

A Cheerful Giver is Beloved of God

A Sermon

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"God loves a cheerful giver."

[2 Corinthians 9:7.](#)

I AM most anxious, dear Friends, to make full proof of my ministry, and in this one respect, especially, that I may address you upon all parts of God's Word and not be found guilty of confining myself to one set of topics, for certainly this, although it might be pleasant, would not be profitable to you. I would rather, if I had my choice, constantly preach upon the doctrine of God's everlasting and unchanging love. I should delight to dilate each Sunday and, indeed, in every sermon, upon the simple doctrine of the justification of the sinner in the sight of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

But there are other things in Scripture beside these. All things in Scripture are not placed there for our comfort. All are not promises. All are not words of cheer for feeble minds and disconsolate spirits. There are other words beside those of consolation—words of direction, words of precept. If we should shun these—if these never entered into the course of our ministry at all—some solemn disease might break out among the Church because a part of the "food convenient" for them had been withheld.

Therefore I think it is meet to speak to you upon this subject tonight, and all the more so because there is no collection. You are not asked to give anything, and I shall therefore feel myself the more at liberty to press upon you the instruction of this text. You will see that my simple object is to bring out the teaching of the Word of God to you, not with any ulterior purpose, but purely to promote that result which God Himself may intend to work by the Words before us! Words, remember, of undoubted Inspiration and therefore as worthy of all acceptance as any other sentence from the Divine mouth.

Brothers and Sisters, in the Church of God there are various forms of service. There are some to whom the gift is given of edifying others—these are bound with diligence to instruct their hearers and expound the Scriptures. To others it is given to evangelize—to break up fresh ground, to win the unconverted. These are bound never to stay their hand, but to sow the Seed both at morning and evening. Many in the Lord's family are not enabled either to be the teachers of the Church, or the winners of souls, but they are called by the duties of a humble, quiet life, to adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things. Such as these should see to it that their conversation is always such as becomes the Gospel of Christ and

befits the household of faith. And it should be their earnest prayer that what is preached by some may be illustrated by themselves in their daily walk and conversation.

A considerable portion of the Church of God is called to yet harder service, namely, that of suffering. God gets glory, still, out of the fire of affliction when His people sing His high praises upon their beds. He receives as much honor from the sickbed as from the pulpit! And those of His servants who are called to lie in a hospital are as acceptable soldiers as those whom He commands to the front of the fray. We must all expect to take our turn in tribulation according to the purpose of God. When we are commanded to do so, we must take up our cross cheerfully and follow our Lord.

To all the Church, also, it is given, and to each member in his measure, to serve God by giving. Some are enabled, being made stewards of wealth, to give largely of their substance. They are bound to do so, but they should not give it merely as being bound, but feeling it to be their privilege to give whatever they can to Him who gave them their all, and who is their All. The poorest Christian is not exempted from this privilege. If he has but little, God accepts according to that which a man has, and not according to that which he has not.

And if he is so poor that he cannot even give the two mites which make a farthing, still he may give to God of his time. He may give to God of such ability as he has in the teaching of the young, in the distribution of the printed Word, or in some other form of service which shall come conveniently within his reach. But none must escape from being givers to God in some way, for we are all receivers and should be all dispensers. Give Him our prayers. Give Him our praises. Give Him such efforts as we can, but let us all be givers—and let us take heed to the text—and be cheerful givers, too.

You will notice that the Apostle Paul had been speaking about giving all through the chapter, but he now comes to speak of giving as it appears in the sight of God. And the great argument which he uses, the master-gun, is, "God loves a cheerful giver," from which I learn that when we are speaking of Christian service, we ought always to view it in its aspect towards God. He had spoken of what the men at Achaia had thought of benevolence, and of what the members of other Churches might think of the Corinthians, since he had before boasted of them. But he recollects himself, and says that the true judgment of a good work is not what may be thought of it by the Church or by the world, but in what esteem God may hold it. "God," he says, "loves a cheerful giver." That is the point.

Beloved Hearer, you are a professed Christian. Do you serve in the Church after this model? You may ask what I mean. It is this. In coming up to the House of God do you come there that you may worship God? When you teach in the Sunday school, is it merely that you may take your share with your fellow Christians, or do you teach as unto God? You speak, my Brother, in God's name—do you not sometimes find yourself preaching otherwise than as unto God? You engage in prayer in the Prayer Meeting, my dear Friend—do you

ever raise the question in your mind, "I wonder whether my prayer is liked by those who listen to it?"

