

1 CORINTHIANS 4:1, 2

A TRUSTWORTHY STEWARD

“This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.”¹

From earliest days in my service before the Master it has been my practise to preach a stewardship message at least once in each calendar month. This practise grows out of a conviction that the people of God can only benefit from instruction detailing the will of God, and especially when the teaching instructs God’s people in the way in which we are to handle the grace God has entrusted to His people.

I understand that preachers are often uncomfortable speaking about administering the grace of God entrusted to each person. The denizens of this fallen world imagine that the only thing a preacher cares about is fleecing people out of their hard earned wealth. Tragically, there are enough examples of charlatans to lend substance to the charge. Professing Christians, having imbibed deeply from the polluted wells of this fallen world, oft times exhibit irritation when receiving a message concerning the grace of giving.

I recall a congregation which I briefly pastored in the Lower Mainland, the church having passed into a distant memory within that community some years ago. The church was in severe decline; and I requested that the treasurer provide the congregation with a statement of receipts and disbursements. She assured me that she would provide the statement. Over the course of the next several months, I made that request several times, each time being assured that she would soon provide the congregation with the statement.

When it became apparent that she was reluctant to provide a statement of the gifts and expenses, I asked that she provide the chairman of the deacons with that particular statement so that we could at least prepare the budget that would be presented at a congregational meeting that was approaching. When I made that request, she exploded, “It is none of your business how much money we have! When we need money, I’ll tell you and you can get it from the people.” Tragically, her attitude is not an exception within the Evangelical Zion. Many church leaders are resistant to informing the people either of the receipt or of the means by which the church handles moneys.

The first congregation I pastored after coming to Canada was likewise in the Lower Mainland. The treasurer I inherited at that church was a former pastor of the congregation. I was young and didn’t have the experience I have today, or he would not have occupied such a position. After I came, week-by-week he would come to me and say, “We’re broke! No money! We can’t give you a cheque.”

I would say, “That’s fine, Bill. God will provide for our family.” My wife and I would pray, literally claiming God’s promise to give daily bread; and God did provide. After about two years, the church experienced conflict, and this treasurer was at the centre of the problem. I drove to North Vancouver to his home on a certain day and confronted him. “Bill, you are divisive and combative. It is closer to North Vancouver than it is to Dallas, so you are going to remove yourself from the congregation.”

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“You can’t do that,” he protested.

“Well,” I said quite firmly, “I have your letter of dismissal here in my jacket. If you wish, we will put the matter to a vote this coming Sunday and see if the congregation stands for truth or if the saints stand on emotion.”

Bill chose to leave, and within a few weeks congregational giving had trebled. We had no way of knowing whether he had distributed congregational funds as the church desired; he had never provided an accounting of the moneys. He had supported another ministry that he had started some years before, and it is possible that he had shifted money from the church to that other ministry. What is apparent is that the people had been exceptionally generous, and likely had been generous for quite some time. However, we could not know if that was the case since we had never had an accounting.

Such experiences cause saints to be reluctant to underwrite the advance of the Faith. Moreover, when such disgraceful attitudes become known to outsiders—and our dishonourable attitudes are always exposed eventually—they perpetuate the caricature of preachers as money grubbers. What is required is teaching on Christian responsibility. People are often surprised to discover that Jesus spoke frequently of the manner in which people are to handle wealth. This is because money is neutral; it is a tool used either to honour the Lord God or employed for purely selfish reasons. Thus, how we employ our moneys reveals our understanding of who we are and of our relationship to the Lord God.

When I speak of stewardship, the uninitiated may think it is a plea for money. Perhaps some imagine that the church needs money and the preacher must therefore plead for their money. I want to disabuse any who hear this message of such thinking. Though stewardship does extend to our moneys, the concept is far broader than that. In fact, the concept of stewardship has its genesis in the salvation that Christ freely offers.

You cannot give what you do not have; and we believe that all that we hold we received from a gracious and loving God. Though we admit that the advance of the Kingdom of God does require moneys, we do not believe that we should request donations from the unsaved. We do not finance the work of God through appeals to the community for funds; neither do we hold bake sales or bingo nights to underwrite the ministry of Christ. We carefully stress that those who have not believed the Risen Son of God should not give during the time of worship when we receive gifts from God’s people. Similarly, we believe that all giving must be voluntary without any coercion. Those who are deeply wounded by life and who cannot rejoice in the act of giving, as well as those fellow believers who do not share our desire to extend the Kingdom of God through the ministry of this congregation, should not give as we worship through giving.

