

*The Tribute of Giving*  
*And*  
*The Return to the Paradise Life*

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# Introduction

A virtuous man saw a poor person shivering from cold, so he put off his coat and gave it to him. Days later he noticed that another man is wearing his coat and asked him where he got it from and found out that the poor man has sold it to him, but at night he saw Jesus Christ wearing the coat and asked Him: "Who gave You this coat my Lord?", and Christ answered: "When you gave it to the poor man, I put it on, so don't be troubled that he sold it to someone else, for you gave it to Me personally.

This story, and other similar ones, makes us wonder:

- 1. Why does God, who granted us the entire world with all its beauty and potentials, ask us to give?**
- 2. Why do we give? And whom do we give to? And how do we give?**
- 3. Is the virtue of giving related to our salvation?**

This is the comfort of the Lord: O man, you would not need to say: "Forgive me"; just give comfort to the weary, seek the diseased and give to the poor, for these deeds are truly prayers... every time you give comfort to the Lord, my beloved, it counts as a prayer.

Persian Wise  
St. Ephrahat The

### 1. In the Garden of Eden:

Many times our souls moan inside us: Why were we deprived of the Garden of Eden? Adam lived in Paradise looking upon his Creator, seeing Him as the Maker of all good, the Granter of life to the heavenlies as well as to the earthlies. He gives all the time and does not need any help from any creature. Adam saw that even with all the creatures around him, most of them if not in all, were characterized by “giving”: the sun gives its light, the moon gives the night a special grandeur with the rest of the planets, the earth does not plant thistle nor spine, rather what satisfies his needs, and so does the sea, the trees, the animals, and fish,... everybody gives, and inside him dwells a flame of love that is anxious to give, just like its Creator and His serving creation.

God, the Man-Lover, did not leave him alone, but gave something, he took a rib from his side, and this was a unique gift, and made it Eve "*a help meet for him*" [Genesis 2:20], to help him realize his longing towards giving. It was the first gift that man gave to his fellow man, and it made him happy. Happily, Adam accepted her from his flesh and bones and gave her his heart, thoughts, feelings and emotions. She truthfully became his help as she enabled him to actually give in the Garden of Eden. But when sin entered the heart of man and corrupted his nature, he became confused between his desire to take and extort and his internal craving to give.

Giving is actually taking, as it enables man to enjoy the experience of the Garden of Eden with the first man before his fall. More precisely, giving is asked from us by God Himself, as if He needs us, to grant us the chance to be like Him, for He is the Granter of all good. In His talk with the Samaritan woman, Jesus presented Himself to her as if He was in need, saying: "*give me to drink*"; and He stood beside the treasury waiting for the two mites of the poor widow. In all these situations God was in need, not for the

gift itself, but for the giving heart of man in order to form His image.

Nothing can make us so close to God and similar to Him as a good deed.

Charity is powerful and has the rule to make its doer similar to God: *"Be merciful, even as your Father which is in heaven is merciful"*.

As much as man is "the least", the more Jesus comes to you through him, because he, who gives a great man, does that proudly, but he who gives the poor does that with purity for Jesus Christ.

St.

John Chrysostom

## **2. Giving is the Building Material for the Temple of God:**

The married brother felt that his little, single, brother is definitely in need for money to prepare himself for marriage and, thus, he used to take from his own harvest and put it in his brother's store room in the middle of the night. At the same time, the younger brother thought that his older brother is in more need of the harvest than he is because he has wife and kids, and, thus, he used to do the same thing. The two brothers noticed that their stocks do not diminish, but rather are filled up with God's blessings. One night, the two brothers met, each of them carrying the harvest from his own store room to his brother's, and asked each other: "Where are you going?" They both cried and hugged each other. In this particular place God chose to build the Temple of Solomon!

God wants to build up your heart as His temple; maybe He will find the love that is filled with giving, so He would sanctify your insides as a temple and reside in it, for

He is love! God rejoices to find love in His creations, that is being prepared to become His residence.

Truthfully, God's joy resides in giving.

St. Clement of Alexandria

**3. Tribute, not Collecting:**

It was said that a little boy loved his dog very much. At lunch time, he used to take a share of the grilled meat and give it to him. His father noticed this and asked him to collect the leftovers of the food and give it to his dog. The boy obeyed his father, but before giving the leftovers to his dog, he hugged and kissed him saying: "I'm sorry, I wanted to give you a tribute, but I had to give you what I collected from the leftovers!"

