

When You Give

Giving is not just a spiritual discipline,
It is understanding who we are
And where we came from
Giving is foundational to a life in Christ—
Following him in giving all!

Hollis McGehee

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Giving Is Living!

It truly is more blessed to
Give than to receive.

Jesus gave all for us.
May we follow him.

We will never be more alive
Than when we die to ourselves
And live all-in for Jesus Christ.

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Introduction

THIS IS A BOOK ON understanding giving, not so much a ‘how to’ as a ‘why’ giving is our only true response to what God has done and is doing for us with every breath we breathe. God is our ultimate example in giving! Everything we have—life here and now, eternal life, breath, the beat of our heart—every good thing is a gift from God. God is the foundation for all our giving!

What is our response to all God has given to us? It’s not a percentage of anything; our only response to God is to give ourselves fully and finally to Him—to give ourselves away! The simple fact is this: we are not our own to begin with. When we give ourselves fully to God, we are simply giving to God what he first gave us. Love is not that we loved God but that he loved us and gave his Son that we might have life—amen.

God didn’t give to us when we deserved it, but “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). We give ourselves to God as we trust and obey him, and he wants us to give all of our love to him and to our neighbors as ourselves—not based on what we/they deserve but based on who God is and all that God has done and is doing for each and every one of us.

Giving is living, and living is dying to ourselves and fully trusting in God with all our hearts—giving ourselves to him, not doing things our way but doing life God’s way: GIVING!

¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (James 1:17)

Author's Note

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”

—2 Corinthians 8:9

HAVING LIVED FOR SIXTY-SIX YEARS on this earth—having seen the faithfulness and consistency of God and his giving to me and to all—I now see giving is what God has done for us from the moment of creation to the present moment. God has given us all that we have, and he is giving us life and breath and even the beat of our hearts at this very moment. What good do we have that is not a gift from God? When we understand who God is, who we are, and what He has done for us, how can we not embrace giving as the primary purpose of living—giving ourselves to God, loving him above all else, and giving love to our neighbors just as ourselves?

Either we embrace giving as living or we reject Christ's life-giving death and resurrection! Giving is what God does for us every moment of every day—from eternity past, to human conception, to birth, to this very moment as we draw breath in our breasts. Knowing God and knowing ourselves leads to the inescapable conclusion that whatever we appear to have is ours

only by God's grace and only for the purpose of serving him. As we joyfully release all to God, to whom it all belongs, we are instantly rich and free beyond anything we ever imagined. Giving is the real living, and the more we love and trust God and give all we have and all we are to him, the more we begin to understand and experience the true joy, freedom, and peace of a life in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Chapter 1

God Gives

God has been giving since he created us and gave us this world.

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

—James 1:17

GOD HAS GIVEN US ALL things! It certainly was not from me or you that we received the moon, the stars, the mountains, the plains, the rivers, and the oceans. I have not created or given you (nor you me) an eagle flying high, an ant working steadily, the light and warmth of the sun, nor the beauty of human relationships. God has given us all good things. Where might we start to look at God’s giving? Where else but here:

¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷ And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸ And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶ And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷ And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw

that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” ²¹So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. ²⁵And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷*So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

²⁸And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” ²⁹And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth and

to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Genesis 1:1–31)

God created us; he made us for a relationship with himself. But we violated that relationship and separated ourselves from God in our sin.

⁹But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” ¹¹He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹²The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent,

*“Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.*

¹⁵*I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.”*

¹⁶To the woman he said,

*“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be contrary to your husband,
but he shall rule over you.”*

¹⁷And to Adam he said,

*“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,
‘You shall not eat of it,’
cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
¹⁹By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:9–19)*

God yet did not cease to be our giver. God has continued to give us all that is needed. Throughout the canon of Scripture we see that we have over and over turned away from God—but God has not turned on us. Over and over, he gives us what is needed: a way out, a way home, bread in the wilderness, water from rocks in the desert, protection, rest, a hiding place. God is the originator of giving, and he has given all to us. We have acted wickedly, and yet God has given the God-created gift of his grace—giving us what we do not deserve. We recognize this truth in life, and we see it lived out in Scripture, that rarely will anyone give his or her life for another, but God shows his love for us this way:

⁸ But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

This is another gift of God—his mercy. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve (death) but rather giving us life, which clearly we do not deserve. It can only be a gift because God gives it at our lowest point—we have turned from God, the giver of all good and perfect gifts, and gone our own way.

²³ For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people. (Titus 2:11)

Although we deserved death, God gave us Life—Jesus Christ!

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16–17)

Yes, God loves you and me so much that he gave his Son. This is the gift—there is no other gift that matters apart from this gift. We have nothing if we don’t have life. When we have life in Christ Jesus, there is nothing else needed, and we must stand ready and willing to give ourselves—and all that we are—away to God and others as he directs us through his Word. The evidence that supports this truth is found here:

¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:11–12)

This life is purely a gift from God. Our only part in eternal life is as unworthy recipients—beneficiaries of the love and grace of God.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8–9)

Look at these same verses from the Amplified Bible:

⁸ For it is by grace [God's remarkable compassion and favor drawing you to Christ] that you have been saved [actually delivered from judgment and given eternal life] through faith. And this [salvation] is not of yourselves [not through your own effort], but it is the [undeserved, gracious] gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of [your] works [nor your attempts to keep the Law], so that no one will [be able to] boast or take credit in any way [for his salvation]. (Ephesians 2:8–9, AMP)

We need to realize that literally everything we have—not just our eternal life, but our present life, breath, heartbeat, water, bread, the amazing gift of the human body, which is beyond the scientist's ability to come close to fully comprehending, and, least but far from last, the beauty of the world we live in, which is perfectly placed in order to sustain our lives—ALL are given by God freely. Every day—minute by minute—we are sustained by a gracious and loving Savior.

³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:3)

God is the originator of giving. God has given us all that we have and all that we are. God did not give based on what we deserved, thanks be to God, but based on his perfect will and his character. God is the Giver, and God's giving is our example for how we should live our lives. God has mandated our giving of love to him and others first and above all—but even if we looked past God's command, how can we not clearly see and respond to God as the source and foundation of everything we have and respond by giving ourselves over to him?

Prayer

Lord, for everything I am and all that I have, I give you thanks. I see that you have given me an example of how to live my life. Help me, Lord, to be a giver—one who gives to you and to others with joy as I reflect on the truth that all I have and all I am is from you. I pray through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Chapter 2

Knowing and Trusting God

Knowing who God is gives us the key to trusting God, and trusting God is the doorway to following God in giving.

“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.”
(Psalm 20:7)

KNOWING GOD IS THE HIGHEST and greatest knowledge we can ever attain. We can never know God in his fullness, but to know him fully as he presents himself to us should be both our most sacred duty and our supreme joy. We read in Proverbs 1:

⁷ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.
(Proverbs 1:7)

To fear the Lord is to recognize that God is God and all that comes with that. God is necessarily eternal—the uncreated Creator of all. Because God is your Creator, he knows you (and

me) better, far better, than we know ourselves. When God acts, he does so with complete knowledge and perfect love. God is love—not the emotional kind we typically think of, but the true love that God is committed to good because God is good in every way and in all things, for all time and for all eternity.

When we know that God is perfect in all his ways, we can trust God in all his ways. God has written us a “love letter” that we refer to as the Holy Bible or the Canon of Scripture. This letter was penned by humans, but it originates with God:

¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16–17)

Neither God nor his Word ever changes; it is impossible for God to change or for him to change what he says. He cannot “get better” because he is already perfect. He cannot fall back because he is perfect in every way so there is nothing to fall back from. We can—we must—build our lives on the truth of who God is, and the Word of God reveals the nature of God: he never acts inconsistently with his perfect nature.

There certainly is the option to reject God as God—but then why would you bother to read a book about following God in giving if you denied the very existence of God? However, God’s call for unwavering faith is anything but a call for blind faith. The evidence for God—for who he is and what he has done—is not just sufficient but overwhelming and completely compelling. There is little or no dispute that the world as we know it came into existence at a specific point in time. We may argue about the point in time, but that the world did not exist and then it did is no longer doubted by persons equipped with the available evidence. So, the question is, do you believe that from nothing came something and that something somehow randomly through time became you and the world you live in? To

believe that would be a perfect example of blind faith. On the other hand, we see that God has already told us that at a certain moment in time when nothing existed other than God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit—one true God), the earth and the heavens and man and woman were created—and the man and woman were created in the image of God. This has always been the testimony of the Bible.

Think on this for a few moments: how did our planet come to be in the only place it could possibly be and be capable of sustaining life as we know it? How is it that the gravitational pull is just what it needs to be so that we can stand and walk and live on this planet that is presently spinning at about 1,000 miles per hour while orbiting the sun at 67,000 miles per hour? If you printed out the information from one human genome, it would take a stack of printing paper 420 feet tall! You can believe the speculation of those who say it all just happened, or you can believe the intelligent designer who created it all—God. He is who he says he is, and he does what he says he will do. I know because I have witnessed firsthand his work in my life and the lives of many others—not human improvement but complete transformations. We are works in progress, but the work God has done is God sized.

God is dependable. You can trust God, who has caused the sun to rise and the moon to set since time began. You can trust the God who spoke us into creation:

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:1–3)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In

him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. . . . ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1–5, 14)

God commands us to trust him—to know that he is God and we can rely on everything about him, that we must not give in to our flawed human understanding where it conflicts with the Word of God.

⁵*Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.*

⁶*In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.*

⁷*Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.*

⁸*It will be healing to your flesh
and refreshment to your bones. (Proverbs 3:5–8)*

This command and our understanding of it and our desire to comply are foundational to giving. God doesn't need anything from us, but, as our Creator, he has commanded us to give because he knows it is critical to our relationship with him. If we will not trust God with the things he has given us, then we will not trust him with our very souls. God made us. He made us to be in relationship with him. Our relationship with God, through Christ Jesus by grace, is through faith—trusting God completely. We are not speaking here of our performance, but our willingness to exercise the faith God himself has given us. God's call on us is a call to Christlikeness:

²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:29)

The very core of Christlikeness is to empty ourselves of ourselves. To lay it all on the line for God because we know that anything we value that is of the earth is temporary and wholly inadequate to meet our true needs. Our real joy and true meaning are found when we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33). He advises us not to set our hearts on temporary things but to set them on things above because where your heart is, there your treasure will be also (Matthew 6:21). You want your earthly treasures in safe places, how much more so treasures that are forever—your soul. There is no other safe place but Christ Jesus.

When we realize that we can and indeed must put our trust in God, the next question is, trust God in what? The answer is easy—trust God in all things, for all time, and for all eternity. All right, I am poised to trust in God completely, but what does trusting God look like? Trusting God means we know that:

1. He is God and he is all powerful, all knowing, ever present, never changing, all loving, all gracious, eternal, and infinite;
2. Every command, every promise, every word of God is right and totally reliable;
3. God has spoken, and we can and must trust and obey the Word of God!

This gets us to the subject at hand—giving! What has God said about giving? God has said much about giving, and we will move there with the following chapters. God said, “When you give,” so we know we are to give, but let’s dig in and see what to give, how much to give, to whom shall we give, and when should we not give.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, our hope and our trust are in you. We believe, but help our unbelief. We need your help not to waver or fall back in our trust in you. You are God, and you have the words of life; to whom else shall we turn? Lord, we trust you, but help us to trust every day, all day, in every way in the inerrant Word you have given us through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Chapter 3

We Are His

***The purpose of our lives is not our lives
but God's honor, and we honor God best
when we trust and obey him most.***

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

—1 Corinthians 6:19–20

Living Life Purposefully

The saddest and most beautiful things in the world are together simply this: that which meets not its own purpose and that which does. We did not create ourselves nor are we at the epicenter of meaning; it is God who made us and placed us here for his own purposes. To travel through life wondering why everything does not go the way we want it is to live a life of constant disappointment—and to miss the whole purpose of our existence.

I was made (you were made) by God for God.

This is not a thing to lament, but the greatest joy ever—the joy of living a life of purpose. In God’s economy there is no hour or even moment of boredom because God is always before us and we can seek him, honor him, thank him, love him, bless him, serve him, pray to him, live for him every moment of every day for all of our earthly lives. There is no thrill in the natural world that matches the thrill, the peace, the sense of purpose, the feeling of being alive that is ours when we are living in God’s purpose and will.

Here is a picture of us living out our purpose here: it is the feeling of “the wind of God’s Spirit blowing upon the sails of our affections that we may be carried further in our heavenly voyage.”¹

We have likely all said something like “I just wish I knew my real purpose . . .” Our purpose is to love and serve God, and when we do, we feel the wind of his Spirit blowing upon our sails and are carried further along in our earthly journey on our heavenly voyage.

The apostle Paul identified himself as a servant (a *doulos* slave) of the Lord Jesus Christ, and compared to knowing Christ, he counted all else in life as meaningless (Philippians 3:7–9). In fact, it is obvious that Paul’s one desire and great joy was coming to the end of himself (self-focused) and losing himself in Christ Jesus (Christ-focused). To one who has not had this pleasure, it sounds as pure foolishness, but to one who knows the presence of Christ (Galatians 2:20), to be yielded to the control of God in one’s own life is to plant your spiritual flag on Everest or the moon—or heaven itself!

Eric Liddell, Olympic runner during the 1920s, said, “When I run, I feel his pleasure.” This picture from Eric’s life is a picture of man’s two great duties—to understand his duty station (his day-to-day place/means of service) and to please God. Serving God means both—using the gifts God has given you but

1 Thomas Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm* (Grand Rapids, MI: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2019), 35.

remembering always and ultimately everything is for God's glory. We are not our own; we were bought at a price. We live for the glory of God, and there is no greater place to be than at the feet of Jesus—down on our knees before God is the most high place.