These practises grow out of our conviction that stewardship lies at the heart of the Christian life. We received life from the Master; therefore, we are responsible to offer freely to all the life we have received. The things that mark this life, including material goods, are under Christ’s reign; but for us, even more foundational to our life is the thought that as Christians, stewardship begins with the mysteries of God.

Perhaps the use of the phrase *mysteries of God* creates a problem. That phrase tends to make some people positively theological; they imagine that we are speaking of some esoteric or ethereal concept that is capable of being understood but vaguely at best. However, the concept of a mystery is easily understood through even a cursory review of its use in the New Testament. Except for four occurrences in the **BOOK OF REVELATION**, the presentation of *mystery* in the New Testament is confined to Paul’s writings.

According to the Word of God, we Christians are appointed as stewards of life. We Christians bear responsibility before God to act wisely in administering all that He has entrusted to our oversight. Our earthly holdings—the houses in which we live, the vehicles we drive, the conveniences that fill our homes, our bank accounts—have all been entrusted to us to be used for God’s glory. We are responsible to employ every holding, every accoutrement of life to the glory of Christ the Saviour.

In the same way, the talents each one has received were given by the Lord. The abilities—the voice that sings so sweetly and the mind that works so quickly, the strength of your hands have been lent to you for a very brief time so that you may serve the Lord. Unquestionably, however, the greatest treasure any of us has received is the knowledge that Christ Jesus is Lord and our testimony of new life in Him. We are each charged to shine like the brightness of the sky above [see DANIEL 12:3]. Each believer is charged to let his or her “light shine before others, so that they may see [y]our good works and give glory to [y]our Father who is in Heaven” [MATTHEW 5:16].

STEWARDSHIP IS THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH — A Methodist minister once informed me that he entered the ministry because he considered the ministry to be an easy job. However, it is not easy to be a servant of Jesus Christ—not if you are a true minister. The world did not love the Master, and those identified as belonging to the world are not likely to love His servants.

As one entrusted with the mysteries of God, the minister of Christ must be faithful to the Master, regardless of what others may say or do. The servant of God will many times be treated quite meanly by those belonging to the world; his own spiritual children will often break his heart and resist godly discipline in the Faith. The servant of God must not, however, cease to be a steward of the mysteries of God. The steward of God recognises that he is responsible to guard the treasure that is the message of hope, even as he makes every effort to give away that precious treasure.

What is true for the minister of Christ holds equally true for each child of God. As you mature in the Faith, you assume greater responsibility to tell others of Christ the Lord and to instruct them in the mysteries of God. It is easily possible to summarise the Christian life by the singular concept of stewardship. The child of God recognises that all that he or she has received is from God, and especially does the believer rejoice in the knowledge of life that is in the Son of God. Therefore, the Christian sees that God is ruler of life; thus, all he holds is held as one appointed as an administrator for God.

When one becomes a Christian, that believer is called to identify immediately with the Saviour in baptism. Paul told of his conversion to Christ, stating that when Ananias had given instruction in the will of God, he then commanded the new believer, “Now why do you wait? Rise and be baptised” [ACTS 22:16]. Having received baptism, believers are joined to the particular Body that administers the ordinance [see ACTS 2:41]. Whether the Body to which the believer is joined has a written covenant or not, that twice-born child of God enters into covenant with the fellow members of that church.

It is anticipated that each believer will assume responsibility within the congregation to which he or she is appointed by the Spirit of God. Above all else, each believer is responsible to build up the fellow members who make up the congregation. Paul makes this quite clear in the instructions he has provided the Corinthian Christians, “Let all things be done for building up” [1 CORINTHIANS 14:26].

Believers in the Risen Son of God fulfil their responsibility to strengthen the congregation through service to one another by exercising the gifts God has given each one and through supporting the ministry of the congregation with prayer and with their material goods. Stewardship is the essence of the Christian Faith. Salvation is the gift of God, but we are saved to serve. The Christian Faith is not an issue of “either/or,” rather it is a matter of “both/and.” We are to minister to one another and we are to administer what God has entrusted to us so that He will be glorified through our service.

Almost all believers will have heard **EPHESIANS 2:8, 9**. The Apostle has written, “By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” I am astounded when believers fail to memorise the **TENTH VERSE**: “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” [**EPHESIANS 2:10**].

Paul’s constant prayer for Christians was a prayer for godly service. For example, he testified to the Colossians, “We have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” [**COLOSSIANS 1:9, 10**].

The concept of willing servanthood permeates the New Testament. Paul commands the Galatians to master the freedom in Christ each one has received when he writes, “You were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” [**GALATIANS 5:13**]. Freedom in Christ, the heritage of each Christian, is revealed through willing service to others.

