

Stewardship

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[0:00] Let's start at the very beginning. There's a song that goes like that, isn't there? Start at the very beginning. In the book of beginnings, Genesis. Genesis chapter 1, verse 1. You can probably all recite this. It says, in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

So it says right at the start that the creator God has absolute rights of ownership. He made everything, the heavens and the earth. He's got absolute rights of ownership over all things. And he's granted us use of those things, of what he has made. We're blessed, aren't we? Amen. We're blessed to have the use of life, of the living that we have. And we have a stewardship to fulfil. There's a sense in which our lives are not our own and our times are in his hands. The word tells now the Lord has claims over our lives and our body. 1 Corinthians 6.19 it says, What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you and which ye have of God? And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. So not only has he made the heaven and the earth, he's made you and me and our body, our person, who we are.

Now, as Christians especially, we are a temple of the Holy Spirit. And we are not our own, we've been bought with a price. He's purchased us out of the devil's ownership and he's made us his own people. We're saved. And then it says, so you're bought with a price, therefore glorify God with your body. Glorify God with your spirit, which belong to him.

And so we are purchased possession. We've been purchased. It's the sense that we're stamped with his ownership. We belong to him. So it follows then that we should glorify God with our lives. Glorify God with who you are, with all your being.

[2:08] And friends, that's stewardship. We're talking about stewardship, being a steward. In other words, we are responsible for the day by day choices we make in our lives. It's called stewardship. A steward is a servant appointed, given a responsibility by their master.

We can look back in the Bible and see examples of that in such an example as Joseph. Joseph was such a one. In Genesis 41 verse 40, we read of Joseph, the Pharaoh said, Thou shalt be over my house and according unto my word shall all my people be ruled. Only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

So Joseph was elevated to this high rank as like the prime minister of Egypt under the Pharaoh. Joseph was given this high level of responsibility as the administrator of the owner's property. It was still Pharaoh who had charge, but Joseph had management. It's the same for you and me as God's people. You are God's agent, God's trustee.

And he has entrusted to you with a precious gift, a life to live. It's called stewardship. Stewardship, it defines our purpose, why we're here, what he's assigned to us into our responsibility.

[3:34] By God himself. That's precious. That's special. That's important. So consider God's provision for you. What you have, God has entrusted things into your life, into your charge, to your care.

The life that you live and your possessions, your family, the life, the livelihood that you have. So, friends, I urge each one today to have that mindfulness that he is the creator.

He's given, he's made everything and he's entrusted things to our care. Ultimately, it all belongs to him. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof it says.

So that means absolutely everything, doesn't it? And so when we think of life, of living, he's the rightful owner. He has given us use of things while we have life to live, while we've got breath to breathe.

We've got a temporary stewardship and administration. And he's placed people into our lives. We've all got different people in our lives. In a sense, that's kind of part of the stewardship, isn't it? [4:40] Our family, friends, workmates, the care of others in our domain, in our house, our family, our spouse. And you yourself have been given that precious gift of life.

The question is, how can you be the best you? It's stewardship, isn't it? Most importantly, be saved. To know him as saviour. To place your heart's trust in Christ as your saviour and Lord. To be a saved man, a saved woman. And then it follows on. Be a determined Christian. Bless your church. Be the best worker at your job. Don't take sick leave unduly. Deliver your best. Be a good testimony to people around you. Especially when people say, oh, he's a Christian. Look what he's doing. You know, keep clear of substance abuse. Be known for your sober habits. I urge you to make a conscious decision to be a good steward of your life. It's your life. You've got temporary charge of it.

[5:44] Live it to the glory of God. Be a good steward of the gift that you've been given. Decide. Friends today, be a good builder of that life that you have.

Build your life with integrity. With character. Live out your life with conviction. With faith. With self-discipline. Give of your love.

Be a loving person. Serve with a servant heart. These are all qualities that we can have. It's part of our stewardship. It's about being the best you that you can be under God.

By his enablement. Maximize your strengths. And manage your weaknesses. Give your life to him. We're all given gifts by God. And your giftedness is a stewardship too.

