

# The Modern Crusade

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Edited by  
H. C. Ostrom, Secretary



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## STEWARDSHIP.

By ROBERT E. SPEER, *New York City.*

There is no more important and vital subject on this program than the subject of Christian stewardship. It is not the most interesting subject, and one fears sometimes that the reason it is not the most interesting subject is because it is the most important and vital. I am reminded of a child who had been disobedient and negligent of duty, and his mother was talking to the little fellow, who listened in silence until there came a lull, and then he said, "Fank you, mother, let's talk about something else; I don't fink that this subject is very interesting." I believe one reason why the subject of Christian stewardship is not very interesting to the church is because it comes a little too near home; because it drives the principle of Christian responsibility right into the actual life and deeds of the man.

People say we need more interest and information. They say that if the church knows more of the needs of the other side of the world, she will give more. A consideration to be thought of in the distribution of my gift is the needs of the people on the other side. But that is not a main reason for my giving and I do not feel that a knowledge of those needs leads men to give. I do not belong to myself and what I have is not mine, but another's. It has to be administered as His. I require only to know that and until I know and acknowledge that I will not give in any adequate way. I will distribute then that which is not my own where it is most needed throughout the world. But knowledge is not enough and unless we get into our hearts the lesson of this conference on stewardship, we may go away from here with knowledge unwrought into life and leaving us worse men than when we came. Our information will be only a curse to us, if we do not act under the principle of Christian Stewardship.

The trouble with many of us in the Christian life is that we act as though we believed that our lives belong to ourselves instead of to Christ. Now and then, perhaps, we admit that they are His, but for the most part we act as though they belonged to us as our own, to be treated as we please, instead of realizing that our lives are only trusts, and delivered to us in trust for God's use and Christ's service. I know we narrow down Christian Stewardship to the matter of money,

and it is right enough to do that perhaps, but the principle of Christian Stewardship runs deeper than our possession of wealth. Money is merely a part of our life, and the principle of Christian Stewardship ought to cover our whole life. Money indeed is life. Life includes money. There is no wealth that is not Human Life. Human life is pressed into the coin and rolled into paper. Money is some human life, the life of men pressed out for use.

All our life, including the money, is given to us as stewards to be used for God. Most of us think of our lives as ends, and thus justify the sacrifice of other things for life and the gratification of life. But life is not an end; life is simply an agency and tool to be used by man for an end. Our Lord thus conceived his own life when He said in the tenth chapter of John, that the Father loved Him because he laid down his life for his sheep. His life was not the thing for which he was to live, but the thing by which he was to live, and to effect the great ends of God. He served by his life, and so our own lives, and all the things that enter into these lives of ours are just our agencies, our tools for the accomplishment of God's ends. That is the true Christian view. And the principle applies equally to all men. There are no classes known to Christ. No one day or week bears more Christian responsibility or brings more Christian privileges than any other day. The claims of the Christian life rest equally on every common man, and the life of each of us is just as much a trust from God and our agency to be used in the interest and service of God as the life of any Christian minister or priest. All that we have is under that law of Christian Stewardship which covers everything and everybody.

I believe that the great necessity to-day is that men should bring their lives practically under the dominating influence of this principle. Our great need is to drive home into the practical life our theoretical convictions, that all we have is not ours but God's. A friend of mine showed me an announcement in a newspaper the other day, that a man had just bought a prize dog in one of the dog shows for twenty-five hundred dollars and this man, my friend said, had given, only a few days before when he had been approached, five hundred dollars to the missionary cause, as the full amount that he was able to give. Now, there are many men who act on that principle, and who find themselves able to spend unlimitedly for their own personal desires, but narrowly confined in their ability to give in the name and for the work of Christ.

Something is needed that will actualize our theory in our life; that will bring the principle of stewardship into our practical operations. Of what value is it simply to say that I belong to Christ? "Why call me, Lord, Lord," asks the Saviour, "and do not?" We need some plain simple device that will give the principle of stewardship a grip. The old law of the tithe is such a device. It is not the full expression of the principle, but is its minimum expression. The man who will go so far, will have really recognized the principle and will inevitably go further. One of the best Christian business men I knew told me once that he had long since got beyond giving one-tenth of his income, that he was not entitled to keep nine-tenths, that he must do his living on less than nine-tenths, and give far more than a tithe to the causes of Christ.

The Christian Church needs such men. She needs preachers but she needs even more a larger body of men who will practice Christian Stewardship. There are more men preaching the gospel than there are laymen practicing Christian Stewardship to the full. The need is for a larger number of men who will take the Christian principles of giving and bind their lives practically under their dominating control. Many of the great Christian givers, men like Wm. E. Dodge, D. W. James, Morris K. Jesup and others are gone, and where are the young men who are rising up to take their places? We need throughout the church an educational movement that will lead the boy, the young man, to recognize Christ's ownership of his life, to realize that he holds it only in trust for Christ. If a man has not acquired in early life the joy of recognizing Christ's ownership of his possessions, he will not learn it easily later. It is a hard thing for an old man to loosen up.

And I believe that for many of us the joy of the Christian life, and the freedom and satisfaction of the new life of prayer, will hinge on the adequacy with which we learn here in the days of this conference, the lesson of a faithful, unselfish, Christian Stewardship. What is the use of going away from this convention praying without giving? Bringing "the tithes into the storehouse" is the condition of the opened "windows of heaven."

When we waste with a prodigal hand upon our self indulgence and give God only a scanty pittance, what opening do we give to Him for His blessing? How could He give any real spiritual help or answer the prayer rising from such hearts and such homes? If we desire to go out from this convention to rise into a larger life, of Christian fellowship, I will tell you the pathway—a Christian Stewardship. Our

hymn relates this truth; to draw near unto God we must begin by being God's:

"I am Thine, oh Lord; I have heard Thy voice;  
And it told Thy love to me.  
But I long to rise in the arms of faith,  
And be closer drawn to Thee."

It is for us to determine our nearness to Him, and the nearness of our hearts to His heart, and the nearness of our lives to His life, and the fullness of the power of His presence in our hearts. We do our part when we recognize that we are His and are obedient unto His law.