The Increase of Faith.
A higher standard of piety would
1. Bring two on our side
2. Leaven social sentiment
This plan of giving is adapted to the pecuniary prosperity of each. It gauges obligation by ability: according as God hath prospered him. The widows two mites were more in the eyes of God than all the sums that the rich had dropped into the treasury, because they were all her living. The poorest may feel just as much joy in giving his penny as the richest in giving his million, if he gives what he can.

Notice here an important truth incidentally recognized. The original reads "as he is prospered" but the uniform teaching of the Bible is that all worldly prosperity comes from God. We are not to feel that our own power or skill or enterprise or energy or economy have gotten us
our wealth. It is just as much from God as anything else. The successful crop that rewarded the sowing of Isaac in the field in Gerar is expressly recognized as a blessing from the Lord: Gen 26:12. Laban declared he had learned by experience that for the sake of Jacob, the Lord had blessed him in the increase of his flocks. Gen 30:27-30. Jacob remembered as he came to the ford Jabbok with his flocks and herds and camels, in two bands, that with his staff, he passed over Jordan, twenty years before, and he attributes all his success to the mercies and the truth which God shewed unto him. Gen 32:10. Indeed Deut 8:18 says in unequivocal terms it is the Lord thy God "that giveth thee power to get wealth"
It how systematically is this fact ignored. God said to his church through Hosea 2:8. I gave her the corn, wine, and multiplied her silver and gold which they prepared for Baal. That which we owe to God's goodness received from his very hand, we appropriate to the world, the flesh, and the Devil. We expend it if no worse in stuffing our stomachs, extravagantly clothing our bodies, building elegant residences, and luxuriously living, and then we have nothing for the higher offices of benevolence. Now the simple theology of the Bible on the subject as I understand it is this: whatever we have we owe to God: the greater our pecuniary prosperity the larger our pecuniary debt and our ability to pay. Greater income instead of being our warrant for greater indulgence ought rather to be our offer
Not only are we then to regard our temporal prosperity as from God; but there is more than one intimation that the measure of our prosperity as God's people may very largely depend upon our fidelity in appropriating to the Lord his dues. Haggai 2:16-19.

God emphatically called the attention of his people to the fact that while they neglected the waste condition of his temple, to continue he smote them with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labors of their hands; but challenged them to mark and prove his words, that from the day that the foundations of the Lord's temple were laid, from that day said He I will bless you; and that He meant temporal things: He shews by alluding to the seed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive which had not yielded.
In Deut. 15:10, 11. Thou shalt surely give (unto thy poor brother) and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land, therefore I command the saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land. "Here we are plainly told that it is God's decree that the poor shall never cease out of the land. Objects of our charity shall always stretch out to us the hand of need and that outstretched hand is God's claim upon our cheerful gifts. And furthermore, we are authorized to look for God's direct blessing upon our recognition of these holy claims."
It proposes a stated and regular time. Upon the first day of the week. Instead of giving money to good ends spasmodically, irregularly, we are directed to have a set time and a regular time. And what day more appropriate to such a thing than that which is specially, the Lord's, and where we celebrate our rising with Christ to a new life. Philo and Josephus tell us that the Jews now went to collect in the synagogue every Sabbath. If so this was really no new feature, but a former cus tom perpetuated.
Where one has not the habit of making stated & regular appropriations to benevolent ends any surplus funds are either expended on needless luxuries, or squandered on lustful indulgences, or wasted on fashionable follies, or at best saved for some future need. It would seem a part of that Providence against a time of sickness or poverty or sudden death that is commended in the Bible that a man should lay up something even from a small income. But how much is put away, when there is ample provision already made, for such emergencies; thus withdrawing entirely from circulation what might be accomplishing glorious ends for Christ, and perhaps hoarding it only to be worse than wasted by some prodigal and spendthrift heir.
There are special advantages in this weekly giving.
Easier far to give when you have it than when you
have it not. We are too much accustomed if we
are prospered at one time to lay aside what we
may thus accumulate, to make up some future
loss, and so, what really belongs in part at least
to God and is the very gift of His goodness is all
the more selfishly clutched to make sure against
domestic reverse hereafter. When we have something
to give we keep it, and then when perhaps we do
see to give, what we had is gone out of our hands.
But a still more common evil is this: we take on
occasion in our prosperity to indulge ourselves
in luxuries, to gratify some favorite project for
promoting our temporal comfort and so it hap
hens perhaps that when some urgent call comes our surplus funds are all used up and a less prosperous condition of our business affairs has made such economy necessary that we have no money to give. The advantage of the inspired plan is that we are likely always to have something ready. Let us see how!

