

original word here translated "vows," means something voluntarily promised—consecrated—set apart to God. This votive offering David says he will present "in the courts of the Lord's house." In other words, he resolves to give in public what he has devoted in private.

Do we appreciate God's "unspeakable gift?" then let us seek to prove the sincerity of our love. Of course, we need not say that our giving will not enrich Him or increase His infinite sufficiency. Nor need we say that it is not intended to appease His anger, or to propitiate His favor.—Christ has satisfied all the claims of His justice—our gift to be a thankoffering, a public testimonial of our devotedness and gratitude to God. It is the acknowledgment of a debt which the contrasted smallness of our offering implies that we can never pay.

The view of giving as a means of grace is often presented to us in Scripture. Notice the high view which Paul takes of it, 2 Cor. viii: 7. In endeavouring to stir up the believers at Corinth to emulate those of Macedonia, he exhorts them, "Therefore 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." No matter how remarkable in other respects, if wanting in "this grace," their Christian character would be incomplete. We suspect, too, from what the apostle says in a subsequent chapter, that the Corinthians were not quite up to the mark in point of liberality. "For what was it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you?" That is, he had taken or asked for no remuneration for his services while he labored among them. The *grace*, therefore, had not been exercised, and consequently they had suffered a loss for which the Apostle, in reminding them of their own neglect, blames himself, and says, "Forgive me this wrong." He speaks of their liberality as much in reference to its reflex influence upon their own life and character, as with reference to the relief it brought to others. It strikes us that there would be a great

deal more independence on the part of pastors in referring to the *duty* of giving, and a great deal more faithfulness on the part of the people in practising it—if it were always regarded in its true light as *a means of grace*. The very import of the expression—a *means of grace*—leads us to apply it to *GIVING*. It is applicable to any exercise which tends to restore God's image in us,—anything that leads us to act like Christ, and giving has this effect. He gave Himself—and if we give—if we make sacrifices for His sake, and in His service, the act excites in us a sympathy with Him, and begets in us a likeness to Him. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. 2 Cor. 8: 9—that is, "You have had an actual experience in denying yourselves—in making yourselves poor that others may be made rich." Giving should be looked upon as a sort of sacrament in which what we *give* symbolizes what we *owe* to God—as the *sign* of our self-sacrifice—and the *seal* of our engagement, to devote all that we have and all that we are to His service.

3. In all ages of the church, giving has been an essential part of public worship. As soon, indeed, as the church began to assume a definite form—as soon as means were required to enable her to carry on her work—the people brought their *free-will offering* when they came to worship. At the great feasts especially it was commanded imperatively—"They shall not appear before me empty: every man shall give as he is able."

When the tabernacle was to be built, "the Lord spake unto Moses, saying: Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring me an offering." Perhaps the idea of *bringing* has not been dwelt upon with the fulness which it deserves. It is a wonder, too, for very frequent reference is made to this mode of making all contributions at the place of worship. Indeed, *no other plan* of replenishing God's exchequer is ever mentioned in Scripture. Thus the offerings were made for the building of the temple,—and afterward, when the temple was repaired, we are told that a chest with a hole in the lid of it was set beside the