

GIVING to GOD

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Giving to God

With a song, not a sigh

By

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"The Reason Why"

Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

(2 Cor. 8. 1-5.)

ONE of the most difficult subjects to deal with is that of "Giving", for it can easily lead to argument and controversy, to discussions on law versus grace, and percentages versus all, and so end in no definite action being taken.

To be effective the subject must be lifted far above the plane of controversy to the high level of personal dealing between one's own soul and God, in the light of the Holy Scriptures. Let us put it there, for only there can it be settled satisfactorily. I believe it to be one of the most vital things in the Christian life, and failure to be liberal with God, one of the most prolific causes of spiritual barrenness.

In Matthew 6. 24 Christ says: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Mammon (or money) is the great symbol of materialism, and never before has it been so true a symbol as today. Our attitude toward money has a great deal to do with whether we are serving mammon or God, and the amount of our weekly wages has very little to do with it. A man with £10 a week may be more interested in money than one with £10,000 a year; or a girl with £5 a week than a woman with a house-keeping allowance of £1,000 per annum. "According

to that a man hath," is God's standard; it is not the amount we have, but our attitude towards it that counts.

Many Christians sincerely think they would be more liberal if they had more, but our Lord's greatest example of liberality is that of a poor widow in Mark 12, whose total resources were two mites, which make one farthing. God's basis of testing our liberality is, according to what we now have, and as we all have more than a farthing, what the Bible has to say about giving touches everyone of us.

Christian Tithing is not Derived from the Law of Moses

As the first reference in the Word of God to any subject is usually of great significance, look for a moment at Genesis 14. 17-15. 1. Here we have the first instance of tithing and, note carefully, it happened some 400 years before the law was given and in the time when God was dealing with Abraham on the basis of free grace, entered into by faith; that is, on the same basis as our own relationship to God, which makes us the seed of faithful Abraham (Gal. 3. 7).

Abraham has pursued Chedorlaomer and recaptured all the goods of Sodom and has returned as far as Salem, which we today call Jerusalem. Here he is confronted by two representative men, Melchizedek, King of Salem and priest of the most high God, and the King of Sodom, the representative of the world and its sinful self-indulgence.

Melchizedek, the King Priest, according to Heb. 7 is a type of Christ in resurrection. He gives Abraham bread and wine, symbols of sacrifice, and tells him that it was God Who had given him the victory over his enemy, and Abraham, to acknowledge this indebtedness to God, gave Him a tithe of all the spoils.

Thus the origin of the tithe. It is not something one gives to God that puts God under an obligation to us for our liberality, but is the Scriptural way of acknowledging that we are already indebted to God for the ten tenths. In other words, to give a tithe is the Scriptural method of saying "Thank you" to God for what He has already given to us, our acknowledgment that He is "El Elyon", the "Possessor of heaven and earth", the Bestower of all spiritual and all material blessings.

I go to a home where there is a little girl, five or six years of age and give her a box of chocolates. She straightway disappears, and when she returns her lips and fingers are covered with chocolate. In another home, however, the box is opened at once and the little lassie brings it to me and says, "You have the first one." "Oh! no," I say, "they are for you;" but "Please," she pleads, "you brought them to me, do please have the first one," and helping myself I say, "Thank you, dear." Which child has the warmest spot in my affections, and which is the more likely to get another box of chocolates?

Let us notice too, that Melchizedek was Priest

as well as King. As King, who has the right to dues, he accepts the tithe and then, as Priest, he bears it in as a tribute of thanks to God. Is this not a beautiful illustration of what Christ does with our gifts today?

Then comes the King of Sodom and says, "Abraham, I saw what took place between you and Melchizedek, the representative of God. He gave you the emblems of sacrifice and took a tithe from you; well, I represent the world; I ask for no sacrifice and I give everything to you, and ask for nothing in return. Keep all the gold and goods of Sodom and expend them on yourself." "But," replied Abraham, "I have just been introduced to God under a new title, El Elyon, 'Possessor of heaven and earth'. You have nothing to give; it is all God's and, therefore, only what comes to me from Him can truly be mine. You are not in a position to enrich me even to the extent of a shoe's latchet."

Note what happens in Genesis 15. 1. "After these things" the Lord appears to Abraham, saying "I am thy exceeding great reward." You took the emblems of sacrifice and turned away from the indulgence of Sodom and, by giving a tithe, you acknowledged Me as the One Who alone had blessed you. It is therefore My good pleasure to give MYSELF to you.

Is this not the thought our Lord expresses in Luke 16. 11 where He says: "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" Or, in

other words, if you are unfaithful in money, God will not commit to you spiritual blessings and gifts.

