

God's Laws Of Stewardship

Introduction. Our world is a materialistic world. Man desires and needs material sustenance. As long as he is in the world, he must come to grips with problems that the material creates. He must formulate attitudes, and he must adopt criteria to deal with the material, or he will find himself under subjection to it.

Jesus spoke more on man's relationship to the material than He did upon heaven, hell, repentance, and the new birth combined. It is only reasonable to assume that God would set standards and reveal His attitude toward something that is this important. When we begin to search, these standards become obvious to us, and nowhere are these rules more evident than in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30.

I. ***Man's Goods Are God's***

- A. All goods committed to man belong to God (vs. 14).
 - 1. Everything in this world belongs to God (Psalm 24:1).
 - 2. Everything in heaven and earth belong to God (1 Chronicles 29:11).
- B. Stewards must account for every item which their master has placed in their hands.
 - 1. This is why Jesus had the right to tell the rich young ruler what to do (Luke 18:22).
 - 2. The ruler quit his job and absconded with his employer's funds when he turned away.

II. ***God Determines Wealth***

- A. The amount of goods entrusted to each steward is determined by God (vs. 15).
 - 1. We do not determine our own prosperity.
 - 2. We take advantage of opportunities and multiply what He has given us (1 Corinthians 4:7; James 4:17).
- B. This is good stewardship, but the more we have, the more for which we have to be grateful and accountable. If we receive it generously, we are to use it generously (Matthew 10:8; 1 Peter 4:10).

III. ***A Steward Has Liberty***

- A. Each steward has liberty to handle the goods given to him as he sees best (vss. 16-18).
 - 1. There is no indication the master gave instructions on how they were to invest.
 - 2. The Lord will provide us with opportunities, but we must make the decision. A properly disciplined spiritual life will give us wisdom to make good decisions (John 6:27; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

- B. The Lord knew some would use this liberty as a cloak for covetousness. The one talent man decided not to use it for his master at all. God did not intend that freedom of action be used as a license for inaction.
 - 1. Miguel Unamuno, a Spanish philosopher, tells about the Roman aqueduct at Segovia, Spain. It was built in 109 A.D., and for 1,800 years, it carried water from the mountains to the city. Nearly 60 generations of men drank from its flow.
 - 2. Then came another generation, a recent one, who said, "This aqueduct is so great a marvel that it ought to be preserved for our children, as a museum piece. We shall relieve it of its centuries-long labor. They did; they laid modern iron pipes. They gave the ancient bricks and mortar a rest -- and the aqueduct began to fall apart. The sun beating on its dry mortar caused it to crumble. The bricks and stone sagged and threatened to fall. What ages of service could not destroy, idleness disintegrated.
- C. Since you have liberty, make great plans, no matter how meager your allotment or talents (Romans 12:4-8; 2 Corinthians 8:1-3). This takes walking by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7).

IV. ***Each Will Give An Account***

- A. Each steward is called to give an account of his stewardship to God (vs. 19).
 - 1. "Reckoneth" makes it clear that they had been given the money specifically for trading.
 - 2. The profit accruing was no unexpected bonus, but was what was intended from the start (Matthew 18:23; cf. Luke 17:10).
- B. There is a day of accounting for every steward of God.
 - 1. No one will escape the reckoning at death (Hebrews 9:27).
 - 2. We will account for the way we have used what God has entrusted to our keeping.
 - a) Our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
 - b) Our money (Luke 12:21).
 - c) Our talents (Hebrews 5:12).
 - d) Our words (Matthew 12:36-37).
 - e) Our deeds (Romans 2:5-7).
- C. We are not forced to use the Lord's goods properly, but we must give an account of our use of them.
 - 1. Research has shown that conservative Christians give more in every measurable way, from writing checks to volunteering time to donating blood to helping strangers.
 - 2. Four factors are involved: church attendance, two-parent families, a strong work ethic, and distaste for government social services. Of

those, church attendance is the most telling. Ninety-one percent of regular church attendees give to charity each year, compared with 66% of those who said they are not religious.

V. ***We Must Show Gain***

- A. This is required of every steward (vs. 27).
 - 1. Jesus does not want His money back when we die, or when He comes again.
 - 2. We are not "safe-deposit boxes" for His property. He wants the glory this wealth can accomplish here on earth (1 Timothy 6:17-19).
- B. If the Master came today, how many opportunities would He find "hid in the earth?"
 - 1. The best investment you can make is the investment of heavenly endeavors (Matthew 6:19-21; 16:26; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8).
 - 2. Leo Tolstoy told the story of a young Russian who inherited his father's small farm. He immediately started dreaming of how to expand his property when one morning a well-dressed stranger visited him and made him an offer that was too good to be true. He could have free of charge all the property he could walk around in one day. The only condition was that he returns to the same spot from which he started, the grave of his father, before the sun went down. Seeing the rich fields in the distance, he sets out without taking any provisions or saying goodbye to his family. He figured he could cover six square miles in a day. After a short while he decided to make it nine, then twelve, and finally fifteen square miles. By noon he made it to the halfway point. He was near the point of exhaustion but the obsession to own the land drove him on. With only a few minutes left before the sun went down, he gathered all his strength, stumbled across the line, the new owner of fifteen square miles of land, and then collapsed on the ground, dead. The stranger smiles and said, "I offered him all the land he could cover. Now you see what that is, six feet long and two feet wide, and I thought he would like to have the land close to his father's grave, rather than to have it anywhere else." Having said that, the stranger whose name is Death vanishes, saying, "I have kept my pledge." Each one of his will come face-to-face with the same stranger and ask ourselves, "What does a man get for his toil?"

VI. ***Reward And Punishment***

- A. The same reward is given to all the faithful (vss. 21, 23).
 - 1. This is one of the most gracious promises in the Bible. God rewards according to faithfulness, not abilities (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

2. The servants who doubled their talents are praised especially for their faithfulness and are given increased responsibility and a share in their master's "joy."
 3. No one should ever fear that he will disappoint God because he is not gifted and will never be able to achieve the same level of accomplishment. God does not expect the impossible; He merely expects us to do all we can.
- B. The wicked servant is "worthless" (vs. 30).
1. To fail to do good and use what God has entrusted to us is a sin that results in the loss of neglected resources and banishment from His presence.
 2. The fact that God may doom you eternally over the misuse of your stewardship may come as a shock, but hopefully this will lead you to growing and developing your Lord's resources, given to you for His glory.

Conclusion. During one of his expeditions to Antarctica (1914-1917), Ernest Shackleton left some of his men on Elephant Island with the intent of returning for them and carrying them back to England. But he was delayed. By the time he could go back for them, the sea had frozen and he had no access to the island. Three times he tried to reach them but was prevented by the ice. Finally, on his fourth try, he broke through and found a narrow channel. Much to his surprise, he found the crewmen waiting for him, supplies packed and ready to board. They were soon on their way back to England. He asked them how they knew to be ready for him. They told him they did not know when he would return, but they were sure he would. So every morning, the leader rolled up his bag, and packed his gear and told the crew to do the same. "Get your things ready, boys. The boss may come today." The crew leader did his crew a great service by encouraging them to be prepared. What will you do with what God has given you? The parable of the talents is grouped with two others that teach the necessity of watching, but we must work while we wait.