Peter commands those who will follow the Master, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” [**1 PETER 4:10**]. His words are not restricted to those who are set apart to formal ecclesiastical service; rather, Peter is addressing each believer in the Risen Christ. The context demands this understanding since in the light of the imminence of the return of the Lord all are to “keep loving one another earnestly” [**1 PETER 4:8**], and each servant of Christ is charged to “show hospitality to one another without grumbling” [**1 PETER 4:9**]. In other words, if we accept that each Christian is responsible to love others earnestly, and if we accept that each Christian is to show hospitality to one another without grumbling, then we must accept that each Christian is responsible to serve one another, understanding that the gift received is not for his or her benefit solely, but rather for the benefit of the whole Body.

To be sure, an overseer is “God’s steward” [**TITUS 1:7**], but it should be obvious by this point in the message that a life of service—a life of stewardship—is expected of each individual who is called a Christian. It is essential that each Christian embraces Christ’s words, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” [**MATTHEW 20:28**].

After Jesus had washed the disciples’ feet, a task that none of them had accepted for himself, He instructed His disciples, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him” [**JOHN 13:12-16**].

These words are but an iteration of Jesus' instruction delivered at the Last Supper. "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves" [LUKE 22:25-27].

The challenge is countercultural, but if anyone will be a Christian in deed and not in name only, that one will cultivate a life reflecting a servant's heart. She will become a steward of the gifts she has received, investing those gifts in others for the glory of the Father. Each believer must accept the responsibility to build others, embracing the responsibility to be wise in distributing financial gifts over which each one has oversight. We do this in order to ensure God's glory; and we will employ the Gospel of Christ as a precious gift to turn many others to faith in the Son of God.

STEWARDSHIP BEGINS WITH THE WAY WE HANDLE THE MYSTERIES OF GOD —

Stewardship is the essence of the Christian walk. Since this is true, it should not be surprising that the manner in which we handle the mysteries of God determines the manner in which we conduct our administrative responsibilities as citizens of the heavenly Kingdom. Each Christian should ask himself or herself, "Am I building the Kingdom of God; or am I just present in the Kingdom? Am I building a church; or am I merely attending services?"

The mysteries of God appear to revolve in particular around the unveiling of the Christ and the creation of His church. The term *mystery* occurs twenty-four times in the New Testament, and, as already mentioned, except for four of those occurrences, all occur in the writings of the Apostle Paul. In New Testament theology, a *mystery* is an event that could not have been anticipated with the limited knowledge available under the Old Covenant, but which God has fully revealed under the New Covenant.

The hardening of Israel in order to permit the salvation of the Gentiles is a *mystery* [ROMANS 11:25]. The Gospel of Christ Jesus is a *mystery* [ROMANS 16:25]. The rapture of the redeemed is a *mystery* [1 CORINTHIANS 15:51]. That the Gentiles are fellow heirs with the Jews is a *mystery* [EPHESIANS 3:6, 9]. The love of Jesus for His church is a *mystery* [EPHESIANS 5:32]. That God should become man is a *mystery* [1 TIMOTHY 3:16]. These mysteries are entrusted to us as Christians.

Let no one miss the impact of the responsibility to show integrity in handling the mysteries of God we have received. Since the mysteries of God revolve around Christ and His church, it should be evident that we are accountable for telling others of Christ. We are responsible to reveal the mystery of Christ, thus building the Body and demonstrating integrity in our interaction with the church that Jesus loved.

Stewardship imposes responsibility to tell lost family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues about the love of Christ, pleading with them to believe the Good News. Stewardship imposes responsibility to treat with respect appropriate for His holy bride—the church where Christ has placed each one. This means that each one must wisely invest the gifts received in those people who share the Faith, seeking their benefit in all things. This means that each one accepts the leaders God appoints, receiving them as overseers who must give an accounting to God. For all who share in congregational life, administering the mysteries of God demands doctrinal integrity.

One who lacks doctrinal integrity can never honour God with his possessions. The one lacking doctrinal integrity is incapable of godly administration of material goods since she is unwilling to administer wisely the spiritual gift(s) God has given. Jesus said, “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own” [LUKE 16:10-12]?

In the parable of the administration of talents entrusted to a man’s servants, the master of the servants commends some by saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much” [MATTHEW 25:21, 23]. Those who are faithful with what God entrusts to them receive yet greater responsibility. Jesus concluded this parable with a statement revealing a Kingdom principle that is counterintuitive to what is witnessed in this present world. “To everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away” [MATTHEW 25:29]. The identical Kingdom truth is restated in a slightly different form in Luke’s Gospel. There, the Master is quoted as saying, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more” [LUKE 12:48].

