

Title: The Gift of Giving  
Text: Acts 20: 33-35  
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As the apostle Paul was leaving Ephesus, he said, **Acts 20: 33: I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34: Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35: I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.**

Recently, a young believer asked me a question about how to give. It has been a long time since I preached on the subject of giving. So it made me realize that new believers may not know the Lord's teaching concerning giving. I am certain we all need to be reminded. So our subject is "The Gift of Giving." I chose that title because everything involved in our giving is the gift of God to us.

"What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1Co 4:7) Everything we have is given to us by God. And everything required of us to be able to give is given to us of God: the heart, the faith, the love, the cheerfulness, the occasion, the brethren, the ability to give, the ability to receive, the gift itself, even God our Father and his Son to whom we give. Everything is the gift of God to us.

I have no doubt, at the end of 2 Cor 9, Paul was speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he wrote, "Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift." (2Co 9:15) But he was writing about the benefits of giving, both for the giver and the receiver. He declared how in each person it redounds to God's glory with much thanksgiving. It seems he became so overwhelmed with joy thinking of the great blessings God has given to us in the ministry of giving, that he wrote, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

If you apply that statement to this ministry of giving, it is indeed, an unspeakable gift of God. For God to take us hard-hearted, covetous sinners then create in us a new man in Christ then to bless us with everything required to make us cheerful givers and to bring so much glory to his own name by it is truly a gift of God. This is one reason the apostle Paul said, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Everything we have in salvation, everything we have which pertains to life and godliness, is all the gift of God in Christ—thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

The only ones in scripture who objected to Christ speaking on this subject were the Pharisee's. After giving the parable of the unjust steward, Christ declared its meaning, saying:

Luke 16: 10: He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. 11: If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*? 12: And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? 13: No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. 14: And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

The Pharisee's scoffed and turned up their noses at Christ's teaching because they were covetous. They were lovers of money. The problem is not money. Many of God's saints in scripture were wealthy. If a person has a problem with giving, the problem is the heart. The apostle Paul told Timothy,

1 Timothy 6: 6: Godliness with contentment is great gain. 7: For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. 8: And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

9: But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10: For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11: But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

So now we will look at a few points out of God's word concerning the ministry of giving. My points are in no particular order.

## **NATURE OF GOD, NATURE GOD GIVES**

First, a cheerful, giving nature is the nature of God and it is the nature God gives his people. Our Lord Jesus spoke of God's giving nature when he said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (Joh 3:16) The loving apostle John praised God's giving nature when he wrote, "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." (1Jo 5:11) Paul spoke of God's gift when he wrote, "the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom 6: 23)

God the Father gave his only begotten Son and Christ gave himself, not as a grudging act, but as a blessed, cheerful gift. "God loveth a cheerful giver." Christ said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." What could be more blessed than God glorifying his Son by giving his Son and the Son glorifying his Father by giving himself on the cross for his Father? What could be more blessed than God giving his people eternal joy and fellowship with himself by giving himself for us?

It was "joy" that was set before Christ, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12: 2) Christ knew he would be despised and rejected of men. There was no joy in that! He knew he must bear the sin of his people and be made a curse for us. He knew that he must bear the shameful cross for us. Christ despised the shame of the cross. There was no joy in the cross for our Substitute. He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Lu 12: 50) We never want to diminish the suffering our Savior endured to perfect his people forever!

Oh, but by finishing the work, Christ knew his Father would be glorified and his people would be given completion in him. Here is the joy set before him:

Revelation 21: 3: And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God. 4: And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. 5: And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.

This is why the Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And when God has made us partaker of his divine nature, he makes his child partaker of that very same love wherewith he loved us. John said, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1Jo 4:7) The Holy Spirit says through the loving apostle that you cannot have God dwelling in you and not have that same loving spirit as God.

So that same love, wherewith God took all our burdens of sin off us, makes a believer happy to do what we can to remove a burden from his brethren. It is for the joy set before us! Think of what Christ says in his word. He says lovers of money pierce themselves through with many sorrows. But the giver is a happy man! It is more blessed to give than to receive. Now, those are the words of THE Blessed GodMan himself! The

blessed man is the preeminent, giving, GodMan. Is that not preeminently so of Christ Jesus our Savior! Let us believe Christ in all things!

So first of all, believer, give cheerfully for the joy set before you! The joy of relieving the burden even as Christ did for you; the joy of knowing it “causes through us thanks-giving to God.” Paul said, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” (2 Cor 9: 7)

## **GIVE TO GOD FIRST**

Under the old covenant, God ordained that his people give their firstfruits to God. Believers are not under the law, we are under grace. The “tithes” was a legal tax. We are not legally required to give. Believers do not “tithes”; we give freely because we want to. Believers give our firstfruits to the Lord because we are constrained by the love of Christ. We want to honor the LORD as God says, “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.” (Pro 3: 9)

By giving to God first, we acknowledge that everything we have, we first received from God. Believers acknowledge God as the first cause for everything we have by giving to God first out of everything God has given to us. We first give ourselves—we are firstfruits. Also, we give on the first day of the week, acknowledging it is God who gave us another day and week to honor him. Then we give the firstfruits of our increase unto God, acknowledging God is the giver who made us to have an increase.