You forget that prayer is to be viewed as unto God, and that all the service of the Christian is not towards man, nor towards the Church, though it has its bearings in both of these directions—but its main bent and bearing is towards God, and to do everything as for the Most High is the most important of duties. To live in this world—

"Careless, myself a dying man,
Of dying men's esteem."

To ask myself never what Mr. So-and-So thinks of me, "Shall I be commended, or shall I meet with censure?" but to say, "As I serve my God and not my fellow men, what will the great Master say to me? What will He say of this, my service? How will it appear in His sight? Will it be gold, silver, precious stones, or will it, like wood, hay and stubble, be consumed in the fire?"

This is the true way in which to work and live! Note, then, before I come to the text to enter fully into its teaching, that whether it is service, or teaching, or suffering, or giving—the main point is to perform it as unto the Lord—and if the Church would see to this she would find her strength. She would serve God after a nobler and more acceptable manner, for He is a Spirit, and they that serve Him, serving Him in spirit and in truth, would serve Him more boldly, more abundantly, and more acceptably through Jesus Christ.

This is, then, upon the outside of the text. "God loves a cheerful giver." We learn that as giving is a part of Christian service, the right way to do it is the way which God will, Himself, accept, and that that way is the giving cheerfully. "God loves a cheerful giver." I do not mean to be very long upon any one point, but first shall notice very briefly what a cheerful giver is. Secondly, why the Lord loves such. And then, thirdly, will it be necessary to say even a word or two upon why we who are His people should be such?

I. First, WHAT IS MEANT BY A CHEERFUL GIVER? The rest of the verse tells us what is not meant, and so helps us to see what is intended. "Not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver." "Not grudgingly," not giving as though you wished you could avoid it and therefore giving as little as possible. Not counting the pennies and reckoning them to be as precious as drops of blood—but giving with ease, spontaneity, freeness, pleasure—this is a cheerful giver.

To be this, one must give proportionately, for cheerful givers reckon how much they should give—how much as good stewards they may be expected at their hands. He who has a large income gives grudgingly if he gives no more than one who has but a tenth as much. He who has but few expenses and lives at a small cost—if he gives no more than another man who has a large family and large expenses, cannot be said to give cheerfully. He evidently

gives grudgingly if he does not give proportionately. Much has been said about giving a tenth of one's income to the Lord. I think that is a Christian duty which none should, for a moment, question.

If it were a duty under the Jewish law, much more is it so, now, under the Christian dispensation. But it is a great mistake to suppose that the Jew only gave a tenth. He gave very, very, very much more than that! The tenth was the payment which he must make, but after that came all the free-will offerings, all the various gifts at different seasons of the year, so that, perhaps he gave a third—much more near that, certainly, than a tenth! And at this present day it is a strange thing that the followers of idols, such as the Hindus, give very nearly that proportion of their substance, and thus utterly shame the illiberality of many who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ!

I do not, however, like to lay down any rules for God's people, for the Lord's New Testament is not a great book of rules. It is not a book of the letter, for that kills. It is the book of the Spirit, which teaches us, rather, the soul of liberality than the body of it. And instead of writing laws upon stones or paper, it writes laws upon the heart. Give, dear Friends, as you have purposed in your heart. And give proportionately as the Lord has prospered you—and do not make your estimate of what you ought to give by what will appear respectable—or by what is expected from you by other people. Give as in the sight of the Lord, as He loves a cheerful giver. And as a cheerful giver is a proportionate giver, take care that you, like a good steward, keep just accounts towards the great King.

But I have said that a cheerful giver is also a willing giver, one who does not need to be "bled," as we sometimes say. He does not need that the knife should be constantly used upon him. He is not like the young grape which must be pressed and squeezed to get the wine out because it is not ripe—but a cluster bursting with invigorating juice! We ought to be like the honeycomb, dropping spontaneously with virgin honey, all too glad if we may but be accepted in our gifts through Him who is the Altar and who renders both the offerer and the offering acceptable unto God! We ought not to need to be preached at, to be exhorted and to be pressed by public appeals and private solicitations! It should be said of us as of the Church at Corinth, "Touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you." Be a proportionate giver, then, and a willing giver.

