

XXVII. The Holy Spirit in Biblical Perspective

Led by the Spirit

“The Anointing of the Holy Spirit”

I Peter 4:1–11

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November 6, 2016 – Morning sermon

We'll start by looking at I Peter 4. This is God's Word and God's Word is the truth. I Peter 4:7–11 says [7] *The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. [8] Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. [9] Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. [10] As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: [11] whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Every member commitment Sunday has been going on at this church since it began 55 plus years ago by our founding pastor and leaders. Here is my confession. When I first came here the every member commitment Sunday was my biggest anxiety and dread than any other Sunday of the year. When you start talking to people about money you get about three responses and two are generally not good. So for many reasons I would dread it. I've been here for 18 years now and those past years there has been a transition for this Sunday has become a Sunday of not anxiety but of anticipation, not dread but joy for me.

First I'd like to acknowledge the practical wisdom of our founding pastor and leaders to give us this Sunday. The deacons are finishing up our budget for final approval in our congregation and they have a couple of charges. One of their charges is that we take the resources that God gives a budget that guides the use of those resources so that we fulfil our mission which is; for God's glory, we at Briarwood are committed to equipping Christians to worshipping God and to reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ. So we can a budget that accelerates and accentuates the fulfillment of that mission and work under the policies of the session. For instance, fifty cents out of every dollar by the time you get to faith promise and causes outside our giving, has to leave Briarwood for mercy, benevolence, church planting, church revitalization beyond our own realm and campus throughout the world which has been taken seriously. This is just one of the great policies they have done.

One of the great blessings is for them to receive from you what you anticipate God is giving you through your regular tithe to Briarwood so they are not only framed by our policies and principles of our missions and value statements but they are also informed from you and they have that information from you. So I see the practical wisdom of it and have bowed to it for a long time. There are also a couple of more things that have made this Sunday a Sunday of anticipation and joy for me. Here are two things that have happened from this.

One is that I have come to understand that basically stewardship is the call to the Christian life. We have been in a series of looking at the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In the next study we'll come back to this study to talk about the stewardship of your spiritual gifts. Each one of you has a spiritual gift that is not repeated and is unique. God has entrusted it to you as a

functioning member of the body of Christ. In this study we're just going to look at a simple phrase in this text that said we are stewards of God's varied grace to us.

In other words, the Spirit-led life is stewardship that makes us giving people. We really embrace the notion that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive. Stewardship is taking what God has given you and giving ourselves to giving it for Him. That is what stewardship ultimately is because the Spirit-led life is a life of stewardship. To have a season of this in our church is a privilege. We don't consider what to give financially but we look at how God wants us to use our time and talents as well. Stewardship is over all of life. It's not just one element of life but we're called to be faithful stewards of what God has given to us and it gives us the opportunity to focus on the one element of stewardship that Satan uses to entrap us continually and that is finances.

I want to be clear that stewardship is much more than finances but it is clear that Jesus knew how much the love of money would entrap us. That is why He makes warning like it's harder for a rich man to get into the Kingdom than for a camel to get through an eye of a needle and that no man can serve two masters; he'll either love one and hate the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (financial resources). He didn't say time or talents there. He knows how Satan uses money to draw your affection and allegiance as opposed to the God of glory to have our affection and allegiance. So we do have unapologetically to look at what Jesus warns us about and can ensnare us. Paul made it very clear that the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil. So principally I'm glad I can address stewardship in general as the Christian life and I'm glad we have this one category that is so easily ensnaring to us that we can take head on as Christians. We can either get glad in God's grace or get mad because we don't believe the truth of God's grace.

Here is a second reason. This season gives us an opportunity to do some self-examining. What has the affection and allegiance of my life? Am I seeking first the Kingdom and His righteousness with things added to me or am I seeking things and let the Kingdom be added to me? It is a wonderful time of assessment and examination personally. How am I doing in my marriage and where do we stand as a husband and wife together? It's also a great time for you to teach your children.