If we give to ourselves and our families first, it not only robs us, it robs God.

Malachi 3: 8: Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9: Ye *are* cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, *even* this whole nation. 10: Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it*. 11: And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. 12: And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

Believer, you will find that when you give to God first then it will help you live within your means because you only have so much left over. If you do it the other way around, you have no fixed point—no Anchor—from which to budget you’re spending. God’s way is always the best way.

## **PROVING LOVE AND FAITH**

First, our giving proves the sincerity of our love. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to take up the offering they purposed to give, not because he commanded it but “to prove the sincerity of your love.” (2 Cor 6: 8)

The example he gave is Christ, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” (2 Cor 6: 7-9) How do I know Christ’s love for me is sincere? I know Christ loved me by how much he had left over when he gave himself for me. He became utterly poor for his people when he laid down his life in our room and stead, even unto the death of the cross. He proved the sincerity of his love because he became poor “that ye through his poverty might be rich.” And how Christ did enrich his people: righteousness, holiness, redemption, completion in him!

Secondly, our giving proves our faith in Christ. Paul reminded the Philippians, “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Php 4:19) He reminded the Corinthians, “God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:” (2Co 9:8)

Do you believe this? How can we prove we believe God? Which one believed the Lord? Scriptures says, “Many that were rich cast in much.” But the widow only cast in two pennies. The Lord “called *unto him* his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all *they* did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living. (Mr 12:43-44) She proved that she trusted that the Lord will provide!

## **HOW MUCH SHOULD I GIVE?**

When it comes to how much we should give, God does not leave us in the dark. Paul quoted the scriptures, “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” (2 Cor 9: 6) Here giving is compared to sowing seed in a field. If we sow sparingly we shall reap sparingly; if we sow bountifully we shall reap bountifully. This has a great deal to do with faith and contentment in God. The believer who sows bountifully because he trusts God and is content in God, will continue to be so, whether he has more or less money, because his safety and contentment is God rather than money. The person who sows little because he imagines safety, happiness and contentment is in money, will never have enough because you never find those things in money.

Also, scripture says, “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.” (Pro 11: 24) This is not the common understanding of rich men. But the point is, the Lord will not be a debtor to his true believing, giving people. As he gives you grace to provide bountifully for the poor, God will provide bountifully for his child. “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.” (Pr 19:17)

Another important word concerning how much we should give is in 2 Corinthians 9: 7. Paul wrote, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

Give because you want to “as you purpose in your heart.” Give according as God has prospered you. We just saw from the Lord’s word concerning the widow that God does not look on how much we give but God looks on how much we have left over. God looks on the spirit with which we give. Remember the woman who broke the alabaster box of ointment on the Lord to anoint him for burial? It was the only work our Redeemer ever called a “good work.” The Lord said, “She hath done what she could.” (Mr 14: 8) “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.” (2 Cor 8: 12) If you are a young believer, supported by your parents or you are a college student, you may wonder should you give. That is up to you. When the Lord first saved me, my parents still supported me. But I had a job so I began giving to the church weekly. I did so, not because anyone made me but simply, because of what Christ had done for me.

Give “Not grudgingly.” If you have this spirit toward giving then do not give. God does not need your money. God does not give a grudging spirit and God takes no delight in a grudging spirit.

Give “Not of necessity.” Do not give because you are imposed upon, are under obligation or to gain an advantage. But it also means do not give *to* a need. Believer, never give to a need. Give to God rather than to a need. How much or how little need there is should not be the reason for our giving. We ought always give to God. The Holy Spirit says “whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” (Col 3:23)

Christ said, “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.” (Mt 25:37-40)

Give “cheerfully.” “God loveth a cheerful giver.” That is the spirit God gives and the spirit God delights in.

### **GIVE QUIETLY AND PRAYERFULLY**

First, give quietly. The Lord said we are not to sound a trumpet when we give. He said that we are to give so secretly that our right hand does not know what our left hand has done. God knows. (Mt 6: 1-4) So make certain that no one knows that you give. Do not to tell anyone you gave, much less, how much.

Also, give prayerfully. The most difficult thing about giving is being puffed up in the heart after doing so. Remember, we have not given anything except what God has already given to us. We have no reason to be proud.

Lastly, I think the young person was only asking me how to go about giving in our local assembly. So as far as how to actually give in this place. There are envelopes on the table in the back. Put your offering in the envelope, seal it and write the amount on the outside.

**Amen!**