



“He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it,” Matthew 10:39.

The Value of Stewardship

Central Truth: Faithfulness to God far outweighs the favor of man.

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Topic: Stewardship.

Jesus said, “*He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it*” (Matthew 10:39). That means that what is kept for self is lost; what is given away for God is saved. It is a paradox, but it is one of the true paradoxes of the Christian life.

Stewardship involves responsibility. We assume responsibility by commitment. At the heart of Christian stewardship, therefore, lies the requirement of commitment. We will account to God for the quality of our commitment because that will determine the quality of our service.

A religious periodical carried a cartoon with this message. A man was lying in his hammock which was suspended in the shade between two trees. His pastor was standing nearby. The man was saying, “Sure, I’d be glad to do anything for my church — as long as it don’t put me out none.” That kind of commitment (which is not commitment at all) will never produce the quality of service required in a steward of God.

Jesus calls for commitment in which one will “*deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow*” Him (Luke 9:23). “*Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple*” (Luke 14:27).

I. COMMITMENT TO SERVICE

We are “*ministers of Christ.*” Think of that! What a privilege it is to serve Christ. We do not serve self, church, religion, or denomination; we serve Christ himself.

Paul's term "*ministers*" is enlightening. It means "under-rowers" in reference to the slaves who pulled the oars from deep inside the hull of the ancient warships. They had the lowest position of any on board the ship. Many toiled so strenuously that they died at their oars. Paul, greatest of the saints, said he was nothing but a bonds slave of Christ.

Is it not demeaning for a believer to speak so of himself? Not in the light of his commission. He was set apart to be a steward (custodian) of "*the mysteries of God*." "My commission is so great, my message so important, that I consider myself to be nothing in comparison. I will die at the oars if it helps get the message delivered." Such a spirit exalts the servant of God.

What are the "*mysteries of God*"? They are truths which have not been understood in ages past, but are now revealed in Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:25-27). There are still mysteries in God which we do not know (Deuteronomy 29:29); but because Jesus has revealed so much, we are living in the light of His divine disclosure. We are commissioned to share with others the truths which He has made clear. That is the reason for our commitment to service.

II. COMMITMENT TO FIDELITY

The prime requisite in any steward (trustee, manager) is that he be trustworthy. Who would put a known embezzler in charge of his money? No one! Who would put a negligent servant in charge of the ministry of the Word? God would not. Prove yourself faithful if you wish to be used of God.

To be faithful is to be "faith-full, full of faith." Such a person never forgets to whom he belongs (Deuteronomy 6:12). He resolves, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*" (Joshua 24:15). Faith produces works (James 2:20, 26); therefore, faith produces faithfulness.

What does Christian fidelity involve? Notice the verbs (which I capitalize) in Deuteronomy 13:4. "*Ye shall WALK after the LORD your God, and FEAR him, and KEEP his commandments, and OBEY his voice, and ye shall SERVE him, and CLEAVE unto him.*" That is faithfulness. It means to follow God fully.

Your pastor calls you to faithful service of God. That is what he urges you to do: "*walk . . . fear . . . keep . . . obey . . . serve . . . and cleave*" to the Lord. That sounds like a full-time job, doesn't it? It is!

Such fidelity involves a full commitment to God. So He says, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength*" (Mark 12:30). In such a call, He left

nothing out!

II. COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY

First Corinthians 4:3-5 deals with the subject of the Christian's accountability. It sets out three principles.

A. We are not accountable to men. *“It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment”* (verse 3). That is not a smart or belligerent attitude. It is an acknowledgment that our approval or disapproval as Christian workers is not dependent on human judgment. Our goal is *“not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts”* (I Thessalonians 2:4). Even so, we should watch our reputation (I Timothy 3:7; I Peter 2:12) before others as we serve God.

B. We are not accountable to ourselves. *“I judge not mine own self”* (verse 3). That does not mean that I am careless about my conduct, but rather that my self-approval is not sufficient to make me truly approved.

C. We are accountable to God. *“He that judgeth me is the Lord”* (verse 4). He judges the whole earth (Psalm 58:11) with righteousness and truth (Psalm 96: 13). His judgment is not by appearance, but in truth. He will *“bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts”* and judge truly (I Corinthians 4:5).

Do not misunderstand what the text is saying. It is important what people think of us. It is important that we evaluate our life-style to make sure it is appropriate. But that is not the most important judgment. The primary question is not, “Do people approve of me?” Neither is it, “Am I satisfied with myself?” The primary question is, “Is my Master satisfied with me?” Without His “Well done,” all other approval is meaningless.

A concert pianist gave a great performance. The audience stood in a tremendous ovation. The musician stood in acknowledgment of their applause, but his eyes were fastened on a certain seat in the gallery where his teacher sat. Only when he saw his teacher clap his approval did he smile.

The world may applaud or condemn. My own heart may approve or condemn. In it all I must remember, *“He that judgeth me is the Lord”* (verse 4). Christian commitment is the determination to please Him.

IV. COMMITMENT TO HONOR

A. We are not to honor one another beyond what is appropriate. The church at Corinth had problems with choosing favorite preachers. *“Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas;*

and I of Christ” (I Corinthians 1:12). Such exalting of preachers was a sign of carnality (I Corinthians 3:4). All honor toward humans, however appropriate it may be, is to be subjected to our honor of Christ. *“One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren”* (Matthew 23:8).

B. We are not to honor ourselves (verse 7). If you have a natural talent which enables you to serve impressively, where did you get it? If you have a spiritual gift which enables you to serve effectively, where did you get it? *“What hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”* (verse 7).

Recognize that all good things come from God and give all glory to Him.

C. We are to honor God alone. *“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever”* (I Peter 4: 11). We must remember *“we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us”* (II Corinthians 4:7). After all, we were saved *“that we should be to the praise of his glory”* (Ephesians 1:12).

Here is the stewardship of commitment. We must be committed to serve God, to be faithful to God, to be accountable to God, and to honor God. *“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful”* (I Corinthians 4:2).

Questions

1. How is Mathew 10:39 related to the stewardship of commitment?
2. Why is Christian commitment so essential?
3. According to Luke 9:23 and 14:27, what did Jesus say about commitment?
4. In what sense are you a “minister of God”?
5. What does it mean to be “faithful”?
6. How does Deuteronomy 13:4 describe faithfulness?
7. Why are we accountable to God alone?
8. How is that related to our accountability to the church?
9. How can you honor God in your life this week?
10. How can you improve your life because of this study?