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MY GOLD AND GOD
By Earl C. Wolf

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DEDICATED

To
My Parents
Rev. and Mrs. L. D. Wolf,
Who pointed me to Christ by precept and practice;
Who live sacrificially for Christ and the church,
This book is lovingly dedicated.

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PREFACE

This little book began from the realization that there is a vital relationship between stewardship and the Christian life. This conviction was deepened by observing the enrichment to character and to Christian personality that came to those people who were faithful in their stewardship.

As a Christian pastor, constantly endeavoring to persuade people to Christian experience and to noble Christian living, I came early to recognize the essential importance of stewardship in its relationship to the whole of the Christian life. From the observation afforded me as a pastor, my belief has been constantly reaffirmed in the importance of stewardship, not only from the financial benefit to the church and the service to the kingdom of God, but primarily from its value to the life

of the individual Christian. Stewardship is not a borderline interest but is of basic import to the life of every child of God.

As every generation must have its own spiritual experience, so every generation must be trained in the matter of Christian stewardship. It is not enough to win men to Christ; we must endeavor to help them to be mature and maximum Christians. It is with this interest in mind that the following chapters deal in a devotional manner with some of the underlying motives and broader implications of stewardship. Perhaps these pages may cause others to be informed and inspired and be the means of adding some to that noble company of "good and faithful" servants.

I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Albert F. Harper, Executive Secretary, Department of Church Schools, and to Mr. R. R. Hodges, Director of Christian Service Training, of the Church of the Nazarene, who read the manuscript and offered helpful suggestions.

Earl C. Wolf
Norristown, Pennsylvania
November 15, 1946

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INTRODUCTION -- WHICH SHALL IT BE?

The pursuits of men fall ultimately into two general classifications. There is one of two spirits which prevails in the mind and motives of every man. Men seek to get or to give; to secure or to share. There must be gaining in order that there may be giving, but the gaining is a means to an end and not the end itself. It is quite evident from a study of the Scriptures and from observations in life that the maxims of the Master and the maxims of worldly-minded men are antagonistic and opposite. The natural man says: "It is more blessed to receive than to give."

The spiritual man says with Christ, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The goal of the world is that of gaining. The follower of the Giver of all good and perfect gifts seeks to

discover how he can make the largest possible contribution to a world in which men are needy and are sinking in the quicksands of sin.

Accumulation is the dominating purpose of greedy and selfish men. According to this principle, the more a man acquires the greater is his success in life. If a man takes this principle as the guide to success in life, he never relaxes his quest for material gain. The promptings of his soul are ever to procure an increasing amount of temporal treasures like the person Jesus pictures for us in the parable of the rich man. This man's ground had brought forth plentifully. The purposeful cry of his heart was: "This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods" (Luke 12:18). Every man who is guided by the principle of this present world, whether he is seeking pleasure, popularity, power, precious stones, or pure gold, is at heart fundamentally interested in accumulation.

But the design of the Christ-like is quite different. It is the Christian's privilege and purpose to be an administrator. He is a trustee of the truth of the Master. He is a steward of grace and of gold. Any precious possession the Christian has is his to be shared with someone else. He secures that he might share. The scholar keeps the lamp burning late only to find light to dispel the darkness of some soul. Adam Clarke, that great commentator, spared not himself in his endeavors to help others. Upon his tombstone in England are these words: "In giving light to others, I myself have been consumed." On October 16, 1828, which was his seventieth birthday, Noah Webster, after twenty-eight years of tedious toil, finished his monumental dictionary. It is said that he slowly wiped the ink from the quill, laid it down, and methodically capped the inkwell. His moist eyes blinked. He turned to his wife and colleague and took her hands. Together they knelt by the desk and prayed humbly and tremblingly, giving thanks to God for His providence in sustaining them through their long labor, since June 1800 when the project was first publicly announced. Thus did they recognize God's help in their undertaking and give thanks for the privilege of completing the work which was to be a great help to others from that day on. Yes, all that the godly man has was given to him for administration.

Our Father in heaven, by right of creation, preservation, and redemption, owns all. This is my Father's world. Such must be the attitude of every faithful Christian. Our souls, bodies, abilities, energies, knowledge, time, and riches are God's. Of all these treasures which we are privileged to have, we are but trustees or administrators. We are givers. The Christian, with diligence and carefulness, must make "full proof" of his administration. That is his supreme concern. The follower of Christ will find a response in his heart to the words of Charles Wesley, that sweet singer of Methodism:

A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.

To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill;
Oh, may it all my powers engage
To do my Master's will.

Arm me with jealous care,
As in Thy sight to live;
And Oh! Thy servant, Lord, prepare
A strict account to give!

Help me to watch and pray,
And on Thyself rely,
Assured, if I my trust betray,
I shall forever die.

Which shall it be? Will we be accumulators only or will we be administrators? We want to be administrators of that with which God has blessed us. Now that we have aligned ourselves in the proper classification, let us think along a specific line of giving. The truth of trusteeship which we have been expressing applies to our gold, our money, but our stewardship is not at all confined to the giving of our means. The motivating forces which urge our faithfulness in this regard will apply also to our other possessions such as time, talents, and energies. The steward who passes the crucible test of giving his gold will, however, most likely be apt to have a readiness to consecrate all else to Christ and the kingdom of God.

To obtain a better understanding of the relationship between our gold and God, let us consider the varied approach of the chapters which follow.

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01 -- HOW MUCH SHALL I GIVE?

What measure of my money should I give to God? How liberal should I be? This inquiry is an important one since stewardship is a foundation principle of Christian living. It is, therefore, of basic importance that guidance should be sought in the matter of giving to God. The development of Christian character is the goal of stewardship. It is a part of wisdom, therefore, to desire the counsel of the church and to seek the truth of the Scriptures.

* * *

Stewardship Training Is Imperative

The responsibility of the church. It is the church's task to provide proper training in Christian stewardship. That which is so vitally related to the building of Christian character must be of primary importance to the church. As each generation must be brought to a personal acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ through evangelization, so each generation must find guidance in the matter of Christian stewardship through instruction.

The message of tithes and offerings is a means of helping good people become faithful stewards. Every time we hear an appeal for funds for the needs of the kingdom of God we are given another opportunity to discharge our obligations as trustees. People need help through

urging. Dr. J. W. Goodwin says, "It is all dodging the point to say that if people are spiritual they will be liberal. You might as well state it the other way and say that if they are liberal they will be spiritual." [1] People must be trained and directed in knowing how to become faithful stewards. The preaching program of every year ought to have some time given to the fertile and fruitful field of stewardship. Youth groups in the church should have programs with stewardship as the theme. Good stewardship literature ought to be available to the people at all times. Katherine Scherer Cronk says, "It is not frenzied finance, but careful home training in stewardship that will fill missionary treasuries."

The church must warn against perilous greed. It is imperative that we endeavor to be liberal enough in our giving to keep the spirit of greed or selfishness from our hearts. Avarice is one of the passions of life that stifles true Christian living. In both the Old and New Testaments we have outstanding illustrations of the drastic results of greed in a person's life. The perilous path of greed was taken by Achan and he was stoned to death for his trespass. Gehazi, seeking to lay hold upon the treasures of Naaman, went out from the presence of the prophet a leper. We see Judas, the treasurer of the college of disciples, in the temple casting away the thirty pieces of silver which he had received for selling his Master, and then going out to hang himself. The most drastic story of the peril of covetousness is perhaps that of Ananias and Sapphira. They lost their lives because they had allowed evil to fill their hearts and because they deceitfully withheld from God. No nobler words have ever been uttered to warn men against the way of greed than those of Jesus when He said, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

There is a tale that comes from France of a miser named Foscue. Fearing that the government would discover and tax his accumulated wealth, Foscue dug a vault beneath the cellar of his home and secured the treasures by a trap door and a spring lock. Many times he slipped down into the vault beneath his home either to feast his eyes upon his treasures or to add to his amassed fortune. One day the miser disappeared and people surmised that he had fled the country in disguise with all his gold. Many months passed and nothing was seen or heard of Foscue. After his return seemed most unlikely, his house was confiscated by the government and publicly sold. While the purchaser's workmen were renovating the home they saw the trap door and opened it and found Foscue's corpse among his bags of gold. With candle in hand, he had gone down to feast his eyes upon his stored wealth when the trap door accidentally closed, the spring lock snapped and he perished in the midst of all his gold.

* * *

The Principle of the Tithe

The tithe -- a scriptural minimum. Although the Word of God prescribes no maximum for our contributions, it does set forth a minimum which is known as the tithe. This one-tenth of our income is the place of beginnings for our contributing. It is not sufficient as the total giving for New Testament Christians, for theirs is an "exceeding righteousness." The scribes and Pharisees and keepers of the law were mindful to pay their tithes, sometimes even paying a second tithe or offering. This principle of giving Jesus never refuted. In fact, it was this practice for which Jesus commended the Pharisees. Jesus came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. Along with many

other items of spiritual significance, the words of Jesus have bearing upon our giving when He said, "I assure you that unless your righteousness greatly surpasses that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you will certainly not find entrance into the Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). [2]

Grace greatly exceeds the law, which was but a schoolteacher to bring us to Christ. Among the fundamentals of this schooling we find the principle of the tithe. In these days of spiritual privileges and blessings which far exceed the days of the law, or times preceding the law, our giving ought to excel that of any other day. Scholars quite generally agree that often the Israelites of the Old Testament gave as much as one-fourth of their income to God. If the Israelites living in a day of dawning revelation would thus give to God, how much more should we, who live in the noontime of revelation, give tithes and offerings unto the Lord.

Tithing practiced before the time of Moses. The principle of tithing, however, did not originate with the Mosaic law. It has been a practice among God's people from the days previous to the time of Moses until today. It is certainly not the novel emphasis of any recent religious sect. Tithing was the principle of minimum giving before and during the days of the Mosaic law and continues to the present hour as the principle for New Testament saints. The tenth was law to the people of the Old Testament; it is a token of love and loyalty to the people of the New Covenant.

Tithing recorded in Genesis. In Genesis, the book of beginnings, we read that Abraham "gave . . . tithes of all" to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20). This tithing took place hundreds of years before the revelation of the law of God for the children of Israel through Moses. Abraham, the father of the faithful, gives us here another expression of his faith in God and an excellent example of his acts and attitudes toward giving. We have another outstanding instance of tithing, before the coming of the law, recorded in Genesis 28:20-22, "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying.... of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

The tenth belongs to God. In Leviticus 27:30-33 we have this message of the Lord revealed to Moses, "the tithe . . . is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord." We can make the deduction and do as Jesus said, "Render ... unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). The tenth belongs to God; it is not mine. Would there be any desire then to withhold that to which I have no right? No. I would but answer, "All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give."

The fairness of the tithing principle. The "tithe and offering" system is God's and His word is finality to the Christian heart. God speaks not only in finality, but in fairness. The teaching of the Word of God in the matter of the tenth for minimum giving is fair to all classes of earners. It is the fairest principle of giving in existence. It demands the same of all. The wealthy man gives the same basic percentage as the man of mediocre means. Then beyond the one-tenth there is abundance of room for expansion. The offering can go ever so high according to the giver's desire and ability. What fairer and sounder means could there be for the preserving and promoting of the work of God on earth? The tithe is a constant percentage; the offering is variable.

Someone has said, "When a Christian begins to make money, God gains a fortune or loses a man." This saying has truth because it is easier perhaps to give one dollar than ten. Sometimes it seems that the more men have the more they seek. Joseph, however, was as faithful to God when he was Egypt's prime minister as when he was Egypt's prisoner. Perhaps the greatest test of life is in

the hour of prosperity. "It takes a steady hand to carry a full cup." God wants men more than money and He is exceedingly fair in the principle of the tithe.

The tithe -- more than a mere law. The tithe is as much a part of Christianity as the Ten Commandments or the maxims of the Master given to us in the Sermon on the Mount. It is not a mere law, for it assumes more than legal proportions. It has remained through the centuries because it is right and vital to the program of Christianity. The words of Jesus, which speak with final authority, to every sincere Christian, make the principle of tithing very definite when He said to the Pharisees, "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin . . . these ought ye to have done" (Matthew 23:23). Their tithing was not an acceptable substitute for the neglect of right heart attitudes, but Jesus said it was a matter of necessity. Many times it would be easier to contribute our money than to give up a grudge, prejudice, or unkind attitude. Nevertheless, Jesus made clear the importance of tithing by His words to the Pharisees. Giving, no matter what proportions it may assume, cannot be a substitute for our love, loyalty, and obedience to Christ in other regards. He has, however, made it clear that tithing is imperative for those who seek to live fully the standards of New Testament Christianity. It is one of the vital conditions of citizenship in the Kingdom that is eternal.

We can afford to give our tithe to God. Some have thoughtlessly allowed themselves to say that they could not afford to tithe. The truth of the matter is that we can never afford to exclude from our plans anything that Jesus asks of us. When we are making out our spiritual budget, the only items we cannot include are those which would be inconsistent with Christian living and would displease our Lord. The man who is spiritually alive has no room in his budget for malice, hatred, jealousy, anger, envy, avarice, or selfishness in regard to his money. The experience of the years has been that we cannot afford to refuse to give God all that He asks of us.

Many times people have said that the giving of the tenth of their income to the church was more than they could afford. Nevertheless, when the war came they found that a far larger part was taken out of their wages by higher taxes, the purchase of war bonds, and the demands of war relief agencies that they could not conscientiously refuse to aid. Have we really learned our lesson? In war or peace we can give to God if we really want to do so. The truth of the matter is that, nearly always, we do what we want to do. If we desire to give to God, we will find the money to give.

* * *

Beyond the Tithe -- the Offering

The Christian position. It was Malachi that charged the people with the sin of robbing God of tithes "and offerings." We believe that New Testament Christians should be urged to give offerings beyond the one-tenth. The amount of this offering will be determined by the contributor's desire and ability.

Let us observe closely the words of Jesus to the Pharisees, "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin ... these ought ye to have done" (Matthew 23:23). How enlightening are these words. In the strictest sense, we do not give anything to God until after we "pay" our one-tenth. All that exceeds our tithe is our gift to God. Pay our debt; give an offering. In the broader sense, of course,

we realize all we render to God is as a gift because of the heart motives which prompt our giving. We do not give simply because we feel we must. There are nobler motives.

The tithe is a starting point in stewardship. It would be marvelous indeed if all the members of the church were tithers as they should be. But if we strive to have men tithe only, we have failed to solve satisfactorily the problem of our stewardship and we have neglected to show men the full meaning of Christian trusteeship. Stewardship offers so many wonderful possibilities. The tithe is only a minimum. It may be sufficient for a man with a small income and large family but it is not enough for the man of wealth or surplus means. The tithe is a wedge which opens the door to more generous giving and to genuine stewardship.

In the life of William Colgate, the famous soap manufacturer, the tithe was the place of beginnings. From there he continued to an ever larger proportion of giving. The story of his stewardship is told so well by Dr. A. J. Gordon. He says:

Many years ago a lad of sixteen left home to seek his fortune. All his worldly possessions were tied up in a bundle which he carried in his hand. As he trudged along he met an old neighbor, the captain of a canal-boat, and the following conversation took place, which changed the whole current of the boy's life:

"Well, William, where are you going?"

"I don't know," he answered. "Father is too poor to keep me at home any longer, and says I must now make a living for myself."

