

THE PRIVILEGE AND BLESSEDNESS OF GIVING

The provision of the gospel, that is, the catalogue of blessings enumerated in the „good news” is so extensive, that the partakers of them, if not somewhat cautious, are likely to overlook some of the *best* things, and so deprive themselves of some advantages which they might otherwise enjoy.

Another way in which we lose rich blessings is through the error of judging (weighing and measuring) them according to *worldly standards*.

The position of those „of this way,” those who, by „searching the Scriptures daily,” have found that „these things are so,” is so changed from what it was not very long ago, that they have not always, perhaps, comprehended the situation, and so have not perfectly adapted themselves to circumstances.

The calls upon us for pecuniary aid, when attached to societies having a salaried ministry and costly services, were so extensive, and sometimes so burdensome (Matt. 23:4), that when the burden was removed, there was a tendency to run to the other extreme, and carry no burden at all, whereas we should not forget that we are still to „bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

The fact that our public services are conducted, and our assemblies convened and dismissed without any collections to defray expenses, may have caused some to conclude, without much thought upon the subject, that there are no expenses, but a little thought will at once dispel such a conclusion and show that some are bearing *so much* pecuniary burden, for the sake of others, that their financial sinews are shrinking from over-work and exhaustion, and thus their usefulness is impaired; and not only so, but those who have not been conscious of the surroundings and have not fully taken in the situation, have been losers from lack of exercise in that direction.

It has been our lot to be so situated during a good portion of the last three years, as to become somewhat acquainted with the working of some parts of „this body,” and so have come to the conclusion that very likely many of the *individuals* who make up the *members* of this body would, if their attention were called to it, *cheerfully* contribute that which would be for the growth and perfection of the whole, which is „knit together in love” (Col. 2:2,19). When we consider the glory and extent of the blessings which the great Head of the Church has wrought out for the world, and then remember that we are now walking by faith and *not by sight*, it is not hard to fully concur with the statement made by the Spirit through Paul, that it is *more* blessed to give than to receive.

(Acts 20:35). It is a blessed truth that the entire employment of the true Church, „which is his body,” may be summarized in the word giving.

When the glorious import of the *Good News* comes to be understood and fully comprehended, and we accept of the conditions of the „high calling,” and receive the „adoption of sons,” we then begin our *everlasting, blessed and eternal* employment of giving. Having given *ourselves* freely and fully, we do not find it hard to give everything else that we have, following the example of him who gave himself *for us*, and of his Father who gave the Son, and will „with him also freely give us all things.” In fact it is our *glory* to give, and we shall never be *impoverished* while the Almighty God is pouring into the vessel from which we are taking out. The princely endowment of his body, the Church, is such, that its grandeur and glory are manifested chiefly, if not wholly, through its munificence. Let us, then, consider a few thoughts bearing upon this subject which are important at this time.

We notice from the statement made in the last WATCH TOWER, that the expenditures of the last year have overrun the receipts well *toward one-half*, which, it is fair to suppose, would not have been the case if the brethren generally had been fully aware of the needs of the „Tract Fund.” We were much surprised at the statement furnished; for, knowing some things in connection with the publishing department, we had supposed the expenditures *must be considerably* more, and also that the receipts would have been proportionate.

As it has been brought to our notice thus in the Jan. number, it is right to expect that the deficiency will not long exist; but lest we might, in the multiplicity of our cares and other thoughts, *forget* it, it will be well for us to write upon our memory some scriptural reasons for giving, together with a few thoughts naturally growing out of them. „Freely ye have received, freely give.” (Matt. 10:8). This was said to those who were sent out to „the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” and referred to the gift of healing, etc., which had been imparted freely to them, and which they were to freely use for the good of their fellowmen; but, on the other hand, they were told to make no provision for their own physical necessities; (9th and 10th verses) showing, we think, that they were expected to be so thoroughly engaged in that work, together with proclaiming „the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” that they would *not have time* to „labor for the meat that perishes,” and would be provided with what their physical needs required by those to whom they ministered. This illustrates the present condition of things; we are again in the harvest time; theirs was the harvest of the Jewish age, ours the harvest of the gospel age.

Some of our brethren are giving their *whole* time and available means to the work, some traveling and preaching the good news, some distributing tracts and papers, and some superintending the publication of papers and tracts, but all for the same purpose, „for the edifying of the body of

Christ," which is an *indispensable* work, especially at this time. Surely we will not let it lack efficiency for want of pecuniary aid. We have a precedent for helping our preaching brethren on their way, in the example of Paul, who expected to be brought on his way by the brethren at Rome. (Rom. 15:24). Now, we would like to make a suggestion which was suggested to us while reading Luke 11:7-9, and Luke 10:7; it is the propriety of our traveling (teaching and lecturing) brethren laying aside all reserve and asking our brethren where they are ministering (serving) for such things as they need, and for those *others* needing where they minister in other places. We think the brethren *served* would be *pleased to have them do so*, and we think their needs would be promptly supplied; for it would be understood that it is *not* asking alms—"for the *laborer* is *worthy* of his hire"—and if the laborer is not *hired*, if the labor is desired and is *accepted*, it is *equivalent to hire*.

