

ON GIVING.

*A SUBJECT OF PERSONAL INTEREST
TO ALL BELIEVERS.*

BY

J. R. C.

GLASGOW:
GEORGE TURNER & CO., 40 SAUCHIEHALL ST.

LONDON:
JAMES E. HAWKINS, 12 PATERNOSTER SQ.

Price One Penny.

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GOD is the great Giver. He is not worshipped "as though He *needed* anything, seeing He *giveth* to all life and breath and all things." (Acts xvii. 25.)

Nevertheless such is His gracious way, and such the honour He bestows upon redeemed sinners that, having first "loaded them" with His benefits, He calls them to draw near to Him, not as those in poverty though "poor in spirit," but as those who, being enriched out of the fulness of God, are able to offer acceptably of that which they have received.

On this ground Moses pleaded with Pharaoh that not even a hoof should be left in Egypt of all that God had given unto Israel, for said he, "Thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither." (Ex. x. 26.)

Again in Ex. xxiii. 14, 15, we read, "Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto Me in the year, . . . *and none shall appear before Me empty.*" So also in Deut. xvi. 16, 17, "They shall not appear before the Lord empty: every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee."

So again when God would appoint for Himself a dwelling-place in the midst of Israel, He spake unto Moses saying, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring Me an offering: of every man that giveth it *willingly with his heart*, ye shall take My offering." (Ex. xxv. 1; 2.) And the result appears in chapters xxxv. and xxxvi.—until "Moses gave commandment and they caused it to be pro-

claimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the Sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing, for the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much."

So also was it at the preparation of the materials for the building of the Temple, as David said, "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee, for we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners." (1 Chron. xxix. 14.)

The law concerning tithes and first fruits taught the same lessons. "All the tithe (or tenth part) of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord.

. . . And concerning the tithe of the herd or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod,* the tenth shall

* Referring to the shepherd's rod, as the sheep, &c., *passed under it* in being numbered.

be holy unto the Lord." (Lev. xxvii. 30-32.)

These tithes were to be reserved for the use, First, of *the Givers*, as they ate them in the presence of the Lord, "at the place where He chose to put His name." (See Deut. xiv. 22, 23.) Secondly, for the *Levites*, as they were God's servants, and had no inheritance in the land of Israel; and Thirdly, for the *stranger*, the *fatherless*, and the *widow*. (See Deut. xiv. 29.)

And is it not most blessed to see in these ancient ordinances the character of Jehovah and His desire to have His people like Himself? When He says the tenth is "holy (or separated) unto the Lord," it is not that He may appropriate it to Himself, but that He may give it back in blessing to Israel; gathering the givers to eat and drink these very tithes and firstlings (see Deut. xv. 19, 20), in the joy of their hearts, in His own bright and holy presence. (See Deut. xii. 5, 7, 17, 18; xiv. 22, 23.) So also with the offering of the materials for the tabernacle and the

temple. It was not that He might deprive them of what they had freely given, but that these their gifts might be fashioned so as to provide for them a richer blessing still, even the manifested presence of God in the midst of His chosen people.

The same is seen in the prohibition to eat blood. Was it an arbitrary command of a selfish God who reserved the life for His own altar? Nay, verily; but in the same breath in which the blood is reserved, it is said, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have GIVEN IT TO YOU upon the altar, to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." (Lev. xvii. 11.) Truly His commandments are not grievous. "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

These ordinances and appointments in Israel, beautiful and perfect in their way as they all were, have passed away with the dispensation to which they pertained. The worldly sanctuary, the human order

of priesthood, the earthly altar, the fleshly sacrifices, the firstlings and the tithes, all belonged to the commonwealth of Israel with Jerusalem as its centre, the place of God's choice—His dwelling-place and His rest.

The scene is changed from earth to heaven. There is the Holy Place not made with hands, of which the former was but a figure. Thither has the great High Priest ascended in all the glorious acceptance of His one offering, in virtue of which all who believe in Him are perfected for ever. We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle. Christ is our altar, which sanctifieth every gift presented by Him, as well as our Sacrifice and our Priest.