Those abilities that you have that are your stewardship. Think of that. You know, we asked for a volunteer to drive the church bus. And she's not here today. But someone said, I'll do it.

[6:41] I'll volunteer. She's just got a driver's license. And maybe the capacity to drive a long trip to Murray Bridge and back. And to put herself out for the sake of others.

She said, I'll do it. She used her stewardship. She had a driver's license. You know, you might think, what can I do? There's things that you can do. There's things we can all do.

You've got a giftedness. There's people that can play a musical instrument potentially. There's people that can minister in different ways. And we've had people minister today in the kitchen and in the catering for our service today.

There's many ways we can all minister and give of ourselves. Why should we care to be such a man, such a woman? Friends, it tells us at the end of time there shall be judgment.

The judgment seat of Christ, it says we shall all stand before that. Romans 14 through 10 through 13. It says, but why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set it not thy brother?

[7:41] For we shall all, A-double-L, stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, every tongue shall confess to God.

And so then every one, every one of us shall give accounts of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge another, but judge this rather that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

Now look out for one another. Let's not put others such that we're stopping them or blocking them from God's best for them. But let's encourage one another to be on that journey of faith.

Every one shall give account of himself to God. There will be an evaluation time at the end. It tells us that.

It's settled. Now, I know I've got some appointments in my diary of things that I plan to do next week, next month, next year. Plans.

[8:52] I may not see some of those come to pass. We can make appointments and we could be gone before the appointment, can't we? Like the Bible says, there's no boasting of tomorrow.

You don't know what it's going to bring forth. You may not see tomorrow. Boast not thyself of tomorrow, it says. But one thing's for sure, there is an appointment and it's one that we have to keep.

It says it is appointed unto men once to die, once to die, after that the judgment. You get one chance, one shot at it. There's no reincarnation. One chance, once to live, once to die, after that the judgment.

You get one life. I know my dad likes the saying, only one life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. We only get one shot at life.

And so there's an evaluation, Tom, an accounting that is told for us to prepare for. An evaluation, an accounting of the lives that we've lived. What could that include?

[9:51] What could that evaluation include? Maybe your time, your use of money, your God-given gifts, your abilities, your influence. It all comes from God. One day we've got to give account of ourselves, not of other people.

It's easy. I know I can be inclined to look at others and think, oh, they could lift their game. Or, oh, they're doing better than me or less than me or whatever it be. We can look at others and judge others and make that judgment.

But it says we give account, everyone will give account of himself. Himself. Everything that you have. What will that evaluation include?

Your possessions, your family, your health, your life itself. It all belongs to God. And he is the owner. He's the creator. He's the owner. And he appoints us as managers of it, stewards of it.

So I urge you this morning, find and do the will of God for your life. What is God's will for your life? What's God saying and wanting of you?

[10:53] And it's you. It's between you and God. You know, it's not for me to judge or tell you. It's something that you need to talk to him and find out what he wants of you.

And really, the word tells us what he wants of us. Romans 12, he tells us here. Paul says to the Romans, he says, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you may present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

What does it say? Present your bodies. Just say, Lord, here I am. Take me. Use me. Fill me. Don't resist him. Render yourselves as a living sacrifice.

It talks of surrender, doesn't it? Of submission. Surrender yourself. It tells in the word, how can I be such a living sacrifice that my life can be lived to that purpose, to that fullest, to that best, God's best, God's will.

[12:06] Redeem the time, it says. It's one thing. Now, redeem the time. How time flies, doesn't it? Be careful how you use it.

Consider those fleeting moments of life. Every moment is a part of the countdown, isn't it? When you think about it. One less hour, one less day to live, one less week, one less year.

It's a countdown of our lives. Redeem the time, it says. Order your time. For the glory of God. Make the most of your time. Schedule your time. Apply your time.

Apportion your time to that which matters. Order the glory of God. For the glory of God. We could think of stewardship as our giving too.

And we know at times there's some churches that major on this and hound people and badger people. We're not like that. But there is a needful giving of our substance because we reap what we sow.