God prosper your business this week. On the first day of the next week you give the matter careful and conscientious thought and conclude that you can afford to lay aside for exclusively religious purposes a certain sum. You do so. Next week you are not successful, perhaps, so that you feel unable to give anything to the Lord. Some worthy object appeals to you and now notwithstanding you feel straitened you
have already something in store. Had you not laid by that when you had it to put aside, it would have been used or wasted and now you would feel too poor to give. But what you put away from time to time as you then are able you regard no longer your own and therefore it remains sacredly untouched even in business reverses and so if prudently distributed, you will always have something, however poor you may feel at the time, to give into the treasury of the Lord.
It is far easier to give little by little without suffering privation than to give the same sum in a lump. Many a poor man who would scarcely know how to give three dollars and a half, all at once, it would seem like taking bread out of his children's mouths, could without any unhealthful self-denial give a cent a day, seven cents a week. Yet the result is the same. God demands one seventh of our time. Who of us could feel able to give up fifty-two days a year to purposes exclusively religious, who could give one day in seven with positive advantage. Now it is remarkable that God imposes the same principle precisely in the payment of our dues to him in money as in time—up on the first day of the week—little by little as we are able.
When Jesus was about to make his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he sent two disciples saying, Go into the village over against you, and as soon as ye be entered into it ye shall find a colt tied whereon never man sat; loose him and bring him and if any man say unto you: Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him and straightway he will send him hither. And just so it was. Yet observe the dignity, divine authoritativeness with which the original owner of all things lays his claim upon the property of a stranger simply saying, The Lord hath need of him and observe the readiness of the response and straightway he will send him. Now as often as any man can demonstrate to us that the Lord hath need of your property or mine it implies rebellion...
against God to withhold our gifts or grumble at the frequency of the appeal. And we should not do this, so often if we would habituate ourselves to laying aside funds for the "Lord's needs" and thus always have something to give. Appeals to our charities chase us most when we are too poor or too selfish or too close to respond. A systematic giver always having a little to give is always ready to hear when money is needed and glad to hold a share, small though it be in any new enterprise promising success.

Charity membership gives for the last year of the gospel $1,209.945 dollars. This last year this seems a large sum, but what is it for a quarter of a million of Christ's disciples? Those two hundred and fifty thousand communicants represent not less...
than two hundred millions of property, and not to speak of capital, cannot represent less than one hundred millions annual income. If then we went on the old Jewish principle of yielding a tithe to the Lord, one tenth would represent ten millions instead of a trifle over four!

Take another example. If the communicants of the Presbyterian church will lay aside two cents a day it will yield annually to our treasury nearly two millions of dollars, $1,843,652.00 — or twice the entire sum paid last year by the whole church for Foreign Missions Domestic Missions, Education, Publication, Church Extension, Disabled Ministers, Freedmen. Yet who is there that could not give two cents a day, while the great majority can do more.
One grand feature of this plan is, it makes giving a matter of principle. It does not leave us to the mercy of impulse, to our moods, to the uncertain response of our sympathy. The majority of Christians give only in two cases, when they want to get rid of some beggar or agent who is generally looked upon only as a polite beggar, and when their sensibilities are touched by some sight of suffering or some touching appeal of want or woe. In neither case do we give from principle; and in both cases the sum we give has nothing perhaps to do with the question of ability; we give to the beggar as little as will satisfy his plea or shut his mouth, and to the sufferer as little as will leave us with a tolerably easy conscience.
The true and only way to give is to do it as a matter of settled principle, because it is right and duty, if we have not yet come to find in it delight and privilege. Instead of being dependent upon our uncertain caprices or even our most generous sympathies we need to recognize this one great fact, taught throughout the Bible that we have nothing of our own. That all we have is from God, not committed to us absolutely but conditionally and in trust, to use for our highest good, the largest profit to others and the greatest glory of God. All holding or spending of property which despises or neglects either of these ends is a violation of trust, an abuse of God's gifts, and utterly unfaithful to a great responsibility.
Observe the sad facts about the churches in our own Presbyterian body. Whether the members generally contribute anything or not to the benevolent work of the church depends first upon the fact whether any regular collection be taken, or perhaps whether they are present at the time or not. Whether they respond liberally or not depends upon the fact whether the pastor or agent who presents the cause does it in such a way as to touch the sympathies, or kindle popular enthusiasm or not. Whether they give frequently or not depends upon the fact whether these appeals are frequently and happily made or not.
Observe now that in all this there is no general reference to any principle of giving. But the plan suggested and enjoined in the text proceeds upon a wholly different basis. It puts the matter where it belongs to the conscience or soul of every disciple of Christ. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him. Do not wait for any knock at your door, any appeal to your feelings. The most needy cause may have the most unfortunate representative, but just as you perform any other part of your Christian duty, make this a matter of uniform habit.
This plan also secures what all of us need so much frequent and serious reflection upon the relation of our property to our Christian obligations. Let a man sit down once a week and calmly and conscientiously ask himself, whence comes my business prosperity? Am I spending too much on myself? Am I giving unto the Lord his dues? Paying these my most sacred debts? Where can I economize in personal or family expenses so as to have more for my Redeemer and his cause? If one would often reflect upon these matters how much extravagance would speedily find a checkrein, and how much money that carelessly slips out of our hands doing us no good and serving no one else would begin to accumulate a little treasure for God.