

Liberality of Heart

by John Nelson Darby

The liberality of heart is a voluntary devotedness to God, a willingness to offer oneself as a living sacrifice, and to be guided by the Spirit of God in our service.

Scripture: Numbers 6:23

Topics: "Voluntary Devotion", "Generosity in Service"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the concept of 'liberality of heart' as a voluntary devotion to God, contrasting it with the painful separation of the Nazarite. He illustrates how blessings flow from this willing heart, as seen in the priestly blessings and the offerings made by the people. Darby highlights that true service is not merely about actions but about offering oneself as a living sacrifice, reflecting the generosity that comes from grace. He points out that every individual's contribution, whether showy or humble, is valuable when dedicated to God, and that communion with God occurs through a willing spirit. Ultimately, the sermon underscores the importance of individual spirituality in collective worship and service.

Transcript

{Christian Friend 1893, pages 85-7.}

In Num. 6 we have had the Nazarite, entire separation from evil, a separation more of constraint, and therefore in one sense painful; but in this chapter another principle is brought out - voluntary devotedness to God, called liberality of heart. Blessings were to be "on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." (Gen. 49:26) At the close of chap. 6 we see divine blessing on his head. In Lev. 9:23, 24, there is priestly blessing following upon the offering of the sacrifice, and now, by virtue of the sacrifice, the Priest is lifting up His hands to bless, only, as Aaron, He can now bless in heavenly joy. As Melchizedec, it will be earthly joy and blessing; but He is not yet come out; but the ground of blessing being laid, the Church has it now in Spirit. When the Lord ascended, He lifted up His hands and blessed the disciples. (Luke 24:50, 51) "On this wise YE shall bless them." (chap. 6:23) It is by virtue of the priestly office of Christ, blessing them, keeping them, making Jehovah's face to shine upon them, "they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them." All that comes to the Church in blessing is from the Lordship of Christ; but the blessing that comes to the children is from the Father, on whom the name of the Father has been put, and blessing must follow. Thus we have priestly blessing after the Nazarite, and then voluntary sacrifice.

This book shows us service, not merely doing certain things, but a voluntary offering up of oneself - a living sacrifice. Prince, in verse 2 of our chapter, means liberality. "My people shall be willing." (Psalm 110) "Willing" and "liberal" are the same word. So in the Song of Solomon (chap. 6:12), "the chariots of Ammi-nadib," meaning a princely, willing people. Again, in 2 Cor. 8:5, Gentiles had been made willing - "They gave themselves first to the Lord." Recognized and owned of the Lord, then comes the generosity. Grace wrought it in them, and God calls it their own voluntary will - "The liberal heart deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand," "every man according as he purposeth in his heart." (2 Cor. 9:7)

"Take it of them." (v. 5.) The Spirit of God suggests to them just what is wanted, and as it is what is in every man's heart, there is entire community with individual privilege. There is the privilege of taking ordinary and common things, and offering them to the Lord for "the service of the tabernacle." These wagons and oxen were given to the sons of Gershon and Merari. Theirs was the most showy and outward service, but was less intimate with God, and therefore had less real honour. Our uncomely parts have more abundant honour. Kohath had to carry on their shoulders. There might be less appearance of service; but we esteem most what we carry on our shoulders. External gift begets external honour. If God has called us to Gershon service, do it well. One priest was as near God as another, there is no difference in priesthood; but in service God giveth to every man severally as He will, and, whatever the liberality, it is just what the Lord wants.

Then, verse 10, came offerings for the altar. National liberality by individual spirituality - "Each prince on his day." Here again is the individual energy of the Spirit. The Lord said to Moses, "They shall offer" (v. 11), not, "Take it of them." Now they come near; the gift is dedicated on the altar. It is the altar that gives the offering its value. "Christ, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God." Our outward service, the dedication of our lives, is thus identified with this one offering of Christ. What is thus brought to God, done in faith, offered to God Himself; is a savour of a sweet smell unto God. When the altar is finally dedicated, there is a perfect result, the twelve princes have willingly offered; so when the Church is presented to God, it is, so to speak, a perfect weight offered; and, so far as we are led of the Spirit, the result is perfect; but when flesh comes in there is disorder.

In chap. 6, we have seen, it was priestly blessing for their need; now, in verse 89, it is "to speak with Him in the tabernacle," within, not on Sinai. God has now intercourse through Moses with a willing people, on the mercy-seat. It is there we get the communion of the mind of God according to the perfect righteousness of God in Christ. What blessed intimacy! He hears a voice in the place of grace in the tabernacle. The tabernacle began on the ruins of the law without the camp, and the Lord spake unto Moses face to face. For us it is written, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things," and, "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

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