"There's no trouble about that," said the captain. "Be sure you start right, and you'll get along finely."

William told his friend that the only trade he knew anything about was soap and candle-making, at which he had helped his father while at home.

"Well," said the old man, "let me pray with you once more and give you a little advice, and then I will let you go."

They both kneeled down upon the tow-path; the dear old man prayed earnestly for William and then gave him this advice, "Someone will soon be the leading soap-maker in New York. It can be you as well as anyone. I hope it may. Be a good man; give your heart to Christ; give the Lord all that belongs to Him of every dollar you earn; make an honest soap; give a full pound, and I am certain you will yet be a prosperous and rich man."

When the boy arrived in the city, he found it hard to get work. Lonesome and far from home he remembered his mother's words and the last words of the canal-boat captain. He was then led to "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," and united with the church. He remembered his promise to the old captain, and the first dollar he earned brought up the question of the Lord's part. In the Bible he found that the Jews were commanded to give one tenth; so he said, "If the Lord will take one tenth, I will give that." And so he did; and ten cents of every dollar was sacred to the

Lord. Having regular employment, he soon became a partner; and after a few years his partner died, and William became the sole owner of the business. He now resolved to keep his promise to the old captain; he made an honest soap, gave a full pound, and instructed his bookkeeper to open an account with the Lord, carrying one tenth of his income to that account. He prospered; his business grew; his family was blessed; his soap sold and he grew rich faster than he had ever hoped. He then gave the Lord two tenths, and prospered more than ever; then he gave three tenths, then four tenths, then five tenths. He educated his family, settled all his plans for life, and thereafter gave the whole of his income to the Lord.

The tithe is not the ceiling, but the place of beginnings.

* * *

Full Devotion

There is no ceiling on giving. We need never fear that men may give too much to God. They cannot. No man has ever rendered too great a service. The need today is for men who will give themselves unreservedly to God. Such a consecration is all-inclusive: "friends, and time, and earthly store." Some fear to make such a commitment to God lest He ask too largely of them. The demands of Deity have never been too great upon a devoted humanity.

Mary gave profusely. When Jesus was visiting in Bethany, Mary came and broke an alabaster box of precious ointment of spikenard and poured it on His feet. Some were indignant and felt this display was wasteful. No doubt some in their murmurings felt that one-tenth of the expenditure would have been enough for Jesus. There are those today that seem to feel they have done the church and Christ a favor when they have put their tithe into the various offerings of the church. The tithe by no means expresses the acme of our stewardship of money. Mary broke the alabaster box and poured all on Jesus. It was not for the precious ointment, but for her attitude that Jesus praised her and said: "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (Matthew 26: 13). Yes, love is profuse; it gives in entirety. Love gives cheerfully, freely and abundantly. It withholds not a mite.

A widow gave all. Jesus sat one day observing people as they came and dropped their gifts into the Treasury. Many of the wealthy contributed in large sums. As He watched, along came one poor widow and dropped in two mites which were of little intrinsic value. But Jesus turned to His disciples and said, "I tell you in truth that this widow, poor as she is, has thrown in more than all the other contributors to the Treasury; for they have all contributed what they could well spare, but she out of her need has thrown in all she possessed-all she had to live on" (Mark 12:43, 44) [8]

Love expressed in willingness to give. Our willingness to give is a test of our love for Christ. Our God is not only a forgiving God, but also a giving God. In John 3:16 we read: "For God so loved . . . he gave." Love gives. If you love Christ, you will give Him the noblest and best that you have. Our love is made manifest in a practical way by the giving of our money. Bishop Hannington said, "I have purchased the road to Uganda with my life." Esther Carson Winans took the trail of tragic sacrifice to give Christ to the unreached tribes in the mountains of Peru. Harmon

F. Schmelzenbach gave all to take the message of Christ to the dark peoples of Africa. John and Betty Stam died for Christ and China. The love of these missionaries is unquestioned because of their sacrifice. We can likewise prove our love for Christ by a life of self-crucifixion and by the generosity of our spirits manifested by being unselfish with our money.

A story of devotion. From Civil War days we have an interesting story told by Robert E. Lee, Jr., son of the great Confederate general. The son was serving with the army of northern Virginia under the command of "Stonewall" Jackson. The battle of Sharpsburg had proved to be a severe struggle. He says:

On that occasion our battery had been severely handled, losing many men and horses. Having three guns disabled, we were ordered to withdraw, and while moving back we passed General Lee and several of his staff, grouped on a little knoll near the road. Having no definite orders where to go, our captain, seeing the commanding general, halted us and rode over to get some instructions. Some others and myself went along to see and hear. General Lee was dismounted with some of his staff around him, a courier holding his horse. Captain Poague, commanding our battery, the Rockbridge Artillery, saluted, reported our condition, and asked for instructions. The general listened patiently, looked at us -- his eyes passing over me without any sign of recognition -- and then ordered Captain Poague to take the most serviceable horses and men, man the uninjured gun, send the disabled part of his command back to refit, and report to the front for duty. As Poague turned to go, I went up to speak to my father. when he found out who I was, he congratulated me on being well and unhurt. I then said:

"General, are you going to send us in again?"

"Yes, my son," he replied, with a smile; "you all must do what you can to help drive these people back." [4]

General Lee ordered his own son into a place of danger in a desperate battle. This order was a proof of the General's devotion to the cause for which he was fighting. Calvary was the test of Christ's devotion and love for lost and needy mankind. What we are willing to give to God is an indication of our devotion to Him.

The Cross an incentive to consecration. The cross of Calvary clearly presents to us One who was not content with being willing to give less than all. When we fear we are making too great a contribution to the Christian cause we need to rediscover the Christ of the cross and repeat thoughtfully the words of the hymn writer and let that heart cry of Isaac Watts be ours:

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small:
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

We need then to follow prayerfully with the consecration song of Frances Ridley Havergal:

Take my lips, and let them be

Filled with messages from Thee,
Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold,
Not a mite would I withhold.

Lord, grant that we may never render too little to Thee. We are aware that our attitude toward giving manifests the shallowness or depth of our love for Thee.

Malachi's challenge. An inspiring message about tithes and offerings comes to us from Malachi. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:8, 10). Here the principle of giving is presented as a promising challenge. Accept God's challenge and give Him a chance to bless your soul. Don't accept the challenge for the blessing only, but out of the love and loyalty of your heart give to God what He bids and enjoy the showers of spiritual refreshing upon your soul. The reason we get so little out of life is that we invest so meagerly in life's bank. Let's consecrate all to Christ and be abundant in our gifts to the Great Giver.

He took God into partnership. At the age of thirty-two, R. G. LeTourneau was an unknown mechanic working for wages. Today he is head of his own business, one of America's gigantic industrial enterprises, which has grown to international proportions with annual sales in the multi-millions. His line of products is described as "The World's Most Complete Line of Modern Tractor-Drawn Earth-Moving Equipment." His machines have been used on such notable projects as the Golden Gate Bridge, Boulder Dam, Grand Coulee Dam, and the Pennsylvania Turnpike, America's finest military road.

That is not all. R. G. LeTourneau is a Christian businessman. After living an aimless Christian life for sixteen years, he consecrated his entire life to God. He says, "From the minute I made God my business partner, things started to go." He became God's businessman. He was rescued from financial bankruptcy by giving the Lord the first fruits of his income.

The thrilling story of Mr. LeTourneau's life is ably told by Albert W. Lorimer in his book, *God Runs My Business*. Mr. LeTourneau gives not ten per cent but ninety per cent of all his business earnings to the work of spreading the gospel. His contributions have already exceeded twelve millions of dollars. In his office is this motto which expresses his keen sense of stewardship: "Not how much of my money do I give to God, but how much of God's money do I keep for myself." That is his concern.

Each year Mr. LeTourneau travels over 200,000 miles in evangelistic endeavors. All traveling expenses are paid by the LeTourneau Foundation which he established in 1935 with ninety-nine per cent of his personal wealth. This Foundation, valued in June, 1946, at seventeen million, is a nonprofit corporation whose income and capital can be used only for the cause of Christ as specified by the Articles of Incorporation, which by law must be adhered to. None of the Foundation's funds can ever be returned to either Mr. or Mrs. LeTourneau or their heirs. Mr.

LeTourneau refuses to be reimbursed by any church or organization before whom he speaks. He does not allow his busy life as an industrialist to keep him from using time and talents for the advancement of the kingdom of God. Through the Foundation other evangelists are employed to spread the gospel. Every month 1,500,000 religious pamphlets are sent out. His publication Now is mailed free for the asking and has a weekly circulation of 175,000. Mr. LeTourneau also carries on activities for the Kingdom in the form of youth camps and aids many other worthy Christian causes.

This phenomenal twentieth century businessman, Robert G. LeTourneau, is a rebuke to an easygoing Christianity. If America's businessmen were all as consecrated as he, industry would be revolutionized. He has shown that Christianity is a practical and dynamic way of life. He is a proof that a prosperous man can recognize the ownership of God and the stewardship of man in the present day.

In the character of R. G. LeTourneau we have the combination of two of the outstanding results of the revival of Pentecost. The early Christians had a dynamic passion to win others to Christ and also a spirit of sacrifice and liberality. These characteristics are outstanding in the life of Mr. LeTourneau, "God's Businessman." As in those early centuries, we must have Spirit-filled men today who will not be hesitant about telling the "good news" nor be lax in giving their gold to God. Lord, we would be entirely Thine.

* * *

Consider This

1. Do you consider stewardship training essential and why?
2. Is greed or avarice a peril to Christian living? Does it matter whether a person seeks gold or God?
3. What is the minimum for giving to God? Is this principle fair?
4. Is the principle of the tithe a novel emphasis of recent days or does it have a biblical basis?
5. What is the Christian position for giving beyond the tithe, or is the tenth the maximum required for the support of the work of God?
6. What relationship exists between our devotion for Christ and our willingness to give? Give some examples of liberal giving due to great devotion from the Scriptures and from history.

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Let us lift the shades and permit the light of stewardship truth to come in through two windows and reveal the relationship which exists between our giving and (1) the Christian conscience and (2) worship. These will be the two basic considerations of this chapter.

* * *

1) Without Condemnation

An incident in the life of Abraham Lincoln, the emancipator, has been often upon the lips of those endeavoring to teach the principle of honesty. It is "Honest Abe" that children are taught to admire because, after working all day as a clerk in a store, he trudged miles to return a few pennies he had mistakenly taken in making change to a customer. We need to be like "Honest Abe" when it comes to that which belongs to God. Have we been fair and honest in our dealings with God?

God does not sit as a tyrant to compel us to give Him what is rightfully His. The matter is left up to our conscience. Every Christian wants to have a pure conscience like the Apostle Paul who exercised himself "... to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24: 16). Many would be greatly and justly concerned over obligations to the butcher or baker. Let us be as rightly concerned over our obligations toward God.

* * *

Honesty Toward God Also

The approach from the standpoint of conscience to the problem of giving seems at first to be extremely legalistic. Its legalism, however, fades before the eyes of a man whose heart is filled with the love of God. We must have, as Christians, "judgment day honesty" in all matters of spiritual significance. We cannot escape moral imperatives simply because we are living in New Testament liberty, for Christ did not do away with the righteousness of the law. There are moral "musts" which we cannot ignore simply because we are living in the dispensation of grace. Our money falls into the class of moral obligations. The manner in which we dispose of that which rightly belongs to God has a vital relationship to our clearness of conscience and depth of spirituality. For we must "Render unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). It may seem unnecessary to caution men in this regard. Yet Malachi asked the question, "Will a man rob God?" It seems wholly improbable. But God answers, "Yet ye have robbed me" (Malachi 3:8). Men rob God of time, talents, love, allegiance, and service as well as gold. But the offense here was that they had robbed God of "tithes and offerings."

We do not like dishonesty. We look upon the vandal, who steals, as a menace to society. We pay policemen to apprehend and place the robber behind locked doors and barred windows. We are usually very liberal in our denunciations of such individuals. Yet, it is a more serious offense to rob God, our Heavenly Father, than to rob our fellow men. No policeman apprehends us when we rob God. But our conscience, the monitor of the soul, brings us discomfort-and rightly so.

Are we to be found guilty of misappropriating funds? What would we think of a friend to whom we gave money to pay the premium on our insurance policy and that friend used the money to pay some obligation of his own? Such a friend did not waste the money but used it to pay an honest debt. Yet we would find it hard to accept his excuses. Are we ever guilty of using God's money to pay some obligation of our own? These are matters for which we must answer to our conscience and to God.

God understands problem cases. Of course our God is reasonable and understanding. There are occasions when one can have a clear conscience and the tithe remain unpaid. If either husband or wife be unconverted and forbids the other to tithe the earnings, the willing soul need not feel condemned before God. It would be wiser in some cases to adopt such a procedure than to disrupt the harmony of the home and to do that which might hinder the unconverted husband or wife from eventually humbling before God. The Christian in this case ought to give as abundantly as possible and pray and be faithful until the other has his or her heart cleansed by Calvary's crimson flow. Here God is understanding.

* * *

Stewardship Over the Nine-Tenths

There is another important truth relative to giving and our conscience. After we have worshipped God with our tithe, we are not free to use the remainder of our income without discretion. We must use all our money discreetly to be Christ-like and to maintain a good conscience. The amount of any giving beyond the tithe will be determined by one's personal desire to give and the ability to do so. Here we do not want to come into condemnation. We want to use all our money in a way that will not soil our conscience or offend God. Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler used to say, "What a young man earns in the day goes into his pocket; but what he spends in the evening goes into his character." We must exercise care over our spending as well as in our giving. It is not to abide merely by the letter of the law that we plead. It must be more than a legalistic spirit that controls us if we are to have a clear conscience. In the final analysis, it will be our love and loyalty to God that will enable us to please God and be at peace with our own conscience.

These words express our responsibility well:

It will not do to divide our possessions into two heaps -- even if those two heaps be equal in size -- and say: This is for God; and this is for myself. Both heaps belong to God, and both must be administered for Him. In the expenditure of both must run the same purpose of service to Him.

No doubt this is a far harder thing than the mere giving of a certain per cent of our possessions to worthy causes. But there can be no question that it is the only condition upon which genuine moral integrity is possible for a thinking man.

Let each man ask himself: Do all my expenditures, personal and charitable, represent the administration of a trust fund given into my hands by God? [1]

* * *

Stewardship and the Evangelistic Imperative

Have you fulfilled your responsibility as a disciple of the Man of Galilee? Do you attempt to do your part as a co-worker in the redemption of the lost? If some cold winter night, while you were enjoying the comfort of a warm home with fire in the furnace and an abundance of coal in the bin, you were told that your neighbor and children were freezing, you would not be able to rest until you had given some service to them. How can men, then, rest in ease when there are millions to whom the frontier of Christian missions has never yet reached? With this in view, it is only when I have tithed and given generously to God that my mind and conscience can be free.

The Great Commission was to all disciples past and present. In this hour it is our responsibility and privilege to send the gospel to all men everywhere. There are only three methods by which this mission can be accomplished: prayer, person, and purse. All these are essential. No missionary effort can be successful without the supernatural aid that comes through prayer. No missionary activities can be initiated without those upon whom God can depend to personally carry the glad tidings. Nor can the missionary cause be promoted without the purse which plays an important part in spreading the gospel everywhere. If we fail in accepting God's plan of tithes and offerings, we are impediments to the voice of Christian missions. Our conscience cannot, therefore, be void of offense toward God nor toward our brethren whom we have neglected because of our unfaithfulness. We have a large debt to pay to our neighbor and we want that debt to be paid. Paul declared that he was a debtor to the Jew first and also to the Greek, and he made startling strides to pay that debt. We cannot afford to have our debt unpaid by failing to give to God. Dr. Phineas F. Bresee said: "We are debtors to every man to give him the gospel in the same measure as we have received it."

