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# SINGLE TALENT IMPROVED.

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THE Lord God is infinitely sovereign in the distribution of temporal blessings to men: to some he intrusts one, to others two, and to others five talents, and requires each to occupy with diligence until his Lord appear. Permit me, beloved reader, whose situation is obscure, and whose talent is inconsiderable, to show how thy money may be exchanged to the best advantage; how it may be rendered most productive, in honor to thy Redeemer, in benefit to the world, and in future glory to thyself.

1. Venture to *employ a portion of the little you possess in works of piety and mercy.* It is surely reasonable to give back to the Lord a part of that substance which was received exclusively from him; and to withhold, when he requires, argues either ingratitude for past enjoyments, or a distrust of his providence for time to come. Besides, if we believe the positive declaration of God, or the experience of his people, in different ages, "the way to get is to give." Seed will not take root when kept in the granary; it must be sown in the earth, if we expect it to take root, or spring up, or bear a liberal harvest. Money will not increase, or produce revenue to its proprietor, while locked up in the trunk; it must be actually loaned out, if interest is expected: thus it is with respect to the talent intrusted in our hands by the living God. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." "To every one that hath," and properly improves, "shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not," that is, who conducts as if he had not, "shall be taken away even that which he hath." "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." The children of the kingdom have often found these promises literally verified. As they ventured to devote a share of their worldly treasures for spiritual uses, their little fund has sensibly increased, and they have executed with ease schemes for the advancement of the divine glory, which

at first appeared altogether impracticable. The meal gradually multiplied in the barrel, and the oil rose in the cruise, as the widow distributed to the prophet of the Lord.

2. *Be not ashamed to present your offering, however useless or inconsiderable it may appear.* Persons whose circumstances are very circumscribed, are frequently discouraged; they refuse, not from want of inclination to give, but because they consider their gift as unprofitable, as unworthy the notice either of God or man; and therefore, because they cannot do a great deal, they conclude that it is better to do nothing. But this conclusion is both unreasonable and unscriptural. The landlord does not expect as much from his tenant who occupies a hundred, as from him who occupies a thousand acres of his land; yet it does not follow, that the former should be ashamed, or afraid, to bring in proportion to what he holds. The great Proprietor of all our talents, therefore, requires according "to what we have, and not according to what we have not." While the rich ought not to glory in the abundance of *their* oblations, the poor should not be ashamed of the scantiness of *theirs*. The two mites thrown into the treasury by the indigent widow, amounted to more, in the divine account, than the most liberal offerings of the rich. I might add, that it is really dangerous to attempt doing nothing, from the apprehension that we can do but little. Why was the man possessing one talent condemned? Not because he had no more, but because that one was neglected. Again, the servants possessing two or five talents were accepted, not because they *had* more, but because their two or five were suitably improved.

3. *Be diligent in redeeming your time to the best advantage, and by this means more can be spared for public purposes.* Inquire whether some moments have not been altogether wasted, which might and ought to have been industriously occupied; or whether some hours have not been trifled away upon vanities, which might have been improved in a more profitable manner. When there is some great work to execute, or journey to perform, we are the more careful to occupy each moment to advantage: we rise early, we shake off a slothful, indolent disposition, and actually add to the hours of the day by more industriously redeeming them. Let us consider the great work to be finished:

our God to be glorified ; our generation to be served ; the church to be edified : and time is the day in which all this must be done, or left undone for ever. "The night cometh, when no man can work." True it is, thou mayest glorify God more perfectly in heaven than on earth ; but thou canst not glorify him there by advancing the edification or salvation of thy fellow-creatures. In heaven there will be no indigent members of Jesus to be relieved, no ignorant to be instructed, no stranger to be brought into the family, and no dejected, disquieted child to be comforted or supported. Listen not to the dictates of flesh and blood, but look forward and inquire what will be most conducive to your glory and felicity for ever, and improve your life accordingly ; if thy heart and thy flesh are ready to fail, through much exertion in the cause of God, remember that there is a long rest in the grave, and an eternity of enjoyment in thy Father's house.

4. *Aim at the utmost economy in every part of your living ;* in eating, in drinking, and in wearing ; and thus you can render what is just to your creditors, and afford more for generous uses. Industry will be unprofitable, unless connected with a becoming frugality. The proverb is ancient and true, "A penny saved is a penny gained." Look therefore into your domestic management, and examine whether some expenses might not be retrenched ; whether your children could not be clothed in a manner more plain, and yet decent ; whether some luxuries might not be omitted, and your families be no less comfortable and respectable. Is it not reasonable that we should be denied the superfluities of life, rather than that others should want its real necessities ; or that our bodies should want pampering, rather than others want that knowledge which is indispensably requisite to salvation ? Consider, also, to what the great God stooped for your sake and mine : he emptied himself of his glory ; he became of no reputation : and shall not we, for the sake of his poor, and the spread of his Gospel, deny ourselves those ornaments which are but fanciful and false ? For your sake and mine he endured hunger, and thirst, and nakedness ; and is it not reasonable that we, in return, be satisfied with temperate enjoyments, in order to feed the hungry and clothe the naked members of this compassionate Jesus ? Is it not better that we be denied,

for a time, those luxuries which secure a happiness merely sensual, than that others, through ignorance, be deprived for ever of God, and glory, and all that constitutes the happiness of a rational being? It is related of the excellent Mr. Hervey, that he often appeared in a dress far inferior to his station, while he abounded in acts of piety and mercy. A lady of rank, at her death, left for her children this advice: "Save your pocket-money, and dedicate it to the Lord's poor, and he will abundantly repay you; a cup of cold water, given in the name of a disciple, shall not lose its reward." The Rev. Philip Henry held it as his motto, "I am no fool if I part with that which I cannot keep, in the prospect of being rewarded with that which I cannot lose."

My beloved reader, I submit to you these few, familiar directions on the mode of occupying thy talent to the greatest advantage; and are they not worthy of an experiment? Are the honor of thy dear Lord, the most precious interests of the souls of others, the everlasting interests of thine own soul, concerned in the use of thy worldly goods, and art thou not therefore reasonably called to try what can be done? I know that the great God, he whose "is the earth and the fulness thereof," he at whose disposal are all beings, whether visible or invisible, has no need of thy instrumentality, or mine; he could easily employ the ravens of the wilderness to supply the wants of his children, and not solicit our charity; he could easily command "a nation to be born at once," and thus dispense with our aid in diffusing the knowledge of salvation. But this is not his ordinary procedure. He stoops to ask and accept our services, however worthless, for the support of his cause. Yet, although ten thousand talents have been forgiven us, *how little do we love*; how grudgingly do we spare a single talent at the call of our God? Although we have been "bought at a price, all price beyond," yet how backward are we to spend a *little time*, a *little strength*, or a *little treasure*, as an expression of our gratitude for *so great salvation!* Do angels weep? It must be at this coldness and indifference of man.

May God enable the reader to "devise liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand."