

The Old Paths

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“It Is More Blessed To Give ...”

Jarrold Jacobs

Acts 20:35 is where we find the title for the article this week. Here, the apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders, *“I have showed you all things, how that so laboring 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.”* Acts 20:35 is a unique Scripture for a few reasons. One of the reasons is the fact that the apostle Paul quotes a saying of Christ that cannot be found within the texts of the gospel records! While we know Jesus taught this principle while He was upon the earth, and expressed it in numerous ways, we find no exact quote within the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John reflecting this statement. To me, the passage is unique because it shows itself to be an example of Paul’s claim that what he taught did not come from the words of man, *“but by the revelation of Jesus Christ”* (Gal. 1:12).

Acts 20:35 is also a unique passage because the teaching found here runs contrary to the majority of the world’s thinking. Society as a whole tends to think it is better to be the recipient of gifts than to have to give them. Children especially think in this manner, don’t they? Typically, if a parent has been on a trip, or if a relative comes for a visit, they will ask, “What did you bring me?” (Until corrected by loving parents not to say that.) Even

now, we are drawing closer to a time of year in which folks think of gift-giving, parties, and the like. Again, our children are told to make their “Christmas lists,” aren’t they? Even some adults make “wish lists” as well! Certainly, it is a natural thing to wish for, and perhaps receive, things we want at times, but bear in mind the words of Christ, *“It is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35).

The mindset of Acts 20:35 was expressed by the Savior when He said, *“Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”* (Matt. 20:25-28). Acts 20:35 is a mindset of sacrifice and service. It is a mindset of looking out for the interests of others, and fighting the selfish attitude which pervades so much of our society. Of course, the mindset described in Acts 20:35 was encouraged in the days of Solomon. He worded it this way, *“The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it”* (Prov. 11:25-26). Yes, *“it is more blessed to give than to receive.”*

A question we could ask in light

of Acts 20:35 is, “Why is it more blessed to give than to receive?” To the worldly mind, it may seem silly to be giving to others rather than be the recipient. Is this the case? Of course, not! *“It is more blessed to give than to receive,”* for in so doing ...

It Makes Us Like God

God gave us life, breath, all blessings physical and spiritual (Acts 17:25), and did so when we had (and still don’t have) nothing with which to repay Him. In addition to this, let us acknowledge that God, the greatest giver, gave Christ, the greatest gift (Jn. 3:16)! Therefore, when we give to others, we are learning to be more God-like! God said that part of the purpose of our working was so we would be able to *“give to him that needeth”* (Eph. 4:28). Those who are rich in this world are charged by God to *“be not highminded; nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life”* (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

It Makes Us Think Of Others

We live in a very selfish society. Now, when we consider the advancements in technology which makes it possible for us to work, shop, be entertained, and correspond with others without leaving our houses, we see how our technology has lended itself to the selfish mindset as well. God does not want us to act like this, but to be mindful of others and their needs, both physically and spiritually. When we give to others, we are showing them that we are thinking of them, and care for them. Think of how it feels when someone

expresses their love to you. Truly, to give rather than to receive is living out the true nature of love as is described in I Corinthians 13:1-8. Read that section of Scripture and be impressed with how many aspects of love are directly tied to my actions toward others. In connection with I Corinthians 13, read I John 3:17-18. Here, John asks how can we say we have the love of God in us when we do not act generously toward our brethren? He goes on to say we ought not love in word and tongue only, but also in deed and in truth. In other words, let us not only say we love others, but let us also ACT upon it! *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

Let us not be selfish, but selfless while we are upon this earth. It will actually make for a better life upon this earth when we act this way! Also, read Matthew 7:12 in light of what we have learned from Acts 20:35. Wouldn't things be much better if we treated others the way we want to be treated?

The Greatest Gift

When we consider the greatest and most selfless act of all — the giving of Christ as a sacrifice for sins — how can we not then act in a loving way toward others, and make sure they have heard the gospel and know what to do to be saved (Rom. 1:16; II Tim. 2:2; Mk. 16:15-16; etc.)? Truly, we need to be active in thinking of others' physical welfare, but how much greater it is when we consider our friends and loved ones and their spiritual welfare! Let us be active in making sure folks "receive" the gospel message that cannot be taken away from them. In turn, may they also "give" this precious gift so that more people will be saved! Think about it!

What Is The Church? (Matthew 16:18)

Gary White, Philpot, KY

Christ said, *"Upon this rock I will build my church."* However, what is His church? This important question presents serious problems to men who think on this subject. Does the true church exist today? How may one find it? Is one as good as another? Are there not legions of good people in all of them? How can an honest man know which church he would join? In fact, why should he join one? The average human becomes lost in a maze of confusion and decides that no church is as good as any. That is the question ... One church or no church?

It is an accepted fact that Christ founded His church. It is also a fact that in the world today exist many human institutions which are called churches, founded by men, existing by no higher authority than the word of men, governed by no higher authority than the creeds of men. Who will say that these institutions are as good as the church Jesus Christ built, and of which one Christ is the head? If good people in all the churches make one church as good as another, then good people

out of all the churches make no church as good as any. Such reasoning by men is shallow. In the light of the New Testament, it is the church or no church! What church should a person join? If, as claimed, there is good in all, why not join all of them?

Editor's Note:

This last week, the above article came across my desk and I thought it was worthy of our study. Our brother Gary White wrote this article intending to have it published in the *Messenger-Inquirer*. When the editor, Suzi Batholomy, refused to print it, I asked him if I could print it here. Brother White makes a great point in exposing the faulty reasoning of men who say that one church is as good as another, and ignore the plain statements of Scripture like Matthew 16:18.

In light of such plain passages of Scripture as Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18, 21 and others, it is the height of arrogance and spiritual ignorance to say that we can choose the church of our choice. Christ gave us only one choice!

May we consider well the words written by brother White and be active in trying to lead folks to Christ. —JJ

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