Man, in his blindness to this great truth of the change of the dispensation and the transfer in the meantime of all the ordinances of worship from earth and an earthly people to heaven and a heavenly people, has persistently sought to mix up the

principles of the two ; to put, as it were, the new wine into the old bottles—a vain attempt to combine what is essentially antagonistic. Consequently we see around us buildings of human device identified with the principle of the temple of old and called “The house of God ;” varying from the very simple structures of some of the denominations who, whilst calling it by the name, would repudiate any special sanctity as to the building, up to the ornate and costly cathedral with its imposing architecture, its holy place railed off, its communion table exalted and called the altar, its priestly offices and vestments, supported by the tithes of the increase of the land, and all this defended and pleaded for on the ground of Old Testament Scripture, and so plausibly reasoned out that those who give of their substance to sustain it all, lifeless or even antichristian as it may be, imagine that their gifts are as acceptable to God as were the offerings of Israel of old.

There are two kinds of worship spoken

of in the New Testament, viz., “Worship in spirit and in truth,” and “Will-worship.” The one is that which the Father seeks—which in the unction and power of the Holy Ghost is offered to Him IN TRUTH, or according to His holy Word. The other is that which is yielded by unregenerate man. For *not having the SPIRIT*, his worship could only be in outward and carnal things, *and not heeding the WORD*, his worship could only be self-devised or Will-worship.

And not only by the unregenerate has such been offered, but also, alas! by children of God who, refusing the call to separation from the world, have had to descend to a style of worship that would suit the tastes of those who have no heart for heavenly things, and not arouse the conscience of those who are unreconciled to God.

But whilst the payment of tithes and the sanctification to God of the first-born of man and beast has altogether passed away—as pertaining to the old covenant

—the God who appointed these ordinances is the same God still. They shewed forth His character, and expressed His thoughts as to His people and their relation both to Himself and to His servants, and to the poor and the destitute amongst them. Therefore the substance and spirit of them is found in the New Testament, although in a form answerable to the spiritual and heavenly character of the dispensation.

If God was known as the great Giver under the old covenant, how much more fully is He revealed in this character under the New. He has bestowed His **“UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.”** (2 Cor. ix. 15.) He has given His only-begotten Son (John iii. 16), and in Him we have the gift of eternal life (Rom. vi. 23), the **“gift of righteousness”** (Rom. v. 17), the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts xi. 17.) Nay more, we are taught by the Spirit thus to argue, **“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS.”** (Rom. viii. 32.)

So also the Lord Jesus Christ is shown as one with the Father in His divine liberality. He gave Himself to God for us. (Eph. v. 2.) "He gave Himself a ransom for all." (1 Tim. ii. 6.) "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.)

Likewise, also, the Holy Spirit—Himself a gift—is also a giver, distributing to each member of the body of Christ according to His own will (see 1 Cor. xii. 8-11), ministering light, joy, peace, comfort, and strength to those in whom He dwells.

Truly our God is the God of all Grace. Our souls may well exclaim, with the prophet, "How great is His goodness, How great is His beauty." (Zech. ix. 17.) Be it ours so to behold the beauty of the Lord that, growing in likeness to Him, we may show forth His virtues, and reflect His character.

God, being thus fully revealed in the New Testament as a Giver, goes farther, and tells us, by the lips of His Son, "*that it is more blessed to give than to receive.*" (Acts xx. 35.)

He has more joy in imparting to us His treasures, than in receiving our worship and service in return. Not but that He seeks and values this, and failing of this, His grace were received by us in vain; yet apart from this, and infinitely higher, it is the blessedness of God that, out of His infinite and inexhaustible resources, He is the Eternal Giver. Love knows this joy in some feeble degree, even in us. Even natural affection, in the various relationships of life, finds its joy in giving, without respect to recompense. But "God is love," and His gifts are gifts of love; and faith, discovers this love of God in His precious gifts, and so it is written, "We love God because He first loved us."

This "more blessed" place of giving, God desires His children to know and enjoy. Hence it is that much is written

in the New Testament about giving—much that is strangely overlooked, even by those who are wont to read the Scriptures with some attention and discernment.

One thing is very clear at the outset. No passage in the New Testament lays down any rule as to *how much* is to be given to the Lord.