What we look up to as the ultimate provides no real peace and purpose apart from Jesus Christ. We could cite many examples, but think of Deion Sanders, who won Super Bowls with two NFL teams and played Major League Baseball as well. Deion (“Prime Time”) had it all, yet he found himself contemplating suicide. He went home and read Romans 10:9: “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” He did, he was, and the purpose of his life radiates out from him today—he feels God's pleasure in being yielded to God's will and way.

What Is Our Real Purpose in Life?

What is our purpose? According to the Westminster Larger Catechism:

“Question 1: What is the chief and highest end of man? Answer: Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever.”²

From God's interaction with Adam and Eve, we see that the purpose of life is to love and enjoy God—to be in a love relationship with God, who has provided all. From the life of Jesus Christ, we know that even though he himself was fully God, he was also fully man, and in his manhood he did only the will of the Father (John 5:19). If Jesus, being fully God, found his place and pleasure in trusting and obeying God, so must I.

What is God's will for you and for me? That can be found in this exchange between Jesus and a lawyer:

2 The Westminster Larger Catechism, 1648, http://www.freepresbyterian.org/uploads/Larger_Catechism.pdf.

³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:36–40)

To love God is to trust God (he is who he says, he does what he promises, he never changes, he is good and perfect in every way) and to know that in trusting God and obeying God, I find my true purpose and my greatest peace and pleasure.

God gave us the simplest of guidelines: love God and love people. Then he clarified even further by saying:

²⁰ If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. (1 John 4:20)

The Expression of Our Ultimate Purpose

How do you best “love your neighbor as yourself”? It’s found in the Golden Rule:

¹² So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

In Matthew 22:36–40, Jesus said that the two great commandments were the foundation for all of the Law and the Prophets (all the Word of God that existed at the time). In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:12), Jesus drew the focus

ever sharper and said, “Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

This is a book about giving. What do we all want to be given? Eternal life, food when we are hungry, shelter when we are exposed, love when we are unloved, comfort when we are hurting, peace when we are in distress, care when we are sick, protection when we are in danger, hope when we are hopeless, meaning when we feel useless. If this is what we want, how can we not likewise do for others?

Prayer

Lord, help me to see and know my purpose here—to love and serve you by loving and giving to others as the need arises and as you give me means and opportunity to love and serve, to share, to do unto others as I would have them do unto me through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Chapter 4

All We Have Is from God

*Everything we have and all that
we are is from God.*

“For from him and through him and to him are
all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

—Romans 11:36

Who Owns What?

In my former life, as a state court judge and as a practicing attorney, I daily saw people fighting over things—the battles were intensely fierce. If I went back and revisited every single case right now, I suspect that most (virtually all) would not recall what the fight was over, or if they do, it would no longer be important to them. Why is this? We think that “things” will solve our problems, but they never ever do. It doesn’t matter what the thing is: a much desired date, an automobile, a title, attention or respect from a person or group, money, property. It never satisfies.

We will never be satisfied by the things of this world because we are not created for this world. Just as all things are *from* God

and *through* God, so also are all things *to* God. At the top of the list of things to God is our very own lives—our souls. Nothing will solve the soul problem we all have; only a new birth—a birth into Christ Jesus—will satisfy. We are not our own; we were bought with a price. Nothing we put in the hole to be occupied by Jesus will ever meet the desperate cry coming from that empty aching space that desperately needs the living Savior. There is nothing wrong with having and enjoying the things of this world; they are gifts from God (James 1:17). We hold them for God, but we have to do the holding—not the other way around, with our “things” having a hold on us—and the grip we have on them needs to be a loose grip. Never seek to cling for life to anything that will not matter in life. Ultimately only Jesus matters; He is the way and the truth and the life (John 14:6)!

What Would God Have Me Do with My Stuff?

How would God have us handle the talents and gifts he gives us? For his honor and glory. How is God most honored? When I love and obey him, I show my love for him by my trust and my obedience (John 14:15). So, knowing that all I have is from God, I need to give freely as God has freely given to me:

⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Matthew 10:8, AMP)

God Has Given Us All—How Can We Not Give in Return?

We have freely received everything; we must also freely give. Jesus said the poor will be with you always (Mark 14:7); there is no need to worry that there are none to whom we can give our love, our help, our resources, our talents. The poor, the needy, the “least of these” are always with us. So, what keeps us from

giving? It has been my experience that we don't give because we fail to recognize these eternal and unchangeable truths:

- God is the giver of all gifts (money, things, love).
- All that we have is not our own—not even our lives—it is all his!
- The having of anything or anybody is, at best, very temporary.
- The giving of ourselves and our resources to others is joyous and has eternal implications (not earning salvation but honoring God).

How many sad and empty rich people are there in this world? We need not look at statistics; just look around at those with much who are desperately seeking more and promptly forgetting about the more they now have as they seek to get more—more that they hope will fill up the deficiency they keep finding in the more they already have. More is not the answer—Jesus Christ is the answer! The accumulation of things is a vicious and unrelenting cycle that in the end only yields emptiness and heartache. It misses the point of our existence: the chief end of man and woman is to love and serve God.

Prayer

Lord, help me to get this—all good things are from you and to you—ultimately yours and for you. There is nothing this world has to offer that can satisfy my soul. Only Jesus is the answer, and to him I come and to him I yield myself even now for Christ's sake. Amen.

Chapter 5

Giving Is Living, and Living Is Dying to Self

Giving is the essence of life; the path to giving is entered through the gate of dying to ourselves so we can live for God.

“For God so [greatly] loved and dearly prized the world, that He [even] gave His [One and] only begotten Son, so that whoever believes and trusts in Him [as Savior] shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

—John 3:16 (AMP)

Jesus Has Given Us an Example

What is the picture of our Savior? What did he do? He, who has always existed in perfect unity with the Father and Holy Spirit, willed to come in human flesh. He came as a baby to a humble couple, being born in a stable. He lived a simple life; he was the son of a carpenter, and he became a carpenter himself. Even though he was fully God and fully man—Jesus “emptied” himself . . . that is, he humbled himself to be obedient to the Father

to die in my place and your place; he knew no sin; he was and is Almighty God; he spoke the world into existence—he gave his life that you and I might have life!

Jesus Gave and Is Giving—So Must We

So when Jesus says, “When you give” (Matthew 6:3), he speaks about that which he himself knows everything. He is not speaking abstractly or hypothetically in saying to us “when you give.” Jesus paid it all—he paid for your sin and mine, for the sin of the whole world—Jesus gave himself.

What are we called to give? What does he mean when he says, “When you give”? Jesus is our example. Jesus gave it all. He gave his life. What more could he give? What must I give? What must you give? Our selves, our lives, our hearts, our minds, our time, our talents, our resources. Lord, help me to give myself away so you can use me. Jesus, you gave all; help me to follow you.

¹⁶ By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.
(1 John 3:16)

The Real Gift for Us to Give Is Ourselves

When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, which is also a letter to you and me, he got to a point in his letter—I can use my divine imagination to think what he might have been thinking—as the Lord led him in his thinking: *therefore* (in light of all that God has done for us) *how could we not* offer ourselves to God as living sacrifices!

¹² I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
(Romans 12:1)

When we are born again, we are placing our trust fully in Jesus Christ. This is the first time of giving ourselves over to God. But then something happens, and we begin to take little pieces back. In my life, it is a daily process of giving myself away, but it is also a thing I must be very intentional about. I needed a mark to represent the end of Hollis—one I can go back to over and over. This is how that happened for me.

On December 17, 2016, God spoke (into my spirit) for the third time in my life. This time I really listened, and that very night I wrote a letter and tendered my resignation to the Chief Justice, advising him that THE CHIEF JUSTICE called and I could not resist his call yet again. By God's grace, I trusted and obeyed him (finally). But a few weeks into "Yes, Lord, your will be done," while on a daily walk in the woods, I felt God leading me to make the following commitment, which I recorded in my daily journal:

Prayer Circle of My Life

Lord, at 10:12 a.m. on 1.9.17 in a circle drawn by my walking staff under the big-cone pine tree on Black Creek Trail in De Soto National Forest, I declare:

I am yours!

All I am.

All I have.

All of my hopes and dreams.

All of my resources.

All of my gifts.

I am yours!

Turn me inside out for you—your kingdom, your glory.

All of me.

Please take all of me.

Can't I see I am nothing without you.

I give you the part that once was my heart.

Please receive all of me.

I want nothing but to do your will.

Lord, help me to not look back.

May the rest of my earthly life be a circle of prayer leading up to heaven.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing and acceptable to you.

Lord, I call this tree and this circle and all who read this as witnesses against me if all that I am and all that I have and all of my days are not committed to you. In Jesus's name, amen.

God the Father was not a reluctant creator; He held back nothing in creation—He went all-in to create a magnificently beautiful and perfectly suited earth for us. Abraham did not hold back anything when he laid it all on the line with God and obeyed as he offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Jesus held back nothing when he became sin that you and I might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus because of what he did for us. God's call on us is to offer ourselves—all that we have and all that we are—withholding nothing.

A few weeks later I decided I needed to create a permanent marker to my commitment to give myself fully over to the Lord, and so I did what a lawyer knows to do to transfer something—I deeded myself to the Lord Jesus Christ:

(insert photo of deed)

The Lord Jesus Christ laid down his life. He gave his life for you and me. God calls us to offer ourselves to him, to go all-in for Jesus. When we give ourselves fully to the Lord, we can trust him to direct our paths.

Prayer

Lord, you have given all to me. How can I not give myself fully over to you? Lord, help me today to give myself away so that you can use me. Lord, I am not my own. I acknowledge I belong to you. Help me to go all-in for Jesus. Amen

Chapter 6

All-In for God

There is no way to trust and obey God “a little bit” or even “mostly”; there is only all in or out. We must each honestly ask where we are with God.

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

—Romans 12:1

IS MY LIFE DIVIDED UP into parts such as spiritual, economic, recreational, and so forth? NO! I have one life, and it is from God and it is to God. My every breath is a gift from God. Dare I take a break from breathing? It is so important to see and understand (as much as is possible by us) the one true God, who exists in three persons: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. God is who he says and does what he says, and he calls us to live looking to, trusting in, and obeying him. This is not a burden; God’s plan is a loving and successful blueprint for our lives. Yes, we can “go our own way,” but my way and God’s way never cross paths, and to live my way is to live permanently and eternally separated from the

One who made me and sustains me and loves me more than I love myself.

No one has said this more clearly than missionary C. T. Studd: “Only one life ’twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.” Jesus said, “As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). So, where are our priorities in life—self or God? I have failed this test more than I can recall or care to say, and even now I fall far short—but each day I get up and “shoot my arrow” in the direction of being all-in for Jesus. There is no relationship other than the one of being all-in; there is no way to “kind of” trust and obey God. Either I am following Jesus or I am not. Jesus said, “When you give,” and to live our lives doing anything other than giving

- Ourselves
- Our talents/gifts
- Our resources
- Our time

All that we have and all that we are to loving and following after Jesus is to disobey. When I fail to fully obey, I am fully disobeying. Lord, help me to go all-in for you daily.

Do you think maybe I am overselling this point? Am I going too far? Am I just a fanatic who doesn’t understand what it means to be a reasonable Christian? Let’s look for our answer in the only place we can look with absolute certainty and clarity—the living and active Word of God (Hebrews 4:12). What has God said about us being all-in?

³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return

for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:34–38)

Notice who he is speaking to—“the crowd.” Translated, that is you and me. “If anyone would come after me” means “If anyone would be my follower”—in other words, a Christ follower, a Christian. If you “save” your life, you keep your love, time, talent, and resources to yourself, then you lose all—plus your very life. But whoever “loses his life” puts Jesus first in his/her life. What good have you done yourself to squeeze your pennies and forfeit your eternal soul? And whoever does not acknowledge God and his commands with obedience now, he will deny and reject when he comes again—meaning eternal separation from God.

The idea of being all-in definitely did not originate with me or with anyone other than Jesus himself, who says you are either with me all the way or against me.

Jesus gave all, and he calls us to follow him—we, too, are to give all, to be all-in, to give what we have and all that we are to Jesus Christ. He will direct us in a path of stewardship that will result in a much better retirement plan than anyone else has ever conceived or ever will. The benefits of following Jesus—being all-in—are the very best for now, and the long-term return is truly “out of this world”! All-in for Jesus—the only way to go!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, you, O Lord, are the Giver of all good things. You have given peace and life everlasting, breath and food and sunlight and water. You have so loved me that you gave your Son. Lord, help me today to give myself fully to your Son. Lord, help me to be all-in for Jesus Christ. Amen.

Chapter 7

What Does God Say About Giving?

God has been speaking to us by example since creation. God has spoken to us in his Living Word, and his message is not if but when you give!

“Bring health to the sick. Raise the dead. Touch the untouchables. Kick out the demons. You have been treated generously, so live generously.”

—Matthew 10:8 (MSG)

IN GOD’S LOVE LETTER TO US, the Holy Bible, he says over and over that we are to give freely and liberally—so it goes without saying, we cannot possibly begin to address all God has said about giving in this short chapter. God says more about the poor and giving than any other subject I can find. There are well over two thousand verses that deal with the issues of caring for and giving to the poor. One clear rule of Scripture is this: when God repeats himself, we’d better pay close attention. When we see God repeat himself more than two thousand times, we’d better

be laser focused on what God is saying! Another scriptural truth is this: if it is important to God, it had better be important to us. Nowhere in all of Scripture is anything repeated as often as our duty to give, to care for the poor, the “least of these.”