I remember an honoured servant of the Lord, after fifty years' public service, saying: "In all my wide experience I have never met a man who was mean in money matters with God, who was blessed with spiritual gifts." Malachi 3. 10 gives us the same thought: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse," and the promise follows that "the windows of heaven" shall be opened and the blessing poured out; while verse 11 adds that there shall be material reward as well.

Even in God's dealings with His earthly people under Law we have lessons to learn, for 1 Cor. 10. 11 tells us, "All these things happened unto them (Israel) for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come," and to admonish us means to warn us of our faults.

In Exodus 23. 19 the first of the first-fruits of the land is to be brought into the house of the Lord; not what is left over after the rent, and the butcher, and the baker are paid, but the first charge is to be the Lord's portion. To give a definite portion to God as a first charge on the wages, salary, or income, lifts giving to a high level, because the money is first GIVEN TO GOD, and that makes all the difference, for it becomes a transaction between one's self and God; and then guidance is sought about its distribution; whereas if there is no definite portion set aside, money is just given to a work, or

worker, as different matters are brought to one's attention.

Christian Tithing is in Harmony with New Testament Teaching

But there is another way of viewing this important matter—not as a question of GENEROSITY, but as a question of HONESTY. In Malachi 3. 8 God says to His people, "Ye have robbed Me in tithes and offerings." Perhaps when we stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ, it will not be a lack of reward for giving sparingly, but of definite judgment for withholding the Lord's portion. Every Christian would shrink from the disgrace of being charged in a court on earth with robbing his fellow man, but how much more terrible to be charged in heaven with robbing God—yes, He has a claim. 1 Cor. 16. 2 says — "LET EVERY ONE of you lay by him in a store AS GOD HATH PROSPERED HIM."

Let us remember, IF WE PERSIST in failing to give God His portion, there is no forgiveness. We can confess something we HAVE DONE, and be forgiven (1 John 1. 9), but we cannot confess something WE ARE STILL DOING, and be forgiven. God, according to Malachi, withheld spiritual blessing because His people withheld the tithe from Him, and who knows how much of the Church's unspirituality today is because of the withheld portion!

Few realize what a prominent place these truths have in the Word of God. ISRAEL starts with an

individual, Achan by name, robbing God, in Joshua 7, for the gold of Jericho was to go into the Lord's treasury; and Israel ends in Malachi 3 with the whole nation robbing God by withholding the tithe.

The first ended in the death of the individual—the second in the nation being cast off and scattered.

The CHURCH starts in Acts 5 with an individual, Ananias, robbing God, and ends in Rev. 3 with the whole professing church apparently doing the same thing; saying in verse 17 — "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." The proof that she was withholding is seen in Christ's words to her — "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." If she had been giving to God, she would not have been poor.

The first resulted in sudden death (Acts 5. 5), the second in being spued out of Christ's mouth (Rev. 3. 16).

"As God hath prospered him" (1 Cor. 16. 2) means only one thing — that the giving is to be IN PROPORTION OF GOD'S BLESSING. If you can think of a better proportion than ten per cent, that makes you glad when you kneel and tell God about it, then use that percentage, but if not, why not start with 2/- in the £, ten per cent, as Abraham did and, maybe, like him, rise higher and higher till eventually you stand on a Moriah with your ALL on the Altar for God.

May I be permitted to tell you of my personal experience in this matter. I have an old note book which contains these entries:

"Feb. 1st, 1904, age eighteen and a-half, wages £1 per week. I have decided to start giving one tenth to the Lord.

Feb. 12th, 1906. Before money gets a grip of my heart, by the grace of God I enter into the following pledge with my Lord that:

I will give ten per cent of all I earn up to —

If the Lord blesses me with —

I will give fifteen per cent of all I earn.

If the Lord blesses me with —

I will give twenty per cent of all I earn.

If the Lord blesses me with —

I will give twenty-five per cent of all I earn.

The Lord help me to keep this promise for Christ's sake; Who gave all for me."

Followed by my signature.

A later entry reads:

"Sept. 1910, aged twenty-five, I have decided to change the above graduated scale and start now giving half (fifty per cent) of all my earnings."

Now, over seventy years of age, I want to bear testimony that, in spiritual communion and in material things, God has blessed me one hundred-fold, and has graciously entrusted to me a stewardship far beyond my expectations when, as a lad of eighteen, I started to give God a definite portion of my wages.

Get to know El-Elyon, the "Possessor of heaven and earth," Who graciously accepts from us the material things He has first given us, and pours into our lives untold spiritual wealth.

God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.

(2 Cor. 9. 8.)

P.S. I earnestly suggest that you do not wait till you are willing to give fifteen or twenty per cent, but that you start TODAY on Abraham's tithe, and let the future grow out of that Divinely ordained beginning.

R.A.L.

Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

(2 Cor. 8. 11, 12.)

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

(2 Cor. 9. 6, 7.)