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Mr. Henry Green

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I WILL GIVE LIBERALLY.

I HAVE a number of REASONS.

1. The objects for which I am called to give are *great and noble*. It is the cause of letters and religion, of man and of God, for which my donations are wanted. The interests of time and eternity both are involved in it. I cannot give calculatingly and sparingly to such a cause, and for such objects.

2. Liberal donations are *needed*. The cause not only *deserves* them, but *requires* them. It takes a great deal to keep the present operations agoing; and we should every year extend the works. Do you not know that we have the world to go over, and that the millennium is just at hand? Behold, the morning of that day is getting bright. We can almost see the sun peering above the horizon.

3. I can *afford* to give liberally. My means either now enable me, or, by economy and self-denial, may be so increased as to enable me to give liberally. I will give liberally, so long as I do not resort to economy and self-denial; and if I do resort to them, that will enable me to give liberally.

4. I will give liberally, because I have *received* liberally. God has given liberally. He has not only filled my cup, but made it to run over. He has given me "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over." I will imitate him in my gifts to others, and especially in my donations to his cause.

5. I am liberal in my *expenditures*, and therefore I will be in my *donations*. Why should I *spend* much, and *give* little? Is spending the more blessed? No; it is giving that is said to be more blessed. The conduct of a man whose expenditures are large, and his donations small, is literally *monstrous*. I will not act so out of all proportion. If I must retrench, I will retrench from my expenditures, and not from my benefactions.

6. The *time for giving is short*, and therefore I will give liberally, while I have the opportunity of giving at all. Soon I shall be compelled to have done giving.

7. A *blessing* is promised to liberal giving, and I want it. "The liberal soul shall be made fat;" therefore I will be liberal. "And he that watereth shall be watered also himself;" therefore I will water. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth;" therefore I will scatter; and not sparingly, but bountifully: for "he which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully."

8. I will give liberally, because it is not a clear gift; it is a *loan*. "He that hath pity upon the poor, *lendeth* unto the Lord"—lendeth to the best of paymasters, on the best security, and at the highest rate of interest; for the Lord renders *double*, aye, a *hundred-fold*, *in this life*, to say nothing of the life to come. I will lend him liberally.

9. I will give liberally, because however *hard* the *times* may be with me, they are harder with those who have not the Gospel.

10. I will give liberally, because there are many who would give liberally, but *cannot*; and many that can, and *will not*. It is so much the more necessary, therefore, that those should, who are both able and inclined. I used to say, "I will not give liberally, because others do not. There is a richer man than I am who does not give so much as I do." But now, from the same premises, I will draw the opposite conclusion. Because others do *not* give liberally, I will.

11. I have sometimes tried giving liberally, and I do not believe I have *ever lost any thing* by it. I have seen others try it, and they did not seem to lose any thing by it; and, on the whole, I think a man is in no great danger of losing, who puts liberally into the treasury of the Lord and possessor of all things, who is himself the giver of every good and perfect gift.

12. And finally, when I ask myself if I shall ever be *sorry* for giving liberally, I hear from within me a prompt and most decided negative, "No, never."

Wherefore, I conclude that I will give liberally. And now I will take care that I do not nullify my resolution, by putting an *illiberal* construction on *liberally*. I will under-

stand it as meaning *freely, cheerfully, largely*; or, in other words, as meaning what I *ought* to give, and *something more*. I will tell you how I will do. An object being presented to me, when I have ascertained what *justice* requires me to give, I will add something, lest, through insidious selfishness, I may have underrated my ability; and that if I err, I may be sure to err on the right side. Then I will add a little to my donation, out of *generosity*. And when I have counted out what justice requires, and what generosity of her free-will offers, then I will think of Him who, "though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich;" and I say not that I will add a little more, but how can I keep back any thing?

"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."

This is my resolution, and these are my reasons for it. Reader, what is your resolution? Will you not give liberally too? But perhaps you hesitate, and have some objections to suggest. Peradventure you say, for it is often said, "THE CALLS ARE SO MANY." Well, let us see how that is, and what sort of an objection it constitutes. *Are they really so many?* Reckon them up. Perhaps they are not, after all, so many as you imagine. Any thing which annoys us at intervals, is apt to be considered as coming oftener than it really does. When a man has rent to pay, how frequently quarter-day seems to come round. But it is not so with him who is the receiver.

But if the calls are many, are they more than the *wants*? And ought they not to be as many? Would you have the calls fewer than the wants? That would never do. In that case some wants would never be supplied. Besides, you should consider who makes or permits the wants—and therefore the calls—to be so many, lest your complaint cast a reflection on God.

