

Stewardship Moment

Sunday, September 16

Lay Speakers: Diddle Vogel (8:30); Vicki Moffitt (11:00)

Christians have a great thing going when it comes to money and wealth. God has freed us to enjoy the fruit of our labors. He desires us to find comfort. He wants us to be satisfied. He gives us joyful hearts. In Ecclesiastes chapter 5, Solomon stated that this is God's intent: "Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work — this is a gift of God."

Then why do we often perceive there is little or no time to enjoy life? Why do we feel we are working ourselves to death with little or no gain? Why do we often find dissatisfaction in our jobs or in our retirement? Why do we complain we can never make ends meet? Why is any increase in what we receive never enough to satisfy our needs? Why do we feel our plans often fall short of expectations?

The Bible speaks clearly in answer to these questions. With one's success, there is the temptation to forget God. In Deuteronomy chapter 8, Moses reminded the Israelites before they entered the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey, who was the Source of their great wealth. "You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth. . . ."

In our failures, there is the temptation to harden our hearts against God. We want to control that which we cannot. In Ecclesiastes chapter 9, King Solomon wrote, "The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all."

Satan wants us to look away from God, both in our success and in our failure. He would have us believe that we derive success and wealth from within ourselves and through the control we exert. He would have us believe that God's role is minimal or is one of unjust punishment. He would have us lose our focus on what we as Christians are to be accomplishing. Satan wants us to become aimless Christians. This is why so often we find it difficult to enjoy the fruit of our labors, the wealth and possessions God has given us.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul wrote, ". . . I do not run like a man running aimlessly. . . ." He clearly understood the meaning of putting on Christ. The risen Lord and Savior, through the working of the Holy Spirit, reigns in our very weakness. The Lord, at His appointed time, will make use of our labor. It is the Lord who will keep us focused on what we are to be accomplishing.

With this knowledge, we realize we cannot make judgments or predict the outcome of our labor. We graciously accept the task at hand and give thanks for the gifts given. In response to God's love, we give back to God a portion of what He has given, set aside portions for the poor and for our families, and yes, retain a portion for ourselves. It is in this way, and this way only, when it comes to our wealth and possessions, that we can have a joyful heart, finding comfort and satisfaction in the fruit of our labor.