

THE GIFT OF GOD

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Which has greater value a diamond or a grain of corn? Put both of them away, and at the end of a hundred years the grain of corn will still have no money value, while the diamond's value, running up into the hundreds of dollars, will be undiminished. At the end of a thousand years the same thing will be true. But suppose, instead, we bury the grain in the warm, moist earth, and year after year throughout the centuries let it go on producing and reproducing. In that time it will have produced a store that the whole earth could hardly contain. Its production represents a money value more than an atom in comparison. To have saved the grain of corn would have been to lose all it was capable of producing.

The plan of salvation originated in a gift. Without God's gift of His own dear Son to the human family, salvation for any man would be utterly impossible. Without Christ's gift of His own life to fallen men and women, there could be no hope of an endless life of joy beyond the grave.

The gift of Christ forms the foundation of the whole scheme of salvation for lost mankind. The gift of Christ is the keystone in that wondrous arch of redemption which binds two eternities together. The gift of Christ is the all and in all of the whole system which imparts security from sin, in heaven; salvation on earth; and immortality hereafter.

Therefore, seeing that all that we have, and all that we can ever hope to have, emanates from a gift, and is in itself a gift,—to study that gift, to make it our science, our song, and our life, is a duty and pleasure the most supreme that is committed to the candidates for admission into the eternal and universal realms of thought and action and life.

God did not *loan* Jesus Christ to the human family. The Father did not *lend* the Son to sinners simply for a few brief years of sojourn here on earth. Nor did the Almighty merely *lease* His only beloved Son to the world for use during their experiment of sin. Neither did the Father *offer* His Son as a gift to humanity.

There was neither loan nor lease nor offer, but a gift. Christ was a free gift from the Eternal to the human. The world's Redeemer was not given to be the Son of God. He was given to become the Son of

man. He was not only given *to* man: far greater was the sacrifice of God,—He was given *to be* man. He was given to be a man in order that He might redeem man. He was a “free gift”—not for three and thirty years; not for the short period of this world’s history; but forever, and for evermore.

Through all eternity Christ will never be again what He was before He “gave himself.” He will not be less good, He will not be less pure, He will not be less glorious; but so long as the ceaseless ages roll, He will be the Son of *man*, a member of the lost, the redeemed, the human family. He was a member of the family of God; He gave himself to become a member of the family of man, that by adoption He might cause the children of earth to become the sons and daughters of heaven.

“In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.’ He gave Him not only to bear our sins, but to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race.”¹

God’s gift of His own dear Son to fallen man was a real, not a make-believe, gift. God did really give away His only begotten Son. Christ was the only one of His kind in the universe. To be sure, the angels were all sons of God, but Christ was the only begotten Son of the Father. When God gave Him to the human family, God made a real sacrifice. The Father not only gave His Son to man, but He gave Him to be a man; and through all eternity Christ will never be what He was before the fall of man,—before His own and His Father’s voluntary gift of himself. He is and ever will be divine; His divinity remains unchanged and unchangeable. But every human being who will know in his own life the blest experience of the gift of giving must first know and recognize that gift as a divine reality in the very life and experience of God and of God’s dear Son.

The word “love” is a common one. It is much used. Its meanings are many and various. Sometimes it implies nothing more than admiration. Often it indicates only greed. It may denote personal sentiment and individual affection between men and women. Frequently it is indicative of the most supreme type of selfishness. It often signifies gross immorality and base passion.

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

Our ideas of love have become so narrow and so low that if the word be analyzed in relation to the emotions, passions, and actions, to which it is for the most part applied, it will be found to express two of the worst traits of human life—selfishness and lust.

Even at best, human love is often but little better than a form of selfishness. A man loves a woman—why?—Because of his desire to draw her to himself, to possess her,—to have her for his life companion,—to gain her to be *exclusively* his own.

But the love of God is the absolute opposite of all these things. “God so *loved*. . . that He gave.” With God loving is giving. “God is love.” With the Eternal One to love is to give. “God is love.” His life is nothing but love. With Him to live is to love, and to love is to give—living is loving, and loving is giving.

Now, therefore, the supreme idea in the love of God is this—It is a love which gives. Any love which does not give is not the love of God at all. It is only human. It is earthly, sensual, devilish. Common affection is not true love. The test of all genuine love is that it has in it the element of giving—yes, that its very essence is self-sacrificial giving. In this, when a man loves a woman it is that he may give to her all human devotion.

There are many in the world who make expensive presents or gifts to others. There are wealthy men who give millions of dollars to different enterprises. Yet much of this giving is pure selfishness. God frowns upon it, because it does not proceed from right wishes, from noble desires of the heart. A gift may be made with the idea of gaining the favor of some one else. Such gifts, whether made to Christ’s cause or to men, are displeasing to God. Many times lavish gifts are bestowed upon great enterprises because the giver desires to become well known and well thought of. This is nothing but pharisaism.

The love of God therefore is a love which gives—gives because of love and loyalty to the cause and object upon which it is bestowed. This *giving* love, and it alone, is the love of God.