A man who gives to God cheerfully has got beyond the serf-like, slavish spirit. The slave brings his pittance, which he is obliged to pay, and puts it down at the task-master's feet and goes his way in misery. But the dear child, so pleased to give its Father what it can, places its little offering into the Father's treasury, as much as possible unobserved of men, beholds the Father smile and goes its way rejoicing. You are not under the Law but under Grace! You are not, therefore, to give or to do anything to God as of compulsion, as though you heard the old Mosaic whip cracking in your ears. You are not to crouch before the Lord as the child of Hagar the bondwoman, fresh from Arabia and from the trembling of Sinai!

You are to advance cheerfully as one who has come to Mount Zion, as the child of promise—as Isaac, whose name is laughter—rejoicing that you are enabled, and favored, and privileged to do anything for Him who loved you to the death. The cheerful giver is one who gives very earnestly, and there is a way of giving earnestly, especially when the gift is that of your time or of your service. Some give God their time on the Lord's Day—but they are half asleep. Some give Him their efforts in the school, or the classes, or street-preaching—but they never seem to throw their souls into their engagements. What the Church needs, nowadays, is more of cheerful, whole-hearted service.

Does it not make the flesh crawl on your bones to hear some men preach? A word today and another word tomorrow—the chilly discourse is spoken so softly, (when they might speak loudly enough, if they would), that you can see they have not stirred their souls with the theme that they wish to put into your souls. Under such preachers, congregations become "small by degrees and beautifully less," because they are under the conviction that the preacher cannot have anything to say that he thinks worth saying, or, otherwise, he would speak out in clear, earnest tones. Oh, if all the ministers of Christ, and all the deacons, and elders, and Sunday school teachers, and street-preachers, and city missionaries were all on fire—what different men they would be!

If the service were all cheerful service in the sense of being intense, full of force—the man's whole manhood being thrown into it—what bright and happy seasons of revival we might expect—for in this sense, "God loves a cheerful giver" who comes not to worship service to do duty, or because it is a matter of routine or the clock has struck and the people need him—but comes because he loves to tell of Jesus' love! He comes because he loves to try to win souls! He comes because he loves to declare the whole counsel of God! He comes because he loves to look those dear children in the face and pray with them! He comes because he loves to take those lads alone and teach them of the Savior who bled for sinners!

Where there is living soul-service there must be a blessing! But if we do not serve our Master cheerfully, and consequently do not do it earnestly, God will not love the service, and nothing will come of it. One thing I know, that a cheerful giver always wishes that he could give 10 times as much. A cheerful doer always wants to have more capacity for doing. A cheerful preacher always wishes that he had a thousand tongues, for not one should be silent. Beloved, do you ever remember wishing that for once you could get out of this dull common life and climb into the higher spiritual life? Did you ever read Henry Martyn's life? He was a polished scholar, a man of learning and repute and he gave up all for Christ to go to Persia and there to die without having seen a convert, perhaps, and yet content to live—content to die in far-off lands for his Master's sake!

Did you ever read of Brainerd, far away among the Indians, toiling on—and in his old age teaching a poor black child its letters, and thanking God that when he could not preach, he could yet teach the child its letters, and so do something for his dear Lord who had done

so much for him? Yes, did you ever read and think of even St. Francis Xavier, papist as he was? Yet what a man! How consecrated, how zealous! With all his errors, and all his mistakes, and all his faults, yet passing over sea and land—penetrating forests and daring death a thousand times that he might spread abroad the poor misguided doctrines which he believed. As much as I hate his teaching, I admire his all but miraculous zeal!

When I think of some such men—when I would gladly censure their mistakes, I can only censure myself that I cannot even so much as think, or cannot do more than think of living such a life as they lived! O that we could learn the secret of entire consecration! O that we could receive a vehement panting and longing after the perfect dedication of ourselves unto our Lord and Master! Then we should make our everyday toil to be lustrous with the glory of holiness! Then we should burn like seraphs while we toiled here below as common men!

Then we should teach, and preach, and pray, and work, and give with such a spirit and such a Divine unction that the world would wonder from where we came, and where we had learned these sacred arts! It is this cheerfulness, this heartiness, this whole-heartedness, this intenseness, this fire of the soul which God loves! O that we may have it! O may we get it, for such doers and such givers God loves!

II. Secondly, WHY DOES GOD LOVE A CHEERFUL GIVER? This is not a sentence spoken to all sorts of men, remember. This was addressed to the members of a Christian Church. God loves them all, but He has special complacency in those whom, by His Grace, He has taught to be cheerful givers. A cheerful giver who was not a Christian would not at all come under the statement here made. He would still be one with whom God is angry every day. It is of saved men, Christian men—men joined to the Christian Church—that it is said, "God loves a cheerful giver."

