

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**Zoe Basilikos! – Life Stewardship according to the Kingdom**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer - February 28, 2016**

**The Malachi Pledge**

**Malachi 3:10**

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

Turn in the card during the offering

**So what do we know?**

**1. Zoe Basilikos Life according to the Kingdom – We know that everything is the Lord's**

*Ps 24:1 The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.*

Ps 89:11 The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it, you have founded them.

**2. That makes us stewards, not owners. Ownership is a *This Age* construct, not an *Age to Come* construct**

Some Christians understand this Kingdom concept and Christian world view better than others:



Jim Elliot along with Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Peter Fleming, and Roger Youderian were killed while participating in Operation Auca, an attempt to evangelize the Huaorani people of Ecuador. They were known to be a murderous tribe and these young men knew the risk. Nate Saint's son Steve was part of a 2006 movie about the event called **End of the Spear**.

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."  
~ *Jim Elliot, personal journal entry October 28, 1949, 22 years old, seven prior to his death*

**3. We have learned that material wealth can be a stumbling block to the pursuit of the priorities of the Kingdom.**

One of my favorite writers and preachers, John Piper, calls our circumstances in the USA as a suffering of Dominance and Prosperity . . .

**The Suffering of Dominance and Prosperity**

He believes that the Christian Church in America suffers from about 350 years of dominance and prosperity. What he means by dominance is that in most of American history being Christian has been viewed by the wider culture as normal and good and patriotic and culturally acceptable and even beneficial. The idea of prosperity is that being Christian has generally resulted in things going well for us American Christians. Since the Christian ethos has been dominant, it has also been a pathway to success. And this idea of suffering—suffering from 350 years of dominance and prosperity—is that this has deeply ingrained in us a massively unbiblical mindset, namely, a mindset of at-homeness in this world and in this age. This has not been good for us. We are suffering from it, prosperous though we be.

We have been dominant and we have been prosperous, and therefore we have come to feel at home in this world, and have developed a deeply ingrained assumption that things should go well for us, and that this is our world and our age, that being a good Christian and being well thought of must go together, and that poverty and sickness and suffering and death is the worst thing that can happen in a land of Christian wealth and health and ease and upbeat, success-oriented vitality.

And so we have developed a form of Christianity to support this ingrained expectation of acceptance and comfort, security and prosperity. This form of Christianity begins by focusing on our felt needs (not our eternal ones that we may not even be aware of), and it makes its appeal on the basis that Christianity will make life a lot better for us in this world. It has not been a call to suffer as an alien, but a call to prosper as a respected citizen—and to be very indignant and angry if someone reveals out Christianity as a liability and not an asset.

There is enough truth in this to make it plausible. If you act like a Christian, you won't have illicit sex and so you probably won't get AIDS or another STD—that's better. If you act like a Christian, you won't drink to excess and so you will be spared the devastation of alcoholism—that's better. If you act like a Christian, you will work hard and be thrifty and will probably do better in business—that's better. If you act like a Christian, you will be kind and generous and so at least a few people will respect you—and that's better.

But we have gotten these things out of proportion—we have elevated the relatively minor this-worldly spin-offs of faith so highly and made them so dominant in our thinking and expectations that the New Testament pattern of Christianity seems almost incredible to us and we can hardly grasp what it was like to be Christian in the beginning, and what God may be calling us to today.

Let's contrast this reality of our history of prosperity and dominance with that of the 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians who were culturally dominated and poverty stricken.

#### **Hebrews 10:32–36**

“But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.”

The New Testament talks about how becoming a Christian means we shine like lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse world (Philippians 2:15). We don't just see the light of God's glory more clearly, we begin to reflect it. God shines into us and we shine out to the world.

So I take Hebrews 10:32 as a compliment to the Christians of the early church that they had then begun to shine in the world as a witness to this truth and value. The first experience with Christ was conversion and that set them free from the world and the second made them stand out from the world, and be useful as a witness to the world.

### **The Result Was Suffering**

And the result was suffering. Verse 32: "But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings." It is not unnatural for the world to see the shining of Christian truth and Christian love and hate it. Just before Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good deeds and give glory to your Father in heaven" (which sounds like a positive response), he also said, "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account" (Matthew 5:16, 11). In other words, some are enlightened by your shining; others are incensed by your shining.

Receive Christ and receive suffering. Evidently they thought things or said things or did things that were not politically correct in those days and the upshot was that some of them got arrested and some others got in trouble because they stood by those who got arrested. Verses 33–34 explain the way they suffered: "sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison."

So there were two ways that these early Christians suffered: one was that some of them got arrested and put in prison, and the other was that the other Christians were willing to share their suffering by showing public sympathy.

This sympathy cost them a lot. Their property was seized and plundered. Verse 34: "You had compassion on them in prison, and accepted joyfully the plundering of your property."

They could do this because they did not have a history of dominance and prosperity. Their Christianity was not built first on being the dominant religion but first by being the persecuted religion. They learned that to obey Christ was to love Christ and then they learned that ***Obedience is Joy . . .***

### **Obedience is Joy**

We learned this truth directly from our Savior.

**Heb. 12:2** Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

What was the joy that was set before him? Most pastors will preach that it was the opportunity to save the lost. He loves us and it was his joy to save us. But I think there is a deeper joy that beset Jesus – that was the joy of obeying the Father. The cross certainly was not his joy. The cross was a physical and spiritual nightmare of cosmic proportions. You remember in the Garden, Jesus wanted no part of it. But He lived to do the will of the Father and only the will of the Father. It was His joy to obey!

It is a way of living not just a choice about the things of life:

### **Stewardship is a grand lifestyle**

Life Stewardship means that for the rest of my life here on Earth, I serve a king of another Kingdom. His word is law and his glance means life or death. Everything I do till the moment I leave this reality and go to the celestial shore, only has meaning as it has ***eternal meaning***.

We can learn something from our presidential candidates.

**"This year Hillary turns 69, Bernie turns 75, and Donald turns 70, and they're running for the hardest job in the world. This is a call to 70 million Baby Boomers not to waste their lives."**  
~ ***John Piper, Pastor***

Victorious stewardship spins around the axis, means giving generously to others and living out from under the bondage of debt. Interestingly we can learn something from our presidential candidates:

**Living the life of the Generous Hilarious Sacrificial Giver is what being Christ-like is all about!**

**Generosity Video Clip**

**Debt is a drag**

**Let's start over!**

**Isaiah 53:4-5**

Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.  
<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
and with his wounds we are healed.

**Community Group Discussion Questions:**

Have you ever been part of a protest? Have you ever written a letter to your congressman in protest of an injustice or to a business owner who you thought was behaving poorly? What were the outcomes of that protest? We have had plenty of things to protest in our lifetimes. Yet most of us don't 'cry out' as the Bible does. Why is that?

Read Mark 6:14-20

Were John's actions an act of civil disobedience? Would you have done the same thing? Dave talked about joy in obedience at church. Do you think there was any joy for John the Baptist?

What comes to mind when you think of life stewardship? Perhaps you have heard of the stewardship of *time, talent and treasure*. Which of these is easiest for you to give up to God? Which is a stumbling block?

How can this Community Life group encourage each other in giving authority to God in ways like your leisure, your intellect, your physical body, your sports, your relationships, your hobbies . . . ?