

Giving

Matthew 5: 42.

W. Kelly.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 340-341.)

In this verse we have a grand principle for the Christian. It comes in at the close of the exhortation to resist not evil, but rather to suffer it, privately, by perversions of law, or from public demand. Christ is the pattern for the disciple; and no sound exposition can explain His word away, however distasteful to flesh and blood. The new nature goes along with it loyally as the perfect law of liberty. Only the fleshly mind seeks evasion by every disingenuous means.

"To him that asketh thee give, and from him that desireth to borrow of thee turn not away." The disciple learns from God that he is a debtor to grace, not only in the outward mercies of every day which he shares with all mankind, but in that still deeper love which quickened him from moral death, death in offences and sins, when a child of wrath by nature. Here a Jew or a Gentile made no difference: as far as we all were concerned, it was a hopeless case of irremediable evil. But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love wherewith He loved us, quickened us together with Christ, raised us up together, and made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus; that He might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness upon us in Christ Jesus.

Those whom the Christ then addresses had tasted already that the Lord is good; but they were soon to be brought into its full compass when He died, rose, and ascended on high, and sent forth the Holy Spirit in glorifying Him to guide them into all the truth. The Lord, having before Him such fulness of grace which we were to receive, looks for our appreciation of it by faith and the action of the Holy Spirit on our souls correspondingly. As He said elsewhere, Freely ye received, freely give. It is the mind of heaven reproduced on that earth which was full of sordid selfishness. None were more characterised by covetousness than the Jews, who, having for the time lost their place as Jehovah's witnesses, sought a vent and excuse for their energy in heaping up wealth; to which end cheating their Gentile masters only gave a greater zest. No wonder that souls so blessed by grace should be called to an entirely new walk and an equally new worship, unintelligible to such as do not enter into the Christian calling and hope. Yet the apostle says plainly that we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Which God before ordained that we should walk in them.

But Christ came to save not only from wrath but ruin, not only from penalty but from sin, and to form a new character in those that hear His voice and follow Him. It was and could only be His own character. For what was that of Socrates, or of Antoninus Pius, of Gautama Buddha or of Confucius? Shades of vanity or pride, in comparison with Him who never did His own will but that of God the Father who sent Him, His only-begotten. It was His to come into this world of sin and self to give Himself up as a sacrifice, thus bringing God into it to put sin out of it, as He assuredly will in power as the glorious issue of what He has already done and suffered.

Therefore, as a part of the spiritual process, He would impress on His own the character of grace, and not mere law like a Jew, in which He was the constant witness and blessed perfection. Was there ever a need, a want, a suffering presented to Him without an answer of divine grace and power, and in all human tenderness? He that was about to give Himself up to God for us, what of good did He ever withhold? Money was too small and mean to give, save as meeting the temple-tax. "Take that [from a strange bank!], and give it to them for Me and thee." Hence the words in Luke 6: 38, "Give, and it shall

be given you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall be given into your bosom; for with the same measure with which ye mete it shall be measured to you again." It is literally "they shall give," but so often in Luke impersonally stated, and really pointing to God. Thus as His grace produces its like, so will He never forget it, however man may.

Now, my dear reader, you know that this is far beyond your heart and life; and that, if you strove to emulate such giving, you would soon weary, and find it a law more fiery than the ten words of Sinai. Only Christ set the example; only Christ gives the power. But you must first be at His feet as a lost sinner, casting your soul with all your sins on Him for life, for pardon through His blood, and peace. It is in vain for you to think of giving of your means, till you have come to Him as the neediest of all to receive of His fulness. Only then, when you have Him as your unfailing treasure, will you have the faith and love to make to yourself friends with the mammon of unrighteousness. Only then will you, with single eye and liberal heart, "give to him that asketh of you, and not turn away from him that would borrow of you," be he of the world, or of the household of faith; only then not grievously, nor of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. And He is able to make every grace abound toward you, that, having in every way always all sufficiency, you may abound to every good work. When grace has saved you by Christ to God's glory, then it will be your joy to follow Christ; and you will shun and hate what is inconsistent with Him, both from your new nature, and in obedience to the word of God.