Now observe, first, God loves a cheerful giver for He made the world on the plan of cheerful giving, and a great artist loves all that is consistent with his plan. I say God has made the whole world on this plan. I will show you. Look at the sun. What an orb of splendor! What a glorious creation of God! Why is it bright? Because it is giving away its light. Why is it glorious? Because it is scattering its beams on all sides. Imagine that it should say, "I will give no more light"—where would be its brightness? If it should say, "I will no more scatter my beams"—where would be its luster? It is in the magnificent generosity of that great father of the day that his glory consists! It is the grandest of orbs to us because it gives us so much of that vitalizing force which is heat, and light, and life.

Behold the moon, the fair queen of the night. Why do we rejoice in her? Because what light she receives from the sun she gives again to us! If she were not to give her light, who would speak of her? If she were a selfish orb, absorbing into herself all the sun's rays. If she were an ungenerous circle bounding up and storing within herself every sunbeam, what would she be? We should not even know of her existence, probably, except when, as a black

speck, she passed between us and some bright luminary. But it is because she scatters her beams over the poverty of midnight that we rejoice and thank God for her wealth of beauty! Even yonder twinkling stars which seem so small to us—do not their brightness and their radiance consist in their giving? "One star differs from another star in glory," because one star differs from another star in what it is able to yield to us. So it is with the heavenly bodies.

Now let us turn, then, to terrestrial bodies. Look at this earth beneath our feet. What is its excellence but in that which it gives? There are parts of the earth sublimely solitary, such as the Great Sahara—such tracts of land give nothing, and what are they? Deserts. Who commends them? Go over that land once so blessed, Palestine, and tread the soil which yields so little—is it not thought to be accursed? And why? Because all the elements of fertility that are within it are unused and not brought forth for the good of man.

But where are the happy countries? Where are the countries where men rejoice to praise the fatherland? Are they not those fertile hills and plains which laugh with superabundant harvests given forth from earth's stores that men may make merry and be glad? Which is the land most chosen of our race—the Beulah of the nations? Not the hoarding land! Not the thirsty land that will take in everything and give out nothing! Not the hungry soil which the farmer tills but which refuses the wheat sheaf and the barley mow!

Walk abroad in this world and think for a minute. Thousands of years ago, before our race was on this planet, it is probable that there were vast forests waving in the sunbeams—and what were they doing? Giving up themselves to fall and die, and why? Why, to form the vast stores which Mother Earth held in her cellars, till, at last, when man came he broke the lock and entered into possession of vast stores of coal which aid our arts and sciences! Coal makes us warm and happy in the depths of winter so that we rejoice to see how that which was stored by generous Nature one day is given up tomorrow freely for our use!

Why, there is not a tree that grows but is giving forth perpetually! There is not a flower that blooms but its very sweetness lies in its shedding its fragrance in the air! All the rivers run into the sea, the sea feeds the clouds, the clouds empty out their treasures, the earth gives back the rain in fertility and so it is an endless chain of giving generosity! Generosity reigns supreme in Nature! There is nothing in this world but lives by giving except a covetous man, and such a man is a piece of grit in the machinery. He is out of gear with the universe. Man is a wheel running in the opposite direction to the wheels of God's great engine. He is a jibbing horse in the team. He is one that will not do what all the forces of the world are doing.

He is a monster! He is not fit for this world at all! He has not realized the motion of the spheres. He keeps not step with the march of the ages. He is out of date. He is out of place. He is out of God's order altogether. But the cheerful giver is marching to the music of the

spheres. He is in order with God's great natural laws and God, therefore, loves him, since He sees His own work in him.

Observe, secondly, that God loves a cheerful giver because Divine Grace has placed such a man in order with the laws of redemption, as well as the laws of nature. And what are these? We who are called, "Calvinists," delight in asserting that the whole economy of the Gospel is that of Divine Grace. It is all of free Grace from first to last, and not in any measure or degree a matter of debt and reward. Salvation is not a thing to be earned and to be won by men, but is the result and exercise of the free Grace of God. If there is election, it is free election springing never from any goodness in us. If there is redemption, "thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." If there is calling, if there is justification, if there is sanctification—everywhere we see the freeness of the work of the great Giver. Never is anything in God stinted, never churlish, never grudging. He gives liberally and withholds not in any good thing. God stands in the work of Grace as a wondrous Giver.

