

Stewardship

by George Mueller

As children of God, we are stewards of God and must seek to use the proceeds of our calling as He directs, giving cheerfully and not of necessity, in order to reap bountifully both spiritually and temporally.

Scripture: Genesis 28:22, Proverbs 11:24-25, Matthew 6:33, Luke 6:38, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 1 Corinthians 16:2, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, Hebrews 13:5, 1 Peter 1:19

Topics: "Generosity", "Stewardship"

Description

George Mueller emphasizes that as children of God, we are stewards of all that we possess, having been bought with the precious blood of Christ. He urges believers to seek God's will in how they use their resources, rather than succumbing to natural desires for personal gain or comfort. Mueller highlights the importance of regular giving and helping those in need, reminding us that our generosity reflects our understanding of stewardship. He encourages believers to trust in God's provision, asserting that those who give bountifully will also reap bountifully, both in this life and the next. Ultimately, he shares his personal testimony of the blessings that come from living as a faithful steward.

Transcript

The child of God has been bought with the "precious blood of the Christ" (1 Pe 1:19) and is altogether His property, with all that he possesses: his bodily strength, his mental strength, his ability of every kind, his trade, business, art, profession, his property, etc.-- for it is written: "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price" (1 Co 6:19-20). The proceeds of our calling are therefore not our own in the sense of using them as our natural heart wishes us to do, whether to spend them on the gratification of our pride, our love of pleasure, or sensual indulgences, or to lay by the money for ourselves or our children, or use it in any way as we naturally like. But we have to stand before our Lord and Master, whose stewards we are, to seek to ascertain His will, how He will have us use the proceeds of our calling. But is this indeed the spirit in which the children of God generally are engaged in their calling? It is but too well known that it is not the case!

Can we then wonder at it, that even God's own dear children should so often be found greatly in difficulty with regard to their calling, and be found so often complaining about stagnation or competition in trade, and the difficulties of the times, though there have been given to them such precious promises as: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mat 6:33), or "Let your conversation [disposition or turn of mind] be without covetousness; and be content with

such things as ye have: for he hath said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee' " (Heb 13:5)? Is it not obvious enough that, when our Heavenly Father sees that we His children do, or would, use the proceeds of our calling as our natural mind would desire, He either cannot at all entrust us with means or will be obliged to decrease them? No wise and really affectionate mother will permit her infant to play with a razor or with fire, however much the child may desire to have them; and so the love and wisdom of our Heavenly Father will not, cannot, entrust us with pecuniary means (except it be in the way of chastisement or to show us finally their utter vanity), if He sees that we do not desire to possess them as stewards for Him, in order that we may spend them as He may point out to us by His Holy Spirit, through His Word.

In connection with this I give a few hints to the believing reader on three passages of the Word of God. In 1 Corinthians 16:2, we find it written to the brethren at Corinth, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him." A contribution for the poor saints in Judea was to be made, and the brethren at Corinth were exhorted to put by every Lord's Day, according to the measure of success which the Lord had been pleased to grant them in their calling during the week. Now, ought not the saints in our day also to act according to this word? There is no passage in the Word of God telling us not to do so, and it is altogether in accordance with our pilgrim character, not only once or twice, or four times a year, to see how much we can afford to give to the poor saints, or to the work of God in any way, but to seek to settle it weekly...

It might also be said by a brother whose earnings are small, "Should I also give according to my earnings? They are already so small that my wife can only with the greatest difficulty manage to make them sufficient for the family." My reply is: Have you ever considered, my brother, that the very reason why the Lord is obliged to let your earnings remain so small may be the fact of your spending everything upon yourselves, and that if He were to give you more, you would only use it to increase your own family comfort, instead of looking about to see who among the brethren are sick, or who have no work at all, that you might help them, or how you might assist the work of God at home and abroad? There is a great temptation for a brother whose earnings are small to put off the responsibility of assisting the needy and sick saints, or helping on the work of God, and to lay it upon the few rich brethren and sisters with whom he is associated in fellowship, and thus rob his own soul!

It might be asked, "How much shall I give of my income? The tenth part, or the fifth part, or the third part, or one half, or more?" My reply is, God lays down no rule concerning this point. What we do we should do cheerfully and not of necessity (2 Co 9:7). But if even Jacob, with the first dawning of spiritual light (Gen 28:22), promised to God the tenth of all He should give to him, how much ought we believers in the Lord Jesus to do for Him?--we, whose calling is a heavenly one, and who know distinctly that we are children of God and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus! Yet do all the children of God give even the tenth part of what the Lord gives them?

In connection with 1 Corinthians 16:2, I would mention two other portions.

1. 2 Corinthians 9:6 "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2Co 9:6). It is certain that we children of God are so abundantly blessed in Jesus, by the grace of God, that we ought to need no stimulus to good works. The forgiveness of our sins, the having been made for ever the children of God, the having before us the Father's house as our home, these blessings ought to be sufficient motives to constrain us in love and gratitude to serve God abundantly all the days of our life, and cheerfully also to give up, as He may call for it, that with which He has entrusted us of the things of this world. But whilst this is the case, the Lord nevertheless holds out to

us in His Holy Word motives why we should serve Him, deny ourselves, use our property for Him, etc.--and the last mentioned passage is one of that kind. The verse is true, both with reference to the life that is now and that which is to come. If we have been sparingly using our property for Him, there will have been little treasure laid up in heaven, and therefore a small amount of capital will be found in the world to come--so far as regards reaping. Again, we shall reap bountifully if we seek to be rich towards God, by abundantly using our means for Him, whether in ministering to the necessities of the poor saints, or using otherwise our pecuniary means for His work.