[13:07] There's principles there. Of being purposeful. Of being faithful. Being regular. I know of some that they count this, their church and if they miss a meeting, they put that money aside and they bring it when they do attend.

That's faithfulness, isn't it? Avoid waste. Use wisdom. In 1 Corinthians 16 too it says, upon the first day of the week, that's a Sunday, in other words, regularly.

On the first day of the week, let every one of you, that's individually, isn't it? Each one. Lay by him in store, that's systematically, as God has prospered him.

That's proportionately. So we see it's regularly the first day of the week. It's individually, everyone. Lay by in store, it's systematic, as God has prospered him.

It's proportionate. And giving is an expression of our worship. Stewardship. Your stewardship includes your service. Find ways in which you can serve the Lord.

[14:07] Serve him. Don't hold back. There's opportunities to serve all around you. And you might say, who am I? I'm so, I'm so weak.

God can use even your weakness. He can strengthen you when you're weak. In Joel 3.10 it says in part, let the weak say, I am strong. You can say that.

You can say I'm weak, but I'm going to say I am strong in God. Be a good example. Honour your master, the Lord and Saviour. And live life to the full as his servant.

So friends, the accounting time is ahead of all of us. All. A double L. It means all. It means you. It means me. And Paul says, as we read in Romans 14, of the judgment seat of Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 5, we read, he says further on that, he says, we're confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

[15:07] Now we don't teach, as some would think, that you go in some kind of a limbo, a kind of, or a purgatory, or you've got some kind of waiting place.

No, to be absent from the body, that moment, you are with the Lord. If you're a saved man, a woman, you're present with the Lord. And so it says, we labor, whether we present or absent, to be accepted of him.

It says, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone, everyone may receive the things that are done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Now, of course, I'm talking here about the judgment seat of Christ, which is the judgment for believers. There is another judgment, and that's for unbelievers. And that, there's only one outcome from that judgment, which is the lake of fire, ultimately.

But friends, I urge you, as Christians, we know our works can't save us, and our works can't condemn us. It's faith in Christ that saves us, and we can be eternally saved in an eye blink of faith, as we trust him in time and eternity, we are saved.

[16:25] And then for us, we know that there's a judgment yet for us too. It is the judgment seat of Christ, but that judgment doesn't result in damnation. That judgment seat of Christ is for rewards of that which we have done.

It's a judgment for rewards. There will be a time of rewards, but friends, we shouldn't take this lightly, nevertheless, that there will be loss too. Some, they won't, they will suffer loss at the judgment seat of Christ.

There's some that will be ashamed before him. And I know we're talking about this in our Bible study last week. There's the sense where there'll be a loss of rewards.

There'll be crowns that we can receive, but some will not receive crowns, and some will have scarcely anything. You know, it tells of wood, hay and stubble. Some will just have a pile of ashes. They'll be burnt up in their hands. Others will have gold, silver, precious stones. So it's about what we do with our life. We'll see the rewards.

[17:25] There are rewards for a life lived well. And our Lord tells of a parable of earthly stewards and a master that called them to a reckoning in Luke 16.

And he calls them to give an account. Luke 16, he called him and he said, give an account of thy stewardship. And he pictured that as really for us too. They will be giving an account of our stewardship.

What will our answer be for the life that we've lived? You know, as a preacher, I often can stand at the head of a grave as a casket is lowered in or as a funeral takes place and loved ones say farewell.

And you think a life lived, it can finish so quickly and unexpectedly. Friends, there's an accounting to make, to give. And we all have to have that answer.

How will I answer my Lord? What have I done with the gift of life that he's given to me? What will you give? What will you do with your life?

[18:26] Firstly, I urge you again. I press you. Give your life to him. Be that living sacrifice. Say, Lord, yes, I, I surrender myself to you.

I, I stop rebelling and running from you. And I come to you as a willing sacrifice. Take my life. I lay it on the altar. I give my life to you.

And then determine that he have your life. And then as a steward, as a steward for your life, as you answer to him, it says, effectively have only one master.

