

The Bible Student

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Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

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CONTINUING

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If we would know how Paul felt about the gospel of the grace of God, by which he was saved, we could not do better than go to Paul's "Great Thanksgiving." "the great thanksgiving" with which he opens the Epistle to the Ephesians. The Epistle to the Ephesians is, of course, not singular in beginning with a thanksgiving to God. That is Paul's customary method of beginning his letters. But it is, perhaps, singular in the marvellous richness and fervor of the thanksgiving with which it begins. And this is perhaps due to what we might have thought an entirely unimportant circumstance. The Apostle was accustomed to draw the theme of his thanksgiving from the special conditions and attainments of those he was addressing. But, unlike his other letters, this was addressed neither to an individual friend and fellow-worker, nor to a separate church with its special circumstances fresh in the Apostle's mind. There was in this case, therefore, no particular subject of thanksgiving, peculiar to the person or church addressed, pressing in on the Apostle's mind and requiring mention. He was thrown back on what was common

to Christians, to thank God for in behalf of his readers. And that is as much as to say he was thrown back on the great fundamental theme of the Gospel. Now Paul's fervor always rises when he is face to face with the first principles of the Gospel.

What Paul returns thanks to God for here is nothing less than the salvation in Christ.

The Trinitarian And with what magnificence of diction as well as depth of feeling and comprehensiveness of view he deals with it! The salvation in Christ involves naturally the saving action of the whole Triune God: and it is easy to make out a Trinitarian distinction in the parts of this long ascription of praise to God for His salvation. Many expositors have, therefore, so divided it. And in any event it is useful to note that there is described to us here the loving activity of God the Father in salvation (in verses 3-6),—of God the Son (in verses 7-12),—and of God the Holy Spirit (in verses 13-14). This successive adduction of the work of the persons of the Trinity in salvation would seem, however, only an inevitable incident of any full description of the process of salvation, for in it

istry (Luke xi. 1-xvii. 10) until summoned to Bethany at the death of Lazarus (John xi. 3), returns to Ephraim, perhaps the modern Jaiyibeh (John xi. 54), and thence passing northward to the borders of Samaria and Galilee (Luke xvii. 11), and again westward to the Jordan takes the Perean route to Jerusalem, which He approaches by way of Jericho and Bethany.

We have not the data for any arrangement that will be final and convincing. There is no contradiction between Luke and John, but, as Dr. Plummer remarks, "All interweaving of the two gospels must be taken as merely tentative arrangement."

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST AS TO WEALTH.

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The marvelous growth of wealth in the civilized world, and especially in our country, during the present generation, and its equally rapid concentration into the hands of a few, are most interesting facts to the student of sociology. This is surely the golden age of the world in a materialistic sense, and many in our land are worshipers of the golden calf. This paper proposes simply to present the teachings of the divine and infallible Jesus on the general subject of wealth. To be comprehensive it must be brief on each point.

There are four ways in which the Master taught; doubtless the most intelligible and important was by the spoken word. In addition and supplementary to this, He taught not only by what He said, but also by what He did not say, by what He did, and by what He was.

A. As to the *Right of Property*, Jesus seems to recognize it as *private* and personal. This recognition He gives, perhaps most decidedly in His failure in any way to condemn it, although it was a custom of His day and country. Moreover, He habitually uses the personal pronoun with reference to various articles of wealth, both land and personal property. For examples, Matth. xxv. 14, "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called *his own* servants, and delivered unto them *his* goods;" and Matth. xx. 15, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with *mine own*?" In all His teachings He as-

sumes the right of private property. It is also involved in the duty of alms-giving, which He enjoins: for unless one has a right to a thing, how can it be proper for him to give it to another? See Matth. v. 23, 40, 42; vi. 2; xiii. 44, 46; xxi. 33; Mark xii. 1, 2, 9; Luke xv. 8, 12, 15; xvi. 1; xx. 9; Jno. x. 3, 4, 12.

In a similar way, He recognizes property in slaves. In the passage already quoted, Matth. xxv. 14, the word for servants is *δούλους*, the strongest term, meaning a bond-slave. See Luke vii. 2, 3; xvi. 13; xvii. 7; xx. 10, 11.

There are several kinds of *title* to property, relative and absolute. Jesus teaches that the absolute title is in God, and that man's right is under God as a tenant or steward. This is the teaching of the parable of the talents, Matth. xxv. 14-30; of the parable of the pounds, Luke xix. 13-26; and of the vineyard, Luke xx. 9-16. He does not say how these rights of property accrue to individuals, under God's creative right and sovereign disposal. He does not state that private ownership as God's stewards may be transferred by one party to another, by sale or gift. In the parable of the laborers, Matth. xx. 9, 10, so much money was paid for the day's service; and in the parable of the prodigal son, Luke xv. 12, the father divided his estate between his two sons.