David Roebuck is the deacon that is guiding us through this season of giving and he said "It's very easy for this to become just a season of checking off the boxes of where you'll be giving and the church pledge is just thrown into the mix with all the other areas instead of realizing that this is my life." Stewardship is the Christian life. Stewardship is the declaration of knowing what and how the Spirit has a hold of you. I want to use this time as a time of personal inventory and assessment under the eye of God. I want to do it because of the grace of God for I'm a steward of God's grace. This isn't what I'm doing for God to be gracious but it is what I'm doing because God has been gracious.

I'm a steward of God's very graces. I have salvation. I have the blood of Jesus, His righteousness, His Spirit and spiritual gifts. I have been time and talents. I have a house, a car, children and all of these things that God has entrusted to me. I'm not going to let this moment slide by with just checking a box and putting a card in. This is too important of a moment for me in my life. I also want my children to start this. I want them to start learning from me what it means to have a prioritized life for Christ, to live the life for Him in all aspects of my life. What does that look like and how is that accomplished because how great is my God and how wonderful the grace of the Lord Jesus is.

So let's look at the passage in I Peter 4 where we are stewards of God's varied grace. In this study we are going to look at one word in this text and that is stewardship. What is stewardship? I want to give you the Greek word for stewardship which is actually two Greek words that are put together. The two Greek words translated in your Bible as stewardship are these words; *oikonomos*. *Oiko* is the Greek word for house. *Nomos* is the Greek word for laws or rules. So *oikonomos* literally means house rules or the rules of the house.

It's not hard to make that jump is it, for Who lives in you? It is Jesus for you are His house. You are His dwelling place because He lives in you. He abides in you. You are His home. It is not let me obey the rules for Him to make me His home. By grace you are His home. He has saved you. Now what are the rules of the house established by the Owner of the house? We are about to find out in stewardship whether we really think He owns the house or not. Or do we own it? Am I owner of everything I have or is God the Owner who sets the rules of the house for me?

Did you grow up in a home that had rules of the house? I did. My mother had all kinds of rules in our house. For instance, if you came in our front door then that meant you were a visitor and if you came in the back door that meant you were either family or friends and you'd be confronted with a sign that said 'take off your shoes.' What was not under that sign was 'or it may cost you your life.' I remember when my parents made that investment in wall to wall carpet and that beige wall to wall carpet was not going to get tracked up by anybody that was a friend or family. My mother was a clean freak. My mom's picture is right beside the word OCD in the dictionary, or at least it should be. We mopped and swept the kitchen floor three times every day. My mother would put newspaper under the cuckoo clock just in case and I was the one who had to change that newspaper every day. I also married someone like my mother because if I happen to get up a little early in the morning to go to the bathroom the bed is made by the time I get back so I'm up at that point. So there were rules of the house and everybody followed them.

God dwells in His church so what is good stewardship that our officers are to follow? God dwells in you so what are the rules of the house? Does the word *oikonomos* sound familiar to you? We actually get an English word transliterated from those two Greek words which is the word economics. We are looking at what the comprehensive economy is of the Christian life. A Spirit-filled life is a stewardship life. It is a life of establishing God's economy in my life. It is not working God into the economy of my life but living God's economy in my life.

As we look at this passage there are a number of things we could pull out but I'll just give you four of them on stewardship. One is that a stewardship life is intentional. A good steward is trustworthy, faithful, good and dependable. We even call stewards trustees. These words are all associated with being intentional as a steward. What are they intentional about?

Secondly, stewardship in the Christian life is comprehensive. It looks at one's experiences in life, the resources that God has given to them and how they spend their time. Redeem the time for the days are evil. Buy back the time and make use of it. So a comprehensive stewardship governs my time, talents, treasures and every aspect of my life.

Thirdly, the stewardship life is a giving life. We are receiving and therefore we are giving. A great example of this is the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee provides two thirds of Israel's drinking water, has fish and all is living in this sea and the same river feeds the Dead Sea and there is nothing living in the Dead Sea. So there is a living sea and a dead sea with the same river feeding both but the difference is the Sea of Galilee takes in and gives out but the Dead Sea only takes in. If you are just a 'taker-inner' then you're going to die

for there is nothing living about you. To live you have to give. It's the giving church and the giving Christian that is the living church and the living Christian. So we are intentional and comprehensive in our giving of life.