Our Lord says in Matthew 6, 24, no man can serve two masters. Either he'll hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

And the context there of obviously materialism and worldly chasing, greedy grasping. It's having that one master, the one master.

[19:28] Use what you've been given. And don't bury your talents. There's parables of that too, of some who were given abilities and they just hid it away and it was unused.

A key principle of stewardship is be faithful with your stewardship. It's required. It's needful. 1 Corinthians 4, 2, it's required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

So friends, I urge you today, brother, sister, let's think about our lives. He's the creator of our life. He's the giver of our life. He's granted you life, breath to breathe, lungs to breathe, the air that you have, a heart to pump, a life to live.

Live it well. Live it wisely. Be a living sacrifice. Give your life to him. Firstly, number one, and ultimately and absolutely and primarily give your life to God.

Say, Lord, I give myself to you. Paul talks of that. He says, whose I am and whom I serve. He recognized, number one, whose I am, I belong to Jesus and who I serve.

[20:37] I serve him. I serve him. And that's the relationship with our Lord, isn't it? Whose I am and whom I serve. And we're given a stewardship of life, even of our body.

You know, I must confess, I need to eat more fruit and vegetables. You know, I've got to look after my body. I've only got one body. Our Lord is called the Lord of the body.

That's something to think about, isn't it? May we take care of it. Look after yourself physically and that's stewardship as well. Nehemiah told how he served diligently. He knew his God had a, he'd had a God-given purpose.

When there was things that were distracting, when the enemy said, come and have a little conference with us, he said, no, I'm doing a great work. Have that mind that you are doing a great work.

Whatever you're doing for God is priority. That's the great work. The gospel work. The believer living a life of service.

[21:37] I am doing a great work. Have that heart, that mindset of Nehemiah. I am doing a great work. I'm going to put God and serving him as a priority.

Now, of course, let me, let me just say this because some can make a shift here which is not right. We put God first, then our spouse, our family and then the church.

Some can make that mistake and that's why sometimes I have people say, oh, pastor, I can't make it. I've got a family thing. I said, go for it, brother. Because your family matters. Your family is first before your church.

Don't make your service above your family. Look after your wife. Look after your children. Look after your family. That's a priority under God.

You're under his umbrella. You've got a responsibility. Man of God for your family. Woman of God to do the godly, wifely duty. and man of God as the husband, as the father.

[22:44] It's important to get that right because some get that out of kilter. They put the church above their family and then things go to pieces. That's a major problem, isn't it? So recognize this. We're doing a great work is to love Jesus, to love him, to want to serve him and serving him by blessing your family, your wife, your family, your husband, your children and think of that mission.

That you have a mission like Nehemiah. I am doing a great work. You've got a mission that God has called you to do. You've got a service to render and you're called to do your duty unto him. He fits you for his work.

If God gives you a burden, he'll fit you for that mission. He'll fit you for that service and our stewardship will grow as we see the closing scenes of world history. Let's keep that heavenly perspective that the accounting time is coming and so let's focus on what counts. It says that we might have fruit to abound to our account.

Philippians 4.17. Paul tells the Philippians and he commanded them in Philippians 1 verse 5, there's a partnership in the gospel. They supported the work of the gospel. Now there's a sense where we want the gospel to get out.

[23:55] That's important. We've got resources. We've got capacities. We've got capabilities. God's gifted you. He's enabled you. Trust him with what is entrusted to you.

And friends, you can trust God. You can trust him. As we see a world turning away from God, friends, think of the priorities that matter. When we see the enemies of Christ, they're running rampant.

You know, Christians have got a public enemy number one. You know, I've been reading about in the US, they're saying pastors are going to be muzzled from what they can say virtually.

They could end up in prison. It's getting to a stage where you can't tell the truth anymore. But that's the reality we're living in in a world that doesn't care about what's righteous.

The world that we live in doesn't care about what's godly and what the Bible says. And sacredness has been lost. There's no sacredness. There's no reverence. There's no sense of right and wrong because it's all blurry now.

[25:02] But, friends, we have absolute truth. And we've got a truth that our world desperately needs. Our world desperately needs to hear this message. The world is in darkness.

