

082 - More Blessed to Give Than to Receive - Acts 20:33-35 GRBC 2013-09-01

Call to Worship: Psalm 119:35-37

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 12:1-5

Sermon: "More Blessed to Give than to Receive" Acts 20:33-35

Benediction: Proverbs 22:1

Acts 20:33-35 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. (34) Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. (35) I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

Review the scene

Paul seems to have brought this address to a conclusion. But there is one more matter to raise, one that is of great importance, and must not be missed.

Principle: It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Read the text: Acts 20:33-35

**Principle: It is more blessed to give than to receive.**

Expound the principle

-to be in need, and have someone give to you, is a state of blessedness

-but to work, gain from your work, and be able to give to those in need, that is a state of greater blessedness

The Lord Jesus has said it.

The Lord Jesus has lived by it

Creation

Redemption

Our eternal home

**Application: the church and its elders must not look covetously at the rich, seeking to receive from them, but must look compassionately at the weak, seeking to give to them.**

Temptation not to live like this

all the people of the church

Thessalonica (1 Thess 4:11-12; 2 Thess 3:6-13)

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 (11) that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, (12) that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. (7) For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; (8) nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, (9) not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. (10) For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. (11) For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. (12) Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

#### Crete

Titus 1:12 One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."

#### Ephesus (1 Tim 5:8, 13; Ephesians 4:28)

1 Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 Timothy 5:13 And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not.

Ephesians 4:28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

#### the leaders especially

-Paul knows this from his previous life among the Pharisees, with whom Paul was intimately familiar

Matthew 23:14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

-Paul knows this from his dealings with the false teachers

Titus 1:10-12 For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, (11) whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. (12) One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy

gluttons."

-Paul knows this from his own sinful flesh

Romans 7:7-9 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." (8) But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. (9) I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

Paul's example of living by this principle

What Paul has done (Acts 20:34)

How it shows us this principle

-if he has not tried to get money from people, or even allowed it to be given to him, he very clearly does not covet

-this is all the more clear because a preacher has a right to some of the people's money and goods; Paul teaches this repeatedly in his letters to the churches (1 Corinthians 9:4-15)

-any person who works to earn his bread is demonstrating this principle

-but Paul, a preacher, entitled to money from the church, but refusing it, demonstrates it all the more powerfully

How Paul is uniquely gifted by the Lord to make this demonstration 1 Cor 7:7; 32-35

How most elders are not uniquely gifted for this

If a man without this gift tries to make this same demonstration, OR

If a church expects a man without this gift to make this same demonstration,

Something will have to give

ministry of the Word

quality of work

marriage

children

his health

But Paul has been given this ability as a gift, that he may set down his life as an example to all the churches of his day, and all the other churches, like this one

So, then, let us understand this principle from our Lord Jesus Christ

**It is more blessed to give than to receive.**

And let us live by that principle in His church in this way

**The church and its elders must not look covetously at the rich, seeking to receive from them, but must look compassionately at the weak, seeking to give to them.**

Acts 19:9-10 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

**Based on what the Lord Jesus has taught us, the church and its elders must not look covetously at the rich, seeking to receive from them, but must look compassionately at the weak, seeking to give to them.**

It is more blessed to give than to receive.

I. In the case of the Lord Jesus Himself

A. In the creation, He did not covet what we had---we had nothing! He was the giver, and we the receivers

B. In His incarnation, He did not covet what we had---this life in the flesh, living in this sinful world.

C. In His crucifixion, He did not covet what we had---all we had was sin, guilt, condemnation, and death. But He had life, and He gave His life for us, that we might live!

D In His return, when He comes again---He is not sitting on the throne of heaven coveting what we have, wanting to receive it. No, He has prepared a place for us in His Father's house, and He will come again to give it all to us!

## II. In the case of the Lord's churches in this life

A. We do not covet anyone's wealth, and seek to be those who receive

1. "I really like the money and other nice things that the people of the church have. I would like somehow to get set up to where they will give me some, and I will receive it."

2. Paul shows the church this: If even one who deserves to be paid by the church for his ministry in the word has been willing to earn his own living with the work of his hands, and earn the living for others with even more work of his hands, then surely all of us must earn our own living with our own labor, and also work hard enough to have something to share with the weak

B. We seek to be those who give

### Background for Paul's Life

-his doctrine on singleness and marriage (1 Corinthians 7)

-it is better, for serving the Lord Jesus singlemindedly, to remain single  
v. 1, 6-8, 32-33, 35

### **I have coveted no one's**

contemplation of coveting

JRY: Note that this verse should not be used by preachers to get the congregation to give more in the church offering. It is directed primarily to the preachers, that they should give more of their labor for the good of the church.

2 Corinthians 12:13-16 For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong! (14) Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. (15) And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved. (16) But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning!

Is 35:3

Rom 15

Calvin:

He doth not, in these words, precisely set down a law which all the ministers of the word must needs keep; for he did not behave himself so loftily and lordlike, that he did take that

away which the Lord had granted to his servants, but doth rather in many places maintain their right, which is, that they be maintained with that which is common, Mat\_10:10; 1Co\_9:14; Gal\_6:6; 1Ti\_5:17; Phi\_4:10; 2Co\_11:8.

Poole:

to have been done only that in such a juncture, they being poor, and the false teachers watching all advantages against him, he might not then be chargeable to them.

Savastio:

When there are weak among you, you will give of yourself to make sure they are cared for.

Paul testifies that “you shall not covet” is what got him. Romans 7

Goad:

It is also blessed to receive, but more blessed to give.

God gives constantly.

Pulpit commentary:

Meyer, following Bengel and others, understands this to mean the weak in faith," like ἀσθενής in [1 Corinthians 9:22](#). They say that St. Paul's self-denial in refusing the help he had a right to claim as an apostle, and supporting himself by his labor, was a great argument to convince the weak in faith of his disinterestedness and of the truth of his gospel, and so he recommends the elders of the Church to follow his example. But the word here is ἀσθενούντων, and ἀσθενεῖν and ἀσθενεῖα rather suggest the idea of bodily weakness ([Matthew 25:36](#); [Matthew 10:8](#), etc.; [Luke 5:15](#), etc.), and the words of the Lord Jesus which follow suggest almsgiving to the needy. So that it is better to understand the word of the weakly and poor, those unable to work for themselves. Doubtless St. Paul, out of his scanty earnings, found something to give to the sick and needy. The sentiment in our text is thus exactly analogous to the precept in [Ephesians 4:28](#). The very word there used, χερσίν, recalls the αἱ χεῖρες αὐταῖ of ver. 34.