

He who retains what he receives forfeits the "more blessed" experience. Now everybody believes it is blessed to receive, and some know that it is also blessed to give; but very few really believe it is *more* blessed to give, and hence the blessings imparted by us are everywhere but a fraction of what are bestowed upon us: the bulk of God's best gifts are wasted or worse than wasted on self-indulgence, or held and hoarded to be finally lavished on vicious pleasures by heedless heirs, or perhaps dissipated among greedy lawyers!

The grand lesson of God's Word is that the highest grade of *living* is *giving*, not of substance only, but of *self*. In Prov. 11 : 24 we read, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth : and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." In Mark 8 : 35 we have the corresponding New Testament lesson : "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it : but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it." This is to the natural man not only a paradox, but the apex of absurdity. To increase by scattering and grow poor by hoarding ; to save by losing and lose by saving is the climax of contradiction, yet here is to be found the summit of Divine philosophy.

God's law is *impartation*. "I will bless thee, . . . and make thee a blessing." "Who comforteth us, . . . that we may be able to comfort others" (Gen. 12 : 2 ; 2 Cor. 1 : 4). We can understand this scriptural law only as we first perceive what is the depraved tendency of our sinful nature.

"The love of money is the root of all evil," yet that love of money is only one branch from a deeper root—the LOVE OF SELF. Selfishness is the great radical *sin*, of which all *sins* are ramifications ; selfishness, the sum of all deformities, the parent of all enormities. Paul's awful catalogue of apostasies begins and ends with selfishness : "Men shall be lovers of their own selves, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3 : 2, 4). The corner-stone and capstone of wickedness is the same idolatry of self.

All men are therefore divisible into two classes : those whose supreme aim is to *get*, and those whose grand aim is to *give*. The former aim feeds and fattens selfishness till it becomes monstrous ; the latter starves selfishness that it may develop benevolence.

It has been hinted that selfishness is but a root-stock, having many branches. The three branches from which all the more minute ones spring are the three lusts : *appetite*, *ambition*, *avarice*, or the lust of pleasure, of power, of gain. To make the lesson the more startling, we take the one branch, avarice, and trace some of its "apples of Sodom." Let us see how greed paralyzes all true giving.

I. First, greed brings *absorption*. The law of selfishness is, Get all you can, and keep all you get. No wonder it makes monopolists and monsters, and that modern society presents the awful contrast of enormous accumulations looking down like Alpine peaks on abject want and hopeless