What concerns God is not how much we give, but the intention of giving. Do we give a tribute to the brethren of God or do we just gather our leftovers to give them as tributes!

It is the intention that makes a tribute valuable or not.

St. Ambrose

What counts is not the act of giving itself, rather the delight in giving; and if one does not have enough to give, it's just enough to be kind and tender.

St. Anthony the Great

**4. Two Children building a Cathedral:**

One of the emperors insisted on building a huge cathedral at his own expense and refused to share the

expenses with any of the men of state or the people. When the building was finished a piece of marble, engraved with the name of the emperor, was put on it. Surprisingly, in the next morning the name of the emperor was wiped from the marble piece and two other names were engraved. This occurred several times, so the emperor prayed to God asking Him to explain this strange situation to him. Indeed, an angel appeared to him and told him that two children contributed to this building even more than he has. The emperor, then, came to know the two children and that they were very eager to contribute to the construction of the cathedral, but had nothing else to do but to bring water to the camels that came from the mountains carrying the building stones. The two children simply gave all what's in their disposal and God accepted their tribute as if they built the cathedral itself. They were just like the two mites of the poor widow.

The story of these two children was repeated in many countries. In Philadelphia, a man took his little girl to a small church to participate in the Sunday School, but the teachers refused to take her due to the lack of place in the church building. The little girl was very distressed. After two years the little girl died, and her father found a note under her pillow with a few cents. In the note the girl wrote that she was deprived from attending the Sunday school due to the lack of place in the church and thus decided to save as much as she can from her allowance to help enlarge the church buildings so that other children will not be deprived from this blessing in the years to come. The church priest read this note to the people and made them copies. The people were very touched by the note and put it in their hearts to work on adding more space to the church. A church was built in Philadelphia for 3300 persons, as well as a college, a student residence and a huge hospital. This was all built by the little girl with her loving heart to all the children that were to come after her death.

The love presented by the poor widow was greater than her offerings, because love can do more than a perfect offering. That's why she beat the wealthy people with her little offering.

St.

Jacob of Serugh

**5. Giving breaks the Chains of the Soul:**

It was said that Abraham, the father of all fathers, was very wealthy [Genesis 13:2], but he was not a slave to his fortune. He owns it, but it does not own him. When his shepherds had an argument with those of his brother's son, Lot, he did not find it difficult to have divide the land between their shepherds and even him choose which part of the land that he would like [Genesis 13:8 etc]. Because he loved and appreciated his wife, Sarah, he asked her to serve the guests herself and not the servants [Genesis 18:6]. Despite his wealth, Abraham's continuous giving in every way possible reveals that his heart is free from the materialistic earthly things and is rather set off to the heavenlies.

If man buried his treasure in the ground, his heart would desire the materialistic earthly things, but if he kept his treasure in heaven, his heart will rise to heaven. If Christians wished to raise their hearts to heaven, they should keep what they hold dear up there, so that despite their living here on earth with their body, their hearts would reside with Jesus Christ. Just as the Head of the Church arose, it is proper for the Christian to raise his heart before Him.

St. Augustine

In the city of Ottawa, the capital of Canada, a lady told me in the presence of her husband: "My son and I mock my husband and take all his money". The husband

laughed and said: "And I, father, mock my wife and son and give them all what I have!" This is a beautiful image of the soul that was set free, by giving, from all its chains and feels that giving is the source of its inner joy!

**6. The Flood of Giving brings Sweetness:**

It is said that the Dead Sea became dead and its water became extremely salty, because it does not have any flowing streams. It is also said that the water of a certain strand in middle Africa was very salty, but when some streams were dug, its water became sweet after several years due to the rain and the water flowing to the streams. Just like that avarice and greed give bitterness to the soul and giving grants sweetness to all the surrounding souls.

It was written on a gravestone: "Here lies (so and so), all what occupied him was to gain more wealth without saturation, and thus he died and we don't know where he is or how he is doing". Another one read: " Here lies (so and so) who used to give his strength to the weak, his money to the needy, his kindness to the weary and his heart to God".

