

Christian Giving and its Result.

"Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase" is the Divine command; "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" is the Divine promise linked to the command. In obeying the command we are but returning a little of His own. "The silver and the gold are His, and the cattle on a thousand hills,"—"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." What we have is entrusted to us to use wisely and well, and from each one of us will He soon require an account of our stewardship.

THE MOTIVE IN GIVING.

"Honor the Lord." To do this we must give in faith. Both Cain and Abel brought offerings perhaps equal in value, but Cain's sacrifice did not honor the Lord. To Cain and to his offering the Lord had not respect. There was no faith, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin. "By *faith* Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."

We must give in humility, from gratitude and not for the praise of men. The Pharisees gave that they might be seen of men. They sought to honor themselves and not the Lord.

We must give as an act of worship. "Come into My courts and bring an offering with you." To bring the offering and present it in an acceptable manner is as really an act of worship as to come into His courts to sing His praise, read His word or supplicate His mercy. If from selfish motives men keep back the offering how can they worship acceptably.

Giving should be in proportion to what He has given us. To whom He giveth little from them He expects but little, to whom much is given from them much is required.—We should give regularly and systematically. As long as God gives to us and in like proportion as He gives to us does our obligation remain to return a part of His own to Him.

THE FIRST FRUITS.

He plainly tells us that the particular part of the substance with which we are to honor Him is the first fruits. This language while referring primarily to husbandmen applies to all. The first fruits are the first part given to God out of our income, no matter whether we be farmers, mechanics, ministers, or merchants. The minister receives his quarter's salary, the first portion out of it laid aside for God, for religious and benevolent objects. The first part of the merchant's income or the mechanic's wages, the first of the produce of the farmer's dairy or loom is as really first fruits as the first bushel of corn from the bin or the first lamb from the flock.

There is something very significant in the term first fruits. The first is generally the best and nothing else will honor Him. How many leave God's share to the last. They are not sure whether they have anything for Him or not. They must have all their own desires gratified and then if there is anything left, well, if not, He must go without. Is it any wonder that such people are spiritually and often materially poor.

HOW MUCH SHOULD WE GIVE?

That must be left to every man's conscience. Giving is an act of worship and like all other acts of worship it is free. There can be no law laid down as to how much men should pray or read God's word, neither can there be as to what proportion all should give.

Under the Old Testament dispensation religious duties were minutely prescribed. A certain number of fasts were to be observed, a certain number of sacrifices offered, and a certain proportion given to God. Now we are free, not from the obligation to perform these duties, but as to the particular way in which they shall be performed. But, reasoning from analogy, surely no less should be given by those who enjoy the light of gospel times than by the Jews who were less highly favored. Many do give a tenth