

“Called as Stewards - *In the Church*”

Introduction

Psa. 24:1—¹ *The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein...*

Eph. 2:19— *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...*

God is the Creator-Owner of everyone and everything. Every aspect of who we are (abilities, talents, etc.) is therefore a gift from Him that has been given to us to be used for His glory and the good of others. Along with our natural giftings, God has also equipped believers to serve one another by giving to us certain spiritual gifts.

Key Point: As believers, we are called by God to steward the gifts that He has entrusted to us by serving others both in the _____ and in the _____.

Servants in God's Household

Stewardship Imagery

Household/steward imagery is fairly common in the NT. Jesus used employed it in three key parables ('The Parable of the Talents' - Matt. 25:14-30; '...the Wicked Tenants' - Matt. 21:33-46; "...the Unrighteous Steward - Luke 16:1-13). Paul used it to speak of the message and work that was entrusted to him by God (1 Cor. 4:1) and Peter used it to refer to Christians in general (1 Pet. 4:10) and elders in particular (1 Pet. 5:4).

“*steward*”—οἰκονόμος (*oikonomos*)—A manager of household affairs, esp. a steward, superintendent (whether free-born or as was usually the case, a freed-man or a slave) to whom the head of the house has entrusted the management of his affairs, the care of receipts and expenditures, and the duty of dealing out the proper portion to others (other servants and even not-of-age children).

“*servant*”—δούλος (*doulos*)—A slave, servant, or attendant; one who is solely committed to another as a subject.

⇒ The Lord Jesus understood the terms *steward* and *servant* as related and even interchangeable.

Luke 12:42-44—⁴² *And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager [steward], whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? ⁴³ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.*

⇒ Paul saw this imagery as significant for a Christian's understanding of his or her identity.

1 Cor. 7:22-23a—²² *For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. ²³ You were bought with a price:*

Key Point: Steward/Servant imagery helps us to understand that serving God and others with the gifts that have been entrusted to us is not _____.

Stewards of God's Grace

1. Each believer is the recipient of the gift of God's grace through the _____.

Rom. 3:23-24—²³ *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*

Eph. 2:8—*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,*

⇒ Having received the gift of salvation by grace through faith in Christ, we are now stewards of the sound ('healthy') doctrine that is for the building up of one another in the faith.

1 Cor. 4:1-2—*This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.*

1 Tim. 1:3-4—³ *As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.*

2. Each believer is the recipient of God's varied grace in the form of _____ gifting.

1 Pet. 4:10-11—¹⁰ *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Observations:

(1) God has a clearly defined purpose for the gifts that He has give to us → _____

(2) There appear to be two general categories of gifting:

Gifts of _____ Gifts of _____

(3) These gifts are exercised in God's _____ for God's glory!

Rom. 12:3-8—³ *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

Observations:

(1) We are often tempted to think more of _____ than of _____.

(2) The image of a _____ is given to remind us of the importance of different parts functioning together.

(3) Our gifts are to be exercised in the _____ and power of God for the good of the body!

Key Point: As recipients of God's grace, we are _____ to graciously serve our brothers and sisters.

Concluding Thoughts

1. Determining where and how God would use our gifts to serve the church is often a matter of looking for opportunities and then _____ our time.
2. We must be careful that we do not confuse gifting and _____.
3. We must be careful to avoid gift _____ - _____ and gift _____.
4. Exercising our gifts and benefiting from the gifts of others are some of the greatest blessings of being a part of Christian _____.

"Labor together with one another; strive in company together; run together; suffer together; [go to] sleep together; and awake together, as the stewards, and associates, and servants of God. Please Him under whom you fight, and from whom you receive your wages. Let none of you be found a deserter." — Ignatius of Antioch, "Letter to Polycarp" (2nd C.)