

The Stunted Grace.

And perhaps they are still ignorant of the... have no apologies to offer for bring- ing before you again the subject of Chris- tian beneficence. As for the church which is doing its full duty in this mat- ter of Christian giving, or for the individ- ual, there is no theme so pleasant and profitable as that of beneficence, and for the church which is not doing its full duty in this respect, or for the individual, there is no kind of preaching they need so much. The full development of all the graces is but the normal growth of a Christian. Hence the Apostle says, "As ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also."—namely, the grace of beneficence. For the space of two whole chapters, the 5th and 13th of his second epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle deals with this theme of Christian giving; and his deliv- erance upon it is more complete than can be found elsewhere in Scripture. The duty of giving, the measure of giv- ing, and the motives that should prompt us in giving, together with two beautiful and worthy examples are laid down with much clearness and force. Paul's long stay in Macedonia had impressed him with the great wealth and generosity of the churches in Northern Greece, and he commends the example of those who in a great trial of affliction had out of "their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." Their deep poverty, rather than being a check upon their liberality, was a helpful stimulus to their Christ-like beneficence. "For," he declares, "to their power, I bear their record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves, praying us with much intreaty, that we would receive the gift and the sacrifice of their fellowship of ministering to the saints." These Macedonian Christians remind us much of the old Kerner pastor who, when asked how his people could afford to give so much, for it was a time of sore famine among them, he said with a con- fident smile, "it only means rice with- out curry." They could eat rice without curry, but as the redeemed of the Lord of Hosts they could not live without giv- ing. The Macedonians were also worthy examples in other respects, and as the apostle says, "they first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." He then calls to mind the beautiful example of Christ: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that He might be rich to us, that we through His poverty might be rich." There must be first a deep sense of consecration, be- fore there can be a high sense of the duty of Christian liberality, and a hearty giving as unto the Lord. Paul's whole argument on beneficence is based on the broad principle that love must and will promote a spirit of liberality; and if the spirit of liberality be wanting, it is be- cause love to God is not supreme, for true beneficence is the free and sponta- neous product of a loving heart. That there is a normal growth in this grace among us must be apparent to all. Never did the voice of divine pro- vidence call so loudly for enlargement as to-day; and never before were the op- portunities for growth so abundant. The design of God is most plainly indicated in the rapid increase of wealth that has been poured into the coffers of the Christian church during the last century. Long since has He claimed the silver and gold for Himself, and will doubtless set their vast machinery in motion for His own glory. Since the Christian church, by prayer and faith, has been universally successful in securing opportunities to declare the story of the cross among all nations, what we now need is the means to send the consecrated herald to the ends of the earth. Then, and only then, can we most hopefully look for the coming of the King. But a new era is about dawning upon the Christian church in regard to the place and power of consecrated wealth in the great mission of the gospel. For God, by placing again her grasp upon sufficient means to evangelize the race, is throwing the responsibility of saving a lost world on the church, in a way and manner He has not done since the apostolic age, and the way the church is coming to feel the responsibility in this matter, may be seen by a statement made before the Evangelical Alliance, held at Washington in 1887, when it was stated that probably since 1850 more money had been raised by the Protestant churches of Christendom for purely evangelic purposes, and for current church expenses and local charities, than was raised in all the previous eighteen centuries. But while great ad- vancement has been made, it only shows us how little they did, and not how much we are doing. For the increase of Christian beneficence, and the planting of means kept pace with the increase of wealth that had fallen to the lot of the Christian church. It has been stated on good authority that while the evangelic churches of the United States hold with- in their possession one-fifth of the wealth of the country—and perhaps they are the most liberal people under heaven—only one per cent of the gross amount is given for religious purposes at home and abroad. The very stones cry out, "where are the nine?" From these facts it is quite evident that beneficence is the stunted grace in all our churches. There must soon come a revolution in our present system of giving if the church of Christ is to accomplish the grand work which an all-wise Providence has plainly marked out for her. The money power of the world has become so potent in the civilization and Christianization of the race, that the church can no longer afford to ignore this power, or her obligation to use it for the divine glory. For the time has come when the money power must be more largely employed in the work of the Lord. There is no longer a respectable standing in the church of God for the miser, no longer can he draw up his purse strings, and sneer at the mercenary and worldly spirit that is rampant upon the church, while he seeks to meet his Chris- tian obligations with sighs and cries. This is a day of real self-sacrifice, a time when much beside prayers and songs must be given for the salvation of men and the glory of God. Never was there a time when the money power was so much through the agency of hard earn- as to-day. And all this but gives force

