

KEPT FOR THE MASTER'S USE

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

OUR SILVER AND GOLD KEPT FOR JESUS

“Keep my silver and my gold.
Not a mite would I withhold.”

“**THE silver and the gold is Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts.**” Yes, every coin we have is literally our Lord’s money. Simple belief of this fact is the stepping-stone to full consecration of what He has given us, whether much or little.

“Then you mean to say we are never to spend anything on ourselves?”

Not so. Another fact must be considered—the fact that our Lord, has given us our bodies as a special personal charge, and that we are responsible for keeping these bodies, according to the means given and the work required, in working order for Him. This is part of our “own work.”

A master entrusts a workman with a delicate machine, with which his appointed work is to be done. He also provides him with a sum of money with which he is to procure all that may be necessary for keeping the machine in thorough repair. Is it not obvious that it is the man’s distinct duty to see to this faithfully? Would he not be failing in duty if he chose to spend it all on something for somebody else’s work, or on a present for his master, fancying that would please him better, while the machine is creaking and wearing for want of a little oil, or working badly for want of a new band or screw?

Just so, we are to spend what is really needful on ourselves, because it is our charge to do so; but not for ourselves, because we are not our own, but our Master’s. He who knoweth our frame, knows its need of rest and medicine, food and clothing; and the procuring of these for our own entrusted bodies should be done just as much “for Jesus” as the greater pleasure of procuring them for someone else.

Therefore there need be no quibbling over the assertion that consecration is not real and complete while we are looking upon a single shilling as our own to do what we like with. Also the principle is exactly the same, whether we are spending pence or pounds; it is our Lord’s money, and must not be spent without reference to Him.

When we have asked Him to take, and continually trust Him to keep, our money, we look up to our Lord for guidance to lay out His money prudently and rightly, and as He would have us lay it out. The gift or garment is selected consciously under His eye, and with conscious reference to Him as our own dear Master, for whose sake we shall give it, or in whose service we shall wear it, and whose own silver or gold we shall pay for it, and then it is all right.

But have you found out that it is one of the secrets of the Lord, that when any of His dear children turn aside a little bit after having once entered the blessed path of truth and conscious consecration, He is sure to send them some little punishment? He will not let us go back without a sharp, even if quite secret, reminder. Go and spend ever such a little without reference to Him after you have once pledged the silver and gold entirely to Him, and see if you are not in some way rebuked for it! Very often by being permitted to find that you have made a mistake in your purchase, or that in some way it does not prosper. If you “**observe these things**,” you will find that the more closely we are walking with our Lord, the more immediate and unmistakable will be His gracious rebukes when we swerve in any detail of the full consecration to which He has called us. And if you have already experienced and recognized this part of His personal dealing with us, you will know also how we love and bless Him for it

There is always a danger that just because we lay “all” we may practically fall shorter than if we had only said “some,” but said it very definitely. God recognizes this, and provides against it in many departments.

For instance, though our time is to be “all” for Him, yet He solemnly sets apart the one day in seven which is to be specially for Him. Those who think they know better than God, and profess that every day is a Sabbath, little know what flood-gates of temptation they are opening by being so very wise above what is written. God knows best, and that should be quite enough for every loyal heart.

So, as to money, though we place it all at our Lord’s disposal, and rejoice to spend it all for Him directly or indirectly, yet I am quite certain it is a great help and safeguard, and, what is more, a matter of simple obedience to the spirit of His commands, to set aside a definite and regular proportion of our income or receipts for His direct service. It is a great mistake to suppose that the law of giving the tenth to God is merely Levitical. Search and look for yourselves, and you will find that it is a far older rule, running all through the Bible, * and endorsed, not abrogated, by Christ Himself. For, speaking of tithes, He said, “**These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.**”

* See Genesis 14:20; 28:22; Leviticus 27:30, 32; Numbers 18:21; Deuteronomy 14:22; II Chronicles 31:5, 6, 12; Nehemiah 10:37; 12:44; 13:12; Malachi 3:8, 10; Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42; I Corinthians 16:2; Hebrews 7:8).

To dedicate the tenth of whatever we have is mere duty. Charity begins beyond it. Free-will offerings and thank-offerings beyond that again.

First-fruits, also, should be thus specially set apart.

This, too, we find running all through the Bible. There is a tacit appeal to our gratitude in the suggestion of them—the very word implies bounty received and bounty in prospect. Bringing **“the first of the firstfruits into the house of the Lord”** was like “saying grace” for all the plenty He was going to bestow on the faithful Israelite.

