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I. Literary.

FINDING THE BOOK OF THE LAW.

BY ROBERT WHITTET, SR.

“When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he rent his clothes.”—2 KINGS xxii. 11.

To know not we're amenable to law—
 A law we wot not of, nor yet can tell
 Aught of its precepts, nor how far they're well
Or ill; to feel no sense of solemn awe
Inspiring rev'rence for their maker, or to draw
 Obedience, and then—as does light dispel
 Night's darkness, and show the hidden pits that dwell
Unthought of in the way, and every flaw,
Revealing perils that entail defeat—
 How startling 'tis, though past the danger point,
 To see the risks we've run! and when once more
We feel that safety is assured, how sweet
 To let the heart in gushing joy anoint
 Itself in gratitude, and faith restore!

THE GRACE OF GIVING.

BY REV. JERE WITHERSPOON, D. D.

THE Dean of Canterbury having been asked to discuss in the leading article of a theological monthly the subject, "*How Best to Guide the Laity in Good Works?*" sent into the publishers his exposition of the third chapter of the book of Nehemiah. A similar request made of the writer, to prepare an article on the "Grace of Giving," has induced a somewhat extended search for literature on the subject, and led to the conclusion that Paul is a standard author on beneficence—systematic beneficence—and that in all writings, secular or sacred, nothing better in the way of a treatise upon Christian liberality can be found than we have in chapters eighth and ninth of Paul's second letter to Corinth. The expounder of the two chapters who would succeed in reproducing Paul as he follows his theme through this portion of his epistle, presenting it in every variety of light and appealing to many of the strongest motives that can sway the heart and open the hand in generosity, would do God's cause a good service, make the whole church his debtor, and furnish Christian libraries with a standard on this subject.

Two impressions are received from the careful reading of the two chapters devoted to the collection in Corinth for the poor Christians in Jerusalem.

First, Paul's zeal in the matter is in evidence all the way through. He is anxious to secure a good offering, for he knows that a good, round sum sent at that juncture from prosperous Corinth of the Gentiles to impoverished Jerusalem, the cradle of the new faith, would be a double blessing. It would relieve distress among God's people, and weld together in closer affiliation and sympathy the Jewish and Gentile sections of the one church of Christ. Kindness speaks all languages and is at home in all climes. As she goes forth in seasons of disaster with medicine, food, money and clothing to do her non-sectional work, prejudice and strife must weaken and the scars of war must heal. The Jewish element in the early church resented the influence of

Gentile Christianity, and the Gentile converts had not as great charity toward their Hebrew brethren as they might have felt. Paul is desirous of having the church at Corinth make a good offering to cement unity and illustrate brotherly kindness.

Second, From reading the chapters I infer that Paul saw the difficulty of his task. When we see a boatman bending his body and straining every muscle as he plies his oars, we judge that tide, wind and current are against him. Paul has a difficulty to meet, as appears from the fact that he puts forth a masterly effort to convince the judgment, move the heart, arouse conscience, stir the instinct of generous rivalry, sweep all objections out of the way and evoke a liberal response to his appeal. It is not an easy matter to induce the church to do her very best in giving to the Lord. It is not uncommon in church courts, where the responsibility of a shortage in collections is being fixed, to hear pastors apologize for their people coming behind in this particular. I have heard some go so far as to say that God's people will always do their duty in giving money when they are properly informed as to the needs of the work. This cannot be true if liberality be what Paul says it is—a *grace*. The apostle classes it with "faith," with "utterance," with "knowledge," and with earnest service, *diligence*; and we have no more warrant for saying that Christians will do their full duty in benevolence when properly informed than we have to say that they fail in no duty if their leaders will only tell them what they must do. If a failure in a collection argues always a pastor's failure in his duty to inform the people, let some one explain Paul's laborious effort to move his brethren at Corinth, not only telling them what he wanted with their gifts, but by piling argument upon argument to convince them of the propriety of the act, and plying their hearts with motives as sacred as those drawn from the condescension and sufferings of Jesus. God's people, it must be confessed, would do a great deal better if pastors were always zealous and alert; but the church is no more likely to bring this grace of liberality to perfection than she is to abound in faith, knowledge or diligence. With the church of Corinth this was the weak point. The apostle is pleading for a symmetrical growth. Unequal development in the parts of an organism produces a freak—a monstrosity. In the march to Canaan the small tribe of Dan "went hindmost," bringing up the rear, and

in the procession of religious virtues tending toward the perfect Christian character, like little Dan among the tribes, this grace of giving usually comes limping behind. Ye abound in everything else. "*See that ye abound in this grace also.*" The subject of giving may be discussed under these two heads: There is involved, first, the question of MOTIVE, and, second, the question of METHOD. Take first—

I. *The motive of giving.* This comes first because without it your methods for collecting and distributing funds gathered from the people will amount to little. In some way you must touch the mainspring of a holy and constraining love for God and man or you will have no money to disburse. A board of deacons, except you supply the means, has no more power to keep a church out of debt than your butler has to procure delicacies for your table without a purse which you fill. The first step toward improving the generosity of a people is to improve the motive, which word I use to stand for everything that tends to stimulate the practice of a virtue or the performance of a duty. God's people must be brought to think and feel properly before they will give as they ought.

