

POSSESSING OUR POSSESSIONS

By
Carl E. Bates

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Carl E. Bates is pastor of The First Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas. During his first year at this church that closed May 31, the congregation received 962 new members of which 583 came by letter and 379 for baptism. Total gifts for the year were \$305,003.

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I take it that I am expected to speak concerning these great numbers whom God has seen fit to send into our fellowship during the past year. I cannot believe, however, that you expect me to spend these moments engaging in laying out in minute detail plans for the enlistment of these people, and I shall therefore rather ask you to think with me about laying upon the hearts of not only these but of all of our people a concept of their stewardship of all of life unto God.

Sometime ago I found a definition of Christian stewardship which I believe covers the subject as adequately as any I've ever found. I shall give you this definition and ask you to think with me in terms of its use in "possessing our possessions."

Here is the definition. Christian stewardship is the practice of giving systematically and proportionately of time, talent and material possessions, based upon a conviction that these are a trust from God to be used in his service for the benefit of all mankind.

Now let us analyze this definition. For one thing, we have said that Christian stewardship is the practice of giving. We must somehow lead our people to see that this is how the church first came into existence. A little group of believers in Christ banded together under the influence of the Holy Spirit in order to give to the world that which they themselves had experienced. This is behind the existence of the church. The church exists to give, and there is no place in its membership for any member who does not plan to participate in a program of giving.

Our definition also tells us how we should give. We should give systematically. The Bible teaches systematic giving, but this is not enough. Many of our people have been systematic in niggardly giving.

The Bible also teaches that we must be proportionate, and I believe that this proportion begins with the first tenth and does not end until men have learned how to give all they have.

Our definition further tells us what we should give. We should give of our time. God has given to each of us twenty-four hours in every day. If a person should say that he does not have time for the work of Christ, what he really means is that he has the time but he will not take it and give it to his Saviour.

We must give of our talents. The Bible abounds in teaching concerning the talents of men.

We must give of our material possessions. I do not pose as a Bible scholar, but I have searched its pages from beginning to end and I fail to find any mention in the Word of God where a child of God has the smile of God when he gives 1 per cent or 2 per cent or anything less than 10 per cent. There is no mention of any percentage less than 10 per cent. This is where Bible giving begins and continues all the way to 100 per cent of what one has.

(more)

Address--Carl E. Bates--"Possessing Our Possessions" (cont'd)

We have said further that this giving is based upon a conviction that all our possessions are a trust from God. The Scriptures are specific on this point. A man must give an account of himself and all he has unto God. "It is required in a steward that a man be found faithful."

Further, these possessions are to be used in the service of God for the benefit of all mankind. I do not know how a person can give himself as a Christian steward without giving to and through the program of his church (a church which engages in a world program of service) all that he has.

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BAPTISTS AND NEW TESTAMENT EVANGELISM

by
Arthur Fox

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Arthur Fox, Morristown, Tennessee, is a national evangelist who has conducted revivals in most of the states. A graduate of Carson-Newman College and Southern Seminary, he occupied several long pastorates until his entrance into evangelism in 1933. He says that he can make a living at 13 different kinds of employment and that his hobby is flying.

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The goal of God's creation was the making of a perfect man, but alas, that man should yield to sin and bring the curse of total depravity upon the whole of the human race.

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Whenever and wherever God has wanted to do anything on this earth man is the agency that he uses. The good and general welfare of mankind has been the object of God's grace from the dawn of the ages to this present hour.

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When God wanted to grow a nation that would stand for the firm foundation of the faith of our fathers, he went to the mountain valley of the Euphrates River and called Abraham saying: "I know him, he will command his children and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment."

When this people became a numerous nation and had been in serfdom for 450 years, God wanted them to emerge a great people millions strong, he needed a mighty man of godliness, valor and resistless leadership, and Moses was the man.

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Four hundred thirty-five years after the last prophet had ceased to prophesy and in the dark and dismal day of the sin-sick world, the hour when the son of God must be born to work out the plan of salvation, the scheme of redemption for the evangelization of humanity, a herald, a forerunner was needed, a Baptist preacher and John the Baptist was the man.

At this momentous event when the God-sent man, John the Baptist, baptized Jesus in the Jordan River there were present the triune God-head, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Then Jesus begins his ministry and out of his first converts he organizes his Church and to his fellow-followers in the church he gives his evangelistic program.

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This New Testament evangelism was the evangelism given by the Lord Jesus himself and as carried on by him and his followers in his church. And may I pause to say here that the commission of Christ to evangelize humanity was given to his church, his people in the church, and not to the outside. Beware of free lance evangelism. Much hurt to the cause of Christ is done by free lance evangelists coming into a community and saying "The Lord sent me into this town to take it for Christ." Conducting campaigns and knocking the churches and many times the pastors and turn those whom they lead away from the church, ask that they make their contributions to them instead of having them line up with the church and support the cause of Christ.

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New Testament Evangelism began with mass evangelism as is demonstrated by John the Baptist, who brought forth his daring denunciation of sin and pled with the multitudes who gathered to hear him to "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." This Baptist evangelist would baptize no one who did not give evidence of his repentance from sin. He dealt with the people publicly and privately, by the mass and by the individual.

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The personal method of Jesus was carried out by His church members. All were active and moved by the inward impulse of regeneration which they had experienced and by the personal example and directions of Jesus. Personal witnessing was their constant effort and practice.

The vital concept of his commission was personal soul-winning. His first recorded message as Matthew gives it was a veritable dynamo of evangelistic dynamics. Not a superfluous word did Jesus ever use in his ministry; every word and work was mainly and directly on his mission.

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New Testament Evangelism is first in Kingdom matters because it is inborn by the Spirit when the soul is "born again." This new-born soul wants lost souls saved there and then.

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This New Testament Evangelism is foremost and fundamental because it holds the basic principles of all Christian activities and organizations.

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