bring forth sons and daughters for the... What better investments can our people... We have a trio of voices: Home Missions, Foreign Missions and Education, calling upon 44,000 Baptists for enlargement in the work of the Lord, through the agency of enlarged liberality. Still we respond to these voices by giving the same sum from year to year, or shall we "abound in this grace," according to the divine injunction? These appear to be the good and sufficient reasons why we, as individuals, and as Christian churches, should "abound in this grace also." Secondly, How shall we abound in this grace? This grace, we must remember that it is a grace, and as such it needs the same care and nourishment as do the other graces. How seldom do Christians pray God to make them liberal; we pray for others, but seldom do we pray that we ourselves may abound in liberality. Then we must strive to make our grace promise in religion, and as many professing Christians who give compen- satively nothing, that those who do give are misrepresented, by being numbered along with so many dead heads. The crying sin of the rank and file in all our churches is that of an unjust steward- ship over the Lord's money. Let us urge upon all the churches within the bounds of this Association to take some more practical steps to grow in this grace during our next Associa- tional year. Let us as pastors urge upon all our churches the Christian duty of at least abounding in this grace during this new Association year, so as to meet the conditions of the Convention Plan, and raise a sum equal to one dollar per member for the various objects that are call- ing so loudly for aid—this we ought to do, and not to leave the other undone. That would be growth in a small degree. Do not the continued mercies of our covenant-keeping God appeal to all our hearts that we as individual Christians, as Christian churches, and as a Christian denomination should in beneficence? One of the saddest calamities that can befall us is to have our money, which we have so graciously bestowed in this grace of liberality. Our Presbyterian brethren are increasing in usefulness, numbers and influence, by abounding in this grace. It became us to consider well the great trust God has committed to us, that we may be faithful to the "Word of Life" as the only guide in the worship and order of His house. These New Testament principles which cost our fathers such bitter persecutions, are more widespread to-day than ever before. The Bible is the standard of appeal in religious denominations to-day than for many past centuries. Our prin- ciples as Baptists are influencing the Christian church at the present time, as they have not done since the early days of Christianity. As those who take the Word of God as their only rule of faith and life, it becomes us to exercise a stronger faith in these prin- ciples by "abounding in this grace also," or prove recreant to our sacred trust. The opportunities for the spread of di- vine truth were never more ripe, and the needs never more widespread. And bring action upon the workmen, and bring success of the highest sort on the field, large harvests and frequent har- vests—the rain on the mown grass mak- ing the grass to grow again for another crop." Prayer is doubtless the great means by which we are to "abound in this grace." As regards the measure of giving, there can be no definite rule laid down. As the Lord hath prospered in the New Testament rule; and if all were fulfilling this rule there would be an abundance for the work at home and abroad. The Jews gave a tenth, and are not to be thought of doing less. Many good and wise things have been said through the Messenger and Visitor on the conse- cration of at least one-tenth of our in- come to the Lord; and it has helped some to make this the law, by which they have abounded in this grace. Should any Christian rest content in this act of self-sacrifice, who is not giving at least one-tenth of his income to the cause of Christ? There certainly can be no reasonable excuse given by any Chris- tian man, woman or child for not giving one-tenth of their income to the cause of Christ? There are many persons who say they think they give a tenth, but there is no thought about it, if they give a tenth they know it, and the Lord knows it, and the law of God says that they do not give the tenth. The practical way is to have a purse for the Lord's money, and put His money in His own purse, then see that it is taken out only for His cause; and there certainly can be no mistake made, if we deal thus with God. 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In a tract written on the subject, "How to open the windows of Heaven," a sys- tematic calculation is made, and the writer says: "Now suppose we worship God in our offering cups, are not in a false position, but in a right one—in the one which God has ordained for you, and therefore in the one which contains blessings—its blessings, its own peculiar blessing. Where you meet with disap- pointment is in expecting from it what does not belong to it. It is wrong, it would not be blessing if it did.—The Outer-