How many times has this and similar testimony been borne: “I am very happy; I feel so much of the *love of God* in my heart; this faith grows more and more precious to me day by day.”

And yet many who utter such words have absolutely no idea of the responsibilities of the love of God—the responsibility to give. He who does not feel the burden upon him to give of his life, to give of his God-entrusted talents, and to give of his property, of his money, to

the suffering cause of God, does not know the love of God, for—*God so loved. . . that He gave.*”

My brother, my sister, when you and I kneel down to pray that God will bless the church and hasten on its work with power in the earth, how can we have faith that the Lord will be pleased with that prayer when we are withholding the money so necessary to make the work go?

It is useless for us to pray to God to bless the work and to tell the Lord how much we love the work when we do not support it by our offerings.

What good does it do to pray for the success of the third angel’s message if we do not freely give the strength and money necessary to forward it in the earth? Any one who does this simply does not believe the third angel’s message at all.

Statesmen and army officers have a saying that “money is the sinews of war.” The same is to a great extent true in the warfare now being waged on earth between Christ and His followers on the one side and Satan and his followers on the other side.

In the Bible it is written: “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in *deed* and in truth.” 1 John 3:18. Loving in word and in tongue,—merely talking about the love of God,—making a profession of love,—is a very different thing from possessing the real love of God. The real love of God is a thing of *deed*, not of word. It is a love which *does*; it is a love which *gives*.

God is calling upon us to love His cause. We must hasten to manifest that love in the same way that God Himself manifests it—by giving. He has said that financial ruin and disgrace are starring His schools in the face. He is calling for gifts, both large and small, to aid our church and school; these instrumentalities, and save them to His cause.

“Therefore, as ye abound in everything, [or gift] in [the gift of] faith, and [in the gift of] utterance, and [in the gift of] knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace [gift] also. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and *to prove the sincerity of your love.*” 2 Cor. 8:1-8.

The desire to give manifesting itself in the act of giving is in itself a gift of God. He who rightly gives to the cause of God is exercising a spiritual gift bestowed on him by the Master. This gift God freely

bestows upon all who open their hearts and hands liberally to perform it.

Giving is a gift. The exercise of this gift is just as surely the exercise of a gift of God as is the exercise of the gift of faith, or of utterance, or of knowledge, or of prophecy, or of teaching, or of tongues. It is a gift of ministry, and he who exercises it is a minister of the gospel.

A man was asked, "What did you do yesterday?" He replied, "Yesterday I taught a class in Sabbath school. On Tuesday I was working in VBS. On Wednesday I was operating in our Adventist hospital in Holbrook, Arizona. On Thursday I was teaching the Word of God in the Amazon. On Friday I was building a church in Mozambique." The friend exclaimed, "Man, even in the jet age you cannot do that!" The fellow said, "But I do it every day. I dedicate to the Lord a gift in the church, and it goes all over the earth doing good for Jesus."

The gift of giving is the gift which proves the sincerity of our love. To all men and women who wish to prove that they possess the love of God, the great apostle commends this gift. By the exercise of the gift of giving, the redeemed of God can prove to all the world and to themselves that they have the love of God abounding in their hearts in deed and in truth.

Remember, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Ps. 24:1. Now people do not believe that the earth belongs to the Lord, or else they do not deal with Him with the same honesty that they deal with their fellowmen. If the earth belongs to the Lord, then He has the right to control it, and every man ought to yield to Him His own. But, not only do they not believe that the earth belongs to the Lord, but very few even believe that there is any God. Heathen principles prevail not only in the world, but largely among those who call themselves Christians.

Although the earth is the Lord's, He has given it to the children of men. Ps. 115:16. This does not absolve them from acknowledging the gift. To receive a gift, and never to acknowledge it, is ingratitude such as always brings a person into disrepute, if manifested toward one of his fellows. But in giving the earth to man, the Lord has reserved a portion for Himself, as He certainly has the right to do, when it is all His. "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord." Lev. 27:30.

This is not a mere “Levitical law.” There is the statement of the simple fact: “The tithe is the Lord’s.” There is no limitation, no qualification. It is not limited to time nor to place. It is true all over the earth, in all time.

Richard Wurmbrand tells of his many years in and out of miserable Communist prisons because of his faith in Christ. He was often tortured, and on some occasions nearly starved to death. But the principle of tithing was so internalized in his heart that when he was given one slice of bread a week and dirty soup every day, he faithfully tithed from it. Every tenth day he gave his soup to a weaker brother, and every tenth week he took his slice of bread and gave it to one of his fellow prisoners in Jesus’ name.

“Didn’t Christ do away with it?” Christ did not come to this earth to overturn the Father’s government, but to establish it. He did not come and give His life for the purpose of upsetting what God had established. Even if that had been His purpose, He could not have accomplished it with regard to the tithe, for there we have not a law, but a fact, and nothing can ever change a fact. “The tithe is the Lord’s,” and nothing can ever change the fact. The tithe may be kept back from Him, by robbery, but robbing one of his property never proves that it is not his. If a thing belongs to me, it can never cease to belong to me unless I sell it or give it away. If a man steals it, it is mine still; if I lose it, it still belongs to me if it can be found.