Some contend that this could not be, because we are altogether His, and only stewards of what we possess; and that, consequently, to set apart any definite proportion is a going back to Old Testament principles. There is, it must be admitted, a measure of truth in this. But this is hardly more fully acknowledged in the New Testament than in the Old.

Moses (Ex. x. 26) and David (1 Chron. xxix. 16) both owned this. In one sense we are, indeed, only stewards; for we have nothing that we did not receive, and, as stewards have to render account of their stewardship, so will the believer be called to render account of every talent entrusted to him by his Lord. But some do not

see that the very Lord whose steward the Christian is, has appointed that the money he earns shall be devoted to special purposes.

One purpose is that he should support himself. As the apostle says, "For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you, neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail, night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you." (2 Thes. iii. 7, 8.) Some, through mistaken ideas as to faith, abstain from laying aside any of their earnings; and, consequently if they get out of work, or sick for some weeks, they are in destitution, and seek that relief from the Church which properly belongs to the aged and helpless. To take the purse and the scrip was forbidden to the disciples at one period, and enjoined upon them at another by the same Lord. (Luke xxii. 35, 36.)

Again it is written, "If any man pro-

vide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” (1 Tim. v. 8.)

Here, then, is another use which the Lord intends His stewards to make of the money entrusted to them. It is, therefore, not *selfishness*, but *obedience* for a man to provide for his own—not merely his own wife and children, but also, if need be, his father, mother, and *aunt* or *uncle*, as is expressly mentioned in 1 Tim. v. 4.

By neglect of these commands, the faith has often been practically denied, and the way of truth evil spoken of—mere natural affection in the unregenerate often going farther than grace in the Christian.

But the will of our Lord as to the use of money does not end here. The love of God, His tender compassions and considerate care, if operating at all in the souls of His children, could not be restrained within such limits as these. Therefore are we taught to look beyond the necessities of our kindred, and to

consider the household of faith, the poor and needy ones therein, and those whose call to service in the gospel has led them to devote themselves wholly to such work; nor even here are we to rest, but as we have opportunity, we ought to do good unto ALL MEN. (Gal. vi. 10.) The practical question, then, to be determined is not, "How much shall I keep to myself, and how much shall I give to the Lord?"—but "How far am I constrained, by the love of Christ, to look beyond the circle that natural affection would embrace? and even at personal cost and self-denial, to be a giver to those whose claims upon me would never have been owned, had not grace implanted in the soul the love and compassion of God?"

Under the dispensation of Law, God made a specific demand. He appointed that one-tenth should be devoted to such purposes, and He called that portion specially His, for He Himself delighted to be identified in this special way with the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the

widow. They were constituted thus partakers of His PORTION, and not pensioners on Israel's bounty.

So under the dispensation of His grace, whilst no specific amount is demanded; and it could be said to Ananias, "Whiles it remained, was it not *thine own?* and after it was sold was it not *in thine own power?*" (Acts v. 4.) Yet God still identifies Himself specially with the poor, the aged, the widow and fatherless, the persecuted and distressed, as well as with His servants labouring in the word and doctrine. What is given for His name's sake to such, He regards as given to Himself; and knowing, as He does, that the claims of such can only be cheerfully responded to by His own love and grace—knowing that mere nature must either despise them, or, in the spirit of bondage, grudge them—He marks such fruits of grace for special recognition in the day of His appearing.

The duties to which we are summoned by the word of the Lord, are without

exception, if we read them aright, most precious privileges, and such surely in no small degree is the duty of giving.

It is not the privilege of the rich only, though theirs is in an especial way, doubtless, this stewardship. It is written in 1 Cor. xvi. 2, "Let *every one of you* lay by in store as God hath prospered him."

So it is remarked of the Macedonian churches, that "In a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality, for to their power I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing." (2 Cor. viii. 2, 3.)

And can we forget the encomium passed by our Lord Himself upon the widow whose "two mites which make a farthing," cast into the treasury, together with the offerings of the rich, escaped not His observation, who knew and appreciated the faith and love that led her to cast in "*all the living that she had.*"

When David would offer sacrifice in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite,

he declined to receive it as a gift, saying "I will surely buy it of thee at a price ; neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth *cost me nothing.*" (2 Sam. xxiv. 24.)

But alas ! how little of this spirit is there now. How few there are who willingly *deny themselves* that they may have to give to the Lord.