Almost three hundred years ago, Jonathan Edwards said, “Where have we any command in the Bible laid down in stronger terms, and in a more peremptory (indisputable) urgent manner, than the command of giving to the poor?”³ Jonathan Edwards was a very conservative Puritan preacher from the 1700s, and he said there is no command in all the Bible as irrefutable and clear as the command of giving to the poor.

More recently, Timothy Keller, a pastor in New York City, said this about Jonathan Edwards’s message on giving to the poor: “He said there is **nothing clearer and stronger in the Bible than our duty for care and involvement with the poor**. He said, **when you become a Christian, there is nothing clearer in God’s will for you**. The reason that struck me is I know very few people who talk that way. Almost everybody says care for the poor is an option for Christians. It is a department in the church. It’s a committee. Some people want to be on that committee. **But here’s Jonathan Edwards who comes along and says there is nothing clearer in the Bible. There is nothing mentioned more often. There’s nothing mentioned more strongly. There’s nothing mentioned more clearly. There’s nothing more incapable of refusal. There’s nothing more incontrovertible than the church’s duty of care and involvement with the poor.**”⁴

What has God said about giving and the poor? God has said a lot and is saying to us today, “When you give . . .” God has given and is giving to us in every way. God is our ultimate example of giving and clearly commands that we, too, are called to give.

3 Jonathan Edwards, “Christian Charity,” January 1732, <http://www.biblebb.com/files/edwards/charity.htm>.

4 Timothy Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*, Manhattan, NY: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-gospel-and-the-poor>.

Jesus gave us this parable—the story of the Good Samaritan—to show us how to respond to those in need.

³³ “But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” ³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.” (Luke 10:33–37)

Here Jesus has a Samaritan (a hater of Jews, who is hated by the Jews) stop and provide aid to a Jewish person whom other Jews, religious Jews, had passed by and ignored. What was the duty Jesus gave as an example? Meeting all the needs and leaving more money for future needs, and he even added to that, if additional needs arise, please see to them, and I will reimburse you when I come back through. Jesus says give until the need is fully met, but what Jesus is showing us is not new.

⁷ If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, ⁸ but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. ⁹ Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, “The seventh year, the year of release is near,” and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the LORD against you, and you be guilty of sin. ¹⁰ You shall give to him freely, and your heart

shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. ¹¹ For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, “You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.” (Deuteronomy 15:7–11)

Who is it that we should give to? Clearly, Jesus gave us no limitation in this illustration. We are to give based on the need and not target people who look, think, act, or live like we do. No! Jesus makes our target audience very clear:

³¹ When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.” ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?” ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

⁴¹ Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave

me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.” ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?” ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, “Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.” ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (Matthew 25:31–46)

We can generate all sorts of excuses not to give, right? “I am not giving *my* money for people who are lazy, no-account, addicts, winos . . .” I have the privilege of helping people on the streets of New Orleans, and there are times when I feel that way myself. I am not immune to those and other negative thoughts. However, here is how God has used those thoughts with me—to bring to my mind what a pain I have been to him in not listening, not helping myself, and on and on. In other words, God shows me how he gives (life, breath, grace) to me daily while I am not loving him with all my heart, not loving my neighbor as myself, not rejoicing in the Lord. I am reminded of how effective God’s grace is in my life every day and how I, too, am called to be gracious, to do for the “least of these” as I go about my life. That what I have is from God and not for me as much as for God—to glorify him in my thoughts, words, and actions—and all with a heavy dose of freely giving because I have freely received.

I love the powerful words in this song by Carol Owens:

*God forgave my sin in Jesus’ name.
I’ve been born again in Jesus’ name
And in Jesus’ name I come to you
To share his love as he told me to.*

*He said, "Freely, freely
You have received
Freely, freely give.
Go in my name,
And because you believe
Others will know that I live."⁵*

Prayer

Lord, you have given freely to me. You have given me life. You have given me love. You have provided all that is needed for me. You care for me by day and by night. You are caring for me now, and you will care for me eternally in Christ Jesus. Help me, Lord, to give generously to you and to all you bring to my pathway. In Jesus's name, amen.

5 Carol Owens, "Freely, Freely," Bud John Songs (ASCAP) (admin. by EMI CMG Publishing), 1972.

Chapter 8

Money Matters

*Money matters in money matters,
but money never matters in God matters
(only the heart matters in God matters).*

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
—Matthew 6:21

IN MONEY MATTERS, MONEY MATTERS, but in God’s economy, money doesn’t matter—but the condition of our hearts about money matters a lot. Does God say anything about money, and if so, what does God say about money? God has a whole lot to say about money even though in his economy money doesn’t matter. In fact, there are more than 2,300 verses in the Bible about money—eleven of the thirty-nine parables in the Bible are related to money. Money matters in money matters!

What am I saying here—is this a play on words? Money matters in money matters but not in God’s economy. We can clearly see the truth of this in how Jesus responded to money:

- Jesus turned over the money changers' tables and scattered their money (John 2:15).
- On being asked about paying tax, Jesus said, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Luke 20:25, NIV).
- Jesus watched people put money in the offering box. Some people put in large sums, but a poor widow put in two small copper coins, and Jesus said she gave more because of her heart—she was all-in (Mark 12:41–44).
- Jesus told the story of a rich young ruler who wanted to be declared right in God's eyes, and he was doing well until Jesus suggested he sell all he had and give it to the poor and come and follow Jesus. The issue was not that the young man had a lot of money but that he treasured his money above all else (Luke 18:18–30).
- Jesus, in his greatest sermon, said you cannot serve God and money (Matthew 6:24).

God is interested in our hearts, not our pocketbooks—but how we handle our pocketbooks reveals the true condition of our hearts. So money matters in money matters but not in God's economy. In God's economy the only way money matters is in money matters revealing where our hearts are in reference to the money. If our treasure is here (money/things), then our treasure cannot be in heaven. We cannot serve God and money!

The Bible shows us from the beginning of time in creation up to this very moment that God has given us everything needed for life. God is our example of giving and the model for us to seek after. We see that Jesus laid down his life for us. We read that where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also. We pour ourselves into the things we treasure—whatever is important to us. For a Christian (I'm not speaking here of religious people but of those who are in a love relationship with the one true

God through faith in Jesus Christ alone), we can have only one treasure, and it must be God.

The heart that serves the Lord Jesus Christ has to be an undivided heart; a divided heart means a “double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8). Here is how committed Jesus said his followers are to be:

²⁵ Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:25–27)

Then Jesus told this story about the rich young man:

¹⁷ And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” ²⁰ And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.” ²¹ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” ²² Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (Mark 10:17–22)

Did Jesus tell him to sell all and give to the poor because money is bad? No! He was looking at the young man’s heart and knew that the money was where this young man’s treasure

resided. Here is the whole thing in a nutshell: anything that comes between man and God is “bad” . . . not bad in itself but money becomes “bad” in how we handle it or rather by allowing it to handle us. We can’t love God and money!

In this story, Jesus was sitting nearby as people were putting their money in the collection box, and look at what happened and how Jesus sees money as a reflection of our hearts:

⁴¹And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴²And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. ⁴³And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. ⁴⁴For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.” (Mark 12:41–44)

The religious people counting the money were more pleased by the donations of the rich. However, Jesus was only interested in the people’s hearts, and the heart of the poor widow, like all of her money—all two coins, was all-in for Jesus!

God wants us to see that what matters in money matters is not the money matters but the heart condition. God says he loves cheerful givers (2 Corinthians 9:7). How we treat our money—and, in fact, how we handle all of our resources—is a sure indicator of how we see ourselves and God. If we know God for who he really is, then we know that all we have and all we are is from God! It is God’s to start with—how would we withhold his own from him? Yes, money matters in money matters, but money doesn’t matter in God’s economy—only our heart’s condition toward money.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, give me the heart of the poor widow. May my heart be pure toward you, all-in for Jesus. May my heart and my treasure be in the Lord Jesus Christ and none else. Amen.

Chapter 9

But What If . . .

All the excuses we come up with to not give . . . We don't give to get. We don't even give because we got. We give because God said so, and that is the most logical reason ever from the Creator of logic.

“If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?”

—James 2:15–16

HERE ARE OUR BEST EXCUSES not to give to our neighbor—completely debunked!

How many excuses can we give for not helping someone?

- I didn't know him.
- She's not trying to help herself.
- I think he's an addict.
- She's never held a job.

- They are from another country.
- I helped someone before, and I never got a blessing.

What if Jesus employed the same strategy we have for giving to his journey to save us? We would be the most hopeless of all hopeless. But Jesus did not make excuses; he made a way for you and me, even in our sins, to be reconciled to God. Jesus warned us about making anything earthly our treasure because we always give our hearts to the things we treasure most (Matthew 6:21). Jesus also said, “Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them” (Matthew 7:12). That means treat your neighbor as you want to be treated. But who is my neighbor? Here is what Jesus said to someone who asked, “Who is my neighbor?”

²⁵And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” ²⁷And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

²⁹But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵And the next day he took

out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?”³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.” (Luke 10:25–37)

Using our imagination, we can hear the responses of those who passed by the injured man and continued on their merry way. The Levite might have said, “I wasn’t sure who I heard groaning in the bushes beside the trail.” The priest was probably concerned about remaining “clean”: “I couldn’t stop and help because I was on my way to tell the people in the synagogue about the love of God, and if I got blood on me, I would not be able to tell them about God’s love!”

But the Samaritan stopped to help the injured Jew—even though Jews hated Samaritans so much that they considered them like dogs (which were held in very low esteem in those days). Did the Samaritan say:

- “This man is a Jew and hates me”?
- “Let his own people care for him”?
- “I am on an important journey, and I don’t have time”?

None of the above. The Samaritan got down in the mud and the blood, and he treated his injuries. He gave the wounded man the only available seat on the donkey. And he walked to an inn and saw to him further—he paid in advance for his care and authorized the desk clerk to fully utilize his own debit card. What did the Good Samaritan do? He followed Jesus by loving those who hated him and gave of himself for the stranger from another country.

How many excuses could Jesus use to avoid dying in my place? More than I can possibly count. But how did Jesus respond to my need?

⁸ But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

How can we look at someone in need and pass judgment? Because here is the unvarnished truth about you and me:

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

⁵ *But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.*

⁶ *All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:5–6)*

Jesus laid down his life for you and for me. What excuses can we legitimately employ here?

*Jesus paid it all
All to him I owe
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow⁶*

Prayer

O Lord, create in me a clean heart—a heart that does not seek or need excuses. Instead, give me a heart that is looking for ways to help others, especially the “least of these.” Amen.

⁶ Elvina M. Hall, “Jesus Paid It All,” 1865.

Conclusion

GIVING IS THE CENTERPIECE OF all that God has done for us from creation to now. There is nothing we have that is not a gift from God, and if we fail to recognize this, then we have missed the whole point of the Bible and this simple book. If you are stuck trying to calculate “whether you should compute your 10 percent before or after taxes,” I respectfully suggest spending a great deal of time studying the materials in the appendices and particularly the part written by God himself.

Our heart is what this is all about. If we truly see how much we have been freely given, then we will freely give ourselves away to the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1–2)

Our giving spirit does not come from our spirit but from the presence of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ living in us.

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

It is my prayer and plea that I would see and that you would see that God has called us to trust in him with all of our heart, with all of our resources, with our very lives—and then he will give us a straight path, and we can know for certain that path is one well worn by Jesus himself giving all. May we follow in his steps, giving our all to God just as God in Christ Jesus has done and is doing for you and for me.

God bless you in your giving—because giving truly is living and living is giving.

³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)

Prayer

O Lord, you are the Giver of all that we hold dear and beautiful. You are the source of our lives and all that sustains us. O Lord, you have given and we have received. May I, may we, see so clearly how giving is at the heart of living and that to give is to live. What we try to keep to ourselves is never ours—it is like ashes—but what we give away is becoming a bloom of love, the love of Christ growing in us. The more we give, the more we grow in Christlikeness . . . and the more we grow in the likeness

of Christ Jesus, the more complete, the more peaceful, the more beautiful and precious does life become. Thank you, Lord—you gave, you are giving, you will give—and so we live in Christ Jesus. Amen.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

A Representative Collection of Scriptures Related to Giving and to the Poor

GENESIS 28:20-22

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God’s house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you.”

GENESIS 41:54-57

and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in every country, but throughout the land of Egypt there was bread. When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do.” And since the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. Moreover, all the world came to

Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine became severe throughout the world.

GENESIS 45:9-11

Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.’

EXODUS 22:25

If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them.

EXODUS 23:11

but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the wild animals may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.

LEVITICUS 5:7

But if you cannot afford a sheep, you shall bring to the Lord, as your penalty for the sin that you have committed, two turtle-doves or two pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering.

LEVITICUS 12:8

If she cannot afford a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf, and she shall be clean.

LEVITICUS 14:21-22

But if he is poor and cannot afford so much, he shall take one male lamb for a guilt offering to be elevated, to make atonement on his behalf, and one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering and a log of oil; also two turtledoves or two pigeons, such as he can afford, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering.

LEVITICUS 19:10

You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God.

LEVITICUS 19:15

You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor.

LEVITICUS 23:22

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am the Lord your God.

LEVITICUS 25:25

If anyone of your kin falls into difficulty and sells a piece of property, then the next of kin shall come and redeem what the relative has sold.

LEVITICUS 25:35

If any of your kin fall into difficulty and become dependent on you, you shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens.