Dear brethren, these are realities! Very shortly will come the reaping time, and then will be the question whether we shall reap sparingly or bountifully.

But while this passage refers to the life hereafter, it also refers to the life that now is. Just as now the love of Christ constrains us to communicate of that with which the Lord entrusts us, so will be the present reaping, both with regard to spiritual and temporal things. Should there be found therefore in a brother the want of entering into his position as being merely a steward for the Lord in his calling, and should he give no heed to the admonitions of the Holy Ghost to communicate to those who are in need or to help the work of God; then can such a brother be surprised that he meets with great difficulties in his calling, and that he cannot get on? This is according to the Lord's Word.

He is sowing sparingly, and he therefore reaps sparingly. But should the love of Christ constrain a brother out of the earnings of his calling to sow bountifully, he will even in this life reap bountifully, both with regard to blessings in his soul and with regard to temporal things. Consider in this connection the following passage, which though taken from the Book of Proverbs, is not of a Jewish character, but true concerning believers under the present dispensation also:

"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself " (Pro 11:24-25).

2. Luke 6:38 In connection with 1 Corinthians 16:2, I would also direct my brethren in the Lord to the promise made 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."

This refers evidently to the present dispensation, and evidently in its primary meaning to temporal things. Now let anyone constrained by the love of Christ act according to this passage; let him on the first day of the week communicate as the Lord has prospered him, and he will see that the Lord will act according to what is contained in this verse. If pride constrains us to give, if self-righteousness makes us liberal, if natural feeling induces us to communicate, or if we give whilst we are in a state of insolvency, not possessing more perhaps than ten shillings in the pound were our creditors to come upon us; then we cannot expect to have this verse fulfilled in our experience. Nor should we give at any time for the sake of receiving again from others, according to this verse. But if indeed the love of Christ constrain us to communicate according to the ability that the Lord gives us, then we shall have this verse fulfilled in our experience, though this was not the motive that induced us to give. Somehow or other the Lord will abundantly repay us through the instrumentality of our fellow men, what we are doing for His poor saints or in any way for His work; and we shall find that in the end we are not losers even with reference to

temporal things, whilst we communicate liberally of the things of this life.

Here it might be remarked: if it be so that even in this life, and with regard to temporal things it is true, that "To him that gives shall be given, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over," and that "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully," then in the end the most liberal persons would be exceedingly rich.

Concerning this we have to keep in mind that the moment persons were to begin to give for the sake of receiving more back again from the Lord, through the instrumentality of their fellow men, than they have given; or the moment persons wished to alter their way, and no more go on sowing bountifully, but sparingly in order to increase their possessions, whilst God is allowing them to reap bountifully, the river of God's bounty towards them would no longer continue to flow. God had supplied them abundantly with means because He saw them act as stewards for Him. He had entrusted them with a little which they used for Him, and He therefore entrusted them with more; and if they had continued to use the much also for Him, He would have still more abundantly used them as instruments to scatter abroad His bounties. The child of God must be willing to be a channel through which God's bounties flow, both with regard to temporal and spiritual things. This channel is narrow and shallow at first, it may be; yet there is room for some of the waters of God's bounty to pass through. And if we cheerfully yield ourselves as channels, for this purpose, then the channel becomes wider and deeper, and the waters of the bounty of God can pass through more abundantly. Dropping figurative language it is thus: At first we may be instrumental in communicating £5, £10, £20, £50, £100, or £200 per year, but afterwards double as much; and if we are still more faithful in our stewardship, after a year or two four times as much, afterwards perhaps eight times as much, at last perhaps twenty times or fifty times as much. We cannot limit the extent to which God may use us as instruments in communicating blessing, both temporal and spiritual, if we are willing to yield ourselves as instruments to the living God--and are content to be only instruments and to give Him all the glory. But with regard to temporal things it will be thus: that if indeed we walk according to the mind of God in these things, whilst more and more we become instruments of blessing to others, we shall not seek to enrich ourselves, but be content when the last day of another year finds us still in the body, to possess no more than on the last day of the previous year or even considerably less, whilst we have been, however, in the course of the year the instruments of communicating largely to others through the means with which the Lord had entrusted us.

As to my own soul, by the grace of God it would be a burden to me to find that I was increasing in earthly possession, for it would be a plain proof to me that I had not been acting as a steward for God, and had not been yielding myself as a channel for the waters of God's bounty to pass through. I also cannot but bear my testimony here, that in whatever feeble measure God has enabled me to act according to these truths for the last sixty-four years and a half, I have found it to be profitable, most profitable to my own soul, and, as to temporal things, I never was a loser in doing so, but I have most abundantly found the truth of 2 Corinthians 9:6, Luke 6:38, and Proverbs 11:24-25 verified in my own experience. I only have to regret that I have acted so little according to what I have now been stating, but my godly purpose is, by the help of God, to spend the remainder of my days in practicing these truths more than ever; and I am sure that, when I am brought to the close of my earthly pilgrimage, either by death or by the appearing of our Lord Jesus, I shall not have the least regret in having done so. I know that should I leave my dear child behind, the Lord will abundantly provide for her and prove that there has been a better provision made for her than her father could have made, if he had sought to insure his life or lay up money for her.

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