

Faithful Stewardship – Part 1
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
January 2, 2022

Text: Malachi 3:10

Purpose: We need to recognize that all we have is from God. Our time here on earth is very brief and we need to be good stewards of the resources we have been entrusted with. How we use them is a direct reflection on our relationship with God.

One day a man decided that he was going to turn his life over to God and dedicate all that he was to the monastery. The monastery that he joined had many rules for him to follow.



One of them was a vow of silence. Those that joined this monastery could not say anything for seven years. After seven years they could come before their leaders and say two words – that was all – two words.

So this man joined and after seven years he came before his leaders and the two words he said was, **“Food’s bad!”** The leaders were surprised but they didn’t respond to his two words. After another seven years had passed, he came before them again and this time, his two words were, **“Bed’s hard!”** Again, the leaders were shocked but they didn’t say anything.

The man served another seven years and when he came before the leaders he said, **“I Quit!”** One of the leaders turned to the other and said, “Well, it doesn’t surprise me, all he has done since he came here was complain!”

We can complain all we want, but a new year is upon us whether we want it or not! Today, we stand on the edge of a new year. Before us lies a great deal of possibilities and opportunities. Maybe you are like I am and are beginning to plan for the coming year. I have added new pages into my planning book and am anticipating what the future may hold. Planning is a good thing.



Today I want to talk about something that I rarely mention but is something that is of great importance. Over the past 20 years as a pastor, I have often taken the first few Sundays each January to discuss the topic of stewardship and tithing. Since we have finished up an old year, and are ringing in a new year, sorting out receipts from last year and preparing for tax season, I think it would be appropriate if we talked about this today.

Before I begin this morning on this topic of stewardship and giving, let me say to those that may be visiting us this morning, this is not something that I mention very much. Our church trusts our members and supporters to financially support the work of the church. We do not make phone calls, hold stewardship campaigns, or push the topic of money and giving to the church.

For those that have been faithful members and supporters of Spilman, you may be surprised to hear of the chief complaints of those outside the church is that the church is always asking for more and more money.

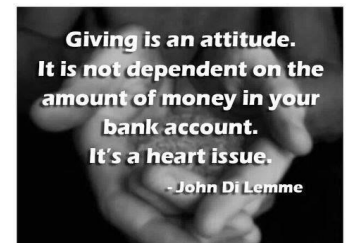
But as you and I know, giving has always been associated with worship.

In a church one Sunday, a man was asked to pray during the service. The man stood and reached into his pockets in search of some money. The preacher said to the man, “It is not time for our offering, could you please pray.” The man replied, “I cannot pray until I have given.”



Our relationship with God is intricately woven with how we have given back to God. In Genesis chapter 4, we read of the account of how Cain and Able brought their offerings unto the Lord. In this tragic example of worship gone wrong, we can see that God approves of some peoples offering, while He rejects others.

In this Genesis example, we see Cain brought the fruit of the ground unto the Lord. We see Abel bringing the firstborn of his flock and their fat unto the Lord. Many people are puzzled about why God would reject Cain’s offering while accepting Abel’s. Some said that the fruit of the ground was a pagan ceremony, while others noted that according to the Nomadic tradition an offering included the firstborn of their flock.



I think the issue was not solely in the item offered, but in the attitude of the heart that God was addressing. God had told them that for sin to be atoned, blood must be shed. Abel offered the better sacrifice because it was according to the way God requested.

J. Vernon McGee makes the following observation.

Hebrews 11:4 says: *“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”*



Jude 11 makes an interesting observation in regards to those that are in an apostate position. Jude says that “.... They have gone in the way of Cain...” When Cain came to God, he did not come to God by faith – he came of his own. And the offering that he brought relied upon the work of his own hands. God’s intended plan for the remission of sins involved the shedding of blood. Abel brought the blood sacrifice which pointed towards a coming redeemer. Abel attempted to win approval by another means. We need to recognize that the way to God is through the shedding of blood – not our own efforts.

We have been entrusted with MANY resources to do good, or to do evil. We could use these resources for our own pleasure, or we could use them to help the work of God here in our community.

The word steward is a word that is somewhat unfamiliar in our culture today. If we were to go on a cruise today, a steward would greet us as we entered the boat. This person is the one that is responsible for the care and needs of the passengers. The people that wait on the customers in an airplane are called stewardesses.



If we were to go into a store, we would encounter a manager. This person is responsible for the goods of the store, that they be arranged in a pleasing and organized manner. If we went to a larger institution, like a hospital or corporation, we would encounter an administrator. Each person is responsible for another person’s property. They are to be wise in their use of the assets and proper in their treatment of the customers and look out for the best interests of the owner.

You may have never thought about it, but God has entrusted you and me with many things. God has said in his word in several places that we are to be good stewards of the things that He has given us.

