

Stewardship – a “Life and Death” Matter

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When God called the hoarding, selfish farmer a “fool” and told him he would die that very night, He asked a soul-piercing question: “And the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?” (Luke 12:20). When one dies, whatever material things he has accumulated will most certainly be left behind for others.

Hebrews 9:16–17 states: “For a testament [will] is of force where there hath been death” (v. 17a). What was true of the Testament/Will of Christ and His death (i.e., it became law when He died) is also true of every person who drafts a legal will.

Wise stewardship involves more than merely the way one handles his possessions in life. The disposition one makes of his or her estate in death is an equally important spiritual responsibility. I have observed two major failings in this regard: (1) Some never make a will at all, and (2) some fail to employ spiritual stewardship principles when they make their wills.

Concerning the first failing, one can control the disposition of property after death **only if he or she has made a will**. Those who fail to make a will invite the courts to distribute their estates, often leaving behind volatile fuel for family feuds. If one wishes to determine the recipient(s) of his estate, **such must be so stated in a will**.

The second failing may be more common than the first. In one case in my experience a few decades ago a godly elderly couple owned a tract of land conservatively valued at \$500,000. They were childless, and they indicated to me and to the elders with whom I worked more than once their intention to leave their estate to the congregation. Alas, they neglected to change their wills to reflect this intent. Their estate went to nephews and nieces, years before named in their wills – devout Mormons all.

Another case involved a dear Christian widow. She and her husband came through the depression and some extremely hard times. However, by very hard work and careful frugality, over the years they accumulated a sizeable estate. They were faithful to each other and to the Lord. They had two children, one of whom preceded them both in death, and the other who in youth deserted her upbringing in the Lord. None of this widow’s grandchildren have any spiritual inclination. I talked with this dear lady a few years ago about her estate and how she needed to use it to continue the things for which she and her husband had lived. She agreed that she should do this, but she has now passed to her reward without ever changing her will. It

is heartbreaking to imagine how much good could have been done had she fulfilled her intention.

I have no doubt that these two cases could be multiplied many times every year. Many millions of dollars that could – and should – have been left to spread the Word of God are thereby falling into the service of Satan, resulting in a great loss of souls. Where is the logic in serving God faithfully for many years and then leaving an estate, regardless of size, to those who will use it to destroy the very principles one advanced and to promote things one opposed in life?

Dear brother or sister, if you have not drafted a will, I **strongly** urge you to do so immediately. If you have willed your estate to relatives who will spend it selfishly or will use it to support error and perhaps moral evil, I **strongly** urge you to change it so that it will advance the Truth of God's Word. If you have included what was once a good cause (a congregation, school, et al.) that has since apostatized, I **strongly** urge you "disinherit" such by changing your will.

I do not hesitate to exhort saints to make a faithful congregation of God's people a beneficiary in their wills. Doing so will perhaps enable you to do more to serve God in death than you were able to do in life. The haunting question is still there: "And the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" (Luke 12:20).

[**Note:** I wrote this article for the "Editor's Clippings" column, and it was published in the January 2001 issue of *The Gospel Journal*, of which I was editor at the time.]

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