Something of gladness, too, seems always implied. **“The day of the firstfruits”** was to be a day of rejoicing (compare Numbers 28:26 with Deuteronomy 16:10, 11). There is also an appeal to loyalty: we are commanded to honor the Lord with the firstfruits of all our increase. And that is the way to prosper, for the next word is, **“So shall thy barns be filled with plenty.”**

The friend who first called my attention to this command, said that the setting apart firstfruits — making a proportion for God’s work a first charge upon the income—always seemed to bring a blessing on the rest, and that since this had been systematically done, it actually seemed to go farther than when not thus lessened.

Presenting our firstfruits should be a peculiarly delightful act, as they are themselves the emblem of our consecrated relationship to God. **“For of His own will begat He us by the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.”** How sweet and hallowed and richly emblematic our little acts of obedience in this matter become, when we throw this light upon them! And how blessedly they may remind us of the heavenly company, singing (as it were) a new song before the throne; for they are the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

Perhaps we shall find no better plan of detailed and systematic setting apart than the New Testament one: **“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.”** The very act of literally fulfilling this apostolic command seems to bring a blessing with it as all simple obedience does. I wish, dear friends, you would try it! You will find it a sweet reminder on His own day of this part of your consecration. You will find it an immense help in making the most of your little charities. The regular inflow will guide the outflow and ensure your always having something for any sudden call for your Master’s poor or your Master’s cause.

Do not say you are afraid you could not keep to it. What has a consecrated life to do with being afraid? Some of us could tell of such sweet and singular lessons of trust in this matter that they are written in golden letters of love on our memories. Of course there will be trials of our faith in this, as well as in everything else. But every trial of our faith is but a trial of His faithfulness, and is much more precious than gold which perisheth.

“What about self-denial?” some reader will say. Consecration does not supersede this, but transfigures it.

Literally, a consecrated life is and must be a life of denial of self. But all the effort and pain of it is changed into very delight. We love our Master; we know, surely and absolutely, that He is listening and watching our every word and way, and that He has called us to the privilege of walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. And in so far as this is a reality to us, the identical things which are still *self-denial* in one sense, become actual *self-delight* in another.

It may be self-denial to us to turn away from something within reach of our purse which it would be very convenient or pleasant to possess. But if the Master lifted the veil, and revealed Himself standing at our side, and let us hear His audible voice asking us to reserve the price of it for His treasury, should we talk about self-denial then? Should we not be utterly ashamed to think of it? Or rather, should we, for one instant, think about self or self-denial at all? Would it not be an unimaginable joy to do what He asked us to do with that money? But as long as His own unchangeable promise stands written in His word for us, “**Lo, I am with you alway**” we may be sure that He is with us, and that His eye is as certainly on our opened or half-opened purse as it was on the treasury when He sat over against it and saw the two mites cast in. So let us do our shopping as seeing Him who is invisible.

It is important to remember that there is no much or little in God’s sight except as relatively to our means and willingness. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. He knows what we have not, as well as what we have. He knows all about the low wages in one sphere, and the small allowance, or the fixed income with rising prices in another. And it is not a question of paying to God what can be screwed out of these, but of giving Him all, and then holding all at His disposal, and taking His orders about the disposal of all.

But I do not see at all how self-indulgence and needless extravagance can possibly co-exist with true consecration.

If we really never go without anything for the Lord’s sake, but, just because He has graciously given us means, always supply for ourselves not only every need but every notion, I think it is high time we looked into the matter before God. Why should only those who have limited means have the privilege of offering to their Lord that which has really cost them something to offer?

Observe, it is not *merely* going without something we would naturally like to have or do, but going without it *for Jesus’ sake*.

Not, “I will go without it, because, after all, I can’t very well afford it”; or, “because I really ought to subscribe to so and so”; or, “because I dare say I shall be glad I have not spent the money”: but, “I will do without it, because I do want to do a little more for Him who so loves me—just that much more than I could do if I did this other thing.”

I fancy this is more often the heart-language of those who *have* to cut and contrive, than of those who are able to give liberally without any cutting and contriving at all. The very abundance of God’s gifts too often hinders from the privilege and delight of really doing without something superfluous or comfortable or usual, that they may give just that much more to their Lord. What a pity!