There once was a hymn writer from Germany named Paul Gerhardt. Many stories are told of Paul Gerhardt whose hymns are still sung in Germany. John Wesley translated some of them into English. In our hymnbook today, we have two hymns written by him. *Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me* (#123) and *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*, (#137).

Gerhardt's family was very poor. He was the shepherd boy who cared for the small flock of sheep and goats at the edge of the forest. One day a hunter came out from among the trees and asked the lad how far it was to the nearest village.



"Six miles, sire," he replied, "but the road is only a sheep track and can easily be missed."

"I have lost my way, and I am very tired," returned the hunter. "Leave your sheep and show me the way. I will pay you well."

"No, sire," said Gerhardt, "I cannot do that for they would stray into the forest and be stolen or eaten by the wolves."

"Never mind; your master would never miss one or two sheep and I would pay you more than the price of one or two sheep."

"But sire, my master trusts me with these sheep, and I have promised not to leave them."

"Well," said the hunter, "let me take care of the sheep while you fetch me food from the village and a guide."

"The sheep do not know your voice and would not obey you, sire."

"Can you not trust me? Do I not look like an honest man?" asked the hunter with a frown.

"Sir," said the boy slowly, "You tried to make me false to my trust, and break my word to my master. How do I know that you will keep your word to me?"

The hunter could not help laughing.

"I see you are an honest lad, and I will not forget you," said the hunter. "Which is the path? I must find a way for myself."

But Gerhardt would not let the man depart hungry, so he gave him the humble contents of his scribe. Just at that moment several men came hurrying through the forest uttering shouts of delight as they caught sight of the two of them. Gerhardt had been talking to the Grand Duke, and these men were his attendants who had been alarmed at his disappearance.

This was the beginning of Gerhardt's future career of honor and success. Pleased with the young boy's honesty, the Duke had him well educated and thus gave him a good state in life.

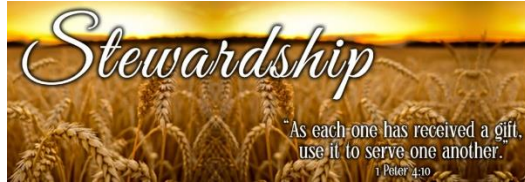
Yes, God wants us to be honest in His sight, and to our fellowman. You will find that throughout your life it pays to be honest.¹

¹ [#812 A treasury of Bible Illustrations]

Honesty. Faithfulness. Commitment to the task. This is what God is asking us to become. Yet, so many fail in this area due to a character flaw.

One aspect of being a good steward is related to **Material**

Stewardship. God has entrusted us with – sharing wealth, tithing, giving back to God, time, talent, and energy.

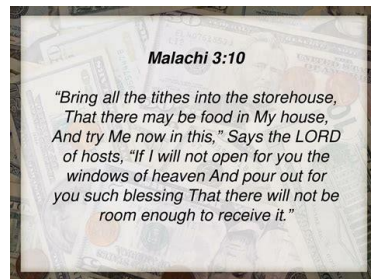


We read in the story of Acts chapter 4, that Barnabas had some property and sold it. He then brought the proceeds and laid it at the Apostles feet for the use of the ministry. The word Barnabas literally means, “The Son of Encouragement.”

Leviticus chapter 27 instructs the sons of Israel to give a tenth of all their wealth to the Lord.

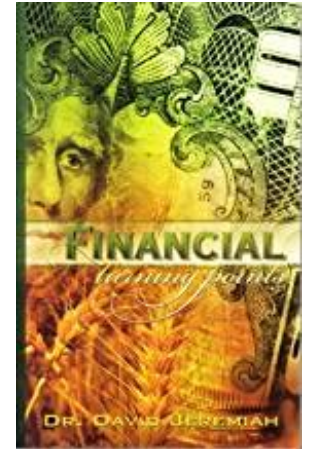
Numbers 18 instructs us also to give a tenth unto God.

Malachi 3:10 (which we read this morning) says for us to, *“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”*



Some people do not want to admit that God has instructed us to share our tithe with work of God. Some people will point out that we are under grace and not under the Law. I can understand that and appreciate it. But over and over Jesus talked about how we use our money. How we use the talents we have been given. How faithful we are to our commitments.

Dr. David Jeremiah in his book, *Financial Turning Points*, has some good points to make in this area.



Most people hate talking about money. If you really want to make someone nervous, start asking questions about anything related to the subject. Immediately you’ll see people clam up, stare at the floor, or simply sneak away quietly. When it comes to money, there is always embarrassment, vague answers, and occasionally some anger that anyone would have the audacity to broach something so personal.

But the truth is, there are no secrets with God. He knows how much we make. He knows how much we give. In reality, each day we stand before Him with our entire financial portfolios wide open. So it actually seems logical, even wise, for us to discuss our finances – and God’s plan for our money.