Stewardship requires faithfulness in little matters as well as in great matters. Christians are to be conscientious in supporting the cause of Christ, showing generosity in distributing earthly wealth and in the investment of time and talents. We serve Christ because we love Him; therefore, it must be our ambition to serve God’s people in order to make them strong. We do this because we love Him.

The things of this life are transient. Precious metals and gems, stocks and bonds, houses and lands are all destined for dust. They are merely tools to be employed for time; however, we must not neglect wisdom in the employment of these tools for Christ’s glory. Relationships, integrity, righteousness and the witness of the Word have an eternal impact. Therefore, the truly valuable aspects of life are people with whom we interact day-by-day. Winning the lost to faith in Christ is permanent. The Psalmist has written,

“[No man] can by any means redeem *his* brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him—
For the redemption of their souls *is* costly,
And it shall cease forever—
That he should continue to live eternally,
And not see the Pit.”

[PSALM 49:7-9]²

On one occasion the Master asked, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul” [MARK 8:36]³? Life is precious; the soul of an individual is of infinite value. No material goods can buy back the life of one who stands condemned before the Lord God. When attempting to exchange earthly possessions for a life—whether another’s or whether one’s own, a man’s offering will always prove insufficient. All that suffices for the soul of man is the infinite sacrifice presented by the Son of God.

² The Holy Bible, New King James Version (Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, TN 1982)

³ New American Standard Bible (Lockman Foundation, La Habra, CA 1995)

Telling others of Christ, praying for them to believe the message of life and refusing to succumb to the ever-present temptation to be silent is the immediate and essential stewardship incumbent upon each follower of the Christ. The steely words of the Master give no permission for silence before an unbelieving world. Jesus warned, “Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” [MARK 8:38].

Likewise, investing our lives in one another within the Body of Christ will assuredly yield eternal results. One cannot read the 14th chapter of 1 CORINTHIANS without being convinced that building up fellow believers is at the heart of acceptable service. Paul is clear about the necessity of strengthening one another in the Faith. The strengthening is not for some great, unseen, universal, amorphous entity—this strengthening is for the same people of God to whom we are accountable for administering the gifts God has entrusted to each of us.

The emphasis upon building the Body of the Lord is not difficult to understand. We have no doubt heard at some time, “If you want a job done, give it to a busy person.” Industrious people are people that can be entrusted with still greater responsibility. We do not entrust responsibility to lazy people. Likewise, we do not entrust responsibility to people that are untrustworthy.

At issue is the question of whether Jesus can be Lord over only a part of life. That is certainly a disquieting challenge that the Master issues to those claiming to follow Him and to obey Him. “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you” [LUKE 6:46]? His words echo those of the prophets.

God, speaking through Malachi, confronted the issue of commitment to the Lord. “A son honours his father and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honour? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, ‘How have we despised your name?’ By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, ‘How have we polluted you?’ By saying that the LORD’s table may be despised. When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favour? says the LORD of hosts. And now entreat the favour of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favour to any of you? says the LORD of hosts. Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts. But you profane it when you say that the Lord’s table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised. But you say, ‘What a weariness this is,’ and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD. Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations [MALACHI 1:6-14].

The hard truth is that either Jesus is Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all. Stewardship—accepting responsibility for administering the grace of God—is nothing less than recognition of and avidly embracing His mastery over life. Stewardship begins with offering all that we possess to the Saviour for His use and for His glory. Stewardship is seeking God’s glory for the benefit of the Body of Christ to which we have been joined. Stewardship is accepting the responsibility to serve without demurring. Stewardship is accepting the burden of urging others to believe the message of life in Christ and honouring the church for which He died. Stewardship means that we will make every effort to know the Lord—to know His will and to know what honours Him—and to understand the role of His bride in the unfolding Plan of the Ages.

STEWARDSHIP ANTICIPATES BEING FOUND FAITHFUL — Paul’s use of the word *pistós* [“faithful”] embraces two convergent concepts. The idea is that a steward will be both reliable and faithful. The two concepts are similar; but when handling the Word, we tend to divide and subdivide concepts until we lose sight of the original intent. In that ancient day, a steward was entrusted with the master’s moneys; thus, a steward needed to be reliable. This embraces the idea of being trustworthy. However, the steward must also fulfil the master’s wishes, and this embraces the concept of being faithful.

