

enjoined, "freely ye have received freely give" (Matt. x: 8). The little apostolic company carried a "bag," which it is evident was drawn upon for religious and charitable purposes (John xiii: 19). Christ approved of the widow's mite (Matt. xii: 43, 54). He taught a gospel of unselfishness illustrated in his charge to the rich young man, "Go sell that thou hast and give to the poor" (Matt. xix: 21), and again, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. vi: 26). The parable of the steward was Christ's utterance, and in it he settles for all time, our relation to our property, and God's claim on us as stewards (Luke xvii). The resources of the early disciples were small, but *all* was held in trust for the support of the Gospel and of the poor. After Pentecost, the necessities incident to the great revival were promptly met. "And all that believed had all things common and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all as every man had need" (Acts ii: 42, 45). Nor was this display of beneficence exceptional, the principle was wide-spread in the church. "Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own." It was voluntary sacrifice; land and houses were cheerfully sold and laid down at the apostles' feet (Acts iv: 32: 37). So general was the disposition to benevolence, that unwilling ones like Ananias were compelled to act the hypocrite. The appointment of the deacons was for the dispensation of charity. When report was brought to Antioch of the distress at Jerusalem "the disciples, every man according to his ability determined to send relief unto the brethren" (Acts xi: 29). The church at Macedonia was commended by the apostle for the "riches of their liberality" (1 Cor. viii: 2), and "love to all the saints shown by Ephesians" (Eph. i: 15), was likewise spoken of. The charge to Paul and Barnabas was, that they "should remember the poor." In his letter to Timothy special injunction was given, that the matter of charity be kept before the church (1 Tim. vi: 17-19). The references in the Acts and in the Epistles are many.

The church of the Old and New Testament practised beneficence because it believed in it. It was not an expedient, but a vital principle of true religion. Christian stewardship needs emphasis in the church to-day. The church has not maintained the standard of beneficence that characterized the apostolic age. Christian charities have assumed great proportions, but the spirit of charity is not so all-prevalent. Giving is less a religious exercise; and church finances are with more regard to the world than to teachings of Gospel. *External influence is more potent than conscience.* Gifts for the Lord's treasury are too often extorted from men; too seldom the prompting of generous, dutiful impulse. God's claims need re-statement. Consecration must again become an essential principle in church life. For, be it remembered, God's claims have not changed. Your daily toil, your

productive farm, your prosperous business, your abundant income are as closely linked to Divine Providence as were the circumstances in the life of the humblest Israelite. The din of a busy world, the selfish striving of an unresponsive heart, may dull your ears to a Father's oft asserted right in you and in your hoarded gains, but he has marked a portion as His own and you do well to recognize his claim. "Will a man rob God?" (Mal. iii: 8). Alas! the Lord's treasury is scantily furnished for the carrying out His plan of evangelization of the world. Again, the world's needs have increased. It was a narrow horizon that shut in the early church. The "world" of the great commission has extended its borders to-day. Its present bounds were before the Lord's vision, but hardly conceived by those addressed. The fields of ripening grain upon which we gaze with indifference, would have deeply thrilled the early disciples. The millions of Asia, and Africa, and the Isles of the Sea would not long have appealed in vain to them for the Gospel. Ours is a magnificent opportunity. The unnumbered millions of Heathendom are at our very doors; barriers that so long hindered have been removed; the cross of Christ has access to every land and yet the great world is almost untouched. The missionary operations of the church are crippled from lack of funds.

Followers of Christ redeemed from everlasting death by the Saviour's death, will you not hear and make possible the Saviour's last command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi: 15)? As the needs to be met have increased, so our resources have multiplied. The past offers no comparison with the present in the facilities offered for money getting. Extremes of wealth and poverty were then as now, but never were the opportunities for honest industry so manifold, never so well rewarded.

The Christian church is wealthy; its temporal prosperity warrants larger gifts, greater outlay; commerce has opened avenues of trade; development of mineral resources, the growth of manufactories and consequent encouragement of agriculture, have made people of all classes and sections prosperous, as compared with the less favored brethren of former days. God's people are furnished means commensurate with the world's needs; and with the opportunity so great, their responsibility is equally great. "Shall we meet it?" Or shall we harden our hearts to the appeals from every side, and suffer the Lord to take away our stewardship? Consecration of our substance has been appealed for, upon the sole ground of our relation to Him and to His people. God's people should need no higher incentive. A Father's claim must be a sufficient warrant for a child's compliance. His will is revealed in His word; taught by example as well as precept. For those who need a precise rule in the matter of beneficence we observe the Scripture rule in giving, as in living, is a principle rather than a statute. The