If the calls are so many, and we must decline some of them, which shall they be? Widows and orphans, and the poor generally, you dare not, as you fear God, exclude from your charities. Will you refuse the call of the *Bible* agent, or the *Tract* agent. Will you withhold from the cause of *Sabbath-schools*, or of *Temperance*; from *Foreign Missions*,

or from *Home Missions*, or from both? Or will you contribute to send out and support missionaries, but refuse to aid in their *education*? For my part, I do not know what calls to except; and therefore I judge the safer way to be, to refuse none.

If the calls for *donations* are many, the calls for *expenditures* are more; and yet we are patient of these last. And perhaps we not only spend, but *waste*, in more ways than we give. Then it should be remembered, that if the calls are so many, the importunity *will not last long*. Not more than some seventy or eighty years does it ever continue. If it is an annoyance, yet you can bear it a few years. In eternity you will not receive these or any other calls. And if they vex you, yet consider, they very differently affect others. Yonder is a poor woman reading the Bible which your money paid for. There is another, weeping over a Tract, for which she is indebted to your donation. There is a third, blessing the good people who support domestic missions; and there is a heathen mother, who, perhaps, would, ere this, have immolated her child, if your contribution had not helped to send her the Gospel.

But perhaps you say, I would meet all these calls—I would give liberally, but “I CAN’T AFFORD IT.” This is another common apology. Let us look at it. *Can* you not afford it? It may be you are mistaken. Perhaps you can afford it. The heart is deceitful. We are very apt to say we can’t do things which we can do. But admitting that you cannot afford it, that is no sufficient apology. There is another thing besides the *fact* of the inability to be considered—the *cause* of the inability. *Why* can you not afford it? *Might* you not have the ability?

Perhaps you do not *earn* as much as you might. If that be the case, your not being able to afford it is no excuse. All you have to do is, to earn more, and then you can afford it. Only be a little more *industrious*, and a little more enterprising, and the difficulty will vanish. And why should not a man earn to *give*, as well as earn to *eat, drink, and put on*? Are these last more blessed than giving?

But perhaps the case is, that you do not *save* as much as you might. You earn enough, but you do not economically use it; and so it is for want of economy that you can-

not afford it. Neither is this any valid apology. You have only to practise economy, and then you will be able to exercise liberality. And is it not worth a man's while to *save*, that he may have it in his power to *give*?

It may be that I have not yet suggested the true cause of your inability. Perhaps you *wear* so much of your money that it leaves you without the means of giving. Or the reason you can't afford it may be found, if not in your apparel, yet in the style of your furniture, or in the service of your table, or in the expensiveness of your equipage. Now, if any one of these suppositions be correct, you see you are left without excuse. All you have to do is, to retrench in these respects, and then you can afford it. If you neither *can*, nor *could* afford it, then, and then only, do you make out a good apology. If you can earn no more, save no more, and spend no less, then you are excused—you can't afford it.

But it is my opinion, there are few persons who cannot better afford to give than *not* to give. There is no loss in giving. There is great gain in it. Giving is *sowing*. What farmer cannot afford to sow? The money that is bestowed in charity is *seed* money; and he that soweth bountifully, shall *reap* also bountifully. It is poor policy to be parsimonious in the use of seed money.

It will grieve me not a little, if any one, after reading all this, shall, instead of coming into the resolution I recommend, adopt another, which a certain member of the church once expressed in these words: "I HAVE DONE GIVING." The words made a great impression on my mind. Done giving, said I to myself. Has he, indeed? Has he given all? Has the disciple imitated the Master? Was he rich, and has he become poor for the sake of others, that they, through his poverty, might be rich? Oh no, he has something left yet—perhaps is rich still—perhaps, through the favor of Providence, richer at this moment than he would have been had he never given any thing. Who knows but his honoring the Lord with his substance has been the means of filling his barns with plenty? It may be bad policy in him to stop giving.

"Done giving." Why? Is there no more need of giving? Is every want abundantly supplied? Is the whole

population of our country furnished with the means of grace? Is the world evangelized? Have missionaries visited every shore? Is the Bible translated into every language, and distributed in every land—a copy in every family—and every member of every family taught to read it? Are the accommodations for widows and orphans as ample as they should be? Is there a house of refuge for every class of the human family that needs one? Have the poor ceased from the land? Oh no; there are no such good reasons as these for ceasing to give.

Well, does the man feel worse for having given away so much? Has it made him unhappy? Is his experience different from that of the Lord Jesus, who said, “It is more *blessed* to give, than to receive?”