Any one who is teaching by accommodation of the brethren, would not, in our opinion, be infringing upon any rule of courtesy if he should, in an unobtrusive manner, make his needs known.

Some, perhaps, might be found who would think that because Paul labored sometimes with „his own hands” to supply his needs and those who were with him, our preaching brethren might do the same. No doubt that every one of these teachers or preachers would be quite as willing to labor with hands as head, if the will of the Lord was so, but the time, of course, would have to be taken from that which otherwise would be filled with gospel work; so, *to the brethren visited*, whether by person or papers and books, it would prove an *actual loss*.

We think Paul refers to this fact (of „laboring with his own hands”) as a gentle reminder that he had found it *necessary* to do so, *else* his needs would have been unprovided for, thus showing their duty.

Whether they felt any compunction or not for laying this *necessity* upon him, and realized the *loss* which *they* had thus sustained, they doubtless felt *no less* sad on account of the mention of it in connection with the thought that they should „see his face no more,” and it *might* have had something to do with their weeping as they „fell upon his neck and kissed him.” (Acts 20:34,37).

But how can the requirements of the laborers and the expenses of publications be met? For „not many mighty” (nor rich), „not many noble are called,” and „God hath chosen the *poor* of this world, rich in faith.” How can better directions be given in answer to the last question than are given in the 16th chap. of 1 Cor., 2d verse? „Upon the first day of the week let *every one of you* lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings (collections) when I come.”

In connection with the expenses spoken of, there are the Lord's poor,

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who are poorer than we, and who, in connection with the ministry of the word, should not be forgotten. How appropriate this direction of Paul's to be *systematic* in the work of giving, and systematic in the manner of providing the *means* to give, and systematic as to the *time* of „laying by the funds for that purpose.”

There are very few so poor as to be unable to contribute *something* which shall help to spread the good news of God's plan to save the world; the glad tidings that the works of the devil are to be destroyed. If we cannot give *much*, let us not deliberately conclude that we *cannot give anything*, but let us be encouraged with the thought of the value which the Master set upon „two mites,” *if we cannot give more*. (Luke 21:2,3,4).

It is blessed to think that the Lord does not estimate the amount we give according to a worldly standard, but according to the intent and desire of the giver.

There is a good lesson and much truth conveyed in the story of the wealthy old Scotchman, who, when the contribution box was passed, put in what he supposed to be a penny, but which proved to be a gold piece of some considerable value; when he had made the discovery, but too late to correct it, and wished credit for the amount actually put in, the shrewd deacon told him they could give him credit for no more than the Lord did, which was only for that which he *intended* to put in.

Some might be inclined to think that was unfair of the Lord and the deacon, but the Lord balances the account by reversing the order, and giving credit for *more* than is put in *where the desire exceeds the ability*.

The writer's desire is that our minds (his own as well) may be refreshed upon this subject, and „stirred up by way of remembrance.” „If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” If, therefore, ye have been unfaithful in the unrighteous mammon, Who will commit to your trust *the true riches*? (Luke 16:11). How can we expect to be entrusted with heavenly things while we set a higher value on earthly things? To be entrusted with treasures that wax not old while we cling with tenacity to treasures that decay? We who have been so sumptuously fed, both by visitation of the teaching brethren and through the medium of the publications, would sadly feel it if those sources of supply were cut off and withdrawn from lack of funds to be carried forward.

But we will not anticipate any such thing, feeling sure that the bare mention of the matter will quicken us, and cause us to obey an injunction which, perhaps through carelessness, had been

neglected, but which is as imperative as other divine precepts. We are persuaded that these suggestions will be carefully considered and acted upon, and that all will *cheerfully* do what they can as an evidence of their *love of the truth*, for „the Lord loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). „He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity (Rom. 12:8). Some additional thoughts upon this subject may be had by reading the last short article in „Food for Thinking Christians.” That the Lord will help us *all* to see the privilege and blessedness of giving is the prayer of the writer.

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[We are not beggars—none of God’s children should be; and we have studiously avoided the „*dunning*,” so common among others. Yet, we have felt that some of the saints were in danger of losing the blessing above mentioned. When the above article from Bro. S. came to hand (unexpectedly to us), we concluded it to be expedient for you, as well as providential, and hence publish it. But remember that Jehovah is not impoverished, and his cause shall not suffer from lack of funds, even though he so arrange as to make our assistance *seem* needful. „He will carry it through,” and the blessing will be to those who are faithful stewards—faithful in little or faithful in much.—ED.]

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