Fourthly, a stewardship life is a prioritized life. At one point in my life I was trying to get ahead of my wife spiritual and someone told me that Christians get life verses so I set about finding a life verse and found one. My life verse is Matthew 6:33 which says [33] *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* So I went and told my wife I had a life verse and she said "That's wonderful." I knew my wife had already had a life verse so I said "My life is better than yours." She said "What is it?" I said "Mine is about priorities" and I quoted Matthew 6:33. I said 'It is the first things that are important in life and Jesus is to have first place in everything.' She said "Yeah I agree" and I said "So what is your life verse?" She said "Matthew 6:33." We have the same verse so I'm glad we're married. It is a matter of priority. What is first in our life?

So now that we know a stewardship life is intentional, comprehensive, giving and prioritized, where does that lead us to? Here is the takeaway. Spirit-led stewardship is the opportunity to intentionally affirm what is first in our lives, which reveals who or what is ultimately first in our hearts. Behavior betrays belief ultimately and I found this out as a Christian and a pastor. People do what they want to do. What about providential hindrance? Ok, there have been times I've wanted to be here and preach but I was at home with a sickness and couldn't be there, but even then there was a wantor that kept me from being there. I didn't want to infect those here but ultimately people do what they want to do.

This is the Lord's Day and people have made a decision in terms of the priority of gathered worship. Is this something that fits into my schedule? Is it something I may do if it works out or is it a priority? Because people do what they want to do, it reveals the wantor in their heart – what they want to do. One of my favorite passages of Scripture is in the Sermon on the Mount right before you get to Matthew 6:33 and it's Matthew 6:21 which says [21] *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* My treasure placing tells you my treasure keeping. God has entrusted grandkids to me, a house, resources, the Gospel and grace to me and all those things for what He has entrusted to me is glorious but what I do with it tells people what it really means to me. What we intentionally affirm that is first in our lives then ultimately reveals what is first in our hearts.

This is the Sunday that we are going to consecrate our giving for the coming year to the Lord in prayer but before we do that I want to give you something that was very helpful to me. I wish I could give credit to the person who gave it to me but I don't remember and I have modified it so it's as much mine as it is his now. This just didn't start with me and if I could remember who gave it to me I'd give them credit for it. These things that I'm about to give you has been very helpful in affirming first things to reveal my heart and what is first in my heart. Here are the five things.

The first one is that the first thought of every morning I want to give to the Lord. Before I get out of bed, before my quiet time and before anything I want my first thought when I awake to be to the Lord Jesus. This first thought has two parts to it. Part one is to praise God to whom all blessings flow. I want to praise Him because He saved me, He has given me the Holy Spirit and He has given me so much in life. Part two is that I move from praise to petition saying, "God, would You allow me to make today count for You? I don't know who I'm going to meet or all that is going to come my way today but whatever comes even if it's the day You

take me home, I want it to count for You. Would You this day hear my thanksgiving for saving me and my request that today will count for You?"

Now I'm ready for the second one. The second thing is that my first appointment of every day will be with the Lord. I want to meet Him in prayer and the Word. Perhaps you might want some suggestions to helping you meet with Him in prayer and the Word. I realize that you might have a better time in the day to meet with the Lord and that is fine as long as you set aside time to meet with Him. The Bible doesn't say you have to start that time in the morning but the Bible does say 'early will I seek thee' so I would encourage you to start the day with Him in order for you to live the day for Him.

So here are some suggestions for you in your quiet time. There is a little devotional called TableTalk (my 101 suggestion) and it's an excellent devotional guide that can walk you through the week. It's almost like getting a book a month because the articles in it are so rich in content. Because our series has been 'led by the Spirit' I would also recommend A.W. Tozer's devotional (my 201 suggestion) called *Tozer on the Holy Spirit: A 366-Day Devotional (Tozer for Today)*. It is a devotional about the Holy Spirit and what He is doing in your life. My 301 suggestion is Reverend William Jay's Morning Exercises. He was a puritan pastor but I bought it when it still was in puritanese (old English language). It is a whole lot easier to read now but he has kept the essence of it and it is excellent. You may want to use one for your personal life and one for your family devotions or something like that but every day start off meeting with the Lord in prayer and His Word. Those are just three instruments I'd recommend to you.