each earning fifteen dollars per week, and giving one-twentieth, equal \$10.00 per week. Thirty members, each earning twelve dollars per week, and giving one-twentieth, equal \$18.00 per week. They would, each earning, six dollars per week, and giving one-twentieth, equal \$3.00 per week. Twenty members, each earning three dollars per week, and giving one-twentieth, equal \$3.00 per week. Making a total of \$45.00 per week, or \$2,356.80 per year. From this amount deduct \$1,500 for pastor's salary; sexton, \$208; gas, \$100; coal \$75; and you have a balance of \$503.80. Should this little church have a debt of \$500, it could pay the interest at six per cent, and have a balance of \$233.80, which could be distributed as follows: Foreign Missions, \$40; Home Missions, \$40; American Baptist Publication Society, \$25; Bible Work, \$25; State Work, \$25; Ministerial Education, \$30; Minis- ters' and Widows' Fund, \$18. The amount is small, but they are propor- tionately much larger than any Baptist church in the United States is giving to- day for either home expenses or benevo- lence. One-twentieth is a sum so small that few Christians earning wages would miss it; and yet, such a sum systemat- ically and proportionately given, would make the Lord's treasury like an unfaul- ting fountain." We need to study care- fully systematic and proportionate giving, to see how little after all is given to the Lord's cause; and how few there are who do this give. There are so many professing Christians who give compen- satively nothing, that those who do give are misrepresented, by being numbered along with so many dead heads. The crying sin of the rank and file in all our churches is that of an unjust steward- ship over the Lord's money. Let us urge upon all the churches within the bounds of this Association to take some more practical steps to grow in this grace during our next Associa- tional year. 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Old Age. Rowland Hill, himself a very old man, says that he heard of one who was asked what age he was. He answered, "The right side of eighty." "I thought you were more than eighty," said the inquirer. "Yes, I am beyond it," he replied; "and be it of the right side, for I am nearer my eternal rest." A man once said to Dr. Rees: "You are whitening fast." The doctor answered him in a sermon which he preached immediately after: "There is a wee little flower which grows not in the snow and frost; but we are glad to see the snowdrop, because it proclaims that the winter is over and that the summer is at hand. A friend reminded me last night that I was whitening fast. But heed not that, brother; it is to me a proof that my winter will soon be over; that I shall have done presently with the cold east wind and the frosts of the earth, and that my summer—my eternal summer—is at hand." To an humble Christian it was remark- ed: "I fear you are near another world." "Fear it, sir," he replied; "I know I am; but, blessed be the Lord, I do not fear it—I hope it." The apostle Paul was an old man, but, happily for him, he was no agnostic, and so he could say: "I know in whom I have believed, and that He will keep His promise to me, and will surely see to it that I shall; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." But for old age to be happy it must be a time of acceptance. Old age fought against it miserably; old age accepted it calmly. Consider that you are not in a false position, but in a right one—in the one which God has ordained for you, and therefore in the one which contains blessings—its blessings, its own peculiar blessing. Where you meet with disap- pointment is in expecting from it what does not belong to it. It is wrong, it would not be blessing if it did.—The Outer-

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and strength. The rapidity of the cure astonished me, as I expected the process to be long and tedious."—Frederico Mariz Fernandes, Villa Nova de Gays, Portugal. "For many years I was a sufferer from scrofula, until about three years ago, when I began the use of Ayer's Sarsaparilla, since which the disease has entirely disappeared. A little child of mine, who was troubled with the same complaint, has also been cured by this medicine."—E. Brandt, Avoca, Neb.

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