B. Concerning the *Use of Wealth*, Christ gives some directions as to how it may be rightly expended.

I. Uses of Wealth. 1. *Debts* must be paid. This seems to be what is meant, Matth. v. 25, 26; that is, one should pay what he owes without the compulsion of the law. It is also a part of the teaching, Matth. xviii. 23-35. As a special kind of debt, with regard to which loose ideas even yet prevail, by example as well as by precept, He enjoins the payment of taxes. He worked a miracle to meet the temple-tax demanded of Him, and, when asked the direct question as to paying tribute to the Roman Empire, He bade the questioner, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," Matth. xxii. 21.

2. Our means are to be used for the support of those who are naturally *dependent* upon us. This is taught in a forcible way in His rebuke of those who sought to evade this duty by a devotion of their goods to religious purposes. Mark vii. 11-13.

3. Jesus repeatedly enjoins the duty of *alms-giving*; sometimes

in general terms and sometimes in concrete cases. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke x. 30-37, He broadens the obligation so as to make it include all men, even strangers and those hostile to us. In reply to the rich young ruler, who asked, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" He said, "If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that thou hast and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Matth. xix. 16-22; Mark x. 17-22; Luke xviii. 18-23. See, also, Matth. xxv. 35, 36, where He tells us that one chief test of our devotion to Him will be our treatment of His poor people here on earth. General exhortations to alms-giving are found in Matth. v. 42; vi. 2, 3; Luke vi. 30; xi. 41; xii. 33.

4. We are to use what we have directly for *Christ's cause*. This may be done by contributions to the support of His ministers. When He sent forth the twelve on their evangelistic tour, He said to them, "Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff; for the laborer is worthy of his food." Matth. x. 9, 10; Mark vi. 8, 9; Luke ix. 3.

His cause may be sustained by gifts made to the treasury of the Church. There was a box for this purpose in the temple, into which the worshipers cast their offerings. He observes this with interest, and specially commends the two mites of the widow. Mark xii. 41-44; Luke xxi. 1-4.

While He was here in bodily presence, acts of worship might be performed to Him in person. Many instances of this are given in the gospels, and one which involved considerable expense on the part of the offerer, the devoted Mary. Judas rebuked her as guilty of a useless act of extravagance; but Jesus praised her unselfish love, teaching us that nothing is too precious to be used in our worship of Him. Mark xiv. 3-9; Jno. xii. 3-8; Matth. xxvi. 6-13.

In this connection we may note His frequent and unqualified statements that all we have must be put upon the altar of consecration to Him. This means two things: That we must be ready, if necessary, to give up the last dollar for His service; and that every dollar we have must be used for His glory, as though it were His, as He would use it were He in our place. Thus the apostles, James and John, and Peter and Andrew, forsook their

fishing nets and ship, and Matthew surrendered his office at the call of the Master. Matth. iv. 20, 22; Mark i. 18; Luke v. 11, 28. Luke quotes Him as saying, xiv. 33, "So, therefore, whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Matth. xvi. 24; xix. 21; Mark viii. 34; x. 21; Luke ix. 23-25.

II. Along with these uses to which we may properly devote our means, we may place certain *Duties*, which our Lord inculcates concerning wealth. 1. We are not to be *anxious* about it, even as regards the very necessities of life. This He urges at length in the Sermon on the Mount. Matth. yi. 25-34; Luke xii. 22-31. 2. Material wealth is to be treated as of *secondary* importance: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Matth. vi. 33. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matth. iv. 4. "For what doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what should a man give in exchange for his life?" Mark viii. 36, 37. 3. We must be *patient* with those that are in *debt to us*. Matthew was inspired to give at some length, xviii. 21-35, what He said on this point, where He enforces the duty by God's patience toward us. 4. He teaches the obligation of a *contract* in the parable of the laborers; where some of the workmen on settlement claimed more than they had agreed to receive and more than was the customary wages; because the employer had seen fit to give full pay to some who did not work full time. Matth. xx. 13.

III. He assures us that they who use their means aright, even though they sacrifice it all, shall be abundantly *rewarded*. He tells the young ruler whom he counseled to sell all he had to give to the poor, assuring him that he should have treasure in heaven, Matth. xix. 21. He promises Peter, who had forsaken all for Him, that every one who had renounced houses or lands for His name's sake should receive an hundred fold and should inherit eternal life. Matth. xix. 29; Mark x. 29, 30; Luke xviii. 29, 30. The most trivial act of charity shall not be forgotten, the mere giving of a cup of water. Matth. x. 42; Mark ix. 41. He asserts that we should make to ourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, in order that when it fails, we may be received into the everlasting tabernacles. Luke xvi. 9.

