

Stewardship Of Materialism: A Biblical Perspective

I. VIEWS OF MATERIALISM

1. The Ascetic: This viewpoint holds that a Christian should give everything away and live a life of total poverty.
2. The Prosperity: This view holds that a Christian will be blessed by God with wealth and prosperity. (Just name it and claim it) - (Copeland - Christ died to make us prosperous)
3. The Biblical view: The Bible neither idealizes poverty nor condemns as evil wealth accumulation. It sees them in clearly defined perspectives. While not forbidding them, it hedges them about with restrictions and corrections. They are not to be an end in themselves. They can and do lead to covetousness. They do not belong to Christians, but to God. Christians are stewards not proprietors of their wealth.

II. THE OLD TESTAMENT VIEW OF KINGDOM ECONOMICS

1. God owns everything (Gen 1:1; Jer. 10:12, Ps. 51:10-11).
2. God has given man responsibility to rule over His material earth (Gen 1:26, 28).
3. In giving man responsibility to govern His possession God also allows man the privilege of personal ownership (Gen 17:8; Lev. 25:13-17; Cf. Acts 2:44-45; 5:3-4).
4. The Old Testament looks toward the collective well being of the people of God as an ideal
5. The Old Testament insistently warns against idolatry of material things and allowing them to turn our hearts away from God. (Exod. 20:1-17; Deut. 8:10-14).
6. The Old Testament presents God as one who is especially on the side of the poor and oppressed (Deut. 10:17b-18; Ps. 72:1-4).
7. The law of gleaning required that at the harvest the fields and vineyards were not to be stripped bare (Lev. 19:9-10). This divine concern reveals God's desire for His people to share their resources.
8. The Old Testament does not value asceticism for His own sake (Prov. 30:7-9).
9. God promises prosperity and success to His people (Joshua 1:8, Job 36:11).
10. Material blessing is one way God prospers His people. Not by their merit, but by His grace (Deut. 8:7-9).

III. JESUS' VIEW OF A CHRISTIAN AND HIS POSSESSIONS

1. Jesus apparently renounced all financial security. He had no job, and no permanent home (Luke 9:58).
2. Jesus apparently expected His closest disciples to maintain the same lifestyle (Matt. 10:38; Luke 9:23).
3. Some of Jesus' followers were, and remained, wealthy and influential people.
 - a. Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:57)
 - b. Nicodemus (John 19:39)
 - c. Zacchaeus (Luke 19:8-10)
 - d. Lazarus, Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42)
4. Jesus speaks of the danger of affluence. (Mark 4:19; 10:25).

The thrust of Jesus' teachings does not deal with the virtues of poverty or the sin of wealth. Rather He seeks to show the greater value of heavenly treasure and the folly of seeking earthly

treasure.

PAUL'S VIEW OF A CHRISTIAN AND HIS POSSESSIONS

1. Paul's lifestyle was derived from two values:
 - a. The glory of God
 - b. The imitation of Christ
2. Paul's lifestyle was not individualistic, but was worked out in the context of a commitment to the Christian community.
3. Paul's lifestyle involved sacrifice for the church (Phil 2:4-12).
4. Paul warns about the love of money (I Tim. 6).
5. Paul instructed the rich to re-orient their priorities and to share their wealth (1 Tim. 6).
6. Paul teaches that one's abundance must be used to help those who lack in order that their abundance may supply the others future lack. There was to be an equality of sharing (II Cor. 8:12-15; Rom. 12:13).
7. Paul emphasizes that wealthy Christians should not be proud (1 Tim. 6).
8. Paul points out that it may not necessarily be God's plan for a Christian to prosper materialistically, but more importantly to be "conformed to the image of His Son." (Rom. 8:29).

IV. CONCLUSIONS:

From the Biblical data presented the following observations are made:

1. The context of a biblical lifestyle is that of the people of God, the community of faith. Neither the faith of the Israelites in the Old Testament nor the faith of the Christians in the New Testament comes as an isolated individual event; it always has a context in the larger group, the whole people of God, and its local expressions.
2. The ideal of prosperity is an ideal for the people of God a whole, not for isolated individuals. The idea of individuals with in the community of faith accumulating wealth, while others suffer need, is abhorrent to the biblical authors.
3. Since God has a special interest in and care for the poor and oppressed of the world, a biblical lifestyle will include this concern and will identify with these people, meeting their needs to every possible event.
4. A biblical lifestyle cannot have wealth as a goal. And wealth is highly seductive, luring its possessors into compromise with this age in order to retain (or increase) it.
5. The biblical authors therefore call on wealthier Christians to share their goods with the less fortunate, to identify with the cry of the poor for justice, and even to totally divest themselves of their surplus.
6. Equality in sharing is the purpose for kingdom economics: the balancing of abundance with need per redistribution of what God provides.

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NOTE from Pastor Harris - Compare the conclusions of this paper with the Biblical data presented and whether is adequate Biblical backing for the conclusion. Compare this paper with the other papers on this or related subjects. Think Critically!