The church must evangelize. We must, therefore, be conscientious in regard to our giving. For the church cannot escape its responsibilities to others. It is the task committed unto the disciples by Jesus which we must assume, that demands the church to evangelize at home and abroad. The church dare not be self-satisfied. Lyman Abbott says:

A church is not a Christian church that is not a missionary church. If the church is satisfied to come together once a Sunday or twice a Sunday, or six or seven times a week in protracted meeting, for singing, prayer and exaltation, and exhilaration and absorption in God, it is an Oriental church, it is not a Christian church. It is not a Christian church unless, coming to the sanctuary and getting through the church a larger vision of God, a larger life of him, a better sense of his love and more of his spirit, it goes forth to carry it to those who need that life and that love, as Christ came forth from God, and as through the eternities God has been coming forth from himself. [2]

Information brings obligation. I have the command of Jesus: "Go ye." I know also that there are many heathen who are perishing. I am aware that there are places where no church or mission bell ever rings on the Lord's Day; where no pastor or missionary lives to tell the story of Jesus and redemption and where no one goes to lead them from darkness unto life. Therefore, my knowledge of these facts makes it necessary for me to make steps toward fulfilling my obligation to others.

Oswald Chambers said, "Conscience is that faculty in me which attaches itself to the highest that I know and tells me what the highest I know demands that I do." Too many people today seem to feel that the work of Christian missions is far advanced and the task nearly completed. But millions are in darkness and are crying for light and liberty. How can I then enjoy the luxuries of life and be void of compassion and concern?

A compassionate church. Dr. D. Shelby Corlett, in an editorial, "The Church in the World," wrote:

The church that will reach the people of the world today must be a church which partakes deeply of the Spirit of Christ and its members must share His compassion for a lost world. Someone has pictured the modern church in these terms: A ship is wrecked at sea; coast guardsmen come to the rescue and bring to shore and safety some of the survivors. But many others are left drifting around on rafts and bits of wreckage. Those rescued sit in comfortable quarters paying tribute to their rescuers and praising them for the work they have done, forgetting entirely the others still at sea. In fact, they insist upon detaining the guardsmen to listen to their words of praise and gratitude -- totally indifferent to the dangers of those not rescued. Too frequently the church is just like that. They rejoice in Christ's work of salvation, they sing praises and bring words of gratitude and worship to Him, but they partake not of His passion nor do they share His love for the lost about them. Nothing is done to rescue the perishing and care for the dying. Such a church never will meet the needs of the people of this day. [8]

Such a church cannot maintain a Christian conscience toward our God and toward our brothers that perish.

A missionary's view. Someone asked Charles E. Cowman, missionary-warrior, what he would do if he were to fall heir to a million dollars. He was staggered at first by such a question and did not reply at once, but that evening while sitting at his desk his thoughts upon the matter were put on paper. "what would I do if I fell heir to a million dollars?"

"First of all I would lay it as a love offering in my Master's hands, saying, 'Lord, what would'st Thou have me to do with it?' Such a gift would involve great responsibility, and an immediate handing it over to God would make it His and not mine. I would count myself but a steward, and 'it is required of a steward that he be found faithful.'

"I would reserve nothing for myself.

"I would not lay it up in the bank and allow it to remain there a long while, in order that it might accumulate interest for a . possible future work. I would send it on its Master's business immediately and put it out to the exchangers, for too long have earth's millionaires been accumulating interest while the heathen perish." [4]

* * *

Practical Applications

No regrets. It is said that a one-time wealthy man was asked, as he sat one day at his table where the food was of poor quality and of meager quantity, if he did not regret the generous sums he had given in days gone by to Christ and the church. He smiled and said that he was grateful to God for his giving in other days. He did not regret one cent of the money he gave to God, for he said, "I know that my present plight is not a penalty for not obeying God in the past with regard to my giving." He could eat the meager meal in quietude of spirit and with a pure conscience. It pays to be honest with God.

Faithful in obligations. The smile and approval of God upon our hearts can be lost by the lack of carefulness in our giving. Many times one's personal like or dislike of the pastor has been a governing factor in the paying of tithes and the giving of offerings. But the regularity of our giving cannot be based upon personal feelings or hindered by petty prejudices if we are to maintain a Christian conscience. Sometimes there has been a withholding of God's money because of a petty prejudice and the family of the minister has had to suffer. Here we ought to take heed to the word of John the Beloved when he says, "But if anyone has this world's goods and sees that his brother is in need, and yet closes his heart against him-how can love for God continue in him?" (I John 3:17). [5] How could we then maintain a clear conscience and a spiritual glow in our lives by withholding from the "storehouse," because of a personal feeling, what rightfully belongs to God and others?

The minister of the gospel, as a rule, is a man of sacrifice. His sacrifice, however, should not be made greater because of the unfaithful stewardship of those who have obligated themselves to him. When a church extends a call to a pastor, the people ought always to feel their obligation toward him financially and deal in fairness as becometh Christians. There have been occasions when the pastor's salary was almost forgotten or paid only in part in the event of a temporary shortage of funds. His salary was the first item in the budget to suffer. Nevertheless, the pastor's expenses for his home and family continued as usual. A proper understanding, a sense of obligation, and the habit of systematic giving would enable the people to be fairer in their obligations to the ministry. As a part of the church, can I do less than my duty and maintain a Christian conscience?

A genuine mark of a Christian experience is a conscientious attitude toward money. The day that Jesus made His visit to the house of Zacchaeus we hear this declaration: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (Luke 19:8). Here Zacchaeus says he will give back in multiplied measure any money he has wrongfully taken from others, and it was right that he should clear his conscience by making restitution. Zacchaeus, then, goes even further in his statement. This young Christian's conscience was already awakened to his obligation to others, for he was giving the half of his goods to the needy. A genuine religious experience will awaken us to our obligations as stewards. Let us be so faithful and honest in our stewardship that before God we are without condemnation.

* * *

2) An Avenue of Worship

Abraham, the father of the faithful, received a most severe test of his faith; the very mettle of his soul was tried on the "proving grounds" of Mount Moriah. God said to him, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering. . . ." (Genesis 22:2). This command was catastrophic. Isaac was the son through whom God had promised posterity and prosperity to Abraham. Nevertheless, in obedience to the voice of God, Abraham set out for the place of sacrifice. With the altar of sacrifice, faith, consecration, and consequent blessing in view, "... Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here and I and the lad will go yonder and worship. . . ." (Genesis 22:5). Did Abraham call the offering of his son of promise upon an altar on Moriah "worship"? It was worship indeed.

* * *

Giving, an Expression of Worship

Giving is worship. God asks a very meager measure of what we value when He asks us for a tithe and offering. How often do we consider what we have given as a means of worship? If Abraham could sacrifice his son in worship and praise, we should not fall short of such a spirit in the giving of our gold to God. If we fail to catch this gleam of golden truth, we fail entirely. Giving can only be enjoyable, as it ought to be, when we are aware that it is an act of worship. We give many times because we feel there is a need, and that is commendable. But we ought to give also for the glory of God and as a means of praising Him. Someone has rightly said, "It is as religious to pay as it is to pray." Giving is as worshipful as singing, shouting, praying or preaching. In fact, if we worship in other ways and fail to give, we miss the mark of Christian discipleship. Giving is another outlet for the expression of our love and loyalty to Jesus Christ.

Wherever people worship, we find the attempt to express that worship of the Unseen by some tangible means. The nation of Israel built the Tabernacle and had many altars to serve as definite places where they could worship. One of the visible expressions of the worship of the Invisible is the bringing of the offering unto the Lord. No matter what the nature of that offering might be, it is an expression of the worship of the heart. Worship demands expression. The building of churches and the giving of our means is an expression of worship. Giving is surely more than a duty or obligation. When seen in its proper relationship, it becomes another means of expressing our worship of God.

If the leaders of our churches would give us no opportunity to be contributors, they would be hindering us in our worship. Some leaders have thoughtlessly said, "I'm glad we don't have to take any offerings in this meeting as all our obligations are met." In reality they are saying, "I'm glad we are not giving you another opportunity to worship God with your gold." Every offering can and should have an atmosphere of worship and reverence about it. No leader need assume the characteristics of the auctioneer. The church must not appear like an auction room. It will not if we make our offerings times of worship.

The Master deserves the best. In this expression of our worship we want to enter into His presence with the largest portion of our money it is possible for us to bring. A missionary said of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Christian leader of China: In the early mornings he was always attired in his best royal robe for the moments of morning devotion. When asked the reason for such

royal attire for his time of private prayer, the Generalissimo replied that for all royal guests he put on the best robe; then how could he do less when he visited with the King of Kings? We ought to come to God with the best that our desire and ability will permit us to bring.

The wise men brought gifts. We read in Matthew a beautiful story of worship.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem . . . and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh (Matthew 2:1, 9,11). These sojourners justified their title, wise men, by the wisdom shown in the act of first worshipping Christ and presenting themselves to God. The giving of gold does not gratify until we have first surrendered ourselves as living sacrifices. When we have sincerely surrendered ourselves, we proceed to present our gifts to God in whatever measure He desires. Worship includes both the gracious humility of person and the glad utility of purse.

The lad of Galilee gave his barley loaves and fishes. The Master accepted his gift and blessed and broke the food and distributed it among the thousands on the hillside and the hungry were fed. Our gifts to God will be blessed and used today to feed the starving souls of earth. Let us give unto the Lord and allow Him to administer to the needy. Each of the various offerings of the church affords another opportunity to enlarge our stewardship. When that offering represents sacrifice, unselfishness, self-denial, we can find blessing and true worship.

Give as you would if an angel
Awaited your gift at the door.
Give as you would if tomorrow
Found you where giving is o'er.

Give as you would to the Master
If you met His loving look;
Give as you would of your substance
If His hand the offering took.

-- Anonymous

* * *

The Public Offering

The making of the public offering in the church a time of worship takes training and definite effort. The attitude of the leader of the service will have much to do with making the giving of our money an act of worship. The offertory prayer should not resemble the regular pastoral prayer in content or length. The offering plates, "properly so-called," should not be termed "collection" plates. The offering plates should always have felt lining or some similar material in the bottom so

that noise is reduced to the minimum. The sight of pie plates is very appealing in proper surroundings but their use in the church as offering plates is decidedly incongruous with the worship service. There should be nothing careless or haphazard about the offering. The manner in which the ushers conduct themselves will add to, or detract from, the spirit of the offering. In a regular worship service it should never be necessary for the leader to say, "Well, let's see. Who's going to help us take the offering? Brother So-and-s o would you come and help us, please?" A little thoughtfulness before the service will bring rewards.

It is also of value to remember that most people are incapable of concentrating on more than one thing at a time. In other words, it will not be helpful to have the "special" song during the offering. Devotional music by the church pianist would be a far greater blessing at the time the offering plates are being passed. It is a mistake also to use the time the offering is being taken to make the announcements. This practice detracts from the significance of giving and very little time is really gained. The offering should not be rushed as though it were of little significance and were not a vital part of the worship service.

Too many times, humorous stories are told to create a mental attitude supposedly conducive to giving; in reality they detract from the worshipful attitude of the people. A bit of wit may have its time and place but ordinarily an honest, fair, and sincere statement of the need will bring the desired results. After all, we are interested in more than getting money. We are interested in helping people to worship God and in aiding them to deepen their devotion to Him.

Training is important. The training a person has received will largely determine whether or not the offering will be an act of worship. The church envelope habit has great value. As long as I can remember attending church services, my regular giving has been through the medium of the church envelope. My parents set the example and trained us children to give in this manner. The church envelope habit is a very practical means of helping to make the offering meaningful. After all, a nickel or dime in the hand of a child speaks in terms of candy, ice cream, and chewing gum. The same amount in an envelope, with proper instruction, is an offering unto the Lord.

Specific goals are valuable. In order to make giving an act of worship there must be the direction of the mind of the worshiper to the specific uses of his gift. It is of value for people to know where their gifts are going. The people should know more than that they are paying a "budget" -- general, district, or local. They should be given some particulars. Their minds must be directed beyond the actual gifts to purposes and uses. The giving must be connected with something specific. The people should be told what those budgets are for and how they are related to the advancement of the kingdom of God through the channels of the church. The church has need of money; but it needs money for what purpose? These facts are what every person who is asked to give should know. If people were more familiar with the reasons for and the purposes of the offerings, it would be easier for them to give as an act of worship. The "how" of giving, in other words, should be preceded by the "why" and "whither" of giving. We must know what relation our giving has to the kingdom of God. This knowledge will give new meaning to the offering.

* * *

Giving Must Have Meaning and Purpose

Some of the most delicate and irritating problems of the church center about the matter of money. The handling of finances is not only a problem of the church, but is likewise a problem in every home and in all our personal lives. The church cannot be unduly criticized for needing money. It must have money to exist as the home needs money to survive. In the church, however, it is not enough to require money merely for the upkeep and maintenance of an establishment. The church has a mission; it must reach people with the gospel; it must evangelize. The main object is not to get money. Our thinking must go beyond to our purposes of building character and developing men.

It's up to the church to teach the proper attitude that Christians must take toward money; the church must constantly teach the stewardship of money, for money is so deeply involved in all our human activities. The lack of the repeated teaching of stewardship would be an obstacle in the effort of the church to provide all that is necessary for the proper worship of God. If the giving of our money is not made an act of worship in the minds of our people, we have failed to solve fully the matter of stewardship for them. It is the task of the Christian church to teach people the right attitude in gaining, saving, spending, and in the giving of money. Someone has said that every sixth word in the Gospels has to do with money or stewardship either directly or indirectly. So the church cannot fail to realize the importance of the teaching of stewardship and the proper attitude of the Christian toward his money.

Repeated instructions are essential. If giving is to be an act or avenue of worship, there must be repeated and constant instruction. Superficial and surface attitudes in regard to Christian liberality are often the result of the lack of stewardship training. We cannot afford to allow the bringing of our offerings unto God to lack meaning. We must put meaning and significance into this part of the worship service. The story is told of two sailors who were standing on the deck of a transport. The one sailor said, as he looked out over the waters of the Pacific, "There surely is a lot of water around here." The other sailor replied, "You haven't seen anything. This is only the top of it." And, too many times, people see only the surface of stewardship. We never will know the depth and meaning of our giving until we see it as an act of worship.

The desire of the Christian should be to "put God first." The giving of one's money is only one of the tangible expressions of the devotion of the heart. In our home it has been the habit over the years to take out the tithe first when the pay is received. Such a habit has proved to be a practical blessing. After the portion that is God's has been set aside, the other expenses are taken care of. A simple little habit such as this will keep one from getting into arrears with the portion that should be given regularly into the offering as a testimony that God has first place in our love and devotion.