- One out of every six verses in Matthew, Mark and Luke is related to money.
- Half of the 38 parables of Jesus in the New Testament are devoted to the issue of money.

- Fifteen percent of everything Jesus said that is recorded in Scripture has to do with our attitudes and actions regarding finances.
- In the Bible there are 2,350 verses relevant to finances, 126 principles of stewardship mentioned in the New Testament alone.

One of the main reasons why money is such a big issue in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and New Testament, is because money is life compressed. That is, money represents the fruit of who we are and what we do. God is ultimately concerned about our heart. And one of the quickest ways to discover the priorities of our heart is to address the placement of our finances.



You see, everything we have is God-given. Any financial resources we enjoy are a gracious gift from Him. As a matter of fact, the investment of money in the New Testament is called “grace” – suggesting beauty, health, and love. That’s how we ought to feel toward financial matters. Giving should become an act of beauty, a statement of health, and a reflection of love.

J. Oswald Sanders, once said, “The basic question is not how much money we should give to God, but how much of God’s money should we keep for ourselves.”



One of the questions people have to answer for themselves is the issue of tithing. Should I tithe or not? I cannot answer for you; I can only answer for myself. If you determine to

tithe (10%), then do I tithe on the gross pay or the net pay? Should I give it to one organization like the church or to several?

Let us look back at the word “storehouse,” as it is mentioned in Malachi. I once asked a pastor (Dr. Aubrey Jones) what he thought the “storehouse” was. He told me that it was the place where you are fed. Is this church spiritually feeding you? Or is another? Wherever you are being fed, that is where you should be sending your support.



Maybe you are sitting here thinking to yourself, “I’m not tithing right now.” Maybe your giving pattern could be considered as “tipping God.” Maybe you are dropping a dollar in every Sunday and feel that is enough. I want to challenge you to rethink that. Pray about what God would have you to give. Maybe you cannot give ten percent right now based upon your individual circumstances. Take time for you and God to work this out between the two of you. Then trust God and step out on faith.

In the movie the Titanic, the old woman in the story is retelling how she as a young rich girl fell in love with a poor young boy. They have found the sunken hull of the ship deep under the Atlantic Ocean. They are trying to find a particular piece of jewelry that went down with the boat. Unknown to them, the old woman had it on her person the



day the ship went down and she was in a lifeboat. At the end of the movie, to my amazement, the woman took that valuable pendant and dropped it overboard into the ocean. For this woman, her heart was broken the day the poor boy died in the ocean. She decided to leave her treasure where her heart was.

Jesus repeatedly taught in the parables that where your heart is, there your treasure will be also! Those that give to the church are present, interested, personally committed and sharing their resources to help the church accomplish its mission.

Through the years, I have met some people that give away over ten percent of their resources to the ministry of God. They have made lifestyle changes that enabled them to give more. In every instance, I have seen God give back to them greatly.

Some of you are familiar with Baylor University. B. W. Spilman graduated from Baylor University. Today it is a thriving institution in Belmont Texas. One of the Christians who gave the money for one of the buildings at that school, later lost all of his property and money. Several men of the world asked him, “Don’t you wish you had the money back that you put into that school?” He replied, “Not at all. It is all that I have saved. If I had kept that money, I would have lost it too, I am thankful that I gave that building when I did.” The world may judge us by what we do with the property God has placed in our keeping.



Nevertheless, we should only be concerned with God’s estimation of our stewardship of His gifts.²

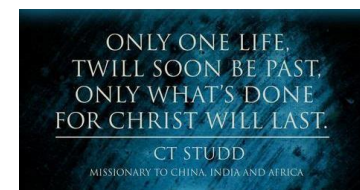
To be honest, we have been entrusted with so many wonderful things. The question I have had to ask myself is, “Am I going to spend it all on myself or am I going to try and improve my church and community with what God has entrusted me with?”

God blesses His children with financial resources so we have everything we need to accomplish His purpose, to do His work in the world. The purpose of His financial blessing is not simply to give us what we want. He gives to us so that we have the opportunity to carry out His mission to extend His kingdom among all nations. In other words, we possess so that we may pass on.

I Chronicles 29:14 simply states the foundation of financial stewardship: *“For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You.”* These words are a powerful reminder to us that anything we give to God is merely a part of His abundant blessing to us. God cares deeply about the way we administer his possessions.



I am reminded time and time again of the following poem.



Only one life will soon be passed,
Only the things that are done for Christ will last.

² [#773 Illustrations of Bible Truths]

Are you ready to move out of your financial comfort zone and trust God?

What is God calling you to do today? Don't pass it off as just another preacher harping on money. If our hearts are right, then our pocketbooks will be also. It is amazing that of all topics that Jesus talked about, the most frequent one was money.

It all goes back to the thought – “Where your treasure is, your heart will be also.”

LET US PRAY