LEVITICUS 27:8

If any cannot afford the equivalent, they shall be brought before the priest and the priest shall assess them; the priest shall assess them according to what each one making a vow can afford.

NUMBERS 18:21

To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting,

DEUTERONOMY 8:18

You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

DEUTERONOMY 14:22-23

“You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year. And before the Lord your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always.”

DEUTERONOMY 14:28-29

Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year, and store it within your towns; the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake.

DEUTERONOMY 15:4-5

There will, however, be no one in need among you, because the Lord is sure to bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a possession to occupy, if only you will obey the

Lord your God by diligently observing this entire commandment that I command you today.

DEUTERONOMY 15:7-8

If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be.

DEUTERONOMY 15:10-11

Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, “Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.”

DEUTERONOMY 16:17

Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given you.

DEUTERONOMY 23:25

If you go into your neighbor’s standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor’s standing grain.

DEUTERONOMY 24:14-15

You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt.

1 SAMUEL 2:8

He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world.

JOB 5:16

So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth.

PSALM 9:18

*For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
nor the hope of the poor perish forever.*

PSALM 12:5

*“Because the poor are despoiled,
because the needy groan,
I will now rise up,” says the Lord;
“I will place them in the safety
for which they long.”*

PSALM 14:6

*You would confound the plans of the poor,
but the Lord is their refuge.*

PSALM 24:1

*A Psalm of David.
The earth is the Lord's
and the fullness thereof,
the world and those
who dwell therein,*

PSALM 35:10

*All my bones shall say,
“O Lord, who is like you?
You deliver the weak from those*

*too strong for them,
the weak and needy from those
who despoil them.”*

PSALM 37:16

*Better is a little that the righteous person has
than the abundance of many wicked.*

PSALM 41:1

*Happy are those who consider the poor;
the Lord delivers them in the day of trouble.*

PSALM 68:5

*Father of orphans
and protector of widows
is God in his holy habitation.*

PSALM 68:10

*your flock found a dwelling in it;
in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.*

PSALM 72:3-4

*May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor.*

PSALM 72:12-14

*For he delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.
He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in his sight.*

PSALM 82:3

*Give justice to the weak and the orphan;
maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute.*

PSALM 109:30-31

*With my mouth I will give great thanks to the Lord;
I will praise him in the midst of the throng.
For he stands at the right hand of the needy, to save them
from those who would condemn them to death.*

PSALM 112:9

*They have distributed freely,
they have given to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever;
their horn is exalted in honor.*

PSALM 113:7

*He raises the poor from the dust,
and lifts the needy from the ash heap,*

PSALM 140:12

*I know that the Lord maintains the cause of the needy,
and executes justice for the poor.*

PSALM 146:5-9

*Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God,
who made heaven and earth, the sea,
and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever;
who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets the prisoners free;
the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous.*

*The Lord watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.*

PROVERBS 3:27-28

*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,
when it is in your power to do it.*

*Do not say to your neighbor,
“Go, and come again,
tomorrow I will give it”
—when you have it with you.*

PROVERBS 11:24-25

*One gives freely, yet grows all the richer;
another withholds what he should give,
and only suffers want.*

*Whoever brings blessing will be enriched,
and one who waters will himself be watered.*

PROVERBS 14:21

*Those who despise their neighbors are sinners,
but happy are those who are kind to the poor.*

PROVERBS 14:31

*Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker,
but those who are kind to the needy honor him.*

PROVERBS 15:16

*Better is a little with the fear of the Lord
than great treasure and trouble with it.*

PROVERBS 17:5

*Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker;
he who is glad at calamity
will not go unpunished.*

PROVERBS 19:17

*Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord,
and will be repaid in full.*

PROVERBS 21:13

*If you close your ear to the cry of the poor,
you will cry out and not be heard.*

PROVERBS 21:26

*All day long he craves and craves,
but the righteous gives and does not hold back.*

PROVERBS 22:2

*The rich and the poor have this in common:
the Lord is the maker of them all.*

PROVERBS 22:9

*Those who are generous are blessed,
for they share their bread with the poor.*

PROVERBS 22:22-23

*Do not rob the poor because they are poor,
or crush the afflicted at the gate;
for the Lord pleads their cause
and despoils of life those who despoil them.*

PROVERBS 28:6

*Better to be poor and walk in integrity
than to be crooked in one's ways
even though rich.*

PROVERBS 28:27

*Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing,
but one who turns a blind eye
will get many a curse.*

PROVERBS 29:7

*The righteous know the rights of the poor;
the wicked have no such understanding.*

PROVERBS 29:13

*The poor and the oppressor have this in common:
the Lord gives light to the eyes of both.*

PROVERBS 31:8

*Speak out for those who cannot speak,
for the rights of all the destitute.*

PROVERBS 31:9

*Speak out, judge righteously,
defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

PROVERBS 31:20

*She opens her hand to the poor,
and reaches out her hands to the needy.*

ECCLESIASTES 5:8

If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and right, do not be amazed at the matter; for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them.

ISAIAH 1:17

learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

ISAIAH 10:1-2

Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be your spoil, and that you may make the orphans your prey!

ISAIAH 25:4

For you have been a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm,

ISAIAH 41:17

When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

ISAIAH 58:6-11

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

ISAIAH 61:1

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;

JEREMIAH 5:28

they have grown fat and sleek. They know no limits in deeds of wickedness; they do not judge with justice the cause of the orphan, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy.

JEREMIAH 20:13

Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers.

JEREMIAH 22:3

Thus says the Lord: Act with justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place.

JEREMIAH 22:16

He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? says the Lord.

EZEKIEL 16:49

This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.

EZEKIEL 18:12-13

oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore the pledge, lifts up his eyes to the idols, commits abomination, takes advance or accrued interest; shall he then live? He shall not. He has done all these abominable things; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself.

EZEKIEL 22:29

The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery; they have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the alien without redress.

AMOS 4:1-2

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on Mount Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to their husbands, "Bring something to drink!" The Lord God has sworn by his holiness: The time is surely coming upon you, when they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks.

ZECHARIAH 7:10

do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.

MALACHI 3:5

Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

MALACHI 3:10

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

MATTHEW 5:42

Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

MATTHEW 6:1-4

"Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the

streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

MATTHEW 6:19-21

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

MATTHEW 6:24

No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

MATTHEW 6:33

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

MATTHEW 10:8

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.

MATTHEW 11:5

the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.

MATTHEW 19:21

Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”

MATTHEW 23:23

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.”

MATTHEW 25:34-40

“Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’”

MATTHEW 26:6-13

Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, “Why this waste? For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor.” But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

MARK 10:21

Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

MARK 12:41-44

And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

MARK 14:1-9

It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people."

While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

LUKE 3:11

In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise."

LUKE 4:18

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,

LUKE 6:20-21

Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh."

LUKE 6:38

Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.

LUKE 7:22

And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them."

LUKE 11:41

So give for alms those things that are within; and see, everything will be clean for you.

LUKE 11:42

"But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."

LUKE 12:33-34

Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

LUKE 14:12-14

He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

LUKE 14:21

“So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’”

LUKE 18:22

When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”

LUKE 19:8

Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.”

LUKE 21:1-4

He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than

all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.”

JOHN 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

JOHN 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?” (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, “Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.” When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

ACTS 2:44-45

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

ACTS 4:32-35

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged

to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

ACTS 9:36

Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity.

ACTS 10:4

He stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" He answered, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.

ACTS 20:34

You know for yourselves that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions.

ACTS 20:35

In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

ACTS 24:17

Now after some years I came to bring alms to my nation and to offer sacrifices.

ROMANS 12:13

Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

ROMANS 15:26

for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:3

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:2

On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:5

And this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:12

For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Appendix 2

Additional Helpful Materials to Read on Giving

This writing by Jonathan Edwards is essential reading to understand a Christian's duty to give. This message put together almost three hundred years ago stands as a beacon of clarity on the Christian's duty to give. In fact, if you have to choose between the book and this sermon and the following one and the Scriptures listed above, skip the book and study the appendixes.

Christian Charity

or

***The Duty of Charity
to the Poor, Explained and Enforced***

Jonathan Edwards
(1703-1758)

Dated January 1732

“If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.” -- Deuteronomy 15:7-11

SECTION I

The words explained.

Subject: 'Tis the most absolute and indispensable duty of a people of God to give bountifully and willingly for the supply of the wants of the needy.

THE DUTY HERE ENJOINED, IS giving to the poor. “If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: — Thou shalt surely give him.” Here by *thy poor brother* is to be understood the same as in other places is meant by *neighbor*. It is explained in Lev. 25:35 to mean not only those of their own nation, but even strangers and sojourners. “And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a *stranger*, or a *sojourner*.” The Pharisees indeed interpreted it to signify only one of their own nation. But Christ condemns this interpretation, Luke 10:29, etc. and teaches, in contradiction to their opinion, that the rules of charity, in the law of Moses, are to be extended to the Samaritans, who were not of their nation, and between whom and the Jews there was the most bitter enmity, and who were a people very troublesome to the Jews.

God gives us direction *how* we are to give in such a case, viz. *bountifully*, and *willingly*. We should give *bountifully*, and *sufficiently* for the supply of the poor's need. Deu. 15:7, 8, “Thou shalt not shut up thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and lend him sufficient

for his need, in that which he wanteth.” And again, in verse 11, “Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.” Again, we should give *willingly* and *without grudging*. Deu. 15:7, “Thou shalt not harden thine heart from thy poor brother,” And verse 10, “And thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest him.”

We may also observe how peremptorily this duty is here enjoined, and how much it is insisted on. It is repeated over and over again, and enjoined in the strongest terms. Deu. 15:7, “Thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother.” Verse 8, “But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him.” Verse 10, “Thou shalt surely give him.” Verse 11, “I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy.”

Moreover, God strictly warns against objections, Deu. 15:9, “Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee.” The matter concerning the seventh year, or year of release, was thus: God had given Israel a law, that every seventh year should be a year of release; that if any man had lent anything to any of his poor neighbors, if the latter had not been able to repay it before that year, the former should release it, and should not exact it of his neighbor, but give it to him. Therefore God warns the children of Israel against making of this an objection to helping their poor neighbors, that the year of release was near at hand, and it was not likely that they would be able to refund it again before that time, and then they should lose it wholly, because then they would be obliged to release it. God foresaw that the wickedness of their hearts would be very ready to make such an objection. But very strictly warns them against it, that they should not be the more backward to supply the wants of the needy for that, but should be willing to give him. “Thou shalt be willing to lend, expecting nothing again.”

Men are exceedingly apt to make objections against such duties, which God speaks of here as a manifestation of the wickedness of their hearts: "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart," etc. The warning is very strict. God doth not only say, Beware that thou do not actually refuse to give him, but, Beware that thou have not one objecting thought against it, arising from a backwardness to liberality. God warns against the beginnings of uncharitableness in the heart, and against whatever tends to a forbearance to give. "And thou give him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee." God warns them, from the guilt which they would be liable to bring upon themselves hereby.

We may observe here several *enforcements* of this duty. There is a reason of this duty implied in God's calling him that is needy, *our brother*: "Thou shalt not shut thine hand from thy poor *brother*." And Deu. 15:9, "Beware that thine eye be not evil against thy poor *brother*." And verse 11, "Thou shalt open thine hand wide to thy *brother*." We are to look upon ourselves as related to all mankind, but especially to those who are of the visible people of God. We are to look upon them as brethren, and to treat them accordingly. We shall be base indeed, if we be not willing to help *a brother* in want. — Another enforcement of this duty is the promise of God, that for this thing he will bless us in all our works, and in all that we put our hands unto; a promise that we shall not lose, but gain by it (Deu. 15:10). — Another is, that we shall never want proper objects of our charity and bounty. Verse 11, "For the poor shall never cease out of thy land." This God saith to the Jewish church; and the like Christ saith to the Christian church, Mat. 26:11, "The poor ye have always with you." This is to cut off an excuse that uncharitable persons would be ready to make for not giving, that they could find nobody to give to, that they saw none who needed. God cuts off such an excuse, by telling us, that he would so order it in his providence, that his people everywhere, and in all ages, shall have occasion for the exercise of that virtue.

From this account the doctrine is obvious, that it is the absolute and indispensable duty of the people of God, to give bountifully and willingly for supplying the wants of the needy. — But more particularly,

I.

It is the duty of the people of God to give *bountifully* for the aforesaid purpose. It is commanded once and again in the text, “Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy poor brother.” Merely to give something is not sufficient. It answers not the rule, nor comes up to the holy command of God. But we must open our hand wide. What we give, considering our neighbor’s wants, and our ability, should be such as may be called a *liberal* gift. What is meant in the text by opening the hand wide, with respect to those that are able, is explained in Deu. 15:8, “Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his want, in that which he needeth.” By lending here, as is evident by the two following verses, and as we have just now shown, is not only meant lending to receive again; [for] the word *lend* in Scripture is sometimes used for giving; as in Luke 6:35, “Do good and lend, hoping for nothing again.”

We are commanded, therefore, to give our poor neighbor what is sufficient for his need. There ought to be none suffered to live in pinching want, among a visible people of God, who are able, unless in case of idleness, or prodigality, or some such case which the Word of God excepts. — It is said that the children of Israel should lend to the poor, and in the year of release should release what they had lent, *save when there should be no poor among them*. It is rendered in the margin, *to the end there be no poor among you; i.e.* you should so supply the wants of the needy, that there may be none among you in pinching want. This translation seems the more likely to be the true one, because God says, Deu. 15:11, that there shall be no such time when there shall be no poor, who shall be proper objects of charity. — When

persons give very *sparingly*, it is no manifestation of charity, but of a contrary spirit. 2 Cor. 9:5, "Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

II.