Some give "out of their abundance." Let not their gifts be underrated or despised because they have much. The word of the Lord to the rich is, "That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." (1 Tim. vi. 18.) Money thus spent is not squandered, but "*laid up in store,*" safely deposited in the hands of a good banker who will see to it, that such service is not forgotten in the time to come.

But there is another side to this. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Here is a costly offering, a possible supposition.

The *quantity* is abundant, but the *quality* is wrong. Much is given, but the motive that constrained to it was not *love*.

Therefore He "by whom actions are weighed," who looks on the heart and not on the outward appearance, regards it not with complacency costly though it be; whilst another who gave "a cup of cold water only," that which cost absolutely nothing, but which was given under the constraint of the love of Christ, shall in no wise lose his reward.

It is therefore of highest importance that we jealously search and guard our motives in this ministry. It is possible to *give* in order to be seen of men—to have the name figuring respectably in a subscription list. It is possible to fix the amount that shall be given; by the amount others have given, a species of worldly emulation leading to the determination that we shall give as much as they. It is possible to give merely from a sense of duty, or because it is our habit to do so. Without having considered the matter, or having communed with God

about it, dropping the smallest coin into the box, the accustomed halfpenny, or the silver threepenny piece ; a gift, but not of love, a lifeless form, obnoxious to Him who desires the worship and service of the heart.

Let the world go on in its formal routine ; let those who know not God's grace so give out of their bondage and legality, but let not those who have rejoiced in Christ Jesus, who have known Him as their Saviour, and owned Him as their Lord, thus mock Him with their niggard formal unconsidered gifts.

The principle of giving is twofold. First "as God hath prospered" (1 Cor. xvi. 2), and secondly, "Every man as he purposeth in his heart." (2 Cor. ix. 7.) Before giving comes prospering, "If there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." (2 Cor. viii. 12.) If through adverse circumstances a believer be in debt, if there be claims upon him by shopkeepers, and others lawfully due which he cannot

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meet, if the finger of the ungodly can be pointed to him as one who owes and pays not, how then can the gift of such an one be acceptable to the Lord?

He cannot give what he has not got. To give to the Lord that which is withheld from one to whom it righteously belongs, is the same in principle, as to offer unto God stolen property.

Yet such has been done, and for what object? Simply to stand well with fellow-believers, to pass for being "liberal," or perhaps "well off." Let any one who has thus dishonoured the Lord "cease to do evil and learn to do well." God's order is "*soberly first, then righteously, then godly.*" Charity at the expense of righteousness is not God's charity.

But as a man is prospered in his work, so let him give. Let him "purpose in his heart." This does not imply merely a putting of the hand into the pocket, and taking out whatever coin comes first. It clearly points to a well-considered amount, proportioned to the prosperity given;

prayerfully and solemnly, yet cheerfully set aside for the service of the Lord. Moreover, in connecting this action with "the first day of the week" (1 Cor. xvi. 2), is there not a special instruction? It is the day upon which the Lord of Glory rose from the dead; the day upon which His saints in obedience to His command, gather together to "break bread" in remembrance of Him. (Acts xx. 7.) A day of holy and blessed associations when above all times the heart of the child of God is impressed with the love that passeth knowledge; is it not therefore as though our God would have us to form this purpose of our hearts under the immediate constrainings of the love of Christ, that so our giving might be no act of bondage, but the fruit of grace, no mere observance of a commandment, but the spontaneous voluntary offering of a renewed soul, an act of worship as real, and as really acceptable, as the thanksgiving and praise of those who surround His table—"An odour of a sweet smell, a

sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing unto God"? (Phil. iv. 18.)

The glory that such a scriptural course of action yields to God, does not stop with the giving. Follow the line of effects described in 2 Cor. viii. 11, 15, and see how the stream of blessing extends.

First there is the thanksgiving of the apostle, as of one who watched for their souls, and joyed as he saw the fruit of divine grace in their liberality. Next there is the *supply of the wants of the saints*—this, of itself alone, no unworthy object. Then there are the many thanksgivings for wants supplied, ascending as sweet incense from many hearts to the Father of Mercies. Then these relieved ones glorify God as they see this evidence of real "*subjection to the Gospel of Christ.*" And as they *praise* they also *pray* for those whose love has ministered to them in carnal things, and *long after* them with responsive love—love that springs up spontaneously, as the exceeding grace of God is thus witnessed and admired in them.