It's in this jail, in this prison cell. And Jesus wants to open wide the door and set the captives free. And we're part of that. That's our mission, to wrench the door wide open and to see the prisoner escape from their bondage and despair.

By God's grace, we can be such a people. We have a saving message. That's another part of our stewardship is that we're entrusted with the gospel. In 1 Thessalonians 2 verse 4, it tells how Paul says, we've been put in trust with the gospel.

1 Thessalonians 2 verse 4. You know, that's why, as a church, we care about souls. We care about reaching out. We care about loving people. We care about reaching people and encouraging people and telling people the good news.

We have a stewardship to fulfil. We're entrusted with the gospel. And so I urge you, as we come to a close here, to spend and be spent.

[26:18] To apply yourself. The kingdom of God is our motivator. And, you know, to paraphrase a familiar saying, you know, you might come to a church and think, there's a tendency, and many churches foster this, where there's a tendency to be just a spectator.

We don't want to foster that. And to paraphrase a familiar saying, ask not what your church can do for you, but what you can do for your church.

There's a sense, isn't there? Some come to a church and think, what can I get out of it? You know, a free lunch. You know, what can I get out of it, as such? Or what's the benefit for me?

Me, me, me. Or rather, what can I put into it? How can I contribute? How can I participate? How can I invest myself to be God's servant?

Because we're all called to that. And friends, we're called to contend too. There's a contention. It's because we're under attack. Let's realise that too.

[27:32] Many reject Christ, and we still love them too. Because we want to reach them. It's part of our stewardship. And there's things we have to stand against. That's part of our stewardship.

We're contending for the faith. Contending against error. You've got the stewardship of the gospel. The good news. The glad news. The greatest news. The greatest cause.

Is there not a cause? There's no greater cause. There's no greater call. No greater commission. No greater calling. You have a stewardship. And you have to give account of yourself.

So, when it comes down to it, will it be that you've been shown to be a good steward? Or an unwise one?

And now, sometimes we can get an inflated sense of ourselves where we get knowledgeable, but it's not put into action too.

[28:35] What does the Bible say? Knowledge puffs up. And we might know, we might know the Bible from cover to cover and to know theology, and that's not discounting, that's important.

We might know the theory, but knowledge can puff up. Let's not get to a point where we are unteachable.

Let's remain teachable. And I think that's part of our stewardship too, is that we always recognise we're all learning. We're all learning. We're all growing. Thank God, we could hopefully look back and say, I'm not where I used to be.

I've moved forward in my Christian walk. May we never get to a point where we think we've arrived and we stop growing, that we stop learning. May we remain teachable. Amen.

It's important. And may we shun carelessness. It's our stewardship. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that you call a people out of darkness into your marvellous light.

[29:35] Lord, we thank you for each soul here today, each precious soul. Every soul here is precious. Young and old and in between. Lord, we're all precious. Males, females.

Lord, we know each one is precious to you as you've made us and your word tells us that in you we live and move and have our being.

Lord, you're the owner, you're the creator, you're the maker, the sustainer and you've given us a life to live, you've given us a family, you've given us opportunities, you give us a morning after morning after morning and Lord, may we each day acknowledge you as the maker of life, life and love and the earth and relationships, Lord.

May we care for our families, our loved ones, may we have that sense that we're a steward, we've got a temporary kind of management of that that you've given us to administer with our life, you've given us a body, Lord, help us to treat it wisely, to not neglect, to look after ourselves physically and health-wise, Lord, to look after our mind, our heart, to fill our mind with good thoughts, with godly thoughts, with gospel thoughts, Lord, thank you for the stewardship of the gospel that you've given us this message to impart, Lord, help us not to become so knowledgeable that the knowledge makes us puffed up, but Lord, to keep humble, to keep learning, to keep teachable, to be flexible, to be that living sacrifice, to know and do your will and bless each one, each heart, each home as we do that.

We pray if there's any present yet to trust you that they might in simple faith, trust you as Saviour and Lord and that they might commence that journey of living for you even now, even right this moment in Jesus' name.

[31:36] Amen.