Gifts are symbols of devotion. Love and devotion have always expressed themselves by the giving of gifts. The lover bestows upon the object of his love gifts that symbolize that love. The box of chocolates or the corsage is given as a token of love. The giving of our gifts to God has, likewise, been a symbol of our devotion. We give to God because we love Him. From the very beginning of the history of worship we find men making some specific offering to God as an expression of worship. We find Cain and Abel building altars and bringing the best of their harvest and herds unto God as a symbol or token of worship. Our worship also has visible expressions

such as the offering of our money. We give not as from or of necessity but in an attitude of love, devotion, and worship.

The altars of the Old Testament were smoking often from the burning of the sacrificial offerings of the people. The altar and sacrifices go back to the very beginning, for the instincts of humanity necessitated some visible expression in the worship of God. In the days of the Mosaic law there were many types of offerings such as the meat, peace, sin, trespass, and burnt offerings, all of which had purpose and meaning. It was not the intrinsic value of that which was offered but the meaning and purpose that gave value to these sacrifices. It is not the value in dollars and cents of what we give today that counts but what the gift represents as we place it upon the altar. The people of other days met God at the altars, and we are to have fellowship and communion as we bring our gifts to God. This realization makes an offering in the public service far more than a mere "collection."

Money represents us. When Cain and Abel brought their gifts to the altar, they brought that which represented them. They had toiled with the flock and with the soil. The altar gifts represented stored-up energy. Our money represents us; it is a part of us. We spend time and energy to earn it. So when we bring our money to God we are bringing a part of our lives to Him as an offering. The offering truly is worship.

* * *

Consider This

1. Can a person refuse to give "tithes and offerings" to God and have a good conscience?
2. Why must we be conscientious in the expenditure of our nine-tenths?
3. How are stewardship and the "Great Commission" related to the Christian conscience?
4. Are we harming others when we fail to give to God? If so, how?
5. How is giving an expression of worship?
6. What can be done to make the public offering meaningful? Are specific goals in giving of value?
7. Is the church primarily interested in money or men? Will purposeful giving benefit the worshiper and the worship service?
8. Why must the church constantly teach stewardship?

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03 -- A PROPER SENSE OF VALUES

We should gather some valuable lessons from the tragic days of World War II when the baneful conflict was raging and men gave their life's blood on the far-flung battlefields. On the land, sea, and in the air men struggled and sacrificed. To the demands of war the American people heroically responded. At the front of the battle or in factories at home the challenge of the conflict was accepted. On the deserts of Egypt, tormented by scorpions and scorching sands, men fought faithfully a ruthless foe. On the jungled and volcanic isles of the Pacific men courageously fought for the freedom and safety of the American people and all free peoples.

At home the wheels of industry whirled as never before. Weary workers gave willingly of their time and earnings. Many gave regularly ten per cent of their income for the purchase of U. S. War Bonds. The rationing of gasoline, tires, sugar, coffee, meats, canned goods, and many other articles was gracefully endured that sons, sweethearts, husbands, and the hungry of other lands might have sufficient food. There were only a few who were so filled with the selfish ways of fallen men that they couldn't appreciate the struggle and sacrifice of others.

Why all this glad giving and sacrifice? The reason is obvious. The people wanted to preserve the American way of living. Americans felt that their land of liberty, their "Four Freedoms," and all that America signified to them was worth fighting for. Their homes and happiness and welfare were worth a hearty defense. A song of those days, "This Is Worth Fighting For," is indicative of their attitude. No amount of planes, tanks, rifles, bombs, battleships, or cannon would have been sufficient for victory had not the men been spirited by a conviction of the value of the cause for which they fought. Their moral equipment was the impulse back of the successful use of the martial paraphernalia. They knew the delight of the dictators would be to destroy the American way of life and Christian character and conduct without which democracy could not endure.

* * *

The Superiority of the Christian Conquest

Conflict of the ages. There is, however, a greater and grander conflict in which every Christian is called upon to be a vital participant. It is acknowledged that the multitude of fallen, unregenerate men would not feel the worth-whileness and greatness of this cause, but to Christian men and women it presents the greatest challenge of all. It is the war against spiritual forces and enemies. Paul says in this regard:

Strengthen yourselves in the Lord and in the power which His supreme might imparts. Put on the complete armour of God, so as to be able to stand firm against all the stratagems of the devil. For ours is not a conflict with mere flesh and blood, but with the despotisms, the empires, the forces that control and govern this dark world-the spiritual hosts of evil arrayed against us in the heavenly warfare. Therefore put on the complete armour of God, so that you may be able to stand your ground in the evil day, and, having fought to the end, to remain the victors on the field (Ephesians 6:10 -13) [1]

This war is the conflict of the ages. It is the ever constant battle against the bane of sin and Satan. This warfare calls for faith, courage, and vigilance until every foe is vanquished.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Ye soldiers of the cross;
Lift high His royal banner,
It must not suffer loss;
From victory unto victory
His army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished
And Christ is Lord indeed.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus
The trumpet call obey;
Forth to the mighty conflict,
In this His glorious day;
"Ye that are men now serve Him,"
Against unnumbered foes;
Let courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose.

Weapons of spiritual warfare different. This conflict is won by different tactics and strategy than the conflict against the physical foe. The kingdom of God does not wage its war with material force. Its soldiers fight with the spiritual weapons of faith, love, prayer, and the enduring Word of God. Christ conquers by compelling love. Yet, this type of warfare calls for the utmost in courage, devotion, consecration, and sacrifice. It calls for Gethsemane and for Calvary.

The cause of Christ claims our support. Would we dare to hesitate to give unstintingly to this cause of Christ? Men have given gladly to support the warfare which destroys human lives. Dare we fall short in our giving to God and His cause to destroy evil and save men? Can we hold tight to our purse strings while priceless souls perish and the progress of proclaiming the gospel is impeded? No, it is imperative that the Christian warfare has the utmost of our self, service, and substance. The tithe is and will be the Lord's. And I must do more. The measure in which I will exceed the one-tenth will be in proportion to my ability and my esteem for Christ and His cause.

Goals nobler than gold. There is an incident in the life of John Paulding that illustrates that the love of one's country can be more powerful than the love of gold. Herbert A. Bosch tells the story. John Paulding, a youth of twenty-two years, because of his own poverty, still wore an old, discarded red coat after he was released from a British prison camp. Along the Hudson River he and two companions guarded the American lines during the Revolutionary War. Though in evident need, the offer of a bribe of fabulous wealth did not lure them from their sense of duty, nor was their lust for gold greater than their patriotic ardor. For concerning John Paulding his epitaph reads:

Poor himself,
he disdained to acquire wealth
by the sacrifice of his country,
rejected the temptation of great reward

conveyed his prisoner to the American camp
and by this act of self-denial
the treason of Arnold was detected,
the design of the enemy baffled,
West Point and the American Army saved. [2]

If the call of our country is more important than money or life itself, how much more important is the call of the Church and of God?

They nobly responded. For a call superior to that of their country, many have refused the riches of this world. Dr. Grenfell gave up a profitable medical career to go to needy Labrador. C. T. Studd, pioneer missionary, was to inherit through his father's will a large sum of money when he reached the age of twenty-five. Before he left England for China two years prior to the time he was to receive his inheritance, he told Mr. Hudson Taylor that he was going to give his fortune to Christ. On the honor roll of faith we have Moses who chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Hebrews 11:25, 26).

* * *

Unique Place of the Christian Church

Solitary among the institutions of men. Now that we have spoken of the value of the Christian warfare and the superiority of its call and challenge, let us consider this question: "How can I make the greatest contribution to Christ and His cause?" I answer that this can be done only by allegiance to Christ and devotion to the visible church. The human organization ordained of God to promote His kingdom on earth is the Church. The Church stands second to none in the rank of human institutions; it excels all others in that its prime purpose is to give light and liberty to the souls of men. There is something about the nature of the Church which merited the confidence of Christ. To every person to whom the Christian religion is important, the Church is indispensable. Whenever there is a revival of religion, there is always a return to the Church.

A determining force in history. The Church in the course of history has not always entirely fulfilled its purpose for existence. Sometimes it has faltered and failed in a measure. In some periods of history, such as the so-called "Dark Ages" that preceded the great reformation under Luther, the Church was a flickering flame and its scope of service was much narrowed. Yet its flame was never fully "blacked-out." In spite of all this, its service to mankind over the centuries is of inestimable value. The Church and the current of human affairs are inseparable. In America the Church has both contributed and prohibited greatly. Heaven's records alone can tell how many times a "Sodom" has been averted by a great revival. The great spiritual revival under Jonathan Edwards changed the entire complexion of things in New England. In England a bloody revolution was avoided only by the powerful revival under John and Charles Wesley. This revival swept England and changed the course of her history and spanned the ocean and blessed America.

America needs the Church. America cannot get along without the Church. People who will not be Christian cannot remain democratic, but the acceptance of Christianity must not be for its

incidental benefits alone. There must be a personal and vital acceptance. Such choice will foster faith in the Church. The wilderness wanderer does not toss into the wilds his compass because of the wavering needle, for that needle gives the lost the general direction. The Church has always been the champion of the high and holy and still is today.

* * *

The Church Merits Adequate Support

We are debtors to the Church. If, therefore, we have a proper perspective relative to the religion of Jesus Christ, we will value highly the cause of God and the human channel through which God has chosen to operate in the spreading of the gospel. Thus, with a proper evaluation, no man can shrink from supporting to the utmost of his ability the Church of Jesus Christ. Roy L. Smith has said, "The man who really believes in his religion will believe in it enough to pay for its propagation." Saint and sinner alike ought always to realize their debt and obligation to the church.

The Church preserved by proper giving. We must give that the Church might live. Our giving is indispensable in the task of lighting the flame of freedom in the souls of sin-enslaved men. The support which we give to the Church must be ample. In order for it to be sufficient our support ought to be intelligent and systematic. The obligations of the Church are not occasional but regular. What better plan could we find than God's system of "tithes and offerings"? We insist on being businesslike in other matters of life, so surely the things of God should be promoted decently and in order. No other practice than God's fair principle of the tithe and offering can adequately meet the financial needs of the Church. Paul reiterates the message when he advises the Corinthians to contribute systematically, individually, and proportionately to the work of God. He says, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (I Corinthians 16:2).

Inadequate methods. Many ways in which people try to support the Church today are noticeably inadequate and inconsistent with the sacredness of the sanctuary. Horace Greeley once received a letter from a woman stating that her church was in distressing financial straits. They had tried fairs, strawberry festivals, oyster suppers, beef stews, turkey banquets, a donkey party, mock weddings, grab bags, box socials, necktie socials, and lawn fetes. "Would Mr. Greeley be so kind as to suggest some new device to keep the struggling church from disbanding?" she wrote. The editor replied: "Try religion." A man, however, does not have religion because he gives but gives because he has religion. All such schemes of church finance lack decidedly in that there is little opportunity to teach genuine stewardship and in the fact that there is little dependence upon God. The prerequisite to proper giving is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. Then follows the evaluation of the Church and the realization of our responsibility to the people of our present age. We cannot afford to do else than scrap all "sinking-sand" methods of financing the work of God and find God's better way.

An active interest. When we come to realize the value of the cause of Christ, then the words of Christ, "Go ye," become a personal challenging command to do our best to make disciples of all nations, then giving takes on new meaning. Many times what we do will seem small and perhaps be unnoticed by men. The widow's gift would, no doubt, have been unnoticed

that day had not Jesus been sitting there. Whatever opportunity comes to us, whether great or small, we ought to give gladly and generously in answer to the Master's plea. There are many who freely find fault with the Church in its appeals for money or in what it should have or should not have done. To all these we would say in the words of another, "There are plenty of people on platforms today shouting our destination, but all too few to help us carry the luggage."

The influence of proper perspective -- a comparison. It was the value Paul placed upon Christ that gave him such faith in the gospel and caused him to assume so large a place of responsibility in the redemption of his brethren. Not only Paul's money, but all his material possessions he considered but refused that he might have the approval of Christ. The inquiring rich young ruler would gladly have dispensed with all he owned and divided it among the poor if he had had Paul's evaluation of Christ and eternal values. The rich ruler "went away sorrowing"; Paul, many times with very limited material comforts and resources, went singing along the roads of the Roman Empire as he heralded the message of the resurrected Christ. The ruler lived for gain; Paul lived to give. The ruler valued the temporal; Paul valued the eternal.

The goal of the Church. There is also a great need of a proper evaluation of the goal of the visible Church. The Church, after all, is not primarily interested in money but in men. Lyman Abbott says, "The Church exists that it may make holy men and holy women; and, if it fails in this, nothing it can do, no creed to which it can subscribe, no ritual it can utter, no cathedral which it can construct, no benevolence in which it can engage, counts for anything." [5]

It is souls more than silver. The Church, therefore, is interested in service more than silver. Money must be gained only to enable the Church to minister to the souls of men. We are making a contribution to the most valuable treasure of earth--the human soul--when we give of our gifts to the Church. No one has given us as clear a statement of the value of human worth as Jesus. He tells us that nothing can be accepted in exchange for the soul, and the gain of the entire world would never compensate for its loss. The world is worthless in comparison to the value of the soul of man. Jesus sums up this truth when He says, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

The superior ministry of the Church. Here we have the superiority of the ministry of the Church. There are many social agencies that are humanitarian in their purposes and aims. They minister to the physical and intellectual needs of men, but the Church's superiority lies in the fact that it ministers primarily to the spiritual side of human life. The Church is interested in the welfare of the soul and the development of Christian character. No other agency has such value as that which aims to make men holy. People respond gladly to the needs of social agencies. We ought, therefore, to respond generously to the Church with its lofty mission.

The most vital sphere of human life. When we give to the Church we are making an investment in human life in its most vital sphere, the realm of the spiritual. There is no need to belittle the importance of physical and intellectual training in order to emphasize this truth, but we are aware of the fact that intellectual and physical development are not sufficient. There has been no modern equal to the educational program of Germany. No other country in the world has spent the time and money for equipment and for research in psychological methods for the education of

the child of preschool age. Nevertheless, Germany failed because of an improper emphasis. She tried to build a superior race instead of men and women. The children and youth of Germany were developed physically and intellectually but not morally and spiritually. No race can be superior which ignores the superior qualities of human life.

The proper development of life. The program for the proper development of human life is given to us by the example of Jesus. Luke says, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). Jesus developed intellectually and rightly so. One of the tragedies of life is the lack of mental development, or normal mental achievement. The Lord also developed physically. A normal development of the body is certainly to be coveted. A frail, crippled, undernourished body is not to be desired. Our Lord also developed socially. He knew how to get along and be in favor with His fellow man. But, Jesus also developed spiritually "in favour with God." This is the most important development of all. Moral and spiritual development is primarily the goal of the Church. When people are brought to realize the superiority of the value of moral and spiritual development over intellectual, physical, and social training, they will want to give their share to the Church. No person's life is complete until attention has been given to the spiritual.

The Church ministers to the human soul because of its value. It was Seneca who said, "The soul is more powerful than any sort of fortune." The soul represents possibilities for good or evil. The Church endeavors to give that training and provide those influences which will bring the soul to the realization of the good life. There are so many influences and tendencies that lead humanity downward. We ought to be willing to support that organization which leads humanity upward.

Timeless investments. When we invest in a human life we are making a contribution that is of enduring import. The soul of man is immortal. When we maintain a church to minister to an immortal soul we are making an eternal investment. Roger W. Babson has characteristically stated the lasting nature of the investment we make in the kingdom of God:

One dollar spent for lunch lasts five hours.

