

Stewardship in the Church

Stewardship, the root of this word is steward, but what is a steward. The dictionary definition of steward is as follows, "a person who serves passengers on a ship, aircraft, etc." It is additionally defined as, "a person responsible for the management of any kind of resources or property."

Noah is a good application of this definition, for he quite literally exercised stewardship over God's creatures during his voyage of forty days and forty nights. But Noah's stewardship began long before the ark set sail. As a prophet, Noah preached to the people of his day, warning them to repent, for the time of destruction was upon them. Noah's stewardship responsibilities encompassed not only the material needs for salvation, the building of the ark, but also the spiritual instruction of God's prophetic proclamation given Noah to save sinful man from the coming flood.

Our Stewardship in the New Testament period is very much the same. In this post-prophetic period, God has given us pastors and teachers to warn the unrepentant of the coming day of judgment. In the New Testament period we have the body of Christ as our ark, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ to call sinful man to repentance. It was on the cross that Jesus Christ completed the salvation of man, (the ark), and began a new covenant with his rebellious creation. There is no further building to complete, "it is finished".

Here we have the Gospel given to us with one stewardship responsibility, Matthew 28:19 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". From this time forward the furtherance of the Gospel message is the only mandate of the Church. This is a difficult task for sinful man; we have created many stumbling blocks for ourselves. We have formed committees and created vast administrations to service our flawed interpretation of the great commission. The world would have us rebuild the temple of Jerusalem and bring ourselves back under the law. We acquiesce to this by concerning ourselves more with the administration of the church, than we do the damaging influence our conduct has on those who are vulnerable in their faith.

You have heard it said, "the church is not the building," and these words are true. But what then of the building, are we to let the bricks tumble around our feet? These are the questions the world asks. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 9:10 "Now he who supplied seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of you righteousness." As God's children we believe that all things belong to God. In Colossians 1:16 Paul also writes, "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together." This gives us tremendous comfort. If all things belong to God, what then do I have to render to the Lord, nothing, for all that is wrought in the flesh is sin. God wants the Christian to receive by faith. The Holy Spirit through the Gospel gives faith and the Gospel is received through the hearing of

the Word, here you have the fulfilling of the great commission, the real work of the Church of Jesus Christ.

The church of this world will always have its troubles and concerns, these are the methods by which God strengthens our faith and bring us closer to Him. We read in Matthew 6:31-33 " So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be give to you as well." These words give us direction in our stewardship priorities. Just as during Jesus' ministry, His only concern was the wishes of the Father, so must our focus be. Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ all will be received.

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