**7. Charity is sharing with the Crucified and members of the suffering body:**

As we behold our Lord, the Crucified Jesus Christ, inside us, and rather became His holy body, it is proper for us to enjoy His feelings, so we would share His pain as if it was our own and long to bear it for Him. This way we become like our Lord, Jesus Christ, who tolerated the gibe of the gibers and bore the load of the despised and detested; He cried with the crying, felt the weakness of the fallen and rejoiced with the delighted. These are the feelings of our Lord, Jesus, in you. If you let Him work through you by giving, which is a live love to the needy and deep inner kindness, He would reveal His work to you so you could taste Him and experience Him within you. Like that can

charity rise from being mere materialistic giving to being a deep love connecting the members of Christ together.

He, who is bound to the cross, bears within him the feature of the Crucified, in whom God finds His joy, and in whom the believers find sweetness when they offer their lives for the sake of others, not because they have to or are forced to, but because it is a natural flow from within them.

**It was said that there are three types of those who give:**

- ❖ The first type is like *granite*: it does not give unless it is hit with another piece of granite causing both to be smashed, giving a spark of burning fire.
- ❖ The second type is like a *sponge*: it does not give unless one squeezes and presses it.
- ❖ The third type is like a *tabloid of honey*: wherever you put it, it naturally pours with sweetness, just like a member of the body of the Crucified!

Our pain has reached the end of the inhabited world, as when one member suffers all the other members suffer too.

St. Basil the Great

If one of your fingers got cut off, doesn't all your body parts frighten? Don't you hurry to the doctor to put your finger back in its place? Sure, you do. Then, your body would be in good shape, when all your body parts are in coherence with each other, then you consider yourself in good health.

As we bethink your continuous easement that you enjoy in Christ, we can also find easement with you, O beloved ones, even if we face more difficulties or fatigue.

St. Augustine

### **8. Giving is a true sign of Repentance:**

Repenting sins truly corrects people, yet if it didn't involve acts of mercy, it is of no use. The righteousness is testified through John, who said to those who come unto him: "*O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance...*" [Luke 3:7-9]; for he, who does not bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, should not think that he would find forgiveness. John, himself, specified these fruits, for, after what he said, the people asked him: "What should we do then?" and he replied: "*He that has two coats, let him impart to him that has none; and he that has meat, let him do likewise*" [Luke 3:10-11].

St.

Augustine

"By mercy and truth iniquity is purged" [Proverbs 16:6]. "Break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor" [Daniel 4:27]. "But rather give alms of such things as you have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you" [Luke 11:41].

### **9. Why do you bear load beyond your abilities?**

The poor are mere carriers, who transport our belongings from earth to heaven, so give them the things you have and they will carry it for you to heaven.

St. Augustine

### **10. Giving and Feelings of a President!**

In the midst of the crowd one of the noble people glanced at a young man and noticed his puzzlement and confusion, so he went to him and started to soften him up till the boy finally said: "My father is dead, and he didn't leave us anything behind; and my mother works and can

barely afford our necessities, but now she is sick in bed and I have no food nor medicine to give her". The man went into a store and bought food and asked that it be delivered to the boy's residence. Then, the man went with the boy to his home, and when he spoke to the sick lady, his heart softened and he apologized to her saying: "I am not the doctor specialized in your disease, but I will write you a piece of paper with a prescription that would help you". He wrote her the note and left. When the lady looked at the piece of paper, she found out it was a check of a huge amount, but she was especially surprised to find out that the man signed the check "George Washington", the president of the United States!

### **11. Our Christ and the Commandment of Giving:**

The commandment of practical love and giving is as old as man himself; God has engraved it in the human conscience; it had first place in the natural Law and the Law of Moses assured it; while Jesus Christ said: *"And the second is like, namely this: you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is none other commandment greater than these"* [Mark 12:31]. Thus, we wonder: why did Jesus say in His farewell speech: *"A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another"* [John 13:34]? And why does John the Apostle call it once an old commandment and another time a new one [Epistle of John 1 2:7-8]?