One dollar spent for a necktie lasts five weeks.

One dollar spent for a cap lasts five months.

One dollar spent for water power or a railroad grade lasts five generations.

One dollar spent in the service of God lasts for eternity.

If we want the most for our money, as most of us do, we must invest it in the kingdom of God. Stewardship is vast in its possibilities. When we see values as they really are, we realize our opportunity to change some of our temporal money into that which endures -- into eternal values.

If the Church could have a larger support in its task of building men and women, our nation would need to build fewer penal and corrective institutions. The leaders of religion could do more

to stem the tide of delinquency and sin if people valued the Church more than they do. If people would give more to build fences at the top of the precipice of moral failure there would not be so great a need for hospitals at the bottom.

* * *

A Proper Evaluation of Life

Not only must we have a proper estimate of the worth of the Church, but we must have an evaluation of all that men seek in life if we are going to rightly invest our lives and our money. Should a man spend all his energies seeking those treasures which are seasonal and temporal? David Livingstone expressed a valuable life principle when he said: "I will set no value on anything I have or possess except in its relation to the kingdom of God."

Right standards. Nothing in the universe has value except in relation to persons both human and divine. The things we would judge to be of human value may be of more or less value when judged in the light of the Divine. Men value sinful pleasure but God would condemn their enjoyment. Money has value only when related to men. Without man it would be utterly useless. For a right set of standards every man must seek to know God. A personal revelation of Jesus Christ will radically change the standards of value. The conception of values among unregenerate men is quite different from that of changed and cleansed men. Christian men see values in the terms of God and eternity. The Christian wants to have those securities that will outlast the things of time that are subject to change and decay.

Timeless treasures. Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal" (Matthew 6:19, 20). The men of this world seek after silver, gold, and precious stones. Should not men seek as earnestly after eternal values? The wise man Solomon said: "My son. . . if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:1-5).

First things first. In order to lay up treasures in heaven we must learn the secret of the place and use of money. We must seek to put God first in our hearts as earnestly as men seek for wealth. For we know that God and money cannot have first place in our love and affection at the same time. If God is first, then money is in a subordinate place. If money comes first, then God is placed in the secondaries, and to put God in other than the supreme place in our lives is to lose Him. We must keep first things first.

When values are reversed. Maeterlinck tells a story that emphasizes the danger of getting the order of things reversed. He says that a lighthouse man, instead of caring for his lighthouse, gave to the poor in the cabins about him the oil of the mighty lantern that served to illumine the sea. When the darkness fell on the stormy reef, and the cries of drowning sailors were heard above the tempest, men did not bless him that he had spent on charity what he owed to duty. The first things must be kept in their proper place.

Values that endure. If we have a right perspective we will not give all our money for that which does not endure. We will want to make some investments in those treasures that know not decay or loss. The money we give for the benefit of others and for the advancement of the kingdom of God will endure. From India comes the story of the golden palace. Sultan Ahmed was a great king. He sent Yakoob, the most skillful of his builders, with large sums of money to erect in the mountains of snow the most splendid palace ever seen. Yakoob went to the place, and found a great famine among the people, and many of them dying. He took all his own money, and the money given him by the king for the building of the palace, and gave it to feed the starving people.

Ahmed came at length to see his palace, but he saw none. He sent for Yakoob and learned his story; then he was very angry and cast him into prison. "Tomorrow thou shalt die," he said, "for thou hast robbed the king."

That night the Sultan Ahmed had a dream. There came to him one who said, "Follow me." Up from the earth they soared, until they were at heaven's gate. They entered, and lo! there stood a palace of pure gold, more brilliant than the sun, and vaster far than any palace of earth.

"What palace is this?" asked Ahmed, and his guide answered, "This is the palace of merciful deeds, built for thee by Yakoob the wise. Its glory shall endure when all earth's things have passed away." Then the king understood that Yakoob had done wisely with his money.

Gold or a good character. Another wise man said, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver or gold" (Proverbs 22:1). Robert Louis Stevenson said: "The soul asks for honor and not fame; to be upright, not to be successful; to be good, not prosperous; to be essentially, not outwardly respectable. Does your soul ask profit? Does it ask money? Does it ask the approval of the indifferent herd? I believe not." A good character is far better than gold or acclaim.

There are many things of far more value than the perishing things of time. The prophet Isaiah said, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" (Isaiah 55:2). Men vainly seek that which satisfieth not. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver" (Ecclesiastes 5: 10).

I wanted the gold, and I sought it;
I scrabbled and mucked like a slave.
Was it famine or scurvy--I fought it;
I hurled my youth into a grave.

I wanted the gold, and I got it
Came out with a fortune last Fall
Yet somehow life's not what I thought it,
And somehow the gold isn't all. [4]

More important than money. Too many have a perverted sense of values. How we need to get our standard of values right. Money is not as important as men. Give to make men, build

character, and enrich life. It is not what a man has that matters; it is what he is and does. The surgical instruments a doctor uses are not the determining factors in an operation. It is the skill of the doctor that is all-important. It is not money that is the determining factor in life; it is how a man uses his money that tells the story. So many things in life are of more value than money. Let us invest in those things that are more precious than gold and we shall have treasures in heaven.

* * *

Consider This

1. Is the call of Christ superior to that of gold or patriotism? If so, why?
2. Why is it that the Church holds a unique place among the institutions of men? Would you say that it has played a dynamic part in human history?
3. Why does the Church merit adequate support?
4. In what way is the ministry of the Church superior to that of other institutions?
5. How would a man's standard of values affect his giving?
6. Why is it imperative to keep "first things first"?
7. What is the greatest channel through which we can make timeless investments?
8. Which is likely to end in disappointment: the search for gold or for a good character?
Why?
9. Do you think a Christian experience would aid a man in getting a proper standard of values?

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04 -- THE QUESTION OF OWNERSHIP

Jesus Warns Against Covetousness

One of the greatest truths ever to fall from the lips of Jesus is found in these words, ". . . Beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Jesus follows this profound precept with an enlightening parable to shed light upon the danger of covetousness or worldly greed. The parable tells us about a prosperous rich man whose ground had brought forth plentifully. But the man of means made several mistakes which stand out as danger signals to all seekers of truth and life.

The fatal folly. The rich man "played the fool" He had no place in his plans for God, for he rested upon the pleasing hope that his material gains would bring proper gratification to his soul.

The goods which the rich man stored in his barns were not suitable sustenance for a never-dying spirit. The wealthy man also falsely presumed that he had a lease on life. He felt he had many years to enjoy his gains. The final foolish mistake that this man made was that he thought the fruits and goods were his own. He had a distorted sense of ownership. In the scriptural story there is an abundance of personal and possessive pronouns which indicate the selfishness of the man's soul. But at the very noontime of his selfish day "God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20). Yes, those pitiful preparations--for whom shall they be now? Man is indeed a pauper if all he owns is perishable. Man cannot afford to invest only in that which perishes and in treasures that tarnish.

Jesus concluded the whole matter by saying, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). So it would follow that every man is foolish who takes no concern about his stewardship and does not invest in the bank of heaven. We ought to exchange our present possessions into the currency of heaven. The fact that the rich man had an abundance of goods was not the charge against him. The truth of the matter is that his heart was filled with greed and he was unfaithful in his stewardship. The rich man might as well have burned his barns or buried his bounty in the deepest sea as to have attempted to hoard it. He did not realize that all his gains were not his own but to be used to meet his needs and for the glory of God.

* * *

The Principles of Ownership

God the owner; we the stewards. The cornerstone of scriptural teaching on ownership and giving is simply this: God is the inalienable owner of all and we are the undeniable stewards. A very missionary-minded man, Arthur T. Pierson, said:

Rightly viewed, it is questionable whether there be even such things as "munificent donations," since a "debtor," a "trustee," a "steward"--which are God's own terms for His human creatures cannot make a "donation," but can only discharge a "debt," fulfill a trust, execute a commission.

This truth is drastic, but it is God's medicine for the deadly disease of greed, and the fatal selfishness of which greed is only a symptom. The teaching of the blessed Word is unmistakable, and may be briefly stated under the following seven "theses," to borrow Luther's word:

1. God owns all things and all creatures, and never alienates or transfers His ownership.
2. God claims us, with all we are and have, as His by creation, preservation, redemption, and endowment.
3. God teaches us that the one goal of our lives, in every detail, is to be not our own pleasure or profit, but His glory.

4. Every man is a debtor to all other men, to love and further their well-being even as he loves and furthers his own.

5. All we possess, being held in trust, is to be used so as to serve the highest, largest, and most lasting ends for God's glory and man's good.

6. Hence the one supreme life of light and love, duty and privilege, honor and blessing, is to lose oneself in the will of God.

7. Giving belongs to this highest plane of privilege. We multiply ourselves in our gifts, as one spring may fill many streams. No miser can be happy, for the very end of reception is impartation.

These laws of giving belong to a code, practically obsolete with man, yet eternally in force with God, immutable as Himself. And not only missions, but every other form of work for man's uplifting and salvation, will find its chariot wheels drag heavily, until the divine idea of giving holds the throne and shrine in our conviction, and sways our lives. Every cry of retrenchment is an assault on God and an insult to His claims. Even were there no more than the faithful bringing in of the tithes, there would always be meat in His house and blessing on His people. But could His Church once be roused from lethargy and apathy, feel her debt to a dying world, and see her apostasy in the matter of withholding what is hers only as held in trust for the payment of that debt, a river of beneficence would flow into the various channels of Christian service, which would overleap all present banks, and demand new and more adequate modes of distribution—a river to swim in. [1]

This is our Father's world. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalms 24: 1). God owns all. Yes, this is our Father's world. He entrusts us with a small portion over which we are to assume responsibility and in turn for which we must give an account some day. All that comes into man's possession he must exercise trusteeship over and be prepared to give an account on that day when he stands before the Judge of all the universe, when everyone shall be commended for his stewardship or condemned for his selfishness. Some have made the mistake of thinking that they were responsible only for the one-tenth that belonged to God. We are stewards also over the nine-tenths. None of our gold can we dispose of as we please. We must here also "do all to the glory of God." The Christian's attitude toward all his possessions is that he is free to do with them only what is in accordance with the divine will of the Father who owns and rules over all. Our liberty, as administrators of God's bestowal of possessions, is limited by the laws of the loving God.

The tithe an acknowledgment of ownership. E Stanley Jones very fittingly says:

The tithe is a token -- a token that you are not owner, but ower. Just as you pay rent as a token of acknowledgment of the ownership of another, so you pay a tithe to acknowledge the ownership of God over the nine-tenths. When the level of your needs has been reached, then all you earn belongs to the needs of others, not as charity, but as right and justice. [2]

Man is a trustee; he owns nothing. Lyman Abbott forcibly declares the stewardship responsibility in these words:

Every man who has money is a trustee. Whether it be one dollar or a hundred and fifty million dollars in no way affects the nature of the responsibility. Any man who uses his property, or any part of his property, for himself alone is guilty of a breach of trust. He is a defaulter before God. For this defalcation he must at least give an account. It will not be enough that he has earned the money honestly; nor that he has not used it oppressively; nor that he has given certain portions of it -- a tenth for example -- in what he calls benevolence. It is not his to use. No part of it is his to use. To the affirmation, "What's mine's mine," the answer of Christ is, "It is not." No man owns anything. At the last every man must meet the question, "How have you administered the trust?" If he is wise he will be asking himself this question day by day. (3)

What will you own one hundred years from now? A prominent bishop of today was preaching one Sunday morning, in the early days of his ministry, upon the truth of God's ownership and man's trusteeship. He emphasized forcibly the truth that "Ye are not your own" and that our possessions are not our own. After the worship service was concluded, an outstanding businessman arose and left the sanctuary without the usual words of appreciation and encouragement he regularly extended to his pastor for the message. Early Monday morning the young pastor received a telephone call. His prominent parishioner politely invited him to take a short trip with him. The pastor gladly agreed to go. The fine car was driven through the city and finally came to a stop in the midst of a newly developed section of homes. The new structures were of the latest styles; had the finest equipment; were well constructed and beautifully situated. The businessman, who had spoken only several words during the journey, said to his pastor, as he looked toward the settlement, "Who owns these new homes?" The young minister, looking at a large sign directly in the foreground with his parishioner's name painted upon it, said, "May I ask you this question before I answer yours, 'Whose will they be one hundred years from now?'" The businessman, whose mind had been much disturbed by the pastor's Sunday morning message, said, "Yes, I see it now."

The stewardship principles of Fritz Kreisler. Fritz Kreisler, doubtless the world's most famous violinist, has come very near to the Christian standpoint on ownership in this declaration of his point of view:

"I was born with music in my system. I knew musical scores instinctively before I knew my ABC's. It was a gift of Providence. I did not acquire it. So I do not even deserve thanks for the music.

"Music is too sacred to be sold. And the outrageous prices the musical celebrities charge today are truly a crime against society.

"I never look upon the money I earn as my own. It is public money. It is only a fund intrusted to my care for proper disbursement.

"I am constantly endeavoring to reduce my needs to the minimum. I feel morally guilty in ordering a costly meal, for it deprives someone else of a slice of bread--some child, perhaps, of a

bottle of milk. My beloved wife feels exactly the same way about these things as I do. You know what I eat; you know what I wear. In all these years of my so-called success in music we have not built a home for ourselves. Between it and us stand all the homeless in the world!"

* * *

Christian Stewardship Not Modern-Day Communism

Care should be exercised, however, and one must not be misled when emphasizing the truth of ownership. Some have tried to make these truths of Jesus, relative to riches and stewardship, teach a modern-day economic communism. But this attempt is surely misleading. Robert E. Speer says:

Jesus nowhere condemned private property. When He said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth" (Matthew 6:19), He did not do so, nor did He when He said to the young ruler, "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, and follow me" (Luke 18:22). In each of these cases He was appealing to men to forego doing what He did not deny they had a right to do. He was pressing a moral choice on the personal will, not establishing an economic law. [4]

The early Christians were not Communists. In the thrilling story of the early Christian Church at Jerusalem we have an example of a high and holy attitude of stewardship. These early Christians were not "Communists" as the world thinks of that term today. They were not practicing an economic communism but established a brotherly community and fellowship. They did not have a political institution. Ullhorn said, "We might as well speak of a community of goods in a family." There was no compulsory surrendering of property in order to be numbered with the Christians. The fact that they were Spirit-filled, however, made them conscious of the needs of others. The early Christians are examples of what the grace of God can do for the hearts of men. After all, the religion of Jesus Christ would not be sufficient if it did not free us from the attachment to this world, from the tyranny of things, and from the love of money. Men may disagree as to the theological implications of the experience of Pentecost in the hearts of the early believers but they cannot deny the far-reaching effects. In this age of secularism and materialism we need an experience that will free us from the despotism of things and will enable us to put God first and give supremacy to the spiritual

Generous because they were spirit-filled. The early Christians were sincere, steadfast, zealous followers of Christ and were filled with the Holy Spirit. The record says, "And when they had prayed . . . they were filled with the Holy Ghost. . . and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts 4:31, 32). Such a condition as here described was not the result of the purposes of a greedy mankind but of redeemed, Spirit-filled saints united in fellowship and purpose for the glory of God.