It is the duty of the visible people of God to give for the supply of the needy, *freely*, and without grudging. It doth not at all answer the rule in the sight of God, if it be done with an inward grudging, or if the heart be grieved, and it inwardly hurt the man to give what he gives. "Thou shalt surely give," says God, "and thine heart shall not be grieved." God looks at the heart, and the hand is not accepted without it. 2 Cor. 9:7, "Every man according as he hath purposed in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver."

III.

This is a duty to which God's people are under very strict *obligation*. It is not merely a commendable thing for a man to be kind and bountiful to the poor, but our bounden duty, as much a duty as it is to pray, or to attend public worship, or anything else whatever. And the neglect of it brings great guilt upon any person.

SECTION II

Of the obligation of Christians to perform the duty of charity to the poor.

THIS DUTY IS ABSOLUTELY COMMANDED, and much insisted on, in the Word of God. Where have we any command in the Bible laid down in stronger terms, and in a more peremptory urgent manner, than the command of giving to the poor? We have the same law in a positive manner laid down in Lev. 25:35, etc. “And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with thee.” And at the conclusion of verse 38, God enforces it with saying, *I am the Lord thy God.*

It is mentioned in Scripture, not only as a duty, but a great duty. Indeed it is generally acknowledged to be a duty, to be kind to the needy. But by many it seems not to be looked upon as a duty of great importance. However, it is mentioned in Scripture as one of the greater and more essential duties of religion. Mic. 6:8, “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, *to love mercy*, and to walk humbly with thy God?” Here *to love mercy* is mentioned as one of the three great things that are the sum of all religion. So it is mentioned by the apostle James, as one of the two things wherein pure and undefiled religion consists. Jam. 1:27, “Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father,

is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

So Christ tells us, it is one of the weightier matters of the law. Mat. 23:23, “Ye have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.” The Scriptures again and again teach us that it is a more weighty and essential thing than the attendance on the outward ordinances of worship. Hos. 6:6, “I desired mercy, and not sacrifice;” Mat. 9:13 and 12:7. I know of scarce any duty which is so much insisted on, so pressed and urged upon us, both in the Old Testament and New, as this duty of charity to the poor.

The reason of the thing strongly obliges to it. It is not only very positively and frequently insisted on by God, but it most reasonable in itself. And so, on this account, there is reason why God should much insist upon it.

I.

It is most reasonable, considering the general state and nature of mankind. This is such as renders it most reasonable that we should love our neighbor as ourselves; for men are made in the image of our God, and on this account are worthy of our love. Besides, we are all nearly allied one to another by nature. We have all the same nature, like faculties, like dispositions, like desires of good, like needs, like aversion to misery, and are made of one blood. And we are made to subsist by society and union one with another. Mankind in this respect are as the members of the natural body, one cannot subsist alone, without an union with and the help of the rest.

Now, this state of mankind shows how reasonable and suitable it is, that men should love their neighbors, and that we should not look everyone at his own things, but every man also at the things of others, Phil. 2:4. A selfish spirit is very unsuitable to the nature and state of mankind. He who is all for himself, and none for his neighbors, deserves to be cut off from the benefit

of human society, and to be turned out among wild beasts, to subsist by himself as well as he can. A private niggardly spirit is more suitable for wolves, and other beasts of prey, than for human beings.

To love our neighbor as ourselves is the sum of the moral law respecting our fellow creatures. And to help them, and to contribute to their relief is the most natural expression of this love. It is vain to pretend to a spirit of love to our neighbors, when it is grievous to us to part with anything for their help, when under calamity. They who love only in word, and in tongue, and not in deed, have no love in truth. Any profession without it is a vain pretense. To refuse to give to the needy, is unreasonable, because we therein do to others contrary to what we would have others to do to us in like circumstances. We are very sensible of our own calamities. And when we suffer, [we] are ready enough to think, that our state requires the compassion and help of others; and are ready enough to think it hard, if others will not deny themselves in order to help us when in straits.

II.

It is especially reasonable, considering our circumstances, under such a dispensation of grace as that of the gospel. Consider how much God hath done for us, how greatly he hath loved us, what he hath given us, when we were so unworthy, and when he could have no addition to his happiness by us. Consider that silver, and gold, and earthly crowns, were in his esteem but mean things to give us, and he hath therefore given us his own Son. Christ loved and pitied us, when we were poor, and he laid out himself to help, and even did shed his own blood for us without grudging. He did not think much to deny himself, and to be at great cost for us vile wretches, in order to make us rich, and to clothe us with kingly robes, when we were naked; to feast us at his own table with dainties infinitely costly, when we were starving; to advance us from the dunghill, and set us among

princes, and make us to inherit the throne of his glory, and so to give us the enjoyment of the greatest wealth and plenty to all eternity. Agreeably to 2 Cor. 8:9, "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." Considering all these things, what a poor business will it be, that those who hope to share these benefits, yet cannot give something for the relief of a poor neighbor without grudging! That it should grieve them to part with a small matter, to help a fellow servant in calamity, when Christ did not grudge to shed his own blood for them!

How unsuitable is it for us, who live only by kindness, to be unkind! What would have become of us, if Christ had been so saving of his blood, and loth to bestow it, as many men are of their money or goods? Or if he had been as ready to excuse himself from dying for us, as men commonly are to excuse themselves from charity to their neighbor? If Christ would have made objections of such things, as men commonly object to performing deeds of charity to their neighbor, he would have found enough of them.

Besides, Christ, by his redemption, has brought us into a more near relations one to another, hath made us children of God, children in the same family. We are all brethren, having God for our common Father; which is much more than to be brethren in any other family. He hath made us all one body. Therefore we ought to be united, and subserve one another's good, and bear one another's burdens, as is the case with the members of the same natural body. If one of the members suffer, all the other members bear the burden with it, 1 Cor. 12:26. If one member be diseased or wounded, the other members of the body will minister to it, and help it. So surely it should be in the body of Christ. Gal. 6:2, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

Apply these things to yourselves. And inquire whether you do not lie under guilt on account of the neglect of this duty, in

withholding that charity which God requires of you towards the needy? You have often been put upon examining yourselves, whether you do not live in some way displeasing to God. Perhaps at such times it never came into your minds, whether you do not lie under guilt on this account. — But this neglect certainly brings guilt upon the soul in the sight of God, as is evident by the text. “Beware that thine eye be not evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee,” Deu. 15:9. This is often mentioned as one of the sins of Judah and Jerusalem, for which God was about to bring such terrible judgments upon them. And it was one of the sins of Sodom, for which that city was destroyed, that she did not give to supply the poor and needy, Eze. 16:49, “This was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness in her, and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.”

And have we not reason to fear, that much guilt lies upon this land on this very account? We have a high conceit of ourselves for religion. But do not many other countries shame us? Do not the papists shame us in this respect? So far as I can understand the tenor of the Christian religion, and the rules of the Word of God, the same are in no measure in this respect answered by the general practice of most people in this land. There are many who make a high profession of religion. But do not many of them need to be informed by the apostle James, what true religion is?

Let everyone examine himself, whether he [does] not lie under guilt in this matter. Have you not forbore to give when you have seen your brother in want? Have you not forbore to deny yourselves a little for his relief? Or when you have given, have you not done it grudgingly? And has it not inwardly hurt and grieved you? You have looked upon what you have given, as lost. So that what you have given, has been, as the apostle expresses it, a matter of covetousness, rather than of bounty. Have not occasions of giving been unwelcome to you? Have you not been uneasy under them? Have you not felt a considerable

backwardness to give? Have you not, from a grudging, backward spirit, been apt to raise objections against giving, and to excuse yourselves? Such things as these bring guilt upon the soul, and often bring down the curse of God upon the persons in whom these things are found, as we may show more fully hereafter.

SECTION III

An exhortation to the duty of charity to the poor

WE ARE PROFESSORS OF CHRISTIANITY, we pretend to be the followers of Jesus, and to make the gospel our rule. We have the Bible in our houses. Let us not behave ourselves in this particular, as if we had never seen the Bible, as if we were ignorant of Christianity, and knew not what kind of religion it is. What will it signify to pretend to be Christians, and at the same time to live in the neglect of those rules of Christianity which are mainly insisted on in it? But there are several things which I would here propose to your consideration.

I.

Consider that what you have is not your own; *i.e.* you have only a subordinate right. Your goods are only lent to you of God, to be improved by you in such ways as he directs. You yourselves are not your own. 1 Cor. 6:20, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; your body and your spirit are God's." And if you yourselves are not your own, so then neither are your possessions your own. Many of you have by covenant given up yourselves and all you have to God. You have disowned and renounced any right in yourselves or in anything that you have, and have given to God all the absolute right. And if you be true Christians, you have done it from the heart.

Your money and your goods are not your own. They are only committed to you as stewards, to be used for him who committed them to you. 1 Pet. 4:9, 10, "Use hospitality one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." A steward has no business with his master's goods, to use them any otherwise than for the benefit of his master and his family, or according to his master's direction. He hath no business to use them, as if he were the proprietor of them. He hath nothing to do with them, only as he is to use them for his master. He is to give everyone of his master's family their portion of meat in due season.

But if instead of that, he hoards up his master's goods for himself, and withholds them from those of the household, so that some of the family are pinched for want of food and clothing. He is therein guilty of robbing his master and embezzling his substance. And would any householder endure such a steward? If he discovered him in such a practice, would he not take his goods out of his hands, and commit them to the care of some other steward, who should give everyone of his family his portion of meat in due season? Remember that all of us must give account of our stewardship, and how we have disposed of those goods which our Master has put into our hands. And if when our Master comes to reckon with us, it be found that we have denied some of his family their proper provision, while we have hoarded up for ourselves, as if we had been the proprietors of our Master's goods, what account shall we give of this?

II.

God tells us, that he shall look upon what is done in charity to our neighbors in want, as done unto him; and what is denied unto them, as denied unto him. Pro. 19:17, "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord." God hath been pleased to make our needy neighbors his receivers. He in his infinite mercy hath so interested himself in their case, that he looks upon what is given in charity to them, as given to himself. And when we deny

them what their circumstances require of us, he looks upon it that we therein rob him of his right.

Christ teaches us, that we are to look upon our fellow Christians in this case as himself, and that our giving or withholding from them, shall be taken, as if we so behaved ourselves towards him; see Mat. 25:40. There Christ says to the righteous on his right hand, who had supplied the wants of the needy, "In that ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." In like manner he says to the wicked who had not shown mercy to the poor, verse 45, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." — Now what stronger enforcement of this duty can be conceived, or is possible, than this, that Jesus Christ looks upon our kind and bountiful, or unkind and uncharitable, treatment of our needy neighbors, as such a treatment of himself?

If Christ himself were upon earth, a dwelt among us in a frail body, as he once did, and were in calamitous and needy circumstances, should we not be willing to supply him? Should we be apt to excuse ourselves from helping him? Should we not be willing to supply him so, that he might live free from distressing poverty? And if we did otherwise, should we not bring great guilt upon ourselves? And might not our conduct justly be very highly resented by God? Christ was once here in a frail body, stood in need of the charity, and was maintained by it. Luke 8:2, 3, "And certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalen, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." So he still, in many of his members, needs the charity of others.

III.

Consider that there is an absolute necessity of our complying with the difficult duties of religion. To give to the poor in the manner and measure that the gospel prescribes is a difficult duty, *i.e.* it is

very contrary to corrupt nature, to that covetousness and selfishness of which there is so much in the wicked heart of man. Man is naturally governed only by a principle of self-love. And it is a difficult thing to corrupt nature, for men to deny themselves of their present interest, trusting in God to make it up to them hereafter. — But how often hath Christ told us the necessity of doing difficult duties of religion, if we will be his disciples; that we must sell all, take up our cross daily, deny ourselves, renounce our worldly profits and interests, etc. And if this duty seem hard and difficult to you, let not that be an objection with you against doing it. For you have taken up quite a wrong notion of things if you expect to go to heaven without performing difficult duties; if you expect any other than to find the way to life a narrow way.

IV.

The Scripture teaches us that this very particular duty is necessary, Particularly,

First, the Scripture teaches that God will deal with us as we deal with our fellow creatures in this particular, and that with what measure we mete to others in this respect, God will measure to us again. This the Scripture asserts both ways. It asserts that if we be of a merciful spirit, God will be merciful to us. Mat. 5:7, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Psa. 18:25, “With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful.” On the other hand it tells us, that if we be not merciful, God will not be merciful to us; and that all our pretenses to faith and a work of conversion will not avail us, to obtain mercy, unless we be merciful to them that are in want. Jam. 2:13-16, “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy. — What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed, and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?”

Second, this very thing is often mentioned in Scripture as an essential part of the character of a godly man. Psal. 37:21, "The righteous showeth mercy, and giveth." And again, verse 26, "He is ever merciful, and lendeth." Psal. 112:5, "A good man showeth favour, and lendeth." And verse 9, "He hath dispersed, and given to the poor." So Pro. 14:31, "He that honoureth God, hath mercy on the poor." Again, Pro. 21:26 and Isa. 57:1. A *righteous* man and a *merciful* man are used as synonymous terms: "The *righteous* perisheth, and *merciful* men are taken away," etc.

It is mentioned in the New Testament as a thing so essential, that the contrary cannot consist with a *sincere* love to God. 1 John 3:17-19, "But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." So the apostle Paul, when he writes to the Corinthians, and proposes their contributing for the supply of the poor saints, tells them what he doth it for, *viz.* A trial of their sincerity. See 2 Cor. 8:8, "I speak to prove the sincerity of your love."

