Getting a Grip on Stewardship

As any golfer knows, a golf swing is really controlled by the way you grip the club. A defective grip can make hitting consistent shots almost impossible. Hold the club too loosely and it goes flying down the fairway. Hold it too tightly and, while it may remain in the hand, there will be lost distance and an inconsistent strike. The grip has to be just right if the player is going to be consistent from tee to green.

It is just as critical that the faithful steward has a “just-right” grip when it comes to what the Lord of the Universe has entrusted for stewardship. If his grip is too loose, then what he receives from the Lord he will steward faithlessly. If his grip on what is entrusted by the Lord is too tight, then the devastating consequence of the claim of ownership will begin to creep into the picture. Neither is a good thing!

Holding too tight

The stewardship grip that is too tight can be seen in Genesis 3. From the moment of the Lord’s powerful and gracious creative conversation, the first stewards, Adam and Eve, had just the right grip on creation. The Lord placed all of the plants in the garden at their disposal for food. In the position of reception, their hands welcomed every gift as a treasure from the Lord. The Lord provided for His precious stewards, who received with open hands.

But then their grip changed. A slithering serpent, that ancient deceiver, caused those stewards to take their eyes off of their hands which were filled with every good and perfect gift from their Creator God. Their focus was moved to that one tree that was set apart and forbidden. An entire garden created to provide for them wasn't enough. They believed the lie. And their grip changed.

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate” (GEN. 3:6). Eve looked. Eve thought. Then Eve took. At that very moment, Eve's hands (and Adam's too) changed from the open, receiving hands of a faithful steward to the tight, grasping hands of a thief. She seized and shared, she coveted and claimed that which belonged to another.

Eve’s taking — her overly tight, sinful grip — caused great problems. Relationships with God, each other and the creation were shattered. Life as it had been up to that point ended and death began. Man’s grip went from the open, palm up position of a receiving steward to the strong grip of an idolatrously closed-fisted thief-owner. From
that point forward, it would be impossible for these stewards to faithfully serve the Lord. They only wanted to serve themselves.

Adjusting our grip

This grip problem is a constant in the life of a Christian steward. The steward knows that the Lord has entrusted much to our stewardship. These gifts are to be held with a “just-right” grip. This “just-right” grip holds these gifts in such a way that the neighbor is served and the Lord is glorified. But far too often, the steward today grips these gifts too tightly. This causes stinginess in giving and heartlessness toward the neighbor, and hinders the work of the Gospel in the community and the world. It is impossible to be a faithful steward when the gifts from the Lord are gripped too tightly.

Consider the steward as a conduit. The Lord bestows gifts. There is a superabundance of gifts poured out on the Lord’s people on a daily basis. It is the task of the steward to receive these gifts to be distributed to those around them for the glory of God. These gifts are given not to be the possession of the steward, but to be distributed to the neighbor. When the steward has a closed fist, the flow of the blessings for the sake of others is constricted and even blocked completely. But when the grip of the steward is “just right,” the conduit of God’s goodness shares the gifts and the joy that comes with them freely and joyously! With just the right grip, the steward can indeed freely and joyously manage all of life and life’s resources for God’s purposes. This not a hands-off proposition. Gripping the gifts of God in such a manner that they are seen as personal possessions makes faithfulness nearly impossible.

This takes practice. Practice is not done on the range. The practice comes when the steward is in close proximity to the Master. This proximity is located where the Gospel is at work. It takes place in the Lord’s House and at the master’s Table. The more time the steward spends with the master teacher, the easier it becomes to reflect the heart and the touch of the Master. As the Lord’s “just-right” grip is at work on the life and heart of the steward through His Word, the steward’s grip on his task becomes “just right” by grace.