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Honoring The Lord

WITH

Material Things

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HONORING THE LORD WITH MATERIAL THINGS.

Wm. M. Stallings.

In Proverbs 3:9 we are admonished to "honor the Lord with our **substance** and with the **first-fruits** of all our increase." This is **stewardship** and **tithing**. Our "substance" is our estate or capital stock; the "first-fruits," our income. We are to honor the Lord with both. Our estate is to be held in trust for God and a **part** or all surrendered to Him when He calls for it. Many stewards of the Lord ought to give a large part of their estates as well as "the first-fruits of their increase" for the Kingdom work. Conscientiously giving the "first-fruits" is no excuse for not honoring the Lord with our "substance" when the work of our Lord demands **more**.

I; Why shall I thus honor God?

1. Because He **commands** it. I have no right to ignore it and make it a dead-letter in my life. It is on a par with all the other commandments of God.

2. Because God gives the power to get wealth and He can take away that power any moment; (Deut. 8:16-18). Men are often removed from their stewardship because they refuse to honor the Lord as here commanded. Sometimes He removes the man from his estate and sometimes he takes the estate away from the man. Give God a square deal.

3. Because all I am and all I have is the Lord's. Paul says, "Whose I am and whom I

serve." "Ye are not your own: ye are bought with a price." What right has a man to think he has given himself to God unless he has given all? God claims all. "The beasts of the field, the fowls of the air," "the silver and the gold are all His." "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," and I am just His tenant to occupy until He calls me to account.

4. Because it will save a man from "covetousness, which is idolatry." Recognition of stewardship and regular, conscientious giving will keep a man from becoming a mere "money-making machine." A pastor called upon one of his members for a noble cause. He was somewhat irritable, and said, "Will these calls never cease?" The pastor quietly replied, "Do you really want them to cease?" The man looked up and said, "No, pastor, I don't; for if they did, I would soon be too penurious to live."

II. God is often dishonored by the use of material things.

1. Money is often used to the physical, intellectual and moral injury of the individual and community. God is dishonored when money is used to gratify unholy appetites, to feed vanity and pride, and excite the envy of others. "Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread; and your labor for that which satisfieth not?"

2. Hoarded money dishonors God. That hoarded money has the curse of God on it can be demonstrated by the history of many such estates. God says "Lay not up treasures upon earth," and he who ignores this command in-

vokes God's displeasure and "pierces himself through with many sorrows." In spite of all God's warning, many a man proceeds to build himself into "a tomb of gold."

"Gold, gold, gold,
Hard and yellow, bright and cold,
Loved by the young, pursued by the old,
To the very verge of the church-yard mould."

III. How God is honored.

1. By recognizing my stewardship and holding and using my estate for Him.

2. By putting God first. "The first-fruits" are His; "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God!" My wants must not take God's place. My whims and fancies are not to be humored at the expense of Kingdom work. I can wait for my "auto," but "the King's business requires haste." All debts are sacred obligations, but the most sacred of all is my debt to God.

If Kentucky Baptists would just follow God's financial plan as outlined in the text of this tract, many large givers would be discovered and the list of "tithers" would grow amazingly. Large gifts in Kentucky have been few and far between. Our present program calls for large giving and heroic sacrifice. None should think of giving less than the tenth, many ought to give the fifth, and some ought to give all of their income. Not a few ought to give, in addition to the tithes, a large part of their estate. God wants it and the cause needs it. Reader, will you lead off with a large and sacrificial gift?