Third, Christ teaches that judgment will be past at the great day according to men's works in this respect. This is taught us by Christ in the most particular account of the proceedings of that day, that we have in the whole Bible. See Mat. 25:34, etc. It is evident that Christ thus represented the proceedings and determinations of this great day, as turning upon this one point, on purpose, and on design to lead us into this notion, and to fix it in us, that a charitable spirit and practice towards our brethren is necessary to salvation.

V.

Consider what abundant encouragement the Word of God gives, that you shall be no losers by your charity and bounty to them who are in want. As there is scarce any duty prescribed in the

Word of God, which is so much insisted on as this; so there is scarce any to which there are so many promises of reward made. This virtue especially hath the promises of this life and that which is to come. If we believe the Scriptures, when a man charitably gives to his neighbor in want, the giver has the greatest advantage by it, even greater than the receiver. Acts 20:35, "I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." He that gives bountifully is a happier man than he that receives bountifully. Pro. 14:21, "He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he."

Many persons are ready to look upon what is bestowed for charitable uses as lost. But we ought not to look upon it as lost, because it benefits those whom we ought to love as ourselves. And not only so, but it is not lost *to us*, if we give any credit to the Scriptures. See the advice that *Solomon* gives in Ecc. 11:1, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days." By casting our bread upon the waters, *Solomon* means giving it to the poor, as appears by the next words, "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight." Waters are sometimes put for people and multitudes.

What strange advice would this seem to many, to cast their bread upon the waters, which would seem to them like throwing it away! What more direct method to lose our bread, than to go and throw it into the sea? But the wise man tells us, No, it is not lost; you shall find it again after many days. It is not sunk, but you commit it to Providence. You commit it to the winds and waves. However it will come about to you, and you shall find it again after many days. Though it should be many days first, yet you shall find it at last, at a time when you most need it. He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord. And God is not one of those who will not pay again what is lent to him. If you lend anything to God, you commit it into faithful hands. Pro. 19:17, "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again." God will not only

pay you again, but he will pay you with great increase. Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given you," that is, in "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over."

Men do not account that lost, that is let out to use. but what is bestowed in charity is lent to the Lord, and he repays with great increase. Isa. 32:8, "The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." Here I would particularly observe,

First, that if you give with a spirit of true charity, you shall be rewarded in what is infinitely more valuable than what you give, even eternal riches in heaven. Mat. 10:42, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple; verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

Giving to our needy brethren is in Scripture called laying up treasure in heaven, in bags that wax not old. Luke 12:33, "Sell what ye have and give alms, provide for yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth." Men, when they have laid up their money in their chests, do not suppose that they have thrown it away. But, on the contrary, that it is laid up safe. Much less is treasure thrown away, when it is laid up in heaven. What is laid up there is much safer than what is laid up in chests or cabinets.

You cannot lay up treasure on earth, but that it is liable to be stolen, or otherwise to fail. But there no thief approaches nor moth corrupts. It is committed to God's care, and he will keep it safely for you. And when you die, you shall receive it with infinite increase. Instead of a part of your earthly substance thus bestowed, you shall receive heavenly riches, on which you may live in the greatest fullness, honor, and happiness, to all eternity; and shall never be in want of anything. After feeding with some of your bread those who cannot recompense you, you shall be rewarded at the resurrection, and eat bread in the kingdom of God. Luke 14:13-16, "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind: and thou shalt

be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. And when one of them that sat at meat with him, heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.”

Second, if you give to the needy though but in the exercise of moral virtue, you will be in the way greatly to gain by it in your temporal interest. They who give in the exercise of a *gracious* charity, are in the way to be gainers both here and hereafter; and those that give in the exercise of a *moral* bounty and liberality, have many temporal promises made to them. We learn by the Word of God, that they are in the way to be prospered in their outward affairs. Ordinarily such do not lose by it, but such a blessing attends their concerns, that they are paid doubly for it. Pro. 11:24, 25, “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; 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.” And Pro. 28:27, “He that giveth to the poor, shall not lack.”

When men give to the needy, they do as it were sow seed for a crop. When men sow their seed, they seem to throw it away. Yet they do not look upon it as thrown away because, though they expect not the same again, yet they expect much more as the fruit of it. And if it be not certain that they shall have a crop, yet they are willing to run the venture of it; for that is the ordinary way wherein men obtain increase. So it is when persons give to the poor. Though the promises of gaining thereby, in our outward circumstances, perhaps are not absolute; yet it is as much the ordinary consequence of it, as increase is of sowing seed. Giving to the poor is in this respect compared to sowing seed, in Ecc. 11:6, “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” By withholding the hand, the wise man means not giving to the poor (see verse 1, 2). It intimates, that giving to the poor is as likely a way to obtain prosperity and increase, as sowing seed in a field.

The husbandman doth not look upon his seed as lost, but is glad that he has opportunity to sow it. It grieves him not that he has land to be sown, but he rejoices in it. For the like reason we should not be grieved that we find needy people to bestow our charity upon. For this is as much an opportunity to obtain increase as the other.

Some may think this is strange doctrine; and it is to be feared, that not many will so far believe it as to give to the poor with as much cheerfulness as they sow their ground. However, it is the very doctrine of the Word of God, 2 Cor. 9:6, 7, 8, "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. And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

It is easy with God to make up to men what they give in charity. Many but little consider how their prosperity or ill success in their outward affairs depends upon Providence. There are a thousand turns of Providence, to which their affairs are liable, whereby God may either add to their outward substance, or diminish from it, a great deal more than they are ordinarily called to give to their neighbors. How easy is it with God to diminish what they possess by sickness in their families, by drought, or frost, or mildew, or vermin; by unfortunate accidents, by entanglements in their affairs, or disappointments in their business! And how easy is it with God to increase their substance, by suitable seasons, or by health and strength; by giving them fair opportunities for promoting their interest in their dealings with men; by conducting them in his providence, so that they attain their designs; and by innumerable other ways which might be mentioned! How often is it, that only one act of providence in a man's affairs either adds to his estate, or diminishes from it, more than he would need to give to the poor in a whole year.

God hath told us that this is the way to have his blessing attending our affairs. Thus, in the text, Deu. 15:10, "Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and all that thou puttest thine hand unto." And Pro. 22:9, "He that hath a bountiful eye, shall be blessed." It is a remarkable evidence how little many men realize the things of religion, whatever they pretend; how little they realize that the Scripture is the Word of God, or if it be, that he speaks true; that notwithstanding all the promises made in the Scripture to bounty to the poor, yet they are so backward to this duty, and are so afraid to trust God with a little of their estates. Observation may confirm the same thing which the Word of God teaches on this head. God, in his providence, generally smiles upon and prospers those men who are of a liberal, charitable, bountiful spirit.

Sixth, God hath threatened to follow with his curse those who are uncharitable to the poor; as Pro. 28:27, "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack; but he that hideth his eyes, shall have many a curse." It is said, *he that hideth his eyes*, because this is the way of uncharitable men. They hide their eyes from seeing the wants of their neighbor. A charitable person, whose heart disposes him to bounty and liberality, will be quick-sighted to discern the needs of others. They will not be at any difficulty to find out who is in want. They will see objects enough of their charity, let them go whither they will.

But, on the contrary, he that is of a niggardly spirit, so that it goes against the grain to give anything, he will be always at a loss for objects of his charity. Such men excuse themselves with this, that they find not anyone to give to. They hide their eyes, and will not see their neighbor's wants. If a particular object is presented, they will not very readily see his circumstances. They are a long while in being convinced that he is an object of charity. They hide their eyes. And it is not an easy thing to make them sensible of the necessities and distresses of their neighbor,

or at least to convince them, that his necessities are such that they ought to give him any great matter.

Other men, who are of a bountiful spirit, can very easily see the objects of charity. But the uncharitable are very unapt both to see the proper objects of charity, and to see their obligations to this duty. The reason is, that they are of that sort spoken of here by the wise man, *they hide their eyes*. Men will readily see, where they are *willing* to see. But where they hate to see, they will hide their eyes.

God says, such as hides his eyes in this case shall have many a curse. Such an one is in the way to be cursed in soul and body, in both his spiritual and temporal affairs. We have shown already, how those that are charitable to the poor are in the way of being blessed. There are so many promises of the divine blessing, that we may look upon it as much the way to be blessed in our outward concerns, as sowing seed in a field is the way to have increase. And to be close and uncharitable, is as much the way to be followed with a curse, as to be charitable is the way to be followed with a blessing. To withhold more than is meet, tends as much to poverty, as scattering tends to increase, Pro. 11:24. Therefore, if you withhold more than is meet, you will cross your own disposition, and will frustrate your own end. What you seek by withholding from your neighbor, is your own temporal interest and outward estate. But if you believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, you must believe that you cannot take a more direct course to lose, to be crossed and cursed in your temporal interest, than this of withholding from your indigent neighbor.

Seventh, consider that you know not what calamitous and necessitous circumstances you yourselves or your children may be in. Perhaps you are ready to bless yourselves in your hearts, as though there were no danger of you being brought into calamitous and distressing circumstances. There is at present no prospect of it; and you hope you shall be able to provide well for your children. But you little consider what a shifting, changing, uncertain world you live in, and how often it hath

so happened, that men have been reduced from the greatest prosperity to the greatest adversity, and how often the children of the rich have been reduced to pinching want.

Agreeable to this is the advice that the wise man gives us, Ecc. 11:1, 2, "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon earth." Thou knowest not what calamitous circumstances thou mayest be in thyself, in this changeable uncertain world. You know not what circumstances you or your children may be brought into by captivity, or other unthought-of providences. Providence governs all things. Perhaps you may trust to your own wisdom to continue your prosperity. But you cannot alter what God determines and orders in providence, as in the words immediately following the fore-mentioned text in Ecclesiastes, "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth; and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north; in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be;" *i.e.* you cannot alter the determinations of Providence. You may trust to your own wisdom for future prosperity. But if God have ordained adversity, it *shall come*. As the clouds when full of rain, empty themselves upon the earth, so what is in the womb of Providence shall surely come to pass. And as Providence casts the tree, whether towards the south, or towards the north, whether for prosperity or adversity, there it shall be, for all that you can do to alter it. Agreeably to what the wise man observes in Ecc. 7:13, "Consider the work of God; for who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?"

This consideration, that you know not what calamity and necessity you may be in yourselves or your children, tends very powerfully to enforce this duty several ways.

1. This may put you upon considering how your hearts would be effected, if it should so be. If it should happen that you or some of your children should be brought into such circumstances as those of your neighbors,

how grievous would it be to you! Now perhaps you say of this and the other poor neighbor, that they can do well enough. If they be pinched a little, they can live. Thus you can make light of their difficulties. But if Providence should so order it, that you or your children should be brought into the same circumstances, would you make light of them then? Would you not use another sort of language about it? Would you not think that your case was such as needed the kindness of your neighbors? Would you not think that they ought to be ready to help you? And would you not take it hardly, if you saw a contrary spirit in them, and saw that they made light of your difficulties?

If one of your children should be brought to poverty by captivity, ^{*1*} or otherwise, how would your hearts be affected in such a case? If you should hear that some persons had taken pity on your child, and had been very bountiful to it, would you not think that they did well? Would you be at all apt to accuse them of folly or profuseness, that they should give so much to it?

2. If ever there should be such a time, your kindness to others now will be but a laying up against such a time. If you yourselves should be brought into calamity and necessity, then would you find what you have given in charity to others, lying ready in store for you. Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days, says the wise man. But when shall we find it? He tells us in the next verse; "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest now what evil shall be upon the earth." Then is the time when you shall find it, when the day of evil cometh. You shall again find your bread which you have cast upon the waters, when you shall want it most, and stand in greatest necessity of it. God will keep it for you against

such a time. When other bread shall fail, then God will bring to you the bread which you formerly cast upon the waters, so that you shall not famish. He that giveth to the poor shall not lack.

Giving to the needy is like laying up against winter, or against a time of calamity. It is the best way of laying up for yourselves and for your children. Children in a time of need very often find their fathers' bread, that bread which their fathers had cast upon the waters. *Psa. 37:25*, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Why? What is the reason of it? It follows in the next verse, "He is ever merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed."

Whether the time will ever come or not, that we or our children shall be in distressing want of bread; yet doubtless evil will be on the earth. We shall have our times of calamity, wherein we shall stand in great need of God's pity and help, if not of that of our fellow creatures. And God hath promised that at such a time, he that hath been of a charitable spirit and practice, shall find help. *Psa. 41:1-4*, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." Such as have been merciful and liberal to others in their distress, God will not forget it, but will so order it, that they shall have help when they are in distress. Yea, their children shall reap the fruit of it in the day of trouble.

3. God hath threatened uncharitable persons, that if ever they come to be in calamity and distress they shall be left helpless. *Pro. 21:13*, "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry himself and not be heard."

SECTION IV

*Objections which are sometimes made
to the exercise of charity, answered.*

PROCEED NOW TO ANSWER SOME OBJECTIONS which are sometimes made against this duty.

OBJECT. I.

I am in a natural condition, and if I should give to the poor, I should not do it with a right spirit, and so should get nothing by it. — To this I answer,

First, we have shown already that a temporal blessing is promised to a moral bounty and liberality. This is the way to be prospered. This is the way to increase. We find in Scripture many promises of temporal blessings to moral virtues; as to diligence in our business, to justice in our dealings, to faithfulness, to temperance. So there are many blessings promised to bounty and liberality.