Nor are such attitudes toward property impossible today when men are united in purpose and fellowship and are all filled with the Spirit of God. Recently I heard of an earnest inquirer asking a district superintendent of the church how to most profitably and safely invest his money. In

reply the godly man said, "As for myself, I'm investing in the kingdom of God." The truth of the matter is that this sincere minister of Christ's was selling personal property in order to procure funds to establish new churches and develop the work of God on his particular district. He was making good usage of his material possessions and surely realized that what he had was, in reality, not his own.

* * *

Jesus Not Opposed to Thrift and Investment

A proper thrift. I do not believe that Jesus was opposed to a sensible type of saving. He did not believe in anxious concern about the future, but neither did He denounce a reasonable preparation for the future. Paul's words in II Corinthians 12:14, "for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children," would seem to bespeak the reasonableness of saving for the benefit of others. It would seem to be sensible here to assume that money invested in insurance which will bring returns to help people in the declining years of life to be free from poverty and from dependence upon their children is entirely justifiable. Insurance that would keep others from hardship when death comes to the home would also be justified. I do not believe that Jesus intended to denounce a Christian businessman for holding capital which he must have on hand to operate his business. Jesus was not, I think we can rightly conclude, adverse to the proper use of money.

A right investment. Roger W. Babson says:

Jesus never criticized the accumulation of money for enduring investments. What Jesus criticized was the accumulation of money for oneself, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," said Jesus. He did not speak about laying up treasures. Jesus knew the accumulation of money was essential for the providing of capital to build railroads, erect buildings, clear forests, and open up mines. He knew that as men are naturally gifted in music, medicine, art, or literature, so other men are naturally gifted to accumulate money and become great bankers, manufacturers, and merchants.

Jesus never said that it is wrong to be a banker, manufacturer, or merchant provided one is in a business for the good of the community and not for oneself alone. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures," Jesus continually said. "Be thrifty and accumulate, but do it in the best interests of your family, your friends, your neighbors, your community, your countrymen, and the entire world, that all may be healthier, happier, and more prosperous," is what He would recommend. By so doing one would make enduring investments which moths and rust would not corrupt and which thieves would not steal. [5]

* * *

Material Possessions Are Only Temporal

If the possessions of the present were entirely our own, our ownership would automatically terminate in a few short years. No material possessions get beyond the door of death. Eternity will be without concern for the materialistic.

Out of this life I'm unable to take
Things of silver and gold I make.

All that I cherish and hoard away,
After I leave, on earth must stay.

All that I gather, and all that I keep,
I must leave behind when I fail asleep.

And I often wonder what I shall own
In that other life, when I pass alone.

What shall they find and what shall they see
In the soul that answers the call for me?

Shall the great Judge learn, when. my task is through,
That my spirit has gathered some riches too?

Or shall at last it be mine to find
That all that I'd worked for I'd left behind?

-- Anonymous

A timely tale is told of a conqueror of many centuries ago. He had won many battles and had accumulated a great amount of wealth. His parting instructions were that he must be buried with his empty hands uncovered so that all might know that he took with him nothing of his vast possessions. Worldly-mindedness and greed frequently become stronger and more pronounced as men grow older instead of decreasing as time goes on. One of the noblest lessons we can learn is that our possessions, large or small, must all be left behind.

* * *

Money Has No Morality

Money is neither good nor bad. It is profitable to note that money in itself has no morality or virtue. Silver and gold are trifles in themselves. They can be either a curse or a comfort. it is our attitude toward and use of money that count. The parable of Dives, the self-indulgent rich man, and Lazarus, the poor beggar, does not teach that riches in themselves are evil. Dives was not "in hell" simply because he had been rich. nor was Lazarus "in Abraham's bosom" because he had been materially destitute. For, as Saint Augustine points out, the very Abraham into whose bosom Lazarus was carried was one who had been on earth rich in flocks, and in herds, and in silver, and in all possessions.

Money in itself is not responsible for the evils which result from the improper attitude toward it or the wrong use of it. Many call it "filthy lucre." We cannot agree with Giovanni Papini's view when he writes.

Money carries with it, together with the filth of the hands which have clutched and handled it, the inexorable contagion of crime. Among the unclean things which men have manufactured to defile the earth and to defile themselves, money is perhaps the most unclean. These counters of coined metal which pass and repass every day among hands still soiled with sweat or blood, worn by the rapacious fingers of thieves, of merchants, of misers; this round and viscid sputum of the Mint, desired by all, sought for, stolen, envied, loved more than love and often more than life; these ugly pieces of stamped matter, which the assassin gives to the cut-throat, the usurer to the hungry, the enemy to the traitor, the swindler to his partner, the simonist to the barterer in religious offices, the lustful to the woman bought and sold; these foul vehicles of evil which persuade the son to kill his father, the wife to betray her husband, the brother to defraud his brother, the wicked poor man to stab the wicked rich man, the servant to cheat his master, the highwayman to despoil the traveler; this money, these material emblems of matter, are the most terrifying objects manufactured by man. [6]

Much of the above is true but, on the other hand, one might say that money builds hospitals to alleviate suffering, colleges and universities to train and enlighten, homes to care for orphaned and crippled children; establishes institutions for the care of the blind; provides places of refuge for the aged and uncared for; builds public schools where all may be educated regardless of race, class, or creed; erects churches and provides Sunday-school facilities for the spiritual aid of mankind; sends missionaries around the world with the message of the gospel; pays for the training of ministers, doctors, nurses, and teachers to care for body, mind, and soul; and provides the necessities of life -- food, clothing, and shelter.

In the final analysis, then, money is neither good nor bad. It becomes a bane or a blessing according to the usage of it. Dr. Paul S. Rees, in a sermon, "Forbidden Luxuries," illustrates this truth about money when he says:

One day, a few months ago, my dear friend George Vallentyne of this city, was talking to me. He said, "Paul, a little while back I was thinking of writing a tract that I proposed to call 'Deadly Dollars.' While thinking about it, I rode past your church on the streetcar. Glancing at your bulletin board, I noticed that you were going to preach the following Sunday on 'Immortal Money.' "And the dear doctor chuckled at what seemed to be the contradiction of the two titles. Actually, of course, there is no contradiction. Money is neither good nor bad in itself. It is neutral. It becomes good or bad according to the use we make of it.

Money can be a bane or a blessing. Dr. Russell H. Conwell, "the penniless millionaire," who made millions of dollars and died leaving virtually nothing but his life insurance, said, "The money you hoard impoverishes you. But the money you give away -- it blesses old age like the cool shade of a tree. I can get a thrill of delight at any time by calling up the memory of nearly five thousand men whose college training my lectures have helped to provide. That is the kind of

fortune for a man to lay up if he wants a delightful and exciting old age. A fortune in folks; money in men."

* * *

John Wesley -- a Great Steward

Practical principles on the use of money. John Wesley, founder of Methodism, gives three practical principles on the question of money, in his sermon, "The Use of Money." He says:

Gain all you can without hurting either yourself or your neighbor, in soul or body, by applying hereto with unintermitted diligence, and with all the understanding which God has given you; -- save all you can, by cutting off every expense which serves only to indulge foolish desire, to gratify either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life; waste nothing, living or dying, on sin or folly, whether for yourself or your children; -- and then, give all you can, or, in other words, give all you have to God. Do not stint yourself, like a Jew rather than a Christian, to this or that proportion. Render unto God, not a tenth, not a third, not half, but all that is God's, be it more or less; by employing all, on yourself, your household, the household of faith, and all mankind, in such a manner that you may give a good account of your stewardship, when ye can be no longer stewards; in such a manner as the oracles of God direct, both by general and particular precepts; in such a manner, that whatever ye do may be "a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour to God," and that every act may be rewarded in that day, when the Lord cometh with all his saints. [7]

More than precepts. These words from the pen of John Wesley are more than precepts. They are the practical principles by which the prophet lived. There is beauty when the glowing sun with the light of day sinks behind the horizon. And the sunset of life for John Wesley was, as J. Wesley Bready says

"--wholly beautiful. The Last Enemy for him had no sting, the grave no victory. For five days the silver cord was loosing; but in Death, as in life, Wesley's example was one not only of spiritual triumph, but of fellowship with the poor. During his half-century crusade, he never claimed for poverty any peculiar virtue; while, on the other hand, he said much regarding the value of money -- if properly used. And, despite the fortune accruing from his publications, never did he retain more than a few odd pounds. All went to the needy. During no single year, did he expend an average of twelve shillings a week on himself. Never did he wear other than the cheapest, as well as the plainest, clothes; and always he dined on the humblest fare. To the end, he gave his time, his talents, his means, his all that he might gain Christ and make Christ real to England." [5]

The principles which John Wesley lived by affected even his funeral instructions. Among them was the request that his body be buried in nothing more costly than wool. No silk or satin was to adorn the corpse from which his spirit had fled. And his last will and testament gave final seal to the gospel he had so long, so courageously, preached -- in "darkest England." "Whatever remains in my bureau and pockets, at my decease," he directed, was to be "equally divided" among four poor itinerants, whom he named. To each of the traveling preachers within the connection six months after his death, he bequeathed the eight volumes of his "Sermons." Then came a clause

expressive both of his solicitude for the unemployed and his efforts for funeral reform. Requesting that neither hearse nor coach take any part in his funeral, he desired that six poor men, in need of employment, be given a pound each to carry his body to the grave. "I particularly desire," his will reads, that "there be no horse nor coach, no escutcheon, no pomp, except the tears of those who love me, and are following me to Abraham's bosom." [9]

We are told that the funeral service was conducted in the early morning before the dawn of day. We cannot help but feel that it was symbolical and should be so, for from a world of darkness to the land of eternal day John Wesley passed where he received his reward and these words were a reality: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

Of John Wesley an admirer says:

Though this great gentleman and mighty prophet died without material estate, he left behind him a heritage which has enriched, beyond computation, the abiding wealth of all mankind. For if spiritual attainment be the ultimate standard of greatness, few greater than this world-minded preacher have yet trodden the earth; and none greater, has spoken the English tongue. [10]

Ownership

"These are my barns, and this my land, my grain."
With greed he stored the golden yield of fall,
But not one particle could he retain
That night when, like a toll, came God's stern call;
And he who owned, yet nothing owned at all.

"I have one talent buried safe and deep;
It is my dear possession; my own hand
Received it from the Lord. Now I can sleep."
The Master took it back; entombed in sand
It had no owner, and no purpose planned.

God had one Son; He gave Him to the earth.
The grain of wheat did not abide alone;
A harvest multiplied has come, a birth
Of many souls. To hoard is to bemoan
One's poverty. To give -- this is to own. [11]

* * *

Consider This

1. How could covetousness distort a man's sense of stewardship?
2. What are the basic principles of ownership? Does man fundamentally own anything?

3. Are the teachings of Jesus communistic? Were the early Christians "Communists"?
4. What did Jesus think of thrift and investment?
5. What lesson can we learn from the fact that material possessions are only temporal?
6. Can money be blamed for the evils associated with its use? Is money good or evil?
7. What were Wesley's three great principles for the use of money? Did he practice these principles?

* * * * *

05 -- WE THANK THEE, LORD

Gratitude is one of the basic Christian graces. It is one of the lessons we must learn early in the school of Christian character. In fact, one of the promptings to repentance is the grateful acknowledgment of the sacrifices and sorrows of the Son of God for one's personal salvation. In order to make progress in the faith one must certainly show concern and cultivate a grateful spirit in his daily walk with God. Jesus relates the parable of the sower. Some of the seeds fell among thorns which subsequently grew up and choked them. But had the hearer of the Word of God been grateful for the privilege he had been granted, he would not have allowed the cares of this world or the deceitfulness of riches to choke out the good seed. Gratefulness will give any man a great lift from lower to higher planes of living. Gratitude is one of the secrets to successful Christian living.

* * *

We Must Be Grateful

There is nothing so base as ingratitude. It is a refusal to recognize the value of the gift received and the goodness of the bestower. The character of man's ingratitude is illustrated by the words of William Shakespeare, "Blow, blow, thou winter wind, thou art not so unkind as man's ingratitude." [1] A base ingratitude is the companion of selfishness. Giving and generosity are basically related to gratitude. It was the opinion of Irenaeus, one of the early church fathers, that, "Our Lord gave counsel to His own disciples to offer first fruits to God for His creatures, not as to one who stands in need, but so that they themselves may be neither unfruitful nor unthankful."

Gratitude a basis for consecration. The Apostle Paul's plea to his brethren for a complete consecration to God was upon the basis of gratefulness. Paul's plea for an unreserved self-surrender to the whole will of God was: "I beseech (beg of, plead with) you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Romans 12:1). The "reasonable service" is undoubtedly inspired by a grateful recognition of the "mercies of God." There is a constant stream

of these mercies upon us every passing day, and because God has been so merciful we ought to present our bodies -- our all -- to Him as a reasonable service.

Benefits -- material and spiritual. If the sun should refuse to shine, all life would cease. It is because of God that there is life in the universe and that all things hold together. For in Him all things consist. The air we breathe and all the material mercies are ours from the giving God. Material mercies are not the total of our blessings; there are the blessings of salvation and redemption for which we owe the deepest gratitude and the utmost of service. The mercies of God always appear of inestimable worth when a man gets a glimpse of Jesus, our burden-bearer and sorrow-sharer, kneeling in agony beneath the olive trees of Gethsemane in intercession and dying in shame as a criminal on the cross of Calvary. For this, the greatest of all mercies, we, as His followers, owe everything.

* * *

Gratitude and Giving Vitally Related

It is important that we realize, with such mercies as the cross and redemption in view, that the giving of our gold to God should be measured and motivated by the deepest gratitude of our hearts. It was F. B. Meyer who said, "Give, not from the top of your purse, but from the bottom of your heart." Gratitude and our giving have a vital relationship. No truly grateful heart can withhold from God when he feels the promptings to give. No sincere soul can look at Calvary and not feel a gratitude in his heart that would want to yield all to God.

Happy is the grateful man. The happiness and holiness of a man do not depend upon the abundance of material possessions that he owns. The man who "walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly," whether prosperity or poverty has been his fortune, can have a heart that is holy and happy. The godly man will gladly and gratefully assume his responsibility to God whether what he has to give is large or small. Every man has many mercies for which to give God praise. Dr. Stuart Nye Hutchison, in a devotional feature, "Moments of Quiet Strength," says, "He who has the grace of gratitude in his heart, even though he has no place to lay his head, can be as happy as St. Francis singing along the roads of France."

How long must we give? A good practical principle for helping us in our giving as God's stewards is this: "Give until God stops giving to you."

"Go break to the needy sweet charity's bread,
For giving is living," the angel said
"And must I be giving again and again?"
My peevish and pitiless answer ran.
"Oh, no," said the angel, piercing me through,
"Just give till the Master stops giving to you."

-- Author Unknown

He gives to all men liberally. He sends the rain and gives the sunshine to all alike. He is not kind only to those who have responded to His kindness and blessings. The measure of our giving, however, will depend largely upon our gratitude. The tithe is rightfully the Lord's, and we want to render unto God that which belongs to Him. But beyond the tithe how liberal are we going to be? That will depend to a large degree upon our gratitude. As your gratitude, so be it unto you. Then, too, let us remember the words of Jesus when He was instructing His disciples for service, "Freely ye have received, freely give."

