

THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF STEWARDSHIP

TEXT: MALACHI 3:7-10

INTRODUCTION:

1. I am going to speak on the Scriptural doctrine of stewardship.
2. Our Lord Jesus Christ had much to say about stewardship.
3. Our Lord said in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."
4. He said in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
5. After our Lord, the greatest preacher was the apostle Paul, and he also had much to say about the Scriptural doctrine of stewardship. I believe every Christian should carefully study II Corinthians 8 & 9.
6. For example, II Corinthians 9:6, 7 -- "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."
7. There are many other important texts as well, and Lord willing we will look at a few more this morning. However, I think the most important of them all is Malachi 3:7-10.

I. THE BASIS OF GIVING

1. The basis of giving is a heart for God. People who have a heart for God are giving people.
2. Amy Carmichael had a heart for God. She was born in 1867 in North Ireland. Amy was saved at the age of 13, and God called her to be a missionary at the age of 24.
3. As the first appointee of the Keswick's missions committee, she went to Japan. But there she met with disappointments, and after working there for 15 months as a missionary, Amy Carmichael became convinced that Japan was not where God wanted her, so she sailed for the island of Ceylon, now known as the nation of Sri Lanka.
4. She was there only a few months when she was urgently called back to England to care for an elderly friend, who was in critical condition.
5. After about one year in England, she returned to the mission field, this time to India. She arrived in Madras in 1895, and remained there till she died in 1951. She stayed in India for 55 years, without ever leaving or taking a furlough.

6. A life-changing experience took place in 1901. A little five-year-old girl was brought to Amy Carmichael by an Indian woman. The child had been sold by her mother to the Hindu priests in the Hindu temple, and there she was being prepared to be a temple prostitute.
7. Twice this little five-year-old girl had run away only to be caught, carried back, beaten, and subjected to the terrible perversion of that Hindu temple.
8. Finally, as she was running away again one night, she met with this understanding woman who brought her to Amy Carmichael. Amy gathered the child up into her lap and picked up a rag doll and gave it to the child to play with.
9. It was then that Amy Carmichael learned just how wicked these temples really were, and what went on inside. This little five-year-old girl talked freely as she played with the doll. She told Amy things that they did to her in the temple, demonstrating them using the doll.
10. Amy never forgot the child's terrible story. This was the beginning of her rescue of these defenseless little children who had been dedicated to the Hindu temple gods.
11. In 1918, Amy and her coworkers began to rescue baby boys, for they too were dedicated for perversion to the temple gods and goddesses.
12. Amy Carmichael was greatly resented by the Hindu priests and was frequently taken to court on charges of being a kidnapper. Over the years literally thousands of temple children were rescued, and other ministries were established in South India -- hospitals, schools, printing ministries, etc. Amy Carmichael wrote 35 Christian books.
13. Amy Carmichael had a heart for God. She often said, "You can give without loving but you cannot love without giving."
14. This is the basis for Christian stewardship. "You can give without loving but you cannot love without giving." This is our basis for giving. This is the basis of Christian stewardship.
15. In the prophet Malachi's day, the people of Israel were drifting far from God. Malachi's message was one of rebuke and challenge -- "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts" (3:7).
16. The people were obstinate and hardened by sin. They replied, "Wherein (how) shall we return?" (3:7).
17. Malachi 3:8 says, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."
18. This Scripture tells us that not tithing is equivalent to robbing God. What an indictment!

19. They were cursed with a curse, because they had robbed God (3:9).
20. God instructed them to bring all their tithes into the storehouse (3:10).
21. Back when Hezekiah was king of Judah, he commanded the people to prepare chambers in the temple, where they could store the tithes and the offerings (II Chron. 31:11, 12). This was the "storehouse."
22. Later on, that temple was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar and his army. A new temple was built by the remnant that returned with Ezra and Nehemiah.
23. Nehemiah 10:38 and 39 tells us that a storehouse was built in the new temple, and there the people brought their tithes and offerings.
24. Today we do not worship in a temple in Jerusalem. Today God's program is for Christians to worship in local churches all over the world.
25. Our Lord said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).
26. Our Lord said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19, 20).
27. Churches are to be established all over the world, and these churches are to be self-supporting. They are to be supported by the tithes and offerings of God's people.
28. The "storehouse" (Mal. 3:10) was in one place. God did not say "storehouses" (plural). The New Testament counterpart of the temple storehouse is the local New Testament church. That is God's place.
29. There are three important principles we must understand: the Lord's tithe, the Lord's church, and the Lord's Day. This is like a three-legged stool. If you remove one leg, it falls apart.
30. We know it is the Lord's tithe because Leviticus 27:32 says the tithe is "holy unto the LORD." And Malachi 3:8 says when a man doesn't give his tithe, he is robbing God. The tithe belongs to God.
31. We know it is the Lord's church because Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
32. And we are to pay our tithes and offerings on the Lord's Day (I Cor. 16:1, 2), the first day of the week. God comes first.
33. The Lord's tithe and the Lord's Day go together, because the Bible teaches that God's people are to set aside at least one day for the Lord, and we are to set aside at least ten percent of our income for the Lord.