Second, you may as well make the same objection against any other duty of religion. You may as well object against keeping the Sabbath, against prayer, or public worship, or against doing anything at all in religion. For while in a natural condition, you do not any of these duties with a right spirit. If you say, you do these duties because God hath commanded or required them of you, and you shall sin greatly if you neglect them, you shall

increase your guilt, and so expose yourselves to the greater damnation and punishment. The same may be said of the neglect of this duty; the neglect of it is as provoking to God.

If you say that you read, and pray, and attend public worship, because that is the appointed way for you to seek salvation, so is bounty to the poor, as much as those. — The appointed way for us to seek the favor of God and eternal life, is the way of the performance of all known duties, of which giving to the poor is one as much known, and as necessary, as reading the Scriptures, praying, or any other. Showing mercy to the poor does as much belong to the appointed way of seeking salvation, as any other duty whatever. Therefore this is the way in which Daniel directed Nebuchadnezzar to seek mercy, in Dan. 4:27, “Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by *showing mercy to the poor.*”

OBJECT. II.

If I be liberal and bountiful, I shall only make a righteousness of it, and so it will do me more hurt than good. To this I say,

First, the same answer may be made to this, as to the former objection, *viz.* that you may as well make the same objection against doing any religious or moral duty at all. If this be a sufficient objection against deeds of charity, then it is a sufficient objection to prayer. For nothing is more common than for persons to make a righteousness of their prayers. So it is a good objection against your keeping the Sabbath, or attending any public worship, or ever reading in the Bible. For of all these things you are in danger of making a righteousness. — Yea, of the objection be good against deeds of charity, then it is as good against acts of justice. And you may neglect to speak the truth, may neglect to pay your debts, may neglect acts of common humanity; for of all those things you are in danger of making a righteousness. So that if your objection be good, you may throw up all religion, and live like heathens or atheists, and

may be thieves, robbers, fornicators, adulterers, murderers, and commit all the sins that you can think of, lest if you should do otherwise, you should make a righteousness of your conduct.

Second, your objection carries it thus, that it is not best for you to do as God commands and counsels you to do. We find many commands in Scripture to be charitable to the poor. The Bible is full of them; and you are not excepted from those commands. God makes no exception of any particular kinds of persons that are especially in danger of making a righteousness of what they do. And God often directs and counsels persons to this duty. Now will you presume to say that God has not directed you to the best way? He has advised you to do thus, but you think it not best for you, but that it would do you more hurt than good, if you should do it. You think there is other counsel better than God's, and that it is the best way for you to go contrary to God's commands.

OBJECT. III.

I have in times past given to the poor, but never found myself the better for it. I have heard ministers preach, that giving to the poor was the way to prosper. But I perceive not that I am more prosperous than I was before. — Yea, I have met with many misfortunes, crosses, and disappointments in my affairs since. And it may be that some will say, That very year, or soon after the very time, I had been giving to the poor, hoping to be blessed for it, I met with great losses, and things went hardly with me; and therefore I do not find what I hear preached about giving to the poor, as being the way to be blessed and prosperous, agreeable to my experience.

To this objection I shall answer several things:

First, perhaps you looked out for the fulfillment of the promise too soon, before you had fulfilled the condition. As particularly, perhaps you have been so sparing and grudging in your kindness to the poor, that what you have done has been rather a discovery of a covetous, niggardly spirit, than of any

bounty or liberality. The promises are not made to every many who gives anything at all to the poor, let it be ever so little, and after what manner soever given. You mistook the promises, if you understood them so. A man may give something to the poor, and yet be entitled to no promise, either temporal or spiritual. The promises are made to *mercy* and *liberality*. But a man may give something, and yet be so niggardly and grudging in it, that what he gives may be, as the apostle calls it, a matter of covetousness. What he does may be more a manifestation of his covetousness and closeness, than anything else. But there are no promises made to men's expressing their covetousness.

Perhaps what you gave was not freely given, but as it were of necessity. It was grudgingly; your hearts were grieved when you gave. And if you gave once or twice what was considerable, yet that doth not answer the rule. It may be, for all that, that in the general course of your lives you have been far from being kind and liberal to your neighbors. Perhaps you thought that because you once or twice gave a few shillings to the poor, that then you stood entitled to the promises of being blessed in all your concerns, and of increasing and being established by liberal things, though in the general you have lived in a faulty neglect of the duty of charity. You raise objections from experience, before you have made trial. To give once, or twice, or thrice, is not to make trial, though you give considerably. You cannot make any trial unless you become a liberal person, or unless you become such that you may be truly said to be of a liberal and bountiful practice. Let one who is truly such, and has been such in the general course of his life, tell what he hath found by experience.

Second, if you have been liberal to the poor, and have met with calamities since, yet how can you tell how much greater calamities and losses you might have met with, if you had been otherwise? You say you have met with crosses, and disappointments, and frowns. If you expected to meet with no trouble in the world, because you gave to the poor, you mistook the matter. Though there be many and great promises made to the

liberal, yet God hath no where promised, that they shall not find this world a world of trouble. It will be so to all. Man is born to sorrow, and must expect no other than to meet with sorrow here. But how can you tell how much greater sorrow you would have met with, if you had been close and unmerciful to the poor? How can you tell how much greater losses you would have met with? How much more vexation and trouble would have followed you? Have none ever met with greater frowns in their outward affairs, than you have?

Third, how can you tell what blessings God hath yet in reserve for you if you do but continue in well-doing? Although God hath promised great blessings to liberality to the poor, yet he hath not limited himself as to the time of the bestowment. If you have not yet seen any evident fruit of your kindness to the poor, yet the time may come when you shall see it remarkably, and that at a time when you most stand in need of it. You cast your bread upon the waters, and looked for it, and expected to find it again presently. And sometimes it is so. But this is not promised. It is promised, "Thou shalt find it again *after many days*." God knows how to choose a time for you, better than you yourselves. You should therefore wait his time. If you go on in well-doing, God may bring it to you when you stand most in need.

It may be that there is some winter a-coming, some day of trouble. And God keeps your bread for you against that time. And then God will give you good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over. We must trust in God's Word for the bestowment of the promised reward, whether we can see in what manner it is done or no. Pertinent to the present purpose are those words of the wise man in Ecc. 11:4, "He that observeth the winds shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." In this context the wise man in speaking of charity to the poor, and comparing it to sowing seed; and advises us to trust Providence for success in that, as we do in sowing seed. He that regardeth the winds and clouds, to prognosticate thence prosperity to seed, and will not trust Providence with it, is not

like to sow, nor to have bread-corn. So he that will not trust Providence for the reward of his charity to the poor is [likely] to go without the blessing. After the words now quoted, follows his advice, Ecc. 11:6, "In the morning sow thy seed, and the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." — Therefore (Gal. 6:9) "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." You think you have not reaped yet. Whether you have or not, go on still in giving and doing good; and if you do so, you shall reap in due time. God only knows the due time, the best time, for you to reap.

OBJECT. IV.

Some may object against charity to such or such particular persons, that they are not obliged to give them anything, for though they be needy, yet they are not in extremity. It is true they meet with difficulty, yet not so but that they can live, though they suffer some hardships. — But,

It doth not answer the rules of Christian charity, to relieve those only who are reduced to extremity, as might be abundantly shown. I shall at this time mention but two things as evidences of it.

First, we are commanded to love and treat one another as brethren. 1 Pet. 3:8, "Have compassion one of another; love as brethren; be pitiful." Now is it the part of brethren to refuse to help one another, and to do anything for each other's comfort, and for the relief of each other's difficulties, only when they are in extremity? Doth it not become brothers and sisters to have a more friendly disposition one towards another, than this comes to? And to be ready to compassionate one another under difficulties, though they be not extreme?

The rule of the gospel is that when we see our brother under any difficulty or burden, we should be ready to bear the burden with him. Gal. 6:2, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." So we are commanded, "by love to serve

one another," Gal. 5:13. The Christian spirit will make us apt to sympathize with our neighbor, when we see him under any difficulty. Rom. 12:15, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." When our neighbor is in difficulty, he is afflicted; and we ought to have such a spirit of love to him, as to be afflicted with him in his affliction. And if we ought to be afflicted with him, then it will follow that we ought to be ready to relieve him. Because if we are afflicted with him, in relieving him, we relieve ourselves. His relief is so far our own relief, as his affliction is our affliction. Christianity teaches us to be afflicted in our neighbor's affliction. And nature teaches us to relieve ourselves when afflicted.

We should behave ourselves one towards another as brethren that are fellow travelers. For we are pilgrims and strangers here on earth, and are on a journey. Now, if brethren be on a journey together, and one meet with difficulty in the way, doth it not become the rest to help him, not only in the extremity of broken bones, or the like, but as to provision for the journey if his own fall short? It becomes his fellow travelers to afford him a supply out of their stores, and not to be over nice, exact, and fearful lest they give him too much: for it is but provision for a journey. And all are supplied when they get to their journey's end.

Second, that we should relieve our neighbor only when in extremity, is not agreeable to the rule of loving our neighbor as ourselves. That rule implies that our love towards our neighbor should work in the same manner, and express itself in the same ways, as our love towards ourselves. We are very sensible of our own difficulties. We should also be readily sensible of theirs. From love to ourselves, when we are under difficulties, and suffer hardships, we are concerned for our relief, are wont to seek relief, and lay ourselves out for it. — And as we would love our neighbor as ourselves, we ought in like manner to be concerned when our neighbor is under difficulty, and to seek his relief. We are wont to be much concerned about our own difficulties, though we be not reduced to extremity, and are

willing in those cases to lay ourselves out for our own relief. So, as we would love our neighbor as ourselves, we should in like manner lay out ourselves to obtain relief for him, though his difficulties be not extreme.

OBJECT. V.

Some may object against charity to a particular object because he is an ill sort of person. He deserves not that people should be kind to him. He is of a very ill temper, of an ungrateful spirit, and particularly, because he hath not deserved well of *them*, but has treated them ill, has been injurious to them, and even now entertains an ill spirit against them.

But we are obliged to relieve persons in want, notwithstanding these things, both by the general and particular rules of God's Word.

First, we are obliged to do so by the *general* rules of Scripture. I shall mention two.

1. That of loving our neighbor as ourselves. A man may be our *neighbor*, though he be an ill sort of man, and even our enemy, as Christ himself teaches us by his discourse with the lawyer, Luke 10:25, etc. A certain lawyer came to Christ, and asked him, what he should do to inherit eternal life? Christ asked him, how it was written in the law? He answers, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." Christ tells him, that if he shall do thus, he shall live. But then the lawyer asks him, who is his neighbor? Because it was received doctrine among the Pharisees, that no man was their neighbor, but their friends, and those of the same people and religion. — Christ answers him by a parable, or story of a certain man, who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and

fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed from him, leaving him half dead. Soon after there came a priest that way, who saw the poor man that had been thus cruelly treated by the thieves; but passed by without affording him any relief. The same as done by a Levite. — But a certain Samaritan coming that way, as soon as he saw the half-dead man, had compassion on him, took him up, bound up his wounds, set him on his own beast, carried him to the inn, and took care of him, paying the innkeeper money for his past and future expense. And promising him still more, if he should find it necessary to be at more expense on behalf of the man.

Then Christ asks the lawyer, which of these three, the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan was neighbor to the man that fell among the thieves. Christ proposed this in such a manner, that the lawyer could not help owning, that the Samaritan did well in relieving the Jew, that he did the duty of a neighbor to him. Now, there was an inveterate enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans. They hated one another more than any other nation in the world. And the Samaritans were a people exceedingly troublesome to the Jews. Yet we see that Christ teaches that the Jews ought to do the part of neighbors to the Samaritans; *i.e.* to love them as themselves. For it was that of which Christ was speaking.

And the consequence was plain. If the Samaritan was neighbor to the distressed Jew, then the Jews, by a parity of reason, were neighbors to the Samaritans. If the Samaritan did well, in relieving a Jew that was his enemy, then the Jews would do well in relieving the Samaritans, their enemies. — What I particularly observe is that Christ here plainly teaches that our enemies, those that abuse and injure us, are our neighbors, and therefore come under the rule of loving our neighbor as ourselves.

2. Another general rule that obliges us to the same thing is that wherein we are commanded to love one another, as Christ hath loved us. We have it John 13:34, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." Christ calls it a *new* commandment, with respect to that old commandment of loving our neighbor as ourselves. This command of loving our neighbor as Christ hath loved us opens our duty to us in a new manner, and in a further degree than that did. We must not only love our neighbor as ourselves, but as Christ hath loved us. We have the same again, John 15:12, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."

Now the meaning of this is not that we should love one another to the same *degree* that Christ loved us, though there ought to be a proportion, considering our nature and capacity, but that we should exercise our love one to another in like *manner*. As for instance, Christ hath loved us so as to be willing to deny himself, and to suffer greatly, in order to help us, so should we be willing to deny ourselves in order to help one another. Christ loved us and showed us great kindness though we were far below him so should we show kindness to those of our fellow men who are far below us. Christ denied himself to help us, though we are not able to recompense him, so should we be willing to lay out ourselves to help our neighbor, freely expecting nothing again. Christ loved us, was kind to us, and was willing to relieve us, though we were very evil and hateful, of an evil disposition, not deserving any good, but deserving only to be hated, and treated with indignation; so we should be willing to be kind to those who are of an ill disposition, and are very undeserving. Christ loved us, and laid himself out to relieve us, though we were his enemies, and had treated him ill. So we, as we would love one another as Christ hath loved us, should

relieve those who are our enemies, hate us, have an ill spirit toward us, and have treated us ill.

