

METHOD OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP.

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The question I am asked to lead you in discussing is the "Method" of Christian stewardship, or perhaps more properly, the money question viewed from the standpoint of the steward.

I presume we are all ready to take the position of stewards; none of us deny the relation, we are only divided as to the duties and responsibilities growing out of the relationship.

The one essential qualification of a steward appears to be that of fidelity. It is required in a steward that a man be found *faithful*: faithful to the interests of the master who employed him and who is absent, conducting the affairs of the home, the society or the business in such a way that should the good man of the house return unexpectedly he would not find his goods squandered and the steward would not be put to confusion. His time and full service belong to the man who employed him, his business being to do in his absence just as the master would were he present. He is to manage the estate, see that the servants perform their tasks, to buy and sell, collect accounts, pay bills, etc. The money that comes into his hands he is not to speculate on, or use for his own purposes, but is to employ according to agreement understood when he entered his master's service. His daily needs are supplied from the common store, and are a necessary part of the administration fully recognized by the master. How much he may spend on himself perhaps the master has not told him, but when he gives all his time and all his service to the master's interests his personal wants will be few indeed. The faithful heart does not enquire how much I may spend on self and still have his smile, but, having his smile, how little do I need to spend.

The pertinent question for each one is, as His steward what is demanded of me?

The question of what Jesus would do were he in my place, ought to be very helpful in enabling me to decide what should be my attitude as His steward. For "It is enough that a disciple be as his master and the servant as his Lord."

By this time we have all read "In His Steps." Whether we agree with the author in all the schemes advanced, we cannot but be impressed with the fact that if Jesus had the regulating of our homes, our churches, our businesses, in most cases a wonderful change would take place.

We cannot believe that were He here the standard of discipleship would be lowered one iota to meet the so-called requirements of the age. We certainly believe He would not rebuke sin the less be it found in whatever guise. With His beautiful life to emulate, and His word

in our hands for 1,900 years, we ought certainly to have learned a fuller measure of His will and be more like the Divine pattern. If we are not living according to our knowledge, we certainly shall be beaten with more stripes than the hypocrites of old, for our opportunities have been greater. What Jesus would do! Is not that what His disciple should do? We all assent to this, yet how little of sacrifice, denial of self, cross-bearing or following do we find in His so-called disciples, and this in the face of His plain statement: "He that would come after Me let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me."

Were Jesus on the earth and possessed of money, what would He do with it? Can you imagine Him building a costly home, richly furnishing it, accumulating a bank account, devoting large sums to personal adornment or amusement while He gave a minimum to sending Peter, James and John throughout Palestine, or Paul and Silas to the regions beyond? What He did do was to spend Himself. Himself he gave without stint. His time, all His time was given to God; sometimes in loving communion with Him, sometimes in agonizing prayer for the accomplishment of His mission. To relieve want and misery in all forms, to comfort the distressed, heal the sick, minister to the needy and sorrowful, He gave Himself, to the end that His kingdom might be established on earth. "It is enough (and no more than is meet) that the disciple be as his Master and the servant as his Lord."

Beside His example we have also His precept, given through His early followers. Paul's relation of the facts and commendation of the Macedonian Christians should stand as an object lesson to be emulated through all time without any law laid down or example set, and, it would seem, without even being asked. Paul pictures these Macedonians poor in worldly goods, yet urging upon him their gifts and putting to shame the wealthier Corinthians. They possessed the willing hearts that needed no "whipping up" or "screwing it out" on the part of an agent. Also notice that before they contributed one penny they called a halt and devoted themselves again to God. In modern language, before the collection was taken they held a consecration meeting. Then all they had—all their poverty, too—was avowedly the Lord's. They were His stewards for little or much, and they proceeded to give of His own. After this example, Paul turns to the, in some things, paragon Church at Corinth, and urges them to add benevolence to the gifts already possessed by them, viz., faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence, reminding them that though they had said a year ago that they were willing, they had not yet given anything. That a willing mind is accepted according to that a man hath, is proven in fact by his gift. Howbeit the gift is a dead thing to offer to God if