If Dives had been grateful for his royal robes and the plenteous provisions of his life, he would have been able to see Lazarus lying at his gate. Selfishness and ingratitude keep a soul from having compassion for others and blind men's eyes to others' needs. If the rich young ruler who came running, kneeling, and asking of Jesus the way of eternal life had had a heart of gratitude instead of greed, he never would have gone sorrowing away from the Master and the gospel. The desire to gain eternal life when one is anchored to the material things of earth cannot gain other than shipwreck for the inquirer.

The story of a grateful Zacchaeus. A delightful little story is told about Zacchaeus by J. R. Miller. He says:

When Zacchaeus was old he still dwelt in Jericho, humble and pious before God and man. Every morning at sunrise he went out into the fields for a walk, and he always came back with a calm and happy mind to begin his day's work. His wife wondered where he went in his walks, but he never spoke to her of the matter. One morning she secretly followed him. He went straight to the tree from which he first saw the Lord. Hiding herself, she watched him to see what he would do. He took a pitcher, and carrying water, he poured it about the tree's roots which were getting dry in the sultry climate. He pulled up some weeds here and there. He passed his hand fondly over the old trunk. Then he looked up at the place among the branches where he had sat that day when he first saw Jesus. After this he turned away, and with a smile of gratitude went back home. His wife afterward referred to the matter and asked him why he took such care of the old tree. His quiet answer was, "It was that tree which brought me to Him whom my soul loveth." [2]

Our debt to the Church. Should we not have a real sense of gratitude toward the Church that nurtured us and brought us to God? The Church is, after all, the place where most people have met the Master. The Church is one of the influential forces that directed us to paths of safety and protected us from the pitfalls of life. Are we grateful? Do we seek to give to the Church in gratitude and thanksgiving?

An offertory prayer. Dean Bertha Munro tells of an offertory prayer she heard. It goes, "There are thousands today who are hungry -- we have food; there are thousands who are shelterless -- we have homes; there are millions who sit in darkness -- we have the Light of Life. Make us truly grateful, and help us to show our gratitude by our giving." Yes, the streams of mercy have been overflowing; God has been freely giving. How many times have we stepped from the cold rain or from the bitter winter winds into a warm, though perhaps humble, home. And did we say, in word or thought, "Thank You, Lord"? And have we told the Lord we are grateful for all His mercies by the way we have been giving?

In grateful recognition of all the mercies of God, the Christian desires to be a good and faithful steward. He wants that God shall know that with a grateful heart his intentions are to render faithfully his "reasonable service. He wants God to know that his money, as well as time and talents, are subject to His demands. So, with a loving heart, he endeavors to manifest his gratitude by grateful giving.

He has filled thy hands with blessings,
Which He bids thee scatter wide,
Calls thee, friend, and not a servant,
Friend to labor at his side.

A rightful response. Gratitude is the unselfish rightful response of the soul to the kindness and blessing that have been bestowed upon it. Gratitude springs from at least two sources; from a realization of the value of bestowed gifts, or from an appreciation of the fact that the bestower has sacrificed in order to present the gifts. We may even go further and say that there may be a gratefulness that comes, not from the value of the gift received or from the sacrifice of the other, but from the thoughtfulness of the giver.

Our debt to others. A Christian who is truly grateful will be prompted to give of his means to God because of the value he places upon his salvation, because of the sacrifice of God's Son to provide redemption and because of the thoughtfulness of God in providing a means for the restoration of a ruined race. Gratitude motivates us to a generous giving of our means, because we realize the value of the Church and the faith "once delivered unto the saints," because we know of the blood of the martyrs, and the sacrifice of the faithful of all ages to establish and preserve the Church, and because we are mindful of the thoughtfulness and burden of the Church that nurtured us in the ways of righteousness. How can we help but be grateful for the heritage that is ours and how can we fail to give that the generations to come may have a like inheritance?

Gratitude is a grace we ought to desire. Giving will rid us of selfishness and will be a constant reminder that we must be thankful. Gratitude will cost us something, but all worth-while virtues in life have a price. We want to be thankful and giving is a concrete expression of our gratefulness. Cicero said, "While I would fain have some tincture of all virtues, there is no quality I would rather have, and be thought to have, than gratitude. For it is not only the greatest virtue, but the mother of all the rest." (3) Even Shakespeare urges:

Let never day nor night unhallow'd pass,
But still remember what the Lord hath done. [4]

* * *

Abundant Mercies Demand Response

There is a worthy exhortation given in Hebrews 12:28, "Therefore, receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us cherish thankfulness, so that we may offer to God an acceptable service with godly reverence and awe." (5) Here is a real reason for gratitude. We have been privileged to share in a kingdom that is eternal and that cannot be shaken or destroyed. This

kingdom is ours because of untold sacrifice. It has come to us through the sacrificial process of redemption and we have the gospel because of the blood-marked trails of the saints and the faithful who have preceded us. So we owe a great debt to others and we must be thankful. In fact, our blessings have been so numerous and brought to us at so great a sacrifice that we are eternally indebted.

It is on the basis of what we have received that we ought to give gratefully in return. This is the plea throughout the pages of the New Testament. When giving instructions to the twelve disciples as they were about to go on a mission; Jesus urges them to service by saying, "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). It is the realization of the forgiveness extended: to us that should prompt us to have the proper attitude toward others. Paul says, "Let all bitterness and all passionate feeling, all anger and loud insulting language, be unknown among you-and also every kind of malice. On the contrary learn to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has also forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:31, 32) [6] We are urged to love our brethren because God first loved us. (I John 4:19-21.) To refuse to give when we have received so much would make us nought else but base ingrates. Even the little bird at the water fountain lifts its head heavenward in recognition of the mercies of God.

Our heritage made sacred by sacrifice. We have a valuable lesson on gratitude in one of the interesting incidents in the life of David. The king, though anointed, was yet in exile. He was in hiding in the cave of Adullam. Three of his brave men heard David cry out, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" (II Samuel 23:15). The three men hazarded their lives and broke through the lines of the Philistine army and brought water to David shut up in the cave. But when David was given the water he refused to drink it but poured it out as an offering unto the Lord. He said, "Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?" (II Samuel 23: 17). The hazards and hardships necessary to bring the water to David made it too sacred to be used for mere self-gratification. It had to be used as an offering unto the Lord. Here is a generosity that comes only from genuine gratitude.

David looked upon the water, obtained by the sacrifice of the three men, as too sacred to be used for selfish purposes. He denied himself and poured the water out as an offering. The blessing of the new covenant is ours today because of the blood of Christ. Can we be else than grateful for the blessings that are ours through the sacrifices of our Savior? These benefits we dare not use for mere self-gratification. We must share our blessings with others as an offering unto our God. The Church has been preserved for us by the blood of the saints and it can never be used rightfully for exploitation or selfish gain. But with grateful hearts we must give our lives and our all as an offering unto the Lord.

Generosity springs from gratitude. With the great apostle Paul, generosity is vitally connected to gratitude. In fact, gratitude is the soil from which the flower of Christian generosity springs and thrives. Paul's giving springs from the worthy purposes of his heart and not from the plenty of his purse. Paul exhorted the Corinthian Christians to sacrificial giving. He says, "Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also" (II Corinthians 8:7). He further tells them that giving is a test of our love and sincerity and that they ought to be liberal. Then Paul gives

some rules for giving. He says, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:7).

What is the basis for Paul's attitude of generosity? The answer is found in this great epistle of II Corinthians. Previous to urging upon the Corinthian Christians the matter of sacrificial and liberal giving, we find Paul singing the praises of his faith. In the fifth chapter he is rejoicing over the assurance of immortal glory and the heavenly home. The sixth chapter he closes with the thought of spiritual adoption and the privilege of being a child of God. The seventh chapter he concludes with expressed joy that is his through his converts. In the eighth chapter Paul exhorts to liberality and sacrificial giving.

Service a fruit of gratitude. The basis for his plea is the fact of Christ's sacrifice and humiliation. Paul says, "For 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" (II Corinthians 8:9). These chapters are filled with words of thanksgiving. Paul closes the ninth chapter, in which he gives the rules of giving, with this declaration of gratitude: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (II Corinthians 9:15). Yes, Paul's generosity was a fruit of his genuine gratitude. The apostle was always thankful for Calvary and for the miraculous deliverance that was his on the Damascus road. Paul remembered how the Lord Jesus had been his constant Deliverer in the many crises of his missionary endeavors. The abundant service of the apostle was a fruit of the abounding gratitude of his heart.

* * *

Paul's Rules for Giving

Rules for today. Is it any wonder that Paul should urge upon others that matter of sacrificial giving? The rules which he gives are for us all today. We are to give "not grudgingly." Our giving should not have about it any spirit of reluctance. It should not have the atmosphere of having to part unwillingly with something that one would rather retain. Our giving should have about it the air of a fervently grateful heart. We should give not of "necessity." Some people give because they are drafted or forced to do so. Our liberality should have the spirit of the volunteer. Our giving should not be merely to satisfy the importunity of the appeal for funds. Some give because of social pressure and are afraid of a "loss of face." We ought to give generously. Paul says, "He which soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (II Corinthians 9:6). According to an earlier counsel, we are to give regularly and proportionately. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (I Corinthians 16:2). This giving is periodic, proportionate, providential, and preventive.

True Christian liberality. True Christian liberality, says Paul, is that which springs not from outward compulsion but from the inward constraint of a loving, grateful heart. The gift is the product of desire and devotion and not of duty or demand. The Christian desires, even more than life itself, the smile and approval of God upon His soul. Here in response to our Christian liberality, we have the happy assurance that "God loveth a cheerful giver." When giving to God is without pain or constraint we can feel assured we are dwelling in the sunshine of His love. Oh,

that we might be grateful to God for His liberality toward us and that we might give to Him in a purposeful and meaningful manner. Help us to be truly grateful, Lord!

I gave My life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead;
I gave, I gave My life for thee,
What hast thou giv'n for Me?

And I have brought to thee,
Down from My throne above,
Salvation full and free,
My pardon and My love;
I bring, I bring rich gifts to thee,
what hast thou brought to Me? [7]

* * *

Consider This

1. What benefits do we receive that should make us grateful?
2. How are giving and gratitude vitally related?
3. How long must we continue giving to God?
4. In what way does our religious heritage obligate us? Suggest some ways whereby we can pay our debt.
5. What are Paul's rules for grateful giving?

* * * * *

06 -- THAT WE MIGHT BE SPIRITUAL

The teachings of the Word of God give considerable enlightenment concerning the rewards of the faithful followers of God. Many of the lines on rewards deal with those that are ultimate and final. Other passages tell of blessings which accompany the faithful execution of our stewardship. All the blessings of a good life are not withheld until after death. The paths of righteousness are the best ways to travel even in this present life. God's way is the best way both now and in eternity.

* * *

Promised Blessing

We want to notice several passages in the Old and New Testaments that are related to stewardship. There are the words of Solomon in Proverbs 3:9, 10: "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Again, "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again" (Proverbs 19:17) Jesus says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Again, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38). Then we have perhaps the most familiar passage on tithing in Malachi 3: 10-12. It reads, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts."

A prosperity in return for generosity. The promises that are given in these passages, and in others that are similar, indicate a prosperity in return for generosity. But we must use discrimination here. Is the prosperity promised such as will guarantee that all who are faithful in tithing and stewardship will become materially wealthy? Or are the promised blessings intended to assure the faithful of the necessities of life both spiritually and materially? It does not seem reasonable to believe that God intended to give us the impression that if we began to tithe we would soon gain economic prosperity and ease. We are confident, on the other hand, that if the righteous are faithful in giving tithes and offerings to the Lord, they need not have anxiety about the necessities of life, for the Lord knows What we have need of in life. God will freely and abundantly supply our necessities. The testimony of the Psalmist is in favor of the care of God for the righteous: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalms 37:25).

It has been the testimony of many that when they started tithing their personal and economic life took a turn for the better. There are many reasons for this happy experience. Many say they have tithed and "never missed it." If a man starts to tithe his income, he begins some degree of budgeting. He is not likely to spend as freely and the remaining nine-tenths goes as far as the entire amount did previously. Others say they haven't "nearly as much trouble getting along." Any man can spend nine-tenths with more enjoyment and his life is happier when his conscience is free and he knows that he is not "robbing God." The clear conscience and the promises of God give the faithful tither an assurance that he does not otherwise have, and he faces his tasks with a new confidence and a happy heart. He is now in better condition and has a better mental attitude to do his work and earn his living. With a man's life properly adjusted, he is likely to be a better breadwinner. And beyond all this, God loves and appreciates a cheerful giver. In all our giving our thoughts are not upon the reward but upon the need of being faithful in the matter of our stewardship.

Thomas Kane, the famous tithing advocate, in a tract entitled "What We Owe, and How to Pay It," tells the story of a man who, when he started tithing, was a section hand earning \$3.20 a day. After a year or so of tithing he wrote:

There is blessing everywhere -- in the flour bin, groceries, wages, gardens, sickness -- things happen all unexpected, all in my favor. Today I am sub-foreman at \$160.00 a month. I begin to believe that tithing is the best paying business out, for it has paid me nearly two hundred per cent on money invested. You have a safe bet that I will keep it up.

The question that immediately comes to mind is: "Would this man tithe if God should see fit to take his good job away from him and if reverses should come?"

What is our purpose? Testimonies of this type will tend to emphasize the payment of the tithe for reward in dollars and cents. Should we tithe for the same reason financiers invest in the stock markets? What is the ultimate purpose in tithing -- to gain money or to please God? We cannot afford to urge tithing for the sake only of material gain. Such an emphasis denies the very heart of our Christian faith. R. G. LeTourneau advises: "Don't obey God because it pays, for then it won't pay. But obey Him because you love Him, and then it will pay." If tithing is a principle of the kingdom of God, we should tithe whether circumstances are favorable or adverse; in loss or in gain we should obey God. To such people God promises life's necessities and rich soul blessings.

* * *

Material Gain Is Not Our Goal

When a man tithes for gain in dollars and cents, he ought to examine his motive in the light of the words of Jesus when He said, "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?..... your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matthew 6:30-32). If we allow the motive of gain to creep into our giving we ought to recall the words of Jesus to the rich young ruler: "Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me" (Luke 18:22). These words are surely typical of the One who "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (II Corinthians 8:9).

Jesus gained no material wealth. Jesus was certainly more than a tither. His contribution was not limited to one-tenth or one-third. Jesus gave himself, His all, His life. And we know this generosity did not result in His gain of a counter on banker's row, nor lead to a mansion on a hillside overlooking Jerusalem, nor to a long life and an old age of security and comfort. The self-expenditure of Jesus sent Him in early manhood to the cross of Calvary, and as long as we believe in the Christ of the Cross, we desire no materialistic gains for the giving of our gold to God.

L. M. Hollingsworth tells of the privation endured by the Saviour that we might have hope and riches that are eternal. He shows a little of the poverty to which Jesus was subjected in order to make many rich.

The Cross Was His Own

They borrowed a bed to lay His head
When Christ the Lord came down;
They borrowed the ass in the mountain pass
For Him to ride to town;
But the crown that He wore
And the cross He bore
Were His own--
The Cross was His own.

He borrowed the bread when the crowd He fed
On the grassy mountainside;
He borrowed the dish of broken fish
With which He satisfied;
But the crown that He wore
And the cross He bore
Were His own--
The Cross was His own.

He borrowed a ship in which to sit
To each the multitude;
He borrowed a nest in which to rest;
He had never a home so rude;
But the crown that He wore
And the cross He bore
Were His own
The Cross was His own.

