



# Truth Matters

*A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters*

Scripture Reading  
Week of  
March 13<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>



Monday

- ❖ Numbers 23, 24
- ❖ Psalm 51
- ❖ Luke 7

Tuesday

- ❖ Numbers 25, 26
- ❖ Psalm 52
- ❖ Luke 8

Wednesday

- ❖ Numbers 27, 28
- ❖ Psalm 53
- ❖ Luke 9

Thursday

- ❖ Numbers 29, 30
- ❖ Psalm 54
- ❖ Luke 10

Friday

- ❖ Numbers 31, 32
- ❖ Psalm 55
- ❖ Luke 11

Saturday

- ❖ Numbers 33, 34

Sunday

- ❖ Numbers 35, 36

## The Whole Universe In Our Hands Toward a Philosophy of Stewardship

Our Purpose Statement on Stewardship reads: "We endeavor to bring all competing affections and passions under the excellent worth of God in Christ Jesus and to use the universe as a means to joy in God." That means that we are devoted to both the being "content in" and "generous with" aspects of how we use our possessions. How we use our possessions is called stewardship.

"Whether, therefore, you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31), means that there is only one legitimate end to each of life's endeavors - the glory of God. God is ultimate! Everything else is less than God. This makes God holy! God is a class all to himself. God, then, has revealed everything that has come into the world, for one of two purposes: (1) either as a means of finding God, or (2) as a means of enjoying God. If God is the only ultimate end then everything else is reduced to a means to an end.

Subverting something intended by God to be a means to him into an end in itself is a form of idolatry. For example, worshipping a tree, which is intended to be a means of enjoying God, turns the tree into a god and results in idolatry for one cannot ascribe to some thing lesser than God the place that rightfully belongs to God. Likewise, using the elements of this world as a means to any end other than the enjoyment of God is the ultimate form of idolatry.

For example, using money, intended by God as a means for the enjoyment of God, as a means to exalting one's self is idolatry for they have attached to themselves the glory that belongs to God. All things exist to help humans find God and enjoy God. This is worship!



However, no human can enjoy God until he has found God. And no human can find God until he has been reconciled to God. Therefore, one, and only one, of God's revealed "things" is meant to help humans find God. That specific revelation aimed at bringing men and women into reconciliation with God is the revelation of Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-3). Jesus Christ has come into the world so that through him, or by means of him, many may come to be reconciled to God. Everything else revealed in the world is left to become a means to enjoying God (Rom. 1:19-20). When people turn

creation into a means of finding God, it reduces creation to an idol. When people worship creation as god / God it reduces creation to an idol.

What does this all mean to our theology of Stewardship? The way we handle our "things" reveals what we worship. To use our God-given resources for our selfish ends is idolatry. To pursue God-given resources as an end in themselves is idolatry. In other words, "Christians" - those who profess to have found God in Christ - are still guilty of idolatry more often than not.

- ◆ Going deer hunting for the sheer sake of the pleasure one gets from the thrill of the hunt is idolatry.
- ◆ Going on vacation for the sheer sake of enjoying the pleasure of Disney World is idolatry.
- ◆ Buying a new car for the boost to one's ego is idolatry.
- ◆ Giving money to a non-profit charity for the sheer sake of the tax write-off is idolatry.
- ◆ Investing in the stock market for the sheer security it brings is idolatry.
- ◆ Giving to the church so as to merit God's approval is idolatry.
- ◆ Watching television for the sheer enjoyment of TV is idolatry.

All of your resources are either being used as a means of pursuing joy in God or as a means of replacing God. All of your resources are either being used as a means of magnifying the worth of God (glorifying God) or as a means to magnifying the worth in some thing

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## The Whole Universe In Our Hands

### Toward a Philosophy of Stewardship

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lesser than God. Paul says this is the essence of sin: "All have sinned and come short of *glorifying God* (author's paraphrase for emphasis)" (Rom. 3:23) because they "have exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles [and any created things]" (Rom. 1:23).

So if all of your resources are a means to some end you must search your soul everyday to determine what end you are pursuing in your every endeavor. If you are not pursuing God, stop what you are doing! Then ask of your soul, "How can I use my resources so as to maximize my enjoyment of God?" You will find that answer in Scripture. Here are the basic foundations:

All humans are created with innate desires for security, contentment and joy. Everything about their existence is aimed at achieving these ends. Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve knew that these ends were met in God alone (cf. Genesis 1:26-31; Everything created in days 1-6 leading up to the creation of man were created for the pleasure and sustenance of man. Notice the statements by God, "Behold I have given..."). But something happened in the questions from the Serpent that caused them to hold God in contempt and to give him a vote of "No Confidence" (Gen. 3:1-3). As a result of Adam and Eve's distrust of God they chose to break out from dependence under him and to pursue their happiness on their own. As soon as their eyes were opened, they realized that they were neither suited for pursuing their own happiness nor designed for a life independent of God. Thus, they were ashamed and sought to cover up their deficiencies (Gen. 3:7).