Now the Christian man, or the professed Christian man, who is no giver, or being a giver is not a cheerful giver, is out of order with the system which revolves around the Covenant of Grace and the Cross of Christ. He is out of tune with the blood and wounds of Jesus. He is out of order with the eternal purposes of the Most High. He is not running in the current of Divine Grace at all. He ought to be under the Law, though there, indeed, he comes not up to its letter—and as the spirit of the Gospel is all freeness, and Grace, and love, and bounty—the man is out of harmony with it and does not understand it at all. Because, then, the cheerful giver, made so by Divine Grace, keeps tune with redemption and nature after his own measure and calling, he is commended of the Lord.

Again, God loves a cheerful giver because He loves anything that makes His people happy. And well He understands that the spirit of self-denial—the spirit of love to others—is the surest source of happiness that can be found in the human breast! He who lives for himself must be wretched. He who can only rejoice in what he, himself, enjoys, has but narrow channels for his happiness. But he who delights to make others blessed, and who delights to glorify God—and who can deny his own flesh and his own wishes if he may but honor his Master and bless the world—he it is who is the happy man! And as God delights in the happiness which is the result, so He delights in the cheerful giving which is the cause.

God delights in a cheerful giver, again, because in such a Believer he sees the work of His Spirit. It takes a great deal of Grace to make some men cheerful givers. With some the last part of their nature that ever gets sanctified is their pockets! The Grace of God works its way into the morality of their trade, and into the actions of the house, but they do not appear to recognize that their substance is to be as much consecrated as their hearts.

Beloved, I know there are some of the Lord's people who look upon all they have most sacredly as being not their own, and who, not as a theory, but as a matter of daily practice, make money for Christ and give money to Christ, and are never so happy as when they can

do a little more than they were accustomed to do to advance His kingdom according to their ability. But, on the other hand, there are some of quite another temperament, in whom the Grace of God has to knock hard before it gets an answer! They know what they ought to do very well, but yet find the purse strings grow tight, and the fingers that are used for giving nearly paralyzed! And really, when they do give a shilling, it appears to be as great an effort of self-denial as when others, according to their proportion, have given pounds.

But the Lord loves not to see His people hugging this world so. He loves to see that they have outgrown the beggarly elements. That they are getting to love the spiritual above the carnal, to love Him above themselves, and to seek the treasures that are above and not the treasures which are on the earth. I am sure it grieves the Spirit of God when He sees the blood-bought as money-grasping as those who are of the world! It grieves the Spirit and He often withdraws His comforting influence when He sees His servants falling down to the dull, dead, brutish level of men of the world whose cry is, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and with what shall we be clothed?"

He would have His people seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness! He would have them delight themselves in the Lord, and not in the creatures which flesh and blood pine after. He would have them drink from purer streams than the muddy rivers of earth. He would have them covet after better riches than these Egyptian treasures which must perish in the using, and from which we must so soon be taken away.

But there is one reason why God loves a cheerful giver which I must dwell on at some length, namely, because He is a cheerful giver Himself. Man generally loves that which is like himself. We gratify ourselves in that way. Generally our affections go after an object that is somewhat congruous to our own character. Now the Lord is the most cheerful of all givers! I want you to think of that for a minute. "Who spared not His own Son"? Oh, what a Gift was that! Mothers, could you give your sons? Fathers, could you spare your children? Well, yes, perhaps you might for your country, but you could not for your enemies. But God, the cheerful Giver, spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, as says the Word.

And since then, what a cheerful Giver He has been! He has given without our asking. We did not ask Him to make the Covenant of Grace. We did not ask Him to elect us. We did not ask Him to redeem us. These things were done before we were born! We did not ask Him to call us by His Grace, for, alas, we did not know the value of that call, and we were dead in trespasses and sins! But He gave to us freely of His unsought but boundless love. Preeminent Grace came to us, outrunning all our desires, and all our wills, and all our prayers. He first made us pray. He gave us the spirit of supplication, or else we had never prayed! He gave us the will to come to Him, or else we should have remained afar off.