II. THE BARRIERS TO GIVING

1. The basis of giving is a heart for God, but there are many barriers to giving. Covetousness is one big barrier. Hebrews 13:5 says, "Let your conversation (manner of life, conduct) be without covetousness."
2. In Ephesians 5:3 and Colossians 3:5, covetousness is listed along with fornication and uncleanness, and inordinate affection, and evil concupiscence as sins of the flesh that are to be mortified, i.e., to put to death.
3. Colossians 3:5 says covetousness is idolatry.
4. Another barrier is unbelief. Malachi 3:10 says, "Prove me now (try me, put me to the test) herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."
5. Some Christians are weak in faith, and they mistakenly believe that if they give tithes and offerings, there will not be enough money left for their other expenses. They are faithless and fearful.
6. The Lord could do a lot more with our 90 percent (or 85 %), than we could do with 100 percent.
7. Our Lord took five loaves of bread, and two fishes and fed about five thousand men, plus women and children. And on top of that they took up of the fragments that remained and there were twelve baskets full (Mark 6:36-44).
8. But some Christians do not give because they lack faith that God can provide for their needs (cf. Matt. 6:24-34).
9. God is a God of order. God created the universe, the earth, the sun, moon and stars, plants and animals, and He made Adam and Eve, who in turn populated this whole earth. Everything is orderly in God's universe.
10. "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" (Matt. 6:26).
11. God is a God of order. First Corinthians 14:40 says, "Let all things be done decently and in order."
12. When our Lord fed the five thousand with the loaves and two fishes, "He commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties."
13. He did this because God is a God of order. And God is orderly when it comes to financing His church (cf. I Cor. 16:1, 2).

14. Many barriers to giving would be removed if people understood the importance of financing God's work God's way.
15. Many barriers to giving would be removed if people understood the importance of financing God's work in getting the Gospel out.
16. We need to get our priorities right. I heard a story about a church business meeting. At this meeting one man stood up to complain about the pastor's emphasis on stewardship, and the church's big missions program, and other expenses, etc.
17. A deacon stood up to speak. He said, "When my son was born he cost me and my wife a lot of money right from the beginning -- hospital bills, doctor bills, medicine, diapers, clothes, food, toys, and many other things. Then he went to school, and that cost a lot of money -- tuition, books, fees, school trips, etc. Then came college and that was very, very expensive.
18. "But in his senior year at college he died in a car wreck. Since his funeral he hasn't cost us a penny."
19. C.T. Studd said, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last."
20. C.T. Studds had his priorities right. C.T. Studds served as a missionary in China, India, and Africa.
21. It was while he was serving in China that C.T. reached the age (25 years old) in which according to his father's will he was to inherit a large sum of money. After reading God's Word, and much prayer, C.T. felt led to give his entire fortune to Christ!
22. He gave some to D.L. Moody, some to George Müller, and the rest to support other worthy ministries.
23. "Two little lines I heard one day, Traveling along life's busy way; Bringing conviction to my heart, And from my mind would not depart; Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last."

III. THE BLESSINGS OF GIVING

1. Malachi 3:10 says, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."
2. Jesus said in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
3. All throughout Scripture, God offers us a choice -- blessing or curse (Malachi 3:9, 10; cf. Deut. 11:26-28).

4. I have had people tell me that they intend to start giving generously "after their ship comes in." That is unscriptural thinking.
5. Generous giving results in abundant blessing -- not the other way around (cf. II Chron. 31:4-10; I Kings 17:9-16).
6. John Bunyan said, "a man there was, though some did count him mad, the more he cast away the more he had."
7. Certainly R.G. LeTourneau proved that to be true. As a multi-millionaire, LeTourneau gave 90% of his profit to God's work and kept only 10% for himself.
8. LeTourneau said that the money came in faster than he could give it away. LeTourneau was convinced that he could not out-give God. "I shovel it out," he would say, "and God shovels it back, but God has a bigger shovel."
9. The apostle Paul commended the churches of Macedonia because they gave "beyond their power" (II Cor. 8:3).
10. Our Lord commended the widow woman because she gave all she had (Mark 12:41-44).
11. The great British soldier, General Charles Gordon was born near London, England in 1833. He distinguished himself as a great soldier during the Crimean War (1853-56), and then he volunteered to join the British forces in China.
12. General Gordon was present during the occupation of Peking in 1860 and defended Shanghai during the Taiping Rebellion.
13. He returned to England in 1865, where an enthusiastic public had already dubbed him "Chinese Gordon." When the British government tried to reward him for his magnificent service in China, General Gordon declined all money and titles, but did accept a gold medal on which his name and a record of his 33 engagements were inscribed.
14. After he was killed by Muslim rebels in Sudan, the medal could not be found. After a thorough search, it was finally discovered that he had sent it to Manchester during a famine, with a request that it be melted and used to buy bread for the poor.
15. In his diary he recorded that the medal was the only earthly thing he valued and that he had given it over to the Lord Jesus Christ.
16. Oh, if we only had more Christians like General Gordon today!
17. Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
18. When we trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, He delivered us from the power of sin, and that includes the sins of covetousness and selfishness and greed and materialism.
19. We have been delivered; we just need to believe it!

20. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

CONCLUSION:

1. By all accounts, John Wesley was the greatest preacher of his generation.
2. John Wesley said that when a person's standard of living increases, his standard of giving should increase as well. Wesley lived very simply when he was a student at Oxford. And he continued to live simply for the rest of his life -- he lived simply; he ate simply; and he dressed simply, etc.
3. John Wesley preached a sermon entitled, "The Use of Money." In this sermon he advocated the following principles:
 - (1) Earn as much as you can.
 - (2) Save as much as you can.
 - (3) Give as much as you can.
4. Over the years, many preachers have used Wesley's simple 3-point outline: (1) Earn as much as you can.
(2) Save as much as you can. (3) Give as much as you can.
5. One day a pastor preached a message using Wesley's 3-point outline.
6. A man approached the pastor after the service and said, "Those first two points were wonderful, but the third point spoiled everything!"
7. Apparently that man did not understand the Scriptural doctrine of stewardship!