Or has he come to the conclusion to give no more, from having found that what has been given hitherto has done no good? And is it so, that no good has been done by all the Bibles published, and all the Tracts distributed, and all the missionaries sent abroad into our own land, and into the world, and all the schools established, and all the children taught to read, and all the civilization introduced, and all the asylums opened, and all the poor relieved? No good been done! Great good has been done by what has been given; but still more will be done by what shall be given hereafter. Bibles and Tracts can now be printed at a cheaper rate than heretofore; and the conductors of our benevolent institutions have learned, by experience, that economy which can be learned in no other way. And yet now, when a dollar goes so much farther than ever before in doing good, will a man say, “I have done giving?” It is just the time to go on giving.

Had I, for a moment, the ear of him who says he has done giving, I would ask him if he has done *receiving*—if God has done giving to him.

“Done giving.” Done lending to the Lord. Done sowing and watering. Done offering the sacrifices with which God is well pleased. Done making the widow’s heart leap for joy, and bringing on himself the blessing of them that were ready to perish! So this is his determination. Well, I am sorry—sorry for the sake of the poor, and the sick, and the orphan, and the ignorant, and the heathen. But no less sorry am I for the man’s own sake. Poor man!

poor, with all his affluence; for there is really no one more poor than he who, with the ability to give, has not the inclination. He is enriched with abundance, but not with liberality.

“Done giving.” Well, then, if he will not give his money, he must *keep* it. And yet how short the time he can keep it. Had he not better freely give away some of it, than wait for it all to be taken from him? Reader, do you not think so? Then resolve for yourself, “I will give liberally.”

Are you not a Christian? Christians used to give liberally. Why should they not now? The primitive believers were bountiful. Many of them parted with *all* their worldly goods for the sake of Christ—sold their possessions and laid the entire proceeds at the apostles’ feet. Now, I do not say that we should do the same. But it strikes me, that if they gave their *principal*, we might, at least, afford to contribute our *interest*.

A remarkable example of liberality we find recorded in the 8th and 9th chapters of Paul’s 2d Epistle to the Corinthians, where, wishing to excite the Corinthians to the exercise of bountifulness, he tells them what their brethren of Macedonia had done—how liberally they had given.

They gave, though they were *very poor*—in “deep poverty,” ch. 8 : 2. They had the best of all excuses for not giving. Truly, *they* could not afford it. But having it in their heart to give, they contrived, by dint of some ingenuity, and perhaps no little self-denial, to get it into their power to give. Such liberal souls had they, that it made their very poverty abound unto the riches of their liberality. I have sometimes thought, if their deep poverty so abounded, what would not their *great riches* have done, had they been as wealthy as some *American* Christians?

Well, having, though so very poor, contrived to bring it within their power to give, what then did these Christians do? Why, they not only went to the full extent of their ability, but even beyond it. “For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power,” they gave. The disciples of our day do not give *more* than they are able. I wish it could be said that they give according to their ability.

But though they gave beyond their ability, they did not

give beyond their disposition. They gave *willingly*. They had it in their hearts to give even more. It was done, "not grudgingly, or of necessity." No one said, as it is sometimes said now, "Well, I suppose I *must* give you something." Nor was their willingness the effect of any appeals made to them. They were not put up to it. They were "*willing of themselves*." It was entirely spontaneous. The apostles had not to entreat them to give; but they had to entreat the apostles to receive their gift. "Praying us with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift." It is not so now. Now, the *begging* is on the other side. What Christians these were. They were of the same mind with Christ. They agreed with him in regard to its being more blessed to give than to receive. Few modern disciples appear to accord with the Master in that sentiment.

Do you wonder how these Christians came to be such cheerful and liberal givers? I will tell you. It was owing to "the grace of God bestowed on them," as it is related in verse 1. That always makes people liberal. Grace is a generous principle. There is nothing opens the heart like it. Under its influence they "first gave their own selves to the Lord." Now, when a man has given away *himself*, it is easy to give what only appertains to him. The great matter is, to give the *person*; the *property* follows as a matter of course; indeed, it is included in the first gift. The reason some give no more property to the Lord's cause is, that they have never given themselves to him. They have not begun right. Reader, have you begun right? Have you consecrated and made over your person to the Lord? Have you given liberally in that respect? He who has not given *himself*, has not imitated Christ, for he gave himself. HE GAVE LIBERALLY. He was rich—O how rich! And he became poor—who *so* poor?—and for our sakes. The Macedonians felt the force of this persuasive consideration. This love of Christ constrained them. They were emulous to do like him. What Christian will not yield himself to the cogency of this love, and not only give liberally of what he *has*, but make a full surrender of all he *is*, TO CHRIST AND HIS CAUSE?