Well might the apostle end the subject with a suitable doxology, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

But whilst this service is thus abundantly to the glory of God, there is a further result in blessing to the givers, that must not be overlooked. There is, as it were, a sowing and a reaping. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

God is a *cheerful* giver, and He is a *bountiful* giver. "He giveth unto all men liberally, and upbraideth not." He would have His children to go and do likewise; and in order to encourage us to do so, He tells us that He looks at what is given as *seed sown*, to bear a harvest of everlasting blessing when He comes again; as money laid up in store, given to the poor, but "*lent to the Lord*," to be returned again with interest. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which ye have showed towards His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister." (Heb. vi. 10.)

And in the meantime, lest any fear that want should come upon us as the result of liberal giving, should hinder the outflow of what by grace is in the heart, He again encourages with such a verse as is hardly equalled in Scripture for its *superlativeness*—"God is able to make ALL grace ABOUND towards you, that ye ALWAYS having ALL-SUFFICIENCY in ALL things may ABOUND to EVERY good work."

What a God we have!

A word or two as to the way in which our contributions are to be bestowed. Let every one "*lay by him.*" This is private. It is in accordance with the forcible words of our blessed Lord, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right doeth." He knows the vile tendency of our corrupt hearts to love the praise of man, more than the praise of God.

The considered and proportionate amount of the income laid aside—let guidance be sought as to how it shall be disposed of. It is the Lord's but it is not on that account to be recklessly spent. Take heed.

lest through mere natural sentimentality, it be spent in building up what God is breaking down.

In most cases in Scripture where this kind of ministry is referred to or acknowledged, it is as coming from an *assembly*, not from an *individual*. Here also there is a wise reason. We are prone to look to *man*, easily induced to hold men's persons in admiration because of advantage; and those who have in larger measure this stewardship might be unduly deferred to—it is so common, and so essentially in the flesh to look up to the rich, and to look down upon the poor. Hence it seems to be the Lord's way where it can be done, to gather together the gifts of rich and poor and to have them distributed by qualified persons in whom the saints have full confidence.

This of course is not to the exclusion of individual liberality for which there is abundant scope at all times. But especially in contributing towards the support of labourers in the gospel at home and

abroad, it seems fitting and scriptural that ordinarily such should be bestowed through the assembly. It diminishes the snare of looking to man, and also affords opportunity of real fellowship to such as could only give a very small sum, and whose gifts, though as much valued by God as the gifts of the wealthier, might otherwise be withheld.

Finally, let it be specially noted that "giving" is not the word usually employed in Scripture for this ministry.

It is a Greek word variously rendered by "fellowship" (see Acts ii. 42; 2 Cor. viii. 4), "contribution" (Rom. xv. 26), "distribution" (2 Cor. ix. 13), "communication." (Heb. xiii. 16.) (See also Rom. xii. 13; Phil. iv. 15; 1 Tim. vi. 18.) This expresses a far deeper and more blessed thought than simply giving for the relief of necessity.

It involves a real entering in sympathy into the need, and feeling for the suffering of the needy one, so that not only is there the hand opened to help, but the heart

uplifted to God for blessing with the help given.

We have thus seen that upon this subject God has spoken abundantly and plainly. Were His word given heed to, and His instructions obeyed, no work really of God would lack support, no ministers sent forth by Him would want, no poor saint would pine in the workhouse, or starve in the garret. As it is written concerning the manna, "He that gathered much had nothing over; he that gathered little had no lack." The motto of the Red Republic may be. "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity"—a liberty to sin, an equality that cannot brook a superior, a fraternity that is from hell; such is the spirit of the last days.

But are not these like all the most successful devices of Satan, *perversions of truth*? Is there not a *liberty* of truth in which the Christian is to stand, a *fraternity* of sons of God, and an *equality* too that sets asides no principle of subjection to authority, but that shares its fulness with

another's want and looses not thereby.
(2 Cor. viii. 14, 15.)

“The liberal soul shall be made fat.”

“There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.”



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