

STEWARDSHIP — THE RELATION IT BEARS TO THE GIVING OF THE GOSPEL TO THE WHOLE WORLD

By Aidine Squire White

The relation of stewardship to the giving of the Gospel to the world is indeed most vital, for it seems unmistakably clear that the dispensing of the "Word of the Truth of the Gospel" is the *raison d'être*, the one all-inclusive purpose of Christian stewardship, as taught in the Word of God.

Two basic conceptions are essential to an understanding of stewardship if it is to prove effectual in world evangelization: the first, a *conception of the office of stewardship*—that it is, to dispense the Gospel; the second, a *conception of the imperative obligation resting upon every believer to fulfil this stewardship*.

First, with respect to the office of our stewardship; let us establish plainly from Scripture the fact that it is indeed to dispense the Word of God.

Abroad, particularly in England, where there are vast estates to be administered, the idea of stewardship is much more definite and familiar than on this side of the water. The nobleman or lord commits his affairs more or less fully to a chosen person who looks after them for him, and his income and comfort often greatly depend on the wisdom and faithfulness of the steward who handles the various details of his estate and household.

Now what is the estate that our Lord has given us to administer in His behalf? What is the trust that is committed to us?

When the nobleman in the parable (Luke xix.) took his departure into a far country, and said to his servants "occupy till I come," he gave them money with which they were to trade and get gain. The other man, also, who travelled into the far country (Matt. xxv) in much the same way, "called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods," which they were to administer to his profit. Again, after speaking of the servants watching for their lord's return (Luke xii.), Christ said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant

whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

What had our Lord in mind as He related these parables? Surely He was forecasting the day when He would stand with that little company for the last time on earth and deliver to them His trust, His great commission: "go ye . . . and teach all nations," "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" and possibly, too, that thrice repeated commission to Peter, "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep, feed my sheep."

We think of the Master as He prays that last incomparable prayer for His own: "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world; (recall in the parable that the man gave to his own servants) Thine they were and Thou gavest them me; and they have kept Thy word I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me; and they have received them And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world I have given them Thy Word As Thou has sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." (John xvii.)

Is not this, then, the office of our stewardship, the ministering of "the Word of the Truth of the Gospel," which, Paul tells us in Col. i, 5-6 "is come unto you as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you since the day we heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth?"

"I have given them Thy Word," said the Lord, I have "sent them into the world." I pray for them also which shall believe on me through their word." "Ye are clean through the Word that I have spoken unto you." "Go ye . . . and teach all nations . . . to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." "I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."*

"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." In other words,

*Consult John xvii. John xv. Matt. xxviii. 20.