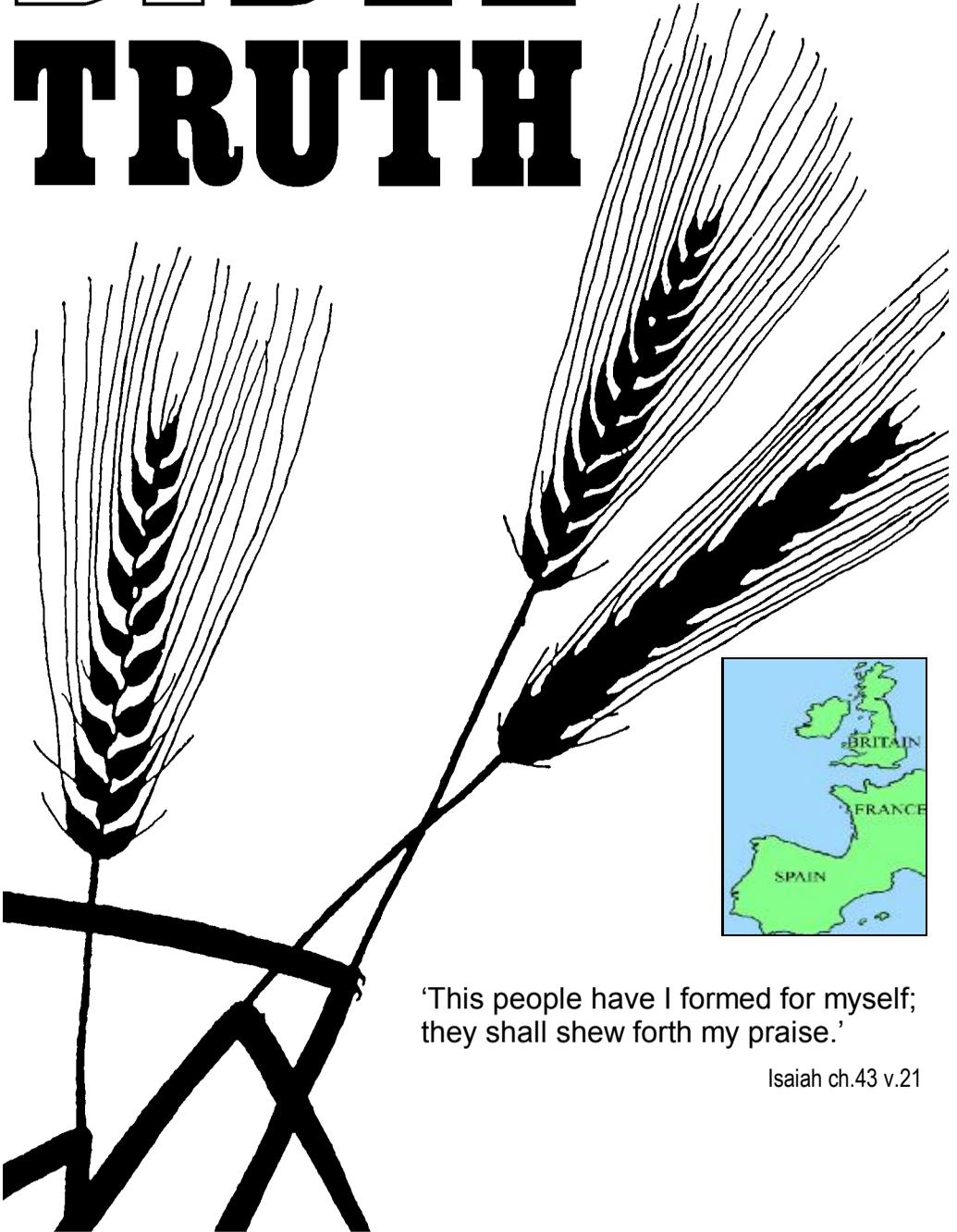


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'This people have I formed for myself;
they shall shew forth my praise.'

Isaiah ch.43 v.21

The Grace of Giving

by Pastor J.P.S. Templeton

Giving is often called the missing beatitude because it was not included by Matthew, although it is quoted by Paul,

‘I have shewed 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’.

Acts ch.20 v.35

King Frederick William III, of Prussia, made great efforts to strengthen his kingdom, but found himself in great trouble because the country was bankrupt, and he was unable to wage war despite the fact that his enemies continued to do so. However, the king was determined not to surrender.

He approached the women of Prussia, asking them to bring their gold and silver jewellery to be melted down to make money for the country. Each woman who gave would receive an iron cross bearing the words, ‘I gave gold for iron, 1813’.