The Word of God, who commended giving since the creation of man, descended to us incarnated to reveal new concepts and new dimensions to us and to give us new capabilities. On the cross, He enlightened our hearts to behold a unique kind of giving, by which the Creator exerts Himself to man, His beloved, to give us Himself and to unite us with Him, so we can share with Him the exerted love bid to everyone, even our resistors. As for the dimensions, Jesus Christ, the source of love, giving, joy and

peace, dwelled inside us so as to broaden our heart to embrace –if possible- all humanity; and through Him our heart can be sanctified to become His holy kingdom.

Our Christ offered Himself to us as the Doctor, the Cure, the Vinedresser, the Intercessor, the Good Shepherd, the Teacher, the Right itself, and the Eternal Joy; He did not leave us in need of anything. The more we draw closer to Him, the more our sights enlighten so we could see His never-ending gifts! As we become members of His body, we would find joy in giving like He, the Wondrous Divine Giver, does. Thus, the believer would become a light to the world and a peacemaker, just like the promise of Jesus Christ, as he presents Christ, who dwells in him, as a Savior, a Redeemer, a Righteous, and Holy to all who he meets.

Jesus presents His features to us through His cross, for we are *"no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the household of God"* [Ephesians 2:19], who have the right to share His eternal glory. This wondrous divine gift lightens our hearts to give, so that –if possible- all humanity can enjoy membership in this divine family with us along with all its magnificent glory.

### **12. Giving opens the Gates to Heaven:**

Once a rich man tried to mock his friend, who used to give to the poor, saying: "On the day you die, I will write you an obituary saying: and He died as a beggar". His friend smiled and said: "Continue the phrase: and the angels carried him into the embrace of Abraham" [Luke 16:22].

We gain the contentment of the angels and all the saints by giving to the poor.

St. Amrosious

The doors of God are open at all time to the requests of he, who spares a fellow human.

St. John Saba

If you want your prayers to fly to heaven, give them two wings: Fasting and Charity.

St. Augustine

One of my beloved in California once told me: "Do you remember when I started out my life here in California 20 years ago and how much I was struggling with all I had; and now God gave me more than what I asked for and beyond what I need? Do you know why He gave me all this richness? Well, several years ago I kneeled before Him and vowed to give generously to the poor; and ever since, the gates of heaven were opened before me and He gave me beyond my needs. I used to kneel before Him and cry: Enough! Enough! I'm afraid that all these blessings would captivate and destroy my soul; but the more I cry to Him, the more He opened His doors before me and enriched me."

***The Heavens revealed Food:***

Once Father Michael Abraham found someone knocking on his door asking for help due to an emergency that he encountered, so he gave him some money that were rolled up together on the table without even looking at them. On his way out, his wife asked him about the money and he told her: "God sent someone to take them". She said: "But that was all what we had for the rest of the month"; and he answered her: "God will send us food". His wife became a little angry and said: "Father, go to the church and do the mass service"! After the service he bumped into someone, who said: "(so and so) gave me this sum of money before he died and asked me to give it to you, because he had borrowed it from you; and it was 20 pounds".

**13. Let's go beyond commitment to pay out Tithes:**

A Christian once met a Jewish in England and asked him: "Do you actually give God a million pounds every year as you win 10 million?" and the Jewish man told him: "If I only pay out the million pounds, I wouldn't be giving anything at all, for this commitment is necessary; it is what I pay out beyond this million that is really a love offering from my heart to God!"

It is your duty to clothe Christ through the poor, visit Him through the sick, feed Him through the hungry, and give Him shelter through the homeless, especially through the believers among them. You should support the virgins and care for God's servants, who are poor and live an angelic life praising God on earth.

St. Jerome

O, what a great prize to those, who feed Christ when He is hungry; and what a horrible crime to despise Him!

St. Augustine

If you come across a poor person, don't send him off empty handed, rather give him from the blessings that God gave you; and know this, that everything you have is not yours, so give it for the sake of God.

St. Isaiah

**14. Desolation without Love:**

Father Simon once asked the desolated St. Mar Isak The Sorian: Why do the desolated abandon mercy even though the Lord has commanded it as the road to perfection? The saint answered him that a desolated person without acts of mercy is not desolated; for his isolation and tranquility do not mean that his heart has hardened, rather

they reflect a loving and kind heart that preferred God's love over all other. Thus, a desolated person should present mercy when the situation calls for it, for his heart is filled with love, but it's not his duty to live among the brethren to present mercy.

An unmerciful monk is like a fruitless tree.

St Isaac The Syrian