends into the abyss of legalism, divine manipulation, and self-exaltation. The character of the Sovereign God is good. James wrote, "Every generous act and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of light" (James 1:17 HCSB).

Second, the BF&M highlights stewardship as a sacred trust. God owns all; we merely serve as “house managers” of God’s possessions. The Gospel is the greatest trust we hold. As the recipients of God’s Good News, we owe a spiritual debt to all humans (Rom 1:14). The only way to pay down this debt is through Gospel proclamation. As trustees, God holds us accountable for our stewardship. Accountability functioned as the primary theme of Jesus’ teachings about stewardship.

Third, the BF&M emphasizes the comprehensive nature of stewardship. Stewardship under the Lordship of Christ encompasses the time, talents, and material possessions of the believer. A disciple, therefore, seeks maximum Kingdom impact by committing all time, all talents and all possessions to the Lordship of King Jesus.

Fourth, the BF&M sets forth the ultimate purposes of biblical stewardship, namely, “the glory of God and for helping others.”

Fifth, the BF&M affirms Kingdom giving. Disciples give to advance “the Redeemer’s cause.” Paul identified the first principle of giving—giving oneself to the Lord (2 Cor 8:5). Giving, then, is a matter of worship, a matter of the heart. Christians give cheerfully (2 Cor 9:7). Christians give regularly, systematically, and proportionately. Paul advised the Corinthian church to give the first day of the week (regular and systematic) and proportionate to God’s blessings (1 Cor 16:2-3). Paul also encouraged churches in special offerings. As with all giving, God’s people must give generously and handle all financial gifts with the highest integrity for the glory of God. There should never be an opportunity or occasion for accusation of financial mismanagement to have merit.

* Portions of this study drawn from articles by Mark Rathel and Doug Walker.