The response was overwhelming, and women generally prized the order of the iron cross as it was called, more than the jewellery they had sacrificed. In the following verses of scripture, we are told a basis for giving.

‘Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat [or food] in mine house, and prove [or test] me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.’

Malachi ch.3 v.10

If we really want God to open the windows of heaven it is vital that our tithes and offerings are given to Him. He also demands that we give Him our all, not withholding any part of our lives. Surely we want this great blessing, so great that there will not be room to receive it. At the time when Malachi wrote it was a custom on feast days, at weddings, and other celebrations, for rich people to open the upper windows of their homes and throw gold and silver coins to passers-by below. This may be the thought in the prophet's mind when God inspired him to write his message, for God would indeed open His windows as well.

As we examine this subject of giving, there are three facts we need to consider. They are the moral, the material, and the miraculous restoration.

Let us consider the first, namely the moral restoration. The religion of humanism and its new age aspects has caused moral decay throughout the nation. The question we must ask ourselves is 'What can be done to stop it?' In these verses God gives us the answer, which in one word is repentance. Yes, this even includes Christians! God tells us what is needed.

'Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein [or in what way] shall we return.'

Malachi ch.3 v.7

How self righteous many Christians have become, yet if they think back to their childhood days, and consider how their parents lived, especially if they were brought up in Christian homes, they would realise how different things are now. Sunday was kept as the Sabbath, and on that day no one was permitted to polish shoes. My grandfather in Bangor would not even allow shoes to be dusted. In some homes even the Sunday meal was prepared on Saturday, so that no work would be done on the Sabbath. Saturday was a very special 'Preparation Day' for the Sabbath.

In bygone years the nation also endeavoured to keep this day as special. Of course the true Sabbath is from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. Sadly the present government in Ephraim-Britain has done away with these laws. The Sunday Sabbath has had all legal constraints removed, with the intention of making Sunday just another shopping day, as it is on the Continent. The Laws of God have been removed from the Statute Book by successive governments.

King Alfred the Great who was responsible for the British Statute Book based on the word of God, would surely turn in his grave, if he could see how Parliament has removed most of God's word, and instead included laws permitting witchcraft, sodomy, abortion, gambling and many other evil practises.

However God has the answer for His Israel nations, for Israel is His beloved son,

'When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.'

Hosea ch.11 v.1

The answer to Israel's problems is found in 2 Chronicles ch.7 v.14, which states,

'If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land'.

As Christians we are also required to empty our pockets and be generous when we are giving to God, which includes those in need, concerning whom He says,

'... Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me'.

Matthew ch.25 v.40

Christians are plainly told what is required of them,

'Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come'.

1 Corinthians ch.16 v.2

The literal Greek for the third phrase of this verse says, 'Lay by ... as God that prospered'. The Greek word is 'logia' which denote that which was opposite to a tax like the tithe. This was to be generous giving, above the normal gift. Dr Stephen Olford writes,

'Instructed Christians in the apostle's day would know that under the law the Israelite was bound to give one tenth of his income to God. Then of course, there were free will offerings, trespass offerings, and costly journeys to the temple. Indeed it has been estimated that the aggregate of religious gifts among the Jews in olden times could not have been less than one fifth of each man's income, and some probably involved a third of it'.

Christians who claim to be living under grace should give more than those who are living under law, and Paul writes about this with the work of God in mind.

'Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel?'

1 Corinthians ch.9 vv.13-14

In fact the Lord despises those who are mean, and any offering they may give is unacceptable.

‘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 toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work.’

2 Corinthians ch.9 vv.6-8

The word for cheerful used here can be rendered ‘hilarious’, suggesting a spirit of real enjoyment which sweeps away all human restraints. Frances Ridley Havergale understood what this meant, and was inspired to write the hymn explaining this in the fourth verse,

‘Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose’.

She wrote,

‘“Take my silver and my gold” now means shipping off all my ornaments, including a jewel cabinet which is really fit for a countess ... to the Church Missionary Society ... I don't think I need tell you I never packed a box with such pleasure.’

This dear servant of God surely lived on a higher level and in closer contact with the Lord than most of us. This is hilarious giving. Giving to God should be from the heart, not because it's our duty, but because everything we have belongs to him, and because we love him. In contrast the story is told about a strong man in a circus who squeezed an orange to pulp and challenged everyone in the audience to squeeze out another drop. A little man volunteered. He was so small and weak that the crowds were amazed. Slowly he compressed the orange which resembled a shrivelled up piece of peel. He continued to compress it, until to everyone's amazement, a drop of orange dripped to the floor. The athlete then asked him to tell the crowd how he had managed to develop such fistic powers. Smiling he made a joke about it and said, ‘Nothing to it, I happen to be the treasurer of the local Baptist Church’.

