

## Article 13    Stewardship

Pastor Rich Spring | Senior Pastor, Living Hope Church, Hesperia, California

Good evening, wow, good evening, there we go. See, he got no doctrine and then I get the one everybody hates, stewardship.

And so if you don't know me, I'm Richard Spring, I'm pastor at Living Hope Church in Hesperia. And so I'm honored to be here with you this evening in the time that we have.

Stewardship's an interesting thing for all of us. We don't like to talk about it, but we have to talk about it. We have to talk about it because for us as pastors, let's just be real. We like getting paid.

The reality of that though, is that there's a doctrinal truth to it, that we are stewards of many things.

The Baptist faith and message throughout its iterations over the last century or so has not changed at all when it comes to this statement. There's very little differences between the 1925, the 1963, and the Baptist faith and message of 2000.

In general, it gives you four things that we can kind of look at, and I want to take a few minutes to talk about when it comes to this.

***The first thing is this, God is the provider of everything.***

God is the provider of everything. It starts with what was just mentioned, **Genesis one, in the beginning, God.**

If you can't start with God, we can't start any place else. God's made the earth. God situated the earth where it was at. God put the garden of Eden where it was. He gave Adam and Eve the responsibility.

He's put everything in place. He's provided for us. He's provided for me. He's provided for you. He's provided for your church. He's provided for your family. He's provided everything because it's all his.

We have to start with an understanding of stewardship that starts that He is the provider of everything and that stewardship is a responsibility that we have as followers of Jesus.

It's also a stewardship in the sense of ***the great things that God has done in us.***

God has done a miraculous thing in my life and in your life and in the life of the people of our churches, those that are in our churches that are followers of Christ.

If you think about it, just taking the **Ephesians** book itself, we have been chosen by the father before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless and adopted as his child.

We have been redeemed by the son, by his shed blood on the cross.

We have been sealed in the Holy Spirit as the down payment of our redemption.

We have an inheritance waiting for us in heaven that is perfect and imperishable.

You go to chapter two and we talked about this earlier. We were dead and we have been made alive in Christ.

We have been saved by *grace through faith and not of ourselves. It is the gift of God, not of work so that no man can boast because we are his workmanship, His masterpiece, his poem.*

I love the phrase masterpiece. It fits more. In fact, I'd like you to say right now, hey, I'm a piece of work. Amen.

Made in Christ Jesus to do those things which God has prepared in advance for us to do. There's our purpose.

God has chosen us, redeemed us, sealed us, saved us, adopted us as his child. We get to call him father. He's given us everything. He's provided everything for us.

He's given us meaning and purpose. He prepares us. He gives us his spirits. He equips us to be able to do those things which he's prepared in advance for us to do.

He set it up so that we can't fail. Have you ever thought about that? We have a stewardship of something that if we submit to the spirit and surrender to his

power in our lives, we can't fail. A perfect God isn't going to set us up to fail. He's setting us up to bring fulfillment and the fulfillment of his kingdom.

You've been chosen, redeemed, sealed, adopted. He gives us works that he's prepared in advance. He gives us the spiritual gifts to be able to do that. He's done a remarkable thing in my life. He's done a remarkable thing in your life. He's done a remarkable thing in your church.

***And we are stewards of that responsibility.*** See the gospel has been given to us as churches. We are responsible as Paul was responsible.

As **chapter three** tells us, the church is *the manifold wisdom of God*, not to earth, although it does that, but to the angels and the spiritual realms.

They look at all of us and they say, God, what in the world are you doing?

And then you go over to **chapter four** and it starts with fear for it says, *therefore live worthy of the calling to which you have been called.*

We live worthy of that. That's a stewardship responsibility that we need to take personally. It's a huge responsibility.

The lostness in our state is so great. We need everything. We need our time. We need our talent. We need our resources.

And there's a stewardship in all of that. When we talk to our people about stewardship, when we talk to our people about those things, we often talk about money because that's what they seem to think about and talk about.

We all think about stewardship. We think about money, but stewardship is about so much more than that. We have been given a trusteeship in the gospel. We have been given a responsibility to go to the ends of the earth and make disciples of all nations.

See, the reality is, folks, is all of us only get 168 hours in a week. All of us, me, you, the people, you shepherd.

How much of that is spent on the most worthy thing ever?

We need to challenge our people to the stewardship of their time. We need to challenge them to the stewardship of their talents and their spiritual gifts that God gave them to build the church, to be a witness to the angels, to take the

gospel to the nations. And yes, obviously, we need to teach them to be stewards of the treasure that God has blessed them with and teach them that while they may have all the education in the world and all the business savvy in the world, God gave them what they have.

And finally, as leaders, I just want to say this in a personal note as we close this out, and I'm speaking to you as a, I can't believe I've been pastoring now for 25 years. For some of you, that's just getting started. I mean, that's a long time.

***One of the things I've learned in the last year or so is as pastors, we need to learn to be good stewards of our very own souls and the souls of those who God has given us the stewardship to shepherd.***

And as we do that, we can take what Paul says in **Ephesians 3:20 and 21** and say *now to him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above and beyond all that we could ask or think according to the power that works in us, to him be the glory in the church to all generations forever and ever. Amen.*

May it be so. Thank you for listening.