First, You may encourage this grace *by prayer.* Paul opens the subject by saying, "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia." Graces come from a God of grace, and they come in answer to prayer. A feature of a service I witnessed in a church of another denomination in our city impressed me no little. The time came for the offering. The special object of this collection was stated in well-chosen words. At this point in the service the young men who were to gather the offerings advanced with the collection plates in hand to the front of the pulpit and stood with bowed heads while prayer was made to God, in whose hands are all human hearts and hands, that as these young men went forth to gather what God's people were about to offer that their hands might be opened to the good cause needing help, and that their hearts might be liberally disposed. Certainly that prayer was in place. The grace bestowed on Macedonia made the poverty of the people blossom out in benevolence. If our prayers should go with our gifts, they ought to go before them.

Second, This grace may be stimulated by clearly defining the need for its exercise. The occasion of the collection to be taken

up in the Corinthian Church was the sufferings of God's people in Jerusalem. A godly lady, with ample means, and whose memory is kept green by the good things she did for love's sake, was accustomed to say to her pastor that she was thankful to him for calling her attention to worthy objects of charity. She relied on his judgment in such matters, and knew that what he commended was deserving. She was glad of an opportunity to do a kindly act. Why not! Phillips Brooks says: "Every man is at once beneficiary and benefactor. Every good deed you do to men you ought to be thankful to God for giving you an opportunity of doing it, and they ought to be right thankful to you for doing it." Pastors ought to guard their people against imposition, and deserve their confidence in the merit of any cause they plead before them for their gifts.

Third, It will encourage this grace to urge it upon God's people both as duty and privilege. It is a duty; begin there. Let men be taught their stewardship in respect to money as everything else. "The gold and the silver are his"; impress that truth. "Ye are bought with a price"; let God's children lay hold on that truth and follow where it leads. The apostle who laid down the promise, God has bought us, states the conclusion, "*Therefore glorify him with your bodies and spirits, which are his.*" Ply conscience with arguments until that witness cries out, "I ought! I must!" When conscience owns her debt and says, "I must, for duty's sake, offer to God," let the heart be plied with appeals of love and gratitude, and another voice you will hear sounding out from the depths of man's soul saying, "I must, for love's sake, bring an offering to God!" The "must" of conscience is the constraint of duty; the "must" of the heart is the debt of love.

"Joy is a duty, so with golden lore
 The Hebrew Rabbis taught in days of yore,
 And happy human hearts heard in their speech
 Almost the highest wisdom man can reach,
 But one bright peak still rises far above,
 And there the Master stood whose name was Love,
 Saying to those whom heavy tasks employ,
 Life is divine when duty is a joy."

Fourth, Teach men that giving to God in the right spirit is worship. "Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first

fruits of all thine increase." "Proportion thy charity," says Quarles, "to the strength of thy estate, lest God should proportion thy estate to the weakness of thy charity." Bring all the tithes into the storehouse. To fail in this is robbery of God. In the furnishings of every church certain articles stand for the parts of the worship. The pulpit, with the written word and living teacher, represents instruction and prayer in which the minister leads. The hymn-book stands for the praises of Israel, which Jehovah inhabits. The communion table, inscribed, "Do this in remembrance of me," signifies the Eucharist, and the collection plates the offerings of the people.

Little need be said of—

II. *Methods* in giving to the Lord when the *motive* is right. Almost any method of raising money will succeed if you can put behind it to make it work the seal of a consecrated heart. When Philippi wanted to make a contribution to Paul's support while he was detained in the barracks of the imperial guard at Rome, they sent Epaphroditus all the way to Rome from Philippi to carry it. Any method we employ ought to embody the idea of *system*. "Lay by each week" is the apostolic rule. The envelope plan, as it is called, is admirably suited to the weekly contribution. Our method should aim at general coöperation, reaching every member in a particular church. In a collection amounting to \$1,500, secured by the writer on a certain occasion, only one gift reached \$100, while the larger part of the amount was given in sums below \$25, two hundred and twenty-five people coöperating. The method employed should seek to secure *proportionate* giving. "As the Lord has prospered you." It may be your duty to give more or less to God's cause this year than last. God will teach you his will.

With the faithful performance of this duty is linked a great blessing. When Israel in the wilderness had offered for the construction of the tabernacle, and all was finished after the pattern received in the holy mount, then the cloud which symbolized the guiding Presence rested upon the tabernacle.

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