In the parables of the talents and the pounds, He makes us know that the right use of what God entrusts to us as His stewards shall be appropriately recompensed. Matth. xxv. 20-23; Luke xix. 16-19.

C. The Master gives us lessons and caution as to *Abuse of Wealth*.

I. He warns us against its *deceitfulness* as a hinderance to the spiritual life and growth. In the parable of the sower, the most hopeful of the unfruitful ground hearers are those that received the seed among the thorns or briers. Even these fail to produce, because "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and they become unfruitful." Matth. xiii. 22; Mark iv. 19; Luke viii. 14. He speaks in more decided language on the occasion of the rich young ruler's turning away from Him, because he was unwilling to sacrifice his wealth at the command of Jesus. He there tells us that it is easier for a camel to go through the narrow needle's eye gateway than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven; impossible by the natural power of man and possible only by the special grace of God. Matth. xix. 23-26; Mark x. 23-27; Luke xviii. 24-27; vi. 24; xii. 16-21; xiv. 18, 19; xvi. 19-23.

II. He forcibly teaches that the *sanctuary* is *not* to be profaned by being made a place *for traffic*. On two occasions, at His first passover after entering upon His ministry and at the last, He drove out from the temple those who were selling bullocks and sheep and doves to be offered as sacrifices; the sanctuary is a place for prayer and not for merchandise. Jno. ii. 14-16; Matth. xxi. 12, 13; Mark xi. 15-17; Luke xix. 45, 46.

III. There are *besetting sins* connected with wealth, which He calls to our attention, that we may avoid them. 1. One of these is *covetousness*, an overweening desire to be rich. Mark vii. 22; Luke xii. 15. 2. Another is *luxury*, overindulgence in those things which money buys. Luke xxi. 24; xvi. 19-23. 3. *Oppressing the poor* in order to get rich. Mark xii. 40; Luke xx. 47. 4. *Hoarding*, failure to use the means with which God has entrusted us. Matth. vi. 19; xxv. 24-30; Luke xii. 33, 34; xix. 20-26; Jno. vi. 27.

IV. He warns us that the breach of trust involved in failing to recognize the responsibilities of our stewardship, the *not using*

our *means*, will be punished. Matth. xxv. 30; Luke xvi. 20-31; xix. 26; xx. 16.

D. There are some interesting teachings concerning the *Poor*. I. They are to be *socially honored* as invited guests, and hospitably entertained in our homes. Luke xiv. 12-14, 21-24; Matth. xxii. 9, 10. II. The godly poor, represented by the beggar Lazarus at the rich man's gate, are *heirs* to the glories of *heaven*. Luke xvi. 20-22. III. He makes the *preaching* of the gospel to the *poor* the last and *crowning proof* of His Messiahship. Matth. xi. 5; Luke iv. 18; vii. 22. IV. The poor may make *larger proportional contributions* to His cause than the rich. Mark xii. 41-44; Luke xxi. 1-4.

E. Christ's *personal* relations to Wealth. I. He *destroyed wealth*, the possession of which was a sin in the Jew that held it. Matth. viii. 32; Mark v. 13; Luke viii. 33. He sacrificed wealth for a higher, spiritual good. Matth. xxi. 19; Mark xi. 14. II. He refused to decide *titles to property*. Luke xii. 13, 14. III. He was *dined* by one rich man and *buried* by another; these were the only helps He received from the wealthy. Luke xix. 2-7; Matth. xxvii. 57-60; Mark xv. 43-46; Luke xxiii. 50-53; Jno. xix. 38-42. IV. He was *betrayed* for thirty pieces of *silver*. Matth. xxvi. 14-16; Mark xiv. 10, 11; Luke xxii. 3-6; Jno. xiii. 2; xviii. 2-5. V. Though He was the living bread and made all things, He was *dependent* on others for His food and had no home of His own. Jno. i. 3, 10; vi. 48; Matth. viii. 20; xxvii. 57-60; Mark vi. 3; xiv. 62; Luke ii. 7, 24; viii. 3; ix. 58; Jno. xix. 26, 27.

These are the teachings concerning Wealth of Him who spake as never man spake.

THE HERODS.

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III. THE LATER HERODS.

ARCHELAUS.

The first wife of Herod the Great was Doris, a woman of the people, married to him perhaps before he had begun to aspire to