He was a cheerful Giver to us, then. And when we went to Him with broken hearts, how cheerfully did He give us pardon! How did He run and have compassion upon us, and fall

upon our neck and kiss us! How cheerfully did He bring us to the banquet with music and with dancing, because His son that was dead was alive again, and He that was lost was found!—

"Many days have passed since then,
Many changes have we seen,"

but there has been no change in Him! He has been a cheerful Giver still! We have needed Grace every day, and He gives liberally and upbraids not. When we have been to Him and have asked for an egg, He has never given us a scorpion. We have asked for bread and He has never given us a stone, but He has given His Holy Spirit to us. Oh, the generosity of God in Providence to some of us! It is not long ago since we were poor enough, but He has been pleased to give us all we can desire.

There are some of you here who were on the bed of sickness and were wondering what would become of that little family of yours for which you were the only breadwinner. But God, the cheerful Giver, provided for you. He set you up again, and sent you once again in health and strength to your work. Others of you have passed through great straits, but still the everlasting arms have been underneath you. And though the young lions do lack and suffer hunger, yet you, having sought the Lord, have not needed any good thing. He is a cheerful Giver!

Ah, poor Sinners, you who are not saved, I wish you knew how glad God is to give His mercy! He is the most cheerful Giver in the universe! You must not think He will grudge you. If you come to Him for pardon of sin, God is ready abundantly to pardon you. If you seek His face you shall not have to clamor after Him as though He were deaf or unwilling to hear you. He will listen to the cries of the penitent! He will hearken to the desires of those who would forsake their sins and find Christ. If you will but trust the Lord Jesus, you shall find Him the most cheerful Giver and the kindest Friend that you have ever dreamed of.

Brothers and Sisters, we shall very soon find God to be a cheerful Giver. Some of our friends, this week, have found Him so. They asked, for they were very sick, that He would sustain them—and He made their bed in their sickness, and put underneath them His kind arms. And then they asked that He would give them an abundant entrance into the kingdom of His dear Son, and He did it. He helped them to bear their witness to His faithfulness. He set open before them the gates of pearl. He did not deny them the harps of gold, nor the Throne of Christ, Himself, but as a cheerful Giver He welcomed His poor weary people to His own eternal banquet, and He made them sit at His own right hand!

So will He do with us, for He is a cheerful Giver—and so He likes His people to be—for in those who are like He, He sees Himself in miniature—as the sun sees itself in every drop

of dew—as the skies are mirrored in every pool. O that God would grant us Grace to be more cheerful givers in the future than we have been in the past!

III. I shall close with only a sentence or two as to WHY WE WHO LOVE THE LORD, IN THIS HOUSE ESPECIALLY, SHOULD SEEK TO BE CHEERFUL GIVERS WHOM GOD LOVES. There are many reasons, but tonight we need not urge them all. One is that all we have we owe to Him. I have heard of one who failed in business, who, in his better times had helped some of his workmen into business and they had prospered.

It was said, "Oh, they will help him. He did them such good turns in his day of prosperity, they will help him." I know not whether they did or not, but this I do know—that He who took us up when we were naked, for so we came into this world—He who took us up when we were more than naked—filthy and defiled—for so we became through our sin and through our original depravity—He who took us from off the dunghill, yes, from out of the fire itself—and made us what we are and wrapped us about with His righteousness and gave us of His mercy—He deserves all and more than all that we can give Him.

Oh, what shall we do for our Savior to praise Him? What shall we not do? Lord, as everything is due to You, take everything and let us make no reserve. Remember, dear Brothers and Sisters, continually, that you are saved—you, when you might have been damned—you, when you had no will at anytime to be saved! You are saved! Your sins are blotted out! The righteousness of Christ is your royal apparel. You are not only saved—the Holy Spirit dwells in you! You are a priest, you are a king unto God! You are an heir of Heaven! The blood imperial runs in your veins! You are one of the peerage of the skies, a prince of the blood! Oh, will you not live above the lives of others? Will you not seek by these high dignities, these priceless gifts and these astounding favors, to consecrate yourselves—spirit, soul, and body—to Him who is your Father, your Heaven, your God?

Brethren, you may well be anxious to be cheerful givers when you remember that the time for giving will soon be over. There is no giving in yonder skies. At least, God's choice treasury, which is the poor man's pocket, will not be held out for you to fill. There will be none of the sons of need there—no little feet cold for need of shoes—no little hands weak for need of bread. There will be no starving women and no hungry men. No meeting houses that need building. No missionaries that need sending forth. No ships that need to be chartered to bear them beyond the seas. No ministers of Christ standing in need of your aid. You will be beyond all such calls, then, and if there could be a regret in Heaven it would be that in Heaven these duties must forever cease. O give, then, while you still can as cheerful givers!