This raises two questions that must be answered if we will be good stewards of the mysteries of God. The first question is, *What has the Master entrusted to us?* According to the text, our Lord has entrusted to us the *mysteries of God*. We see that these mysteries include the truths concerning Christ and the churches for which He died. Christians are accountable to know and to communicate that Jesus Christ is Lord. This announcement of the Gospel is accomplished through what we say, but it is also communicated through how we live. Many people ascribe to Francis of Assisi the quote, “Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary.” Though it is questionable whether Francis ever spoke these particular words,⁴ the saying does capture an essential truth. I don’t mean to imply that a godly walk is sufficient to communicate life to a lost person. Nevertheless, the manner in which we live does communicate what we believe. What you believe is revealed through how you live; your life will either lend power to the words you do speak or it will enervate what you say. Speaking truth while living a life indistinguishable from that of the world will never be empowered by the Spirit of God. A transformed life empowers the testimony pointing others to the Master.

If I love Christ, I will also love the Bride of Christ. Protests will prove meaningless if I do not love His Body, for it will soon be evident that I do not love Him [1 JOHN 2:10; 3:10; 4:20, 21]. While many people claim to love an ideal, the love anticipated is love for the visible Body of Christ—the assembly to which He has joined each believer. None of us can minister effectively with the gifts entrusted to us if we try to minister to all churches or if we attempt to minister to no church. We can, however, make all churches stronger through investing our gifts in the lives of those who share our worship as fellow members of the Body of Christ. If the church to which I have been appointed is strong, she will strengthen other churches through revealing the presence of the Lord Christ and through enabling the congregation to encourage sister congregations.

⁴ Julie Zimmerman, “Friar Jack’s Catechism Quiz: Sorting out the Truth About St. Francis of Assisi,” September 23, 2002 (<http://www.americancatholic.org/e-News/FriarJack/fj092302.asp>) accessed 26 February 2016

The Master has entrusted to us as Christians the mystery of God in human flesh, Christ presenting Himself as the sacrifice for sinful man. That mystery declares that all who believe the message of life in the Risen, Living Son of God are forever freed from sin. The Master has also entrusted to us as members of His Body the mystery of the church, that God is uniting in Christ all peoples who receive the life He promises.

Good administrators of the grace of God will be required to answer the question, ***Has the Master given any commands concerning the mysteries He has entrusted to us?*** Of course, we have been commanded by the Lord to “Go ... and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” [MATTHEW 28:19, 20].

Christ Jesus anticipates that His people will make disciples. Christians are responsible, individually and collectively, to disciple others. This glorious task is fulfilled through telling others of the mystery of Christ and through inviting them to receive the grace of God. Your church exists to provide a place for those you bring to faith to grow in this most Holy Faith and to encourage you in the work you do for Christ. However, you must never forget that each of us who is known as a Christian bears responsibility to be always going, always discipling and always teaching.

We are to be willingly accountable to one another, thus honouring the church to which we belong. We do this through showing respect for the Body to which the Spirit appointed us. Your church does not exist for your benefit alone, though the ministry of your church does benefit you. The Body to which you belong gives you a place to exercise the gifts you received from God and to receive ministry from other believers who share your love for the Master.

Paul teaches us, “Let all things be done for building up” [1 CORINTHIANS 14:26]. Mutually building one another is especially to be carried out “when you come together” in assembly. Each Christian must aspire to build up the Body to which he or she belongs. Paul challenged the Christians in Corinth, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple” [1 CORINTHIANS 3:16, 17].

Should I treat the church with contempt, refusing her disciplines and asserting my “rights” at the expense of my responsibilities, I will be treating my church with disrespect. The Apostle warns, “If your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died” [ROMANS 14:15]. Paul also warns, “Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God” [ROMANS 14:20].

When I refuse to demonstrate a submissive spirit within the church to which I have been appointed, I dishonour that church. To dishonour the church to which God appointed me is to threaten that church with destruction; and to threaten the congregation with destruction is to invite God’s judgement.

The grace of God is revealed through His goodness to all mankind; God’s goodness is showered on all people. We Christians know that God “makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” [MATTHEW 5:45]. Everyone—whether acknowledging God or denying Him—enjoys God’s merciful provision—this common grace provides strength and sustenance for each person. Believers are responsible to be stewards of God’s grace. However, stewardship begins with wisdom how we handle the mysteries of God.

Of course, you cannot wisely handle the mysteries of God if you have never known Him of whom those mysteries speak. You cannot understand those mysteries until you personally experience the first and greatest mystery, which is the Person of Christ the Lord. He died because of your sin, and rose from the grave for your justification. The call of God is for you to believe this message so that your sin will be forgiven and so that you will be saved.

God's Word calls you to faith in Christ. These are the words Scripture presents. "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." That passage concludes with the divine promise that "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" [ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13]. Believe this message and be saved, even today. May God bless each one as you receive Christ as Master over your life. Amen.