Second, we are obliged to this duty by many *particular* rules. We are particularly required to be kind to the unthankful and to the evil. And therein to follow the example of our heavenly Father, who causes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. We are obliged, not only to be kind to them that are so to us, but to them that hate, and that despitefully use us. I need not mention the particular places which speak to the effect.

Not but that when persons are virtuous and pious, and of a grateful disposition, and are friendly disposed towards us, they are more the objects of our charity for it, and our obligation to kindness to them is the greater. Yet if things be otherwise, that doth not render them not fit objects of our charity, nor set us free from obligation to kindness towards them.

OBJECT. VI.

Some may object from their own circumstances that they have nothing to spare; they have not more than enough for themselves. — I answer,

First, it must doubtless be allowed that in some cases persons, by reason of their own circumstances, are not obliged to give to others. — For instance, if there be a contribution for the poor, they are not obliged to join in the contribution, who are in as much need as those are for whom the contribution is made. It savors of ridiculous vanity in them to contribute with others for such as are not more needy than they. It savors of a proud desire to conceal their own circumstances and an affectation of having them accounted about what they in truth are.

Second, there are scarcely any who may not make this objection, as they interpret it. There is no person who may not say, he has not more than enough for himself, as he may mean by *enough*. He may intend, that he has not more than he desires,

or more than he can dispose of to his own advantage; or not so much, but that, if he had anything less, he should look upon himself in worse circumstances than he is in now. He will own, that he could live if he had less. But then he will say he could not live so well. Rich men may say they have not more than enough for themselves, as they may mean by it. They need it all, they may say, to support their honor and dignity, as is proper for the place and degree in which they stand. Those who are poor, to be sure, will say, *they* have not too much for themselves. Those who are of the middle sort will say, *they* have not too much for themselves. And the rich will say, *they* have not too much for themselves. Thus there will be none found to give to the poor.

Third. in many cases, we may, by the rules of the gospel, be obliged to give to others, when we cannot do it without suffering ourselves. As if our neighbor's difficulties and necessities be much greater than our own, and we see that he is not like to be otherwise relieved, we should be willing to suffer with him, and to take part of his burden on ourselves. Else how is that rule of *bearing one another's burdens* fulfilled? If we be never obliged to relieve others' burdens, but when we can do it without burdening ourselves, then how do we bear our neighbor's burdens, when we bear no burden at all? Though we may not have a superfluity, yet we may be obliged to afford relief to others who are in much greater necessity. As appears by that rule, Luke 3:11, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." — Yea, they who are very poor may be obliged to give for the relief of others in much greater distress than they. If there be no other way of relief, those who have the lightest burden are obliged still to take some part of their neighbor's burden, to make it the more supportable. A brother may be obliged to help a brother in extremity, though they are both very much in want. The apostle commends the Macedonian Christians, that they were liberal to their brethren, though they themselves were in deep poverty. 2 Cor. 8:1, 2, "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of

God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: how in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality.”

Fourth, those who have not too much for themselves are willing to spare seed to sow, that they may have fruit hereafter. Perhaps they need that which they scatter in the field, and seem to throw away. They may need it for bread for their families. Yet they will spare seed to sow, that they may provide for the future, and may have increase. But we have already shown that giving to the poor is in Scripture compared to sowing seed, and is as much the way to increase as the sowing of seed is. It doth not tend to poverty, but the contrary. It is not the way to diminish our substance, but to increase it. All the difficulty in this matter is in trusting God with what we give, in trusting his promises. If men could but trust the faithfulness of God to his own promises, they would give freely.

OBJECT. VII.

Some may object concerning a particular person that they do not certainly know whether he be an object of charity or not. They are not perfectly acquainted with his circumstances. Neither do they know what sort of man he is. They know not whether he be in want as he pretends. Or if they know this, they know not how he came to be in want, whether it were not by his own idleness, or prodigality. Thus they argue that they cannot be obliged, till they certainly know these things. — I reply,

First, this is Nabal’s objection, for which he is greatly condemned in Scripture; see 1 Sam. 25. David in his exiled state came and begged relief of Nabal. Nabal objected, 1 Sam. 25:10, 11, “Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?” His objection was, that David was a stranger

to him. He did not know who he was, nor what his circumstances were. He did not know but that he was a runaway. And he was not obliged to support and harbor a runaway. He objected, that he knew not that he was a proper object of charity; that he knew not but that he was very much the contrary.

But Abigail no way countenanced his behavior herein, but greatly condemned it. She calls him a man of Belial, and says that he was as his name was. Nabal was his name, and folly was with him. And her behavior was very contrary to his. And she is greatly commended for it. The Holy Ghost tells us in that chapter, 1 Sam. 25:3, that "she was a woman of a good understanding." At the same time God exceedingly frowned on Nabal's behavior on this occasion, as we are informed that about ten days after God smote Nabal that he died, verse 38.

This story is doubtless told us partly for this end, to discountenance too great a scrupulosity as to the object on whom we bestow our charity, and the making of this merely an objection against charity to others, that we do not certainly know their circumstances. It is true, when we have opportunity to be certainly acquainted with their circumstances, it is well to embrace it. And to be influenced in a measure by probability in such cases, is not to be condemned. Yet it is better to give to several that are not objects of charity, than to send away empty one that is.

Second, we are commanded to be kind to strangers whom we know not, nor their circumstances. This is commanded in many places. But I shall mention only one. Heb. 13:2, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." By strangers here the apostle means one whom we know not, and whose circumstances we know not; as is evident by these words, "for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Those who entertained angels unawares, did not know the persons whom they entertained, nor their circumstances. Else how could it be unawares?

OBJECT. VIII.

Some may say they are not obliged to give to the poor till they ask. If any man is in necessity, let him come and make known his straits to me, and then it will be time enough for me to give him. Or if he need a public contribution, let him come and ask. I do not know that the congregation or church is obliged to relieve till they ask relief. — I answer,

First, it surely is the most charitable to relieve the needy in that way wherein we shall do them the greatest kindness. Now it is certain that we shall do them a greater kindness by inquiring into their circumstances, and relieving them, without putting them upon begging. There is none of us but who, if it were their case, would look upon it more kind in our neighbors, to inquire into our circumstances, and help us of their own accord. To put our neighbors upon begging in order to relief, is painful. It is more charitable, more brotherly, more becoming Christians and the disciples of Jesus, to do it without. I think this is self-evident, and needs no proof.

Second, this is not agreeable to the character of the liberal man given in Scripture; *viz.* that devises liberal things. Isa. 32:8. It is not to devise liberal things, if we neglect all liberality till the poor come a begging to us. But to inquire who stand in need of our charity, and to contrive to relieve them in the way that shall do them the greatest kindness; that is to devise liberal things.

Third, we should not commend a man for doing so to his own brother. If a man had an own brother or sister in great straits, and he were well able to supply them, under the pretense that if he or she want anything, let them come and ask and I will give them, we should hardly think such an one behaved like a brother. Christians are commanded to love as brethren, to look upon one another as brethren in Christ, and to treat one another as such.

Fourth, we should commend others for taking a method contrary to that which is proposed by the objector. If we should hear or read of a people who were so charitable, who took such care of

the poor, and were so concerned that none among them should suffer, who were proper objects of charity; that they were wont diligently to inquire into the circumstances of their neighbors, to find out who were needy, and liberally supplied them of their own accord; I say, if we should hear or read of such a people, would it not appear well to us? Should not we have the better thought of that people, on that account?

OBJECT. IX.

He has brought himself to want by his own fault. — In reply, it must be considered what you mean by his fault.

First, if you mean a want of a natural faculty to manage affairs to advantage, that is to be considered as his calamity. Such a faculty is a gift that God bestows on some, and not on others. And it is not owing to themselves. You ought to be thankful that God hath given you such a gift, which he hath denied to the person in question. And it will be a very suitable way for you to show your thankfulness, to help those to whom that gift is denied, and let them share the benefit of it with you. This is as reasonable as that he to whom Providence has imparted sight should be willing to help him to whom sight is denied, and that he should have the benefit of the sight of others, who has none of his own. Or, as that he to whom God hath given wisdom, should be willing that the ignorant should have the benefit of his knowledge.

Second, if they have been reduced to want by some oversight and are to be blamed that they did not consider for themselves better, yet that doth not free us from all obligation to charity towards them. If we should forever refuse to help men because of that, it would be for us to make their inconsiderateness and imprudent act, an unpardonable crime, quite contrary to the rules of the gospel, which insist so much upon forgiveness. — We should not be disposed so highly to resent such an oversight in any for whom we have a dear affection, as our children, or our friends. We should not refuse to help them in that necessity

and distress, which they brought upon themselves by their own inconsiderateness. But we ought to have a dear affection and concern for the welfare of all our fellow Christians, whom we should, love as brethren, and as Christ hath loved us.

Third, if they are come to want by a vicious idleness and prodigality, yet we are not thereby excused from all obligation to relieve them, unless they continue in those vices. If they continue not in those vices, the rules of the gospel direct us to forgive them. And if their fault be forgiven, then it will not remain to be a bar in the way of our charitably relieving them. If we do otherwise, we shall act in a manner very contrary to the rule of *loving one another as Christ hath loved us*. Now Christ hath loved us, pitied us, and greatly laid out himself to relieve us from that want and misery which we brought on ourselves by our own folly and wickedness. We foolishly and perversely threw away those riches with which we were provided, upon which we might have lived and been happy to all eternity.

Fourth, if they continue in the same courses still, yet that doth not excuse us from charity to their families that are innocent. If we cannot relieve those of their families without their having something of it, yet that ought not to be a bar in the way of our charity. And that because it is supposed that those of their families are proper objects of charity. And those that are so, we are bound to relieve. The command is positive and absolute. If we look upon that which the heads of the families have of what we give, to be entirely lost; yet we had better lose something of our estate, than suffer those who are really proper objects of charity to remain without relief.

OBJECT. X.

Some may object and say, Others do not their duty. If others did their duty, the poor would be sufficiently supplied. If others did as much as we in proportion to their ability and obligation, the poor would have enough to help them out of their straits.

Or some may say, it belongs to others more than it does to us. They have relations that ought to help them. Or there are others to whom it more properly belongs than to us.

ANS. We ought to relieve those who are in want though brought to it through others' fault. If our neighbor be poor, though others be to blame that it is so, yet that excuses us not from helping him. If it belong to others more than to us, yet if those others will neglect their duty, and our neighbor therefore remains in want, we may be obliged to relieve him. If a man be brought into straits through the injustice of others, suppose by thieves or robbers, as the poor Jew whom the Samaritan relieved; yet we may be obliged to relieve him, though it be not through our fault that he is in want, but through that of other men. And whether that fault be a commission or a neglect alters not the case.

As to the poor Jew that fell among thieves between Jerusalem and Jericho, it more properly belonged to those thieves who brought him into that distress to relieve him, than to any other person. Yet seeing they would not do it, others were not excused. And the Samaritan did no more than his duty, relieving him as he did, though it properly belonged to others. — Thus if a man have children or other relations, to whom it most properly belongs to relieve him, yet if they will not do it, the obligation to relieve him falls upon others. So for the same reason we should do the more for the relief of the poor, because others neglect to do their proportion, or what belongs to them. And that because by the neglect of others to do their proportion they need the more, their necessity is the greater.

OBJECT. XI.

The law makes provision for the poor, and obliges the respective towns in which they live to provide for them. Therefore some argue that there is no occasion for particular persons to exercise any charity this way. They say, the case is not the same with

us now as it was in the primitive church. For then Christians were under a heathen government. And however the charity of Christians in those times be much to be commended, yet now, by reason of our different circumstances, there is no occasion for private charity. Because, in the state in which Christians now are, provision is made for the poor otherwise. — This objection is built upon these two suppositions, both which I suppose are false.

First, that the towns are obliged by law to relieve everyone who otherwise would be an object of charity. This I suppose to be false, unless it be supposed that none are proper objects of charity, but those that have no estate left to live upon, which is very unreasonable, and what I have already shown to be false, in answer to the fourth objection, in showing that it doth not answer the rules of Christian charity, to relieve only those who are reduced to extremity.

Nor do I suppose it was ever the design of the law, requiring the various towns to support their own poor, to cut off all occasion for Christian charity. Nor is it fit there should be such a law. It is fit that the law should make provision for those that have no estates of their own. It is not fit that persons who are reduced to that extremity should be left to so precarious a source of supply as a voluntary charity. They are in extreme necessity of relief, and therefore it is fit that there should be something sure for them to depend on. But a voluntary charity in this corrupt world is an uncertain thing. Therefore the wisdom of the legislature did not think fit to leave those who are so reduced upon such a precarious foundation for subsistence. But I suppose not that it was ever the design of the law to make such provision for all that are in want, as to leave no room for Christian charity.

Second, this objection is built upon another supposition which is equally false, viz. that there are in fact none who are proper objects of charity, but those that are relieved by the town. Let the design of the law be what it will, yet if there are in fact persons who are so in want, as to stand in need of our charity, then that law doth not free us from obligation to relieve them by

our charity. For as we have just now shown, in answer to the last objection, if it more properly belong to others to relieve them than us; yet if they do it not, we are not free. So that if it be true, that it *belongs* to the town to relieve all who are proper objects of charity; yet if the town *in fact* do it not, we are not excused.

If one of our neighbors suffers through the fault of a particular person, of a thief or robber, or of a town, it alters not the case. But if he suffer and be without relief, it is an act of Christian charity in us to relieve him. Now it is too obvious to be denied, that there are in fact persons so in want that it would be a charitable act in us to help them, notwithstanding all that is done by the town. A man must hide his mental eyes, to think otherwise.

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