The following quotation may, (I hope it will), touch some conscience:

“A gentleman once told us that his wine bill was £100 a year—more than enough to keep a Scripture reader always at work in some populous district.

“And it is one of the countless advantages of total abstinence that it at once sets free a certain amount of money for such work. Smoking, too, is a habit not only injurious to the health in a vast majority of cases, and, to our mind, very unbecoming in a temple of the Holy Ghost, but also one which squanders money which might be used for the Lord. Expenses in dress might in most people be curtailed; expensive tastes should be denied; and simplicity in all habits of life should be a mark of the followers of Him who had not where to lay His head.”

And again: “The self-indulgence of wealthy Christians, who might largely support the Lord’s work with what they lavish upon their houses, their tables, or their personal expenditure, is very sad to see.”

Here the question of jewelry seems to come in. Perhaps it was an instance of the gradual showing of the details of consecration, illustrated in the last page of chapter 1, but I will confess that when I wrote, “Take my silver and my gold,” it never dawned on me that anything was included beyond the coin of the realm! But the Lord “leads on softly,” and a good many of us have been shown some capital bits of unenclosed, but easily enclosable ground, which have yielded pleasant fruit.

Yes, very pleasant fruit! It is wonderfully nice to light upon something that we really never thought of as a possible gift to our Lord, and just to give it, straightaway, to Him. I do not press the matter, but I do ask my lady friends to give it fair and candid and prayerful consideration. Which do you really care most about—a diamond on your finger, or a star in the Redeemer’s kingdom, shining forever and ever? That is what it comes to, and there I leave it.

On the other hand, it is very possible to be fairly faithful in much, and yet unfaithful in that which is least. We may have thought about our gold and silver, and yet have been altogether thoughtless about our rubbish! Some have a habit of hoarding away old garments, pieces, remnants, and odds and ends generally under the idea that they will come in useful some day; very likely setting it up as a kind of mild virtue, backed by that noxious old saying, “Keep it by you seven years, and you’ll find a use for it.”

And so the shabby things get shabbier, and moth and dust doth corrupt, and the drawers and places get choked and crowded; and meanwhile all this that is sheer rubbish to you might be made useful at once, to a degree beyond what you would guess, to some poor person.

It would be a nice variety for the clever fingers of a lady’s maid to be set to work to do up old things; or some tidy woman may be found in almost every locality who knows how to contrive children’s things out of what seems to you only fit for the ragbag, either for her own little ones or those of her neighbors. My sister trimmed seventy or eighty hats every spring, for several years, with the contents of friends’ rubbish drawers, thus relieving dozens of poor mothers who liked their children to “go tidy on Sunday,” and also keeping down finery in her Sunday-school. Those who literally fulfilled her request for rubbish used to marvel at the results. Little scraps of carpet, torn old curtains, faded blinds, and all such gear, go a wonderfully long way towards making poor and old or sick people comfortable.

I never saw anything in this rubbish line yet that could not be turned to good account somehow, with a little *considering* of the poor and their discomforts.

I wish my lady reader would just leave this book now, and go straight upstairs and have a good rummage at once, and see what can be thus cleared out. If she does not know the right recipients at first hand, let her send it off to the nearest working pastor's wife, and see how gratefully it will be received! For it is a great trial to workers among the poor not to be able to supply the needs they see. Such supplies are far more useful than treble their small money value. Just a word of earnest pleading for needs, closely veiled, but very sore, which might be wonderfully lightened if this wardrobe overhauling were systematic and faithful.

There are hundreds of poor missionaries' families to whom a few old garments or any household oddments are as great a charity as to any of the poor under their charge.

There is no bondage in consecration.

The two things are opposites, and cannot co-exist, much less mingle. We should suspect our consecration, and come afresh to our great Counsellor about it, directly we have any sense of bondage. As long as we have an unacknowledged feeling of fidget about our account-book, and a smothered wondering what and how much we ought to give, and a hushed-up wishing the thing had not been put quite so strongly before us, depend upon it we have not said unreservedly, "Take my silver and my gold."

And how can the Lord keep what He has not been sincerely asked to take?

Ah! if we had stood at the foot of the Cross, and watched the tremendous payment of our redemption with the precious blood of Christ—if we had seen that awful price tolled out, drop by drop, from His own dear patient brow and torn hands and feet, till it was ALL paid, and the central word of eternity was uttered, "***It is finished!***" should we not have been ready to say, "*Not a mite will I withhold!*"

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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