The third thing is the first day of every week is given to Him. If you want the week to be lived for the Lord with life worship then make it a priority for the Lord's Day in gathered worship. I can assure you if gathered worship on the Lord's Day is optional, secondary or something that fits into life then that is exactly how you will treat the Lord throughout life. The Lord's Day is not a burden. It's a gift. He said 'I did not make man for the Sabbath but I made the Sabbath for man.' It is the thermostat for life.

The fourth thing is the first things of every moment. What are the first things of life? They are the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, discipleship, relationships and here is my encouragement to you. What does it mean to get first things in your life? The Great Commission is making disciples. There is evangelism and discipleship. The Great Commandment is loving the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind and those are every moment issues. Any place you have taken a vow before God is a first thing. I took a vow for my marriage so my marriage is a first thing. I took a vow for my children when they were baptized as an infant into our covenant family. That is a first thing. I took a vow in membership in the body of Christ which is the one institution that is headed to eternity and that's a first thing for me. I took a vow as an ordained minister. If I stepped into a court and took a vow to tell the truth that would become a first thing. Wherever I have put God's name upon my life and made a vow then that is a first thing for every moment of life.

The fifth thing is the first dime of every dollar belongs to the Lord. It is called the tithe. I agree with Randy Alcorn where the tithe is not giving because if you keep the tithe you rob God. You don't rob God by keeping a gift but you rob Him when you keep something that belongs to Him and the tithe belongs to the Lord. That is why we say before the offering 'let's worship God with His tithe and our offerings' for it's His tithe we're bringing and that is the beginning of stewardship. Randy Alcorn says the tithe is the training wheels of stewardship. I'm so glad the Lord has taught me that and it has grown in my family's life ever since.

God has grown my family so much in this area that I am amazed at what God does to us because He found out that it will get through us. So at least start with the training wheels of bringing to the Lord the first day of the week in worship that which He has given and belongs to Him. The first dime of every dollar is His and watch what the Lord does in your life and through your life when you do this. It is the only thing that God ever says to test Him on and see what He will do in your life. Malachi 3:10 says [10] *Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.*

Every year the ministry of Briarwood is extended through the church revitalization ministry, Embers to a Flame, so every year I'm with pastors from other churches. I talk with them about God's roadmap to vitality and health which is found in the church at Ephesus. God told the church at Ephesus that He was about to remove the lampstand. Why? It was because they had left their first love. Then He told them to return to their first love and here is your roadmap – remember, repent and recover. Remember, stewardship is assessment and thoughtfulness. Repent – wherever we need to recalibrate to make sure the first things are the first things and Jesus is first place then recover the first things. First love comes from first things and first love invigorates the giving of first things.

The first thought of every morning, the first appointment of every day, the first day of the week, the first things of every moment and the first dime of every dollar I give to Him who has given to me and the love of Christ fills and overflows not only to us but from us into the world. The first things declare and reveal who has first place in our hearts. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Take a few moments in silent prayer. We are going to consecrate our commitments before the Lord so please take a moment in prayer to do that. God, I want to thank You that we have arrived at this moment of personal, family and marriage assessment. God, I remember how many times I would sit in that worship service and watch my dad take the envelope from his pocket and place it in worship. Thank You for teaching me. Father, I thank You that we can teach one another not only in the matter of the first dime of every dollar, the first thought of every day, the first appointment in every day, the first things in every relationship and the first day of every week, but here we are Lord as Your people consecrate themselves not just in their finances. We are actually consecrating ourselves as we give willingly and freely to the One who gave to set us free, Jesus. Take our life and let them be consecrated Lord to Thee, Amen.

Power Point

A LOOK AT THE TEXT

Oikonomos – Stewardship the “Rules of the House” The Economics of Life

A Spirit-Led life is a stewardship life...

- Intentional
- Comprehensive
- Giving
- Prioritized

LIFE TAKEAWAY

Spirit-led stewardship is the opportunity to intentionally affirm what is first in our lives, which reveals who or what is ultimately first in our hearts.

- First Thought of every morning.
- First Appointment of every day.
- First Day of every week.
- First Things of every moment.
- First Dime of every dollar.