And, last of all, we have need of a giving God, and therefore let us be cheerful givers. Remember that story which Mrs. Stowe has so well written? I am afraid I cannot tell it again, certainly not in her words, but it is something to this effect. There was a merchant, says she, who had prospered a great deal in business. He had built a house in the country, and he had

enlarged it and had laid out his grounds at great expense. When he went to his office he was called upon by a collector for some society and he replied to his requests, "I really cannot afford to give anything. I have so many calls, I cannot do it."

Well, he was a man who had usually been very generous, and it touched his conscience a little afterwards to think that he should begin to stint in what he gave to his Lord. At night, when the wife and family had retired to rest, he sat by the fireside meditating, and he said to himself, "I really do not know whether I was wise to build this house. It has brought a deal of expense. New furniture is needed. I have been introduced into a new rank of society. Expenses have increased, the girls need more for clothes—everything is on a more lavish scale, and yet I have been stinting the Lord. I fear I have done amiss. I do not feel easy about it at all."

As he was so thinking it is supposed that he fell asleep, but if so it was well for him that he did so, for suddenly the door opened and there came into the room a very meek and lowly stranger. He advanced to him and said, "Sir, I have called upon you to ask your help for a society which sends the Gospel to the heathen. They are perishing, perishing for lack of knowledge. You are wealthy, will you give me help to send them the Word of Life?" He said, "You must excuse me, really. My expenses are so great and I must curtail. I am quite unable to give you anything. I must decline."

The stranger looked at him with a mournful glance and said, "Perhaps you think that the work is too far away, and you do not give because the money is to be sent beyond the seas. I will then tell you that there is a ragged school down a part of the city, near your house of business, and it is about to be shut up for lack of funds. And there are the poor little ragged children, the Arabs of your streets, ignorant of the right way—will you give me a subscription to that object?" The merchant was a little vexed to be asked again, and he said, "Forbear to trouble me. I cannot afford it. I cannot give you anything."

The stranger brushed a tear from his eyes, and he said, "Well, then, I must ask you at least for something for the Bible Society. That, you see, lies at the root of everything. It gives away the Word of God, and surely, if you cannot afford to give to the Missionary Society, or the Ragged School, you will give for the Word of God itself." "No," he said, "I have told you I cannot do it," and then—and then the aspect of the Stranger seemed to change, and though He still was meek and lowly, yet His Countenance became majestic! There was a glory in His face, and yet there were lines of grief, and He said, softly and very sternly, "Five years ago that little daughter of yours, with the fair ringlets, lay sick of the fever and you prayed in the bitterness of your soul that the darling of your heart might not be taken from you, but that you might be spared that heavy stroke. Who heard that prayer, and gave you back your child?"

The merchant covered his face with his hands, and felt ashamed. "Ten years ago," said the same voice, "you were in great difficulties. Bills were returned upon you. You were on

the verge of bankruptcy. Your hair seemed as if it would turn gray with care. To whom did you apply in the hour of trouble, and who heard you, and who found you friends who tided you over your difficulties when other houses were crashing, and wealthier men than you were failing on every side? Who did that for you?"

"Once more," said the stranger, "fifteen years ago you felt the burden of your sins. You went up and down the world wringing your hands with fear, and crying, 'God have mercy upon me!' Your heart was overwhelmed within you. Who, in that hour, spoke the forgiving words which cancelled all your sins? Who took all your iniquities upon Himself?" The merchant sobbed aloud and trembled much when the voice said, "If you will never ask anything of Me again, I will never ask anything of you." The man fell on his face before the august Visitor, and said, "Take all!"

Whether it were a dream or not, it is certain that that merchant became one of the Christian princes of America and gave to the cause of Christ as few had ever done before. "God loves a cheerful giver," and you see His claims upon you! Go your way, merchants, and give largely as God gives to you. Go your way, you trades people, and scatter as you can, for God first gives you the means. Go your way, you working men and toiling women, and give according to your ability. Give, you rich, because you are rich, and give, you poor, because you cannot afford to get poorer, and you are likely to do so unless you offer God His portion.

But have you first given Him your heart? Have you put your trust in Jesus? If not, this sermon is not for you. But if your heart belongs to my Lord, and has been washed in His precious blood, let my text sink deep into your ears, and deeper, still, into your hearts—"God loves a cheerful giver!"