Now we have no record that the Lord has ever sold or given away His right to the tithe. There is no evidence to show that God has ever renounced all claims on this earth and on mankind. The tithe belongs to Him now just as much as it did four thousand years ago. “I am the Lord, I change not.”

Fred Green was sixteen years old when he was given the job of picking up the trash and cleaning restrooms for \$3 a day. He got to drive an old, beat-up pick-up truck. His first paycheck he and his parents were sitting around the table discussing how he was going to spend all that money. His dad said, “What about the Lord?” Fred sat down and refigured his budget, and he laid aside ten percent of his income for the Lord. To the best of his knowledge Fred has given ten percent or more of every dollar he ever earned to the Lord ever since. The Lord has truly blessed he and his family.

God says, “Ye have robbed me.” Will a man rob God? One would think that God is the last One that one would think of robbing; but it is not so. Men who would feel grossly insulted if it were intimated that

they would rob a man of a penny, or would take anything from him that belonged to him, will not hesitate to rob God. All their lives they rob Him, and never once feel any compunctions of conscience. Why is this? Is it because God is so far away, and does not press His claims as men do? Is it because nobody thinks any the less of a man who robs God, while it is disreputable to rob men? If it is for one or both of these reasons, is it not plain that such a man would rob his neighbor if he could do it without losing his standing in society? Can such a man be called an honest man? If a man be brought into court charged with theft, can he clear himself of the charge by saying, "I robbed only one man, and he was a foreigner; I have never robbed one of my neighbors." Robbery is robbery, no matter who the victim is. Surely it is no less a crime to rob God than it is to rob a man. What a big debt we all owe to the Lord!

The Lord positively rewards men for doing their duty. He rewards those who have robbed Him, when they come and restore what they have stolen. What man would do that? Giving to the Lord, or paying Him what is His due, never impoverishes anybody. People do not grow poor by serving the Lord. There are thousands of people in the direst poverty today, who would in a few months be in comfortable circumstances if they would serve the Lord in truth; not make a profession of religion, but really serve the Lord with a perfect heart. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. 4:8. They are in poverty because of habits of life, which a perfect living out of the gospel would take away, leaving them free.

God says that when a whole tithe is brought to Him, He will open the windows of heaven, and bless till there is not room enough to receive it; it will overflow. If anybody wishes to know what sort of blessings the Lord will pour out, he has only to prove the Lord, as He says, and he will see for himself. How many who invest thousands in doubtful speculations, dare take the Lord at His Word, and give over to Him that which belongs to Him?

The payment of the tithe is in itself an acknowledgment that the whole belongs to Him. The tithe of yourself, that is, a tithe of your labor belongs to the Lord, but you cannot divide yourself, therefore you belong to Him entirely. So the only way in the world for you to bring a whole tithe into the storehouse of the Lord, is for you to give Him yourself. You will find that the Lord knows a great deal more about business than you do, and can manage your affairs better than

you can. "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruit of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Prov. 3:5-10. Give yourself to the Lord with His tithe, and you will find a blessing that will overflow to others.

Andrew Fuller went back to his hometown to collect money for foreign missions. One of his contacts was an old friend. When presented with the need, the man said, "Well, Andrew, seeing it's you, I'll give you five dollars." "No," said Fuller, "I can't take your money for my cause, seeing it is for me," and he handed the money back.

The man saw his point. "Andrew, you are right. Here's ten dollars, seeing it is for Jesus Christ."

Let us remember, it is not the amount we give toward helping the Lord's work; it is the motive He looks at. When we have the opportunity to contribute to some worthy Christian cause, may we do so with the right purpose in mind. We should never give just because we feel obligated to organizations or persons, nor because we desire to receive selfish recognition or reward. The apostle Paul said, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). We should honestly say, "It's for the Lord!"

The Scottish soldiers, forced by their Japanese captors to labor on a jungle railroad, had degenerated to barbarous behavior, but one afternoon something happened:

A shovel was missing. The officer in charge became enraged. He demanded that the missing shovel be produced, or else. When nobody in the squadron budged, the officer got his gun and threatened to kill them all on the spot. It was obvious the officer meant what he had said. Then, finally, one man stepped forward. The officer put away his gun, picked up a shovel, and beat the man to death. When it was over, the survivors picked up the bloody corpse and carried it with them to the second tool check. This time, no shovel was missing. Indeed, there had been a miscount at the first check point.

The word spread like wildfire through the whole camp. An innocent man had been willing to die to save the others! The incident had a profound effect. The men began to treat each other like brothers. When the victorious Allies swept in, the survivors, human skeletons, lined up in front of their captors and instead of attacking their captors

insisted: “No more hatred. No more killing. Now what we need is forgiveness.” Sacrificial love has transforming power.