All of human history has been the tale of one of two stories: either of those who have continued to cover up their inadequacies for independence from God by human effort and achievement, or of those who have repented and returned to God and a life of happiness under him. Humans have further exerted their rebellion against God by seeking happiness apart from Him and His laws. But those who find Christ, turn from their sins of independence rooted in a vote of "No Confidence" towards God and place their trust in Christ for the fulfillment of their life.

Having found fulfillment in Christ, Christians seek to extend their joy by sharing their newly found treasure with as many people as possible. They do this through the manifold deeds of love. Paul says that "faith works through love" (Gal. 5:6). Faith means turning to God with a vote of "Confidence" displayed in a life of trust that manifests one's dependence upon God for a life of

security, contentment and joy. The only way to extend one's joy in Christ is to share its source - love.

God created humans in His image so as to extend the joy and love He enjoyed with Himself in the Trinity (Father, Son and Spirit). Even after the Fall, God sent Christ into the world so as to extend the love He had for the Son upon all those who trusted in the Son. In other words, God's acts of creating and sending Christ came from a desire of extending the joy he has in himself (cf. John 17:5 with 13 and 21 and 23-24). Those who see that the root of their security, contentment and joy rests in the love of God seek to extend their joy through love.

Extending joy through love means that instead of using people to make one's self content through sexual immorality and greed, they can turn to God for their contentment and respond to others in love - acts of kindness, goodness and generosity. Instead of being angry when someone robs one of their contentment or when someone blocks their path toward happiness and responding toward them in fits of rage, rivalries, dissensions, etc. they can turn to God for their happiness and respond to others with mercy, forgiveness and patience (cf. Gal. 5:19-23). This is the essence of Christianity: having found all I need in God through Christ, I can act in total unselfish and pure love toward others. I do not seek my own (1 Cor. 13:5) for all I need has been met in Christ. I do not even do acts of kindness toward others out of selfish ambition of conceit (Philip. 1:3) for all I need has been met in Christ.

Therefore, Scripture builds an inextricable link between faith and love. The first great commandment of the law is "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second one is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31). Where there is fire there is heat. If the fire in one's heart is love toward God then the heat it emits will be the deeds of love toward others. "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:17). People who truly love God and look to him for the fulfillment of their core desires do not need to use the world's goods or the world's people for their own sakes. Instead, they spill over with the love of God in a desire to serve other people in love just as God spilled over to serve us with Christ (John 1:16). Even the martyr knows that the cruel persecutor who is about to take his life is not really robbing him of anything he needs for his security, contentment or joy (Philip. 1:20-21). Thus, he can respond in love toward the

tyrant. Similarly, the man who has been living comfortably off of \$40,000 for the past few years can look at the pay-increase to \$60,000 with newly found lenses. This pay increase is not for the increase of his living but for the increase of his giving. He will be happier by giving it away not hoarding it on his pleasures (Acts 20:35). He is a steward who uses the resources of his master for the master's purposes not his own (1 Cor. 4:1-2). That is the definition of a steward - one who manages the assets of another for the benefit of the owner. Oh, how we have this reversed.

There is another danger on the other hand. If fire is the love of God and the heat emitted by the fire is love and good deeds, then any attempt to produce heat without fire results in the deadening work of legalism. Doing good deeds for the sake of doing good deeds turns good deeds into idolatry (1 Cor. 13:3). Christians do good deeds for the sake of Christ's name being manifested and his worshippers being multiplied. Supporting missions for the sake of supporting missions is a waste of time. Evangelizing your neighbor for the sake of evangelizing your neighbor is a waste of time. Giving alms to the poor for the sake of being noticed by men is a waste of time. Going to death in martyrdom for the sake of martyrdom or men is worthless. But giving everything you have for the sake of Christ reaps eternal rewards (Luke 21:1-2)!

This paper has not sought to examine every text dealing with money, missions, giving, serving, etc. Instead, it has sought to give you a cohesive approach to looking at the big picture of scripture in such a way that you can apply it to the parts and see that they indeed fit the whole.

Remember two truths: God is ultimate and we have seen his glory! Now we exist to enjoy him. We enjoy him by using his resources entrusted to his stewards for the spreading of his fame! Thus, our Purpose Statement says this about stewardship: "We are devoted to both the 'being content in' and 'generous with' aspects of possessions."