He borrowed a room on His way to the tomb
The Passover lamb to eat;
They borrowed a cave for Him a grave;
They borrowed a winding sheet;
But the crown that He wore
And the cross He bore
Were His own--
The Cross was His own.

The thorns on His head were worn in my stead;
For me the Saviour died;
For guilt of my sin the nails drove in
When Him they crucified;

Though the crown that He wore
And the cross He bore
Were His own
They were rightly mine.

Good motives must be ours. When we come to know Christ and something of His sacrifices, we are anxious that no materialistic motives ever enter into our giving. It is the motive we must guard. Outward acts are governed by inward motives. We know that gifts count but little; motives count much. Back of giving that pleases God there is a good -- a righteous -- giver. The spirit of the giving person is, in the final analysis, what really counts. Motives are the measure of a man. Right and holy motives will find expression in right outward actions.

Good motives and spirituality, then, are at the basis of liberality. Our consistent and systematic giving is a legacy of our faith and a token of our devotion to the Saviour of men. The Greek word for "holy" is "hagios" which literally means "not earthy." Therefore, holy men are other-worldly minded. They are not living for the present only. They are seeking those things which are above; things not temporal, but eternal. The Christian seeks not the things of earth as the ultimate pursuit of life because his affections have been transferred to things above. In an old Methodist hymnbook (1) we have this truth expressed in the words of the hymn:

The World Has Lost Its Charms

Let worldly minds the world pursue;
It has no charms for me:
Once I admired its trifles too,
But grace hath set me free.

Its pleasures can no longer please,
Nor happiness afford;
Far from my heart be joys like these,
Now I have seen the Lord.

As by the light of opening day
The stars are all conceal'd,
So earthly pleasures fade away,
When Jesus is reveal'd.

* * *

Greed Impoverishes the Soul

While generosity bolsters spiritual life, greed brings spiritual impoverishment. No man can continue the course of selfish gain and maintain an effective spiritual life. The end of selfish pursuits is death. The fatal finish of greed is death. Perides, the Greek schoolteacher, tells the following story.

In my own city, in the Isle of Cyprus, dwelt a man who was lord of a great estate. He was blessed with a house in the city, and villas in the country, with comely wife and beautiful children. All went well with him until the lust of gold began to lead him astray.

At first he began to deny his servants money, so that they had nothing with which to buy seed for sowing. Then he began to deny himself clothes to wear and food to eat. Growing greedy for gain, one day he sold his slaves for gold and then he had no one to care for his lands; then exchanging the lands for gold, he lacked for food because he had no gardens, and he and his were often hungry; for more gold he stripped the wall of its pictures and curtains, until his house was as bare as a garret; for gold also he surrendered that sword that was the city's gift to his father.

One day when the slave-trader went to see him, he found the man running his fingers through the golden coin, feasting his eyes upon the golden discs; and in that hour the slave trader offered gold for the man's children and led them away in chains. And at last the hour came when this wretched being tore the wife of his youth from her home, carried her shrieking into the market-place, and sold her to the slave trader. By this time his house was so stuffed with treasure that there was no room in it for its owner, so the miser slept as a watchman upon his own threshold. There, being overtaken by cold, he miserably perished.

This story of the ancient Greek teacher, Perides, is more modern than it seems. There are many in America that are crowding out the finer and nobler things of life for the gain of money. They are selling their souls and the things of true value for the riches that perish. Our day is one of secularism and materialism. Let us beware that we do not become entangled with this present world until we lose sight of the noblest and best in life. The great antidote for greed is a liberal spirit. We must give if we will live. Let us put God first and endeavor to be spiritual Christians.

* * *

Fundamentally Related to Spirituality

Liberality. While spirituality is basic to genuine giving, liberality has its reward in spirituality. That is, giving and our spirituality are vitally related. Someone has said: "Earning maketh an industrious man; spending a well-furnished man; saving a prepared man; giving a blessed man." People, in order to be spiritual, must have an opportunity to give. No church can be spiritual unless the members are cheerful givers. It does not matter how secure a church may be financially; how well its pastor is paid; or how many thousands of dollars it gives easily each year for missionary endeavors, its people must still be educated in stewardship and be urged to assume their full share of the responsibility of the work of God. A living church is a giving church.

Every Christian should bring himself to a realization of a spiritual attitude toward his giving. Many church members today do not give enough of themselves or of their possessions to keep them spiritually healthy. We cannot be spiritual unless we are assuming our part in the redemptive process in history. We, the Church, must take the news of salvation to the needy and lost. This task is dependent, in its success, to a great extent upon our giving. As F. B. Meyer has forcibly told us, "The kingdom of God can never be established by raising money, but it can never be extended without raising money."

Regularity. Regularity, like liberality, contributes to our spirituality. Some do not give sufficiently to be spiritually healthy; others do not give regularly, or systematically, enough to have spiritual health. Regularity in the habits of life contributes much to our physical health. The regularity of the hours of eating, exercising, and sleeping has much to do with our physical well-being. The human system responds to regularity. Likewise, regularity in our attention to the things of God puts health and solidarity into our spiritual lives. Regularity in our attendance upon the means of grace pays dividends. The Sunday school, church, and prayer services must be regularly attended. Likewise, the Christian must also be systematic in giving to his God. The expenses of a church call for regularity. They never go on a vacation. Let us endeavor to make a contribution to our spiritual life by a systematic and regular habit in our giving to the church and to God.

Sacrifice. Sacrifice and spirituality are inseparable. Self-denial has its rewards in the deepening of our spiritual life. "In this world," said Henry Ward Beecher, "it is not what we take up, but what we give up, that makes us rich." Only a deeply spiritual life has power. Someone has said: "If the Church of the Living God were sacrificial she would thrill the world." So many times people do not sacrifice enough to be spiritually effective.

One of the most famous of Dr. John Henry Jowett's illustrations is as follows:

I was crossing the shoulder of one of the lower Alps, the Furren Alp, whose bold, rocky head looks down into the lovely valley of Engleberg. My guide-book told me that I should reach a place where the visible track would cease, but it vouchsafed no further information. I reached the place and with the place the end of the beaten road. For a time I wandered about uncertainly, guided only by the somewhat vague and capricious counsels of a compass. And then I caught sight of what seemed like a splash of blood upon a rock, and then some little distance another similarly splashed, each one I came to bringing into view another further away. And then I inferred that these were to be my dumb guides across the trackless waste. I was to follow the blood marks. By the red road I should reach my destination. [2]

"The red road is the path of noblest influence," Dr. Jowett urged.

Too many times today the Church can say, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing (Revelation 3:17). But God has the same condemnation as in that other day and is concerned about their condition for He knows that the lack of sacrificial giving has made them lukewarm, powerless, and inefficient in the work of God. O God, increase our spirit of sacrifice and self-denial until our spiritual lives are deepened and made powerful for God. No man has the right to the unnecessary luxuries of life until the lost have heard the gospel. A people who would be willing to be sacrificial to that degree would have the spiritual power and force of the early Church that won the victory against paganism and persecution and evil in their day. God grant that we might be spiritual.

Responsibility. The spiritual person is one who assumes his part of the responsibility that rests upon the church to be aggressively evangelistic and to take the gospel to the whole world. The Christian who fails to realize his share in this great task will not become strong spiritually.

Someone has said, "It is responsibility that makes men out of boys." Those who are spiritually stable and strong are those who are assuming their share of the Church's responsibility.

Those sacred vows. The vows we make at the altar of the church are sacred, and the church then becomes our adopted responsibility. You would think that a parent was irresponsible or delinquent if he took care of his neighbor's children to the neglect of his own. Yet there are occasions when an individual's giving has gone into so many channels that the obligation of first regard, his church, has been neglected. Sometimes Christians have put their tithe into so many avenues that in any one place their giving was of little weight. Is not our first duty to our church? It is our responsibility.

We made the following vow at the altar of our church:

Desiring to unite with the Church of the Nazarene, do you covenant to give yourself to the fellowship and work of God in connection with it, as set forth in the General Rules and Special Rules of the Church of the Nazarene? to endeavor in every way to glorify God, by a humble walk, godly conversation, and holy service; devotedly giving of your means; faithful attendance upon the means of grace; and, abstaining from all evil, seek earnestly to perfect holiness of heart and life in the fear of the Lord? (3)

One of the "Special Rules" we accepted in our vow to the church is. as follows:

We believe that the scriptural method of gathering money for the support of the Church is by means of tithes and offerings. We urge that our people adopt tithing as the scriptural and satisfactory plan, that each member do his minimum share in the support of the whole church, local, district, and general. And on the basis of the divine promises to liberal givers, we exhort our people to make freewill offerings, in addition to tithes, as generous as circumstances will permit'

If we would stand by these vows to the church, we would be stronger spiritually.

* * *

The Spiritual Law of Compensation

To give is to live. No man can possibly remain spiritual and refuse to be generous. As surely as there are natural laws which direct and govern life in our physical universe there are spiritual laws which direct the life of the soul. One of these spiritual laws is that we must give in order to live. The farmer gives the seed to the soil in order that he might reap a harvest. It was with this truth in mind that Solomon said, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Proverbs 11:24, 25). Jesus confirms this truth by His words, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38). Here is a law in the realm of the spiritual. Generosity rewards in terms of life and power and victory.

This truth is beautifully illustrated by a story from the life of the prophet Elijah. The ravens had brought him food at the brook Cherith. After a time the brook dried up. Then God directed Elijah to journey to Zarephath and there a widow was to provide him with food. When Elijah arrived and requested food the widow explained that all she had was a handful of meal in the barrel and a little oil in the cruse which she needed for herself and her son. But the prophet prevailed upon her to serve him first and promised that the barrel would not be empty or the cruse of oil fail. The widow obeyed the voice of the prophet and prepared food first for him. And the promise of God through the lips of Elijah proved true. The barrel of meal did not become empty and the cruse of oil did not fail. How much our lives are enriched by giving!

We do not receive larger blessings many times because of hesitancy to give largely. Rabindranath Tagore tells an oriental story of a Hindu devotee who was begging by the wayside and saw the king coming. Looking for rich bounty he was about to hold out his begging bowl when the king in jest anticipated him, and holding out his own hand for a gift said, "What hast thou to give me?" The beggar picked out the least, minutest grain of corn and gave it to the king. That night, when pouring out the contents of his bag, the beggar found one grain of pure gold, just the size of the grain of corn he had given the king. "I bitterly wept," said the beggar afterward, "and wished that I had had the heart to give thee my all, my king."

The greatest reward is in character. The law of spiritual compensation will not fail. There is no possibility of becoming spiritually bankrupt because of the largeness of our giving. After all, no one can go beyond God in the matter of giving. He never fails to return blessing to us. David Livingstone gave much for the dark continent of Africa but the sacrifice was a source of great blessing to him. Harmon Schmelzenbach gave largely for Africa but Africa gave more to him. Dr. Grenfell gave in abundance to Labrador but he received more in return. John G. Paton gave much of his life for the cause of Christ among the cannibals of the South Sea Isles but he was rewarded in far greater measure. This spiritual law does not fail. A noted writer and admirer of Dr. Russell H. Conwell wrote:

The biggest and best thing about Russell Conwell is not his famous lecture, "Acres of Diamonds," or any one of his words or works. It is Russell H. Conwell, a boy who took hold of a mighty discouraging personal outlook and has made it one of the most valuable human estates in the world today. He himself is more inspiring than anything he has ever said or done, despite all he has said and all he has done. [5]

The law of "Give, and --" has hardly a better illustration than the life of the Apostle Paul. He gave much to the cause of Christ when he invaded the continent of Europe with the gospel of Christ, but he was spiritually compensated. Paul gave freely and fully to Christ but the Master did much in return for Paul. Paul sacrificed much but one is awed by the greatness of his own soul and the tremendous influence of his accomplishments.

From Italy to Syria he blazed the trail for Christ. He pulled in the poles of his ancient world and bound them to the cross. In city, town, hamlet, cove, he threw open to the Gentiles the doors of the Christian church and bade them "come in." Along the trail the Grand Old Missionary was whipped, stoned, starved, frozen, shipwrecked, half-drowned, and as if all these were not enough, he was finally beheaded. None of these things could clip his wings, his life he knew he

was eternally safe; his close and devout friendship to the Wonder Man of all ages was his greatest security.

He wrote with frenzied pen; his letters now are Bible books, wellsprings of doctrine, the scaffolding of church theology. Peter's spirit may be the church's rock; Paul's writings are the superstructure, the side walls, and the roof. Self-sacrifice was his life law; Calvary his passion. Paul taught principles rather than rules. He was as courageous as he was faithful, as indifferent to criticism as he was unyielding for righteousness. He is one of truth's dominant heroes, Christianity's noblest martyrs, the New Testament Moses and the most picturesque portrait in the gallery of the soldiers of the cross. [6]

Yes, stewardship does much more than enable a church to meet its obligations and fulfill its mission. Faithfulness in stewardship develops the souls of men. It helps make them strong and spiritual. The penitent thief received life eternal as his physical life ebbed away because he was willing to give himself in self-surrender to the Man on the middle cross. We cannot give of self, talent, time, or money without compensation. May God help us to give sacrificially so that our lives may be enriched and that we might be spiritual.

There is a sea which day by day
Receives the rippling rills,
And streams which flow from the wells of God
Or spring from cedared hills.
But what it thus receives it gives
With glad, unsparing hand;
And a stream more wide, with a deeper tide,
Pours out to the lower land.
But does it lose by giving? -- Nay!
Its shores and beauty see
The life and health and bounteous wealth
Of Galilee.

There is a sea which day by day
Receives a fuller tide;
But all its store it keeps, nor gives
To shore nor sea beside.
What gains its grasping greed? Behold!
Barrenness round its shore;
Its fruit of lust but apples of dust,
Rotten from rind and core.
Its Jordan waters, turned to brine,
Lie heavy as molten lead;
And its awful name does ever proclaim
That sea is Dead.

-- Author Unknown

God's blessing is upon the liberal giver The individual and the church are not to be like a stagnant pond that breeds death but like the reservoir which gives out for the blessing of the community. Liberality gives life; greed brings death. It is a paradox indeed. But the only way to keep the blessings of God is to share them with others. By giving, we gain. James Russell Lowell said:

He is dead whose hand is not open wide
To help the need of a human brother;
He doubles the length of his lifelong ride
Who gives his fortunate place to another;
And a thousand million lives are his
Who carries the world in his sympathies
To give is to live.

* * *

Our Earnest Prayer

Lord, we would be faithful in our giving. We are determined to give liberally that we might grow spiritually. We would give that there may be abundance in the house of the Lord and that we might be spiritually strong.

From lust for gain or greed or gold,
Keep me with high and holy mien,
But if the ships of fortune bring
Some precious cargo clear and clean,
Safeguard me in my stewardship
By glimpses of thy great unseen.

From lust for place or pomp or power,
Save me with pure and passionate pride.
Curb not the hunger of my soul,
But keep ambition sanctified.
Safeguard thy Steward, Lord, each day,
By visions of thy higher way. (7)

* * *

Consider This

1. What are some of the rewards promised to those who give liberally?
2. Should we urge tithing for the purpose of material gain? What are some nobler motives for giving?

3. How are the following related to spirituality: liberality? regularity? sacrifice? responsibility?

4. What is the spiritual law of compensation? How is this law illustrated by the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea?

5. What is the greatest reward of generosity?

* * * * *

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