Things were extremely bad in Malachi's day, similar to the state of the nation today, for there was no moral restoration whatsoever.

‘Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein [or in what way] shall we return?’

Malachi ch.3 v.7

So it is God's command for Christians to tithe, and this is the way to blessing and revival.

‘Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat [or food] in mine house, and prove [or test] me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.’

Malachi ch.3 v.10

Our Lord gave us the supreme example when he was only twelve, and explained to His parents,

‘And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist [or knew] ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?’

Luke ch.2 v.49

It can be seen that the moral restoration comes when the benefits God has given us are put in a right perspective. This brings us to the second point which is the material restoration.

In the text as we have shown there is a command from God which is applicable for this day and age, namely the phrase in Malachi ch.3 v.10, ‘Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house’.

Throughout Britain churches are being closed and even being taken over by the heathen, so that they are turned into Moslem mosques and Hindu temples. Until the Church of God is replenished, and the commands of God are obeyed, there can be no change in the land. Even the heathen in our midst must be brought to Christ.

It can be seen that there is a curse upon the nation today, and when the people question the meaning of returning to God, it is brought home to them.

‘Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein [or how] have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.’

Malachi ch.3 vv.8-9

This verse indicates that more is required than just the legal tithe.

How different this is from the attitude of Abraham, who, when he met Melchizedek, servant of the Most High God, that '... he gave him tithes of all.' (See Genesis ch.14 v.20).

When King of Sodom offered Abram the spoils of battle he replied,

'... I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion'.

Genesis ch.14 vv.22-24

When the Lord first revealed Himself to Jacob he made a vow,

'And Jacob vowed 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 raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee'.

Genesis ch.28 vv.20-22

It is wonderful how spiritual and material benefits go together.

'Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.'

3 John v.2

This reminds us of the statement made by Jesus concerning giving not only to God, but to all who are in need,

'Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete [or measure] withal, it shall be measured to you again'.

Luke ch.6 v.38

The bosom here refers to the breast or fold made in the wide outer garment, by tucking it into the girdle, so making a hollow or pocket, and it shows just how much God loves those who are givers, and will doubly recompense them.

This story illustrates how our refusal to be generous can give us eternal regret. On one occasion Queen Mary was out for a walk in the neighbourhood of Balmoral Castle on a dark and cloudy day, but she strolled rather far, and as the rain drops came down, she stopped at a

cottage for the loan of an umbrella. The woman did not recognise her, and thinking that she might never see the umbrella again, decided to give the stranger one with a broken rib. The next morning a man in gold braid appeared at the cottage door. He said, 'Her Majesty the Queen has asked me to thank you for the loan of an umbrella.' The woman in the cottage was dumbfounded, and with tears flowing down her cheeks said, 'What an opportunity I have missed! Why did I not give the Queen the best umbrella I hold?' The King of Kings and Lord of Lords is worthy of the best we can give Him. When we do this, we will experience the miraculous restoration, for the text in Malachi ch.3 v.10 said, '... prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it'.

Revival will come to Christians who have learnt to give to God.

'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.'

2 Corinthians ch.8 v.9

God wants us to be rich in every sense of the word, spirit, soul, body, and in that order.

Dr Stephen Olford writes of this verse,

'Here is Divine giving at its highest and deepest. At its highest level we are lifted to the great concept of the unmerited favour of God in sending His Son from heaven's glory down to earth's gloom. At its deepest level we are introduced to the unutterable poverty to which Our Lord descended. Paul is so careful about this that he uses a Greek word which means "Pauperism". In other words, The Lord Jesus became a pauper on this earth that we might be introduced to all the richness of His grace. Now, says Paul, whenever we give, remember that we are only reflecting the self giving of God, and this should fill us with unspeakable thanksgiving to Our Lord'.

Not only individually, but nationally, for the nation will also experience the miraculous restoration, and will know that a great change has taken place, all because Christians who really wanted revival were prepared to pay the price, Malachi ch.3 vv.11-12,

'And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts'.

*Supposing today were your last day on earth,
The last mile of the journey you've trod,
After all of your struggles, how much are you worth?
Don't count as possessions your silver and gold,
For Tomorrow you leave them behind;
And all that is yours to have and to hold
Are the blessings you've given to mankind?
Just what have you done as you've journeyed along
That was really and truly worthwhile?
Do you feel you've done good and returned it for wrong?
Could you look o'er your life with a smile?*