

The Blessedness of Giving

Acts 20:35

Introduction

1. Materialism and consumerism have robbed our society of the ability to perceive and pursue true wealth.
2. Christians are those who should have such senses intact, but the influence of such a plagued age is inevitable, and the struggle to see things God's way is constant.
3. Our mind needs renewed, and transformed lives need to follow. I need to let the Spirit lead my mind through the gospel, and I need to take advantage of the providential opportunities to act in ways harmonious with the gospel. (Not simply in refraining from sin, but in actively doing the will of God.)
4. Paul quoted a unique statement of the Lord in his visit with the Ephesian elders which provides an example of the disharmony between the reality of spiritual substance and the worldviews that surround us – **Acts 20:35**
5. How could giving be more blessed than receiving? What is at the heart of this truth?
 - I. The Nature of the Blessedness
 - A. Not Material
 - a. Jesus' words are not indicative of a physical return on giving that should elicit the giving itself – that is, I give to get.
 - b. The idea itself is contradictory – giving by nature, in the physical realm, is negating.
 - c. **Luke 21:1-4** – how was she blessed materially? She gave everything and therefore is left with nothing.
 - d. NOTE: This is not to say that God has not promised us material blessings in a life of giving (**cf. Matthew 6:33**), but it is not the blessedness to which Jesus refers.
 - B. Not Psychological
 - a. **"Blessed"** – *Makarios* – is it subjective or objective?
 - i. Different uses throughout scripture.
 - ii. Happy – a subjective sense reflecting the psychological or mental state of the person – i.e. they feel happy.
 - iii. Blessed – or well, whole – an objective observation or description of the state of that person – regardless of outer circumstances, or any particular mental state.
 1. I.e. would the widow have been happy to make the sacrifice of putting in all that she had?

2. But she would undoubtedly be in a blessed state of wholeness and wellness (only understood spiritually).
 - b. **James 2:14-17** – what does it profit if you say, but do not give?
 - i. What does it profit to give?
 1. Not materially – negating.
 2. Psychologically? – is the profit James alludes to one of inner happiness? You won't feel good unless you give?
 - ii. No, an objective, spiritual state of wellness, or wholeness – (**vv. 17, 22** – faith is either dead, or made whole)
- C. Spiritual and Relational
- a. The “Beatitudes” help us understand the spiritual nature of the blessedness – **Matthew 5:3-12** – “**Blessed**” – *Makarios* (Used in a parallel fashion to that of **Acts 20:35**)
 - i. (**vv. 3-6, 10**) – poor, mourn, meek, hunger and thirst, persecuted – these are the most puzzling out of the list.
 - ii. Not material or psychological – either absence or negative presence.
 - iii. “**For**” – giving the reason for the assertion of blessedness.
 1. Each “For” clause gives an objective spiritual state as the reason for the blessedness.
 - a. Do the poor, mourners, meek, persecuted prosper materially? As a direct result of their identity as such?
 - b. Are the poor, mourners, meek, persecuted always happy?
 2. (**vv. 8-9**) – assign an objective spiritual relationship, all the rest having implicit force of relationship with God.
 - iv. Though there may be material/physical or psychological byproducts to the virtues or states described in the beatitudes, that is not what the word “**Blessed**” describes.
 - b. **Acts 20:35** – He does not attribute to Christ a “**For**” clause.
 - i. The giver is not blessed because of what happens as a result of His giving – though there may be and certainly are positive results.
 - ii. “**to give**” is the state of blessedness – the very action itself.
 - iii. **Other scriptures provide the “for” of the blessedness of the action of giving:**
 1. Spiritual – **1 Timothy 6:17-19** – the act of giving is the act of storing up a good foundation of the time to come.

2. Relational – **1 John 3:16-17** – He gave, so we give and in doing so engage in fellowship with Him (**cf. 1 John 4:7**).
3. These two are inseparable – **“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”** (**Luke 12:21**) – storing up a good foundation in the pursuit of fellowship with God – **the relationship is the investment, and the return is the eternal consummation of it)**

II. The Gospel of Giving

A. The Gospel is that God Gave

- a. Spiritual blessings and salvation are predicated upon the exclusive and abundant supply of God – **Ephesians 1:3, 7; 2:4, 7, 8** – every spiritual blessing, riches of His grace, rich in mercy, riches of His grace, gift of God.
 - i. God gave – **John 3:16**
 - ii. Jesus gave – **Titus 2:14**
 - iii. The Holy Spirit gave – **Ephesians 3:3-5**
- b. The question of why God gives is a deep one but can be answered by His nature – **1 John 4:8** – God is love – which is a giving thing.

B. The Gospel Invites Us to Give

- a. **Acts 20:35** – this is spoken of in the context of material giving but is true essentially – **THE BLESSING OF GOD’S GIVING IN THE GOSPEL IS NOT MERELY THAT WE RECEIVE, BUT THAT WE ARE EQUIPPED TO GIVE.**
 - i. **1 Corinthians 4:7** – this certainly prohibits boasting, even making such impossible.
 - ii. However, the giving nature of the gospel, and our being on the receiving end does not negate the ability, necessity, or privilege of giving – **cf. Psalm 50:12-15** – God is not a receiver of necessity, but grants us the privilege of giving, and entertaining such with the fellowship of receiving.
 1. **To deny the reciprocal nature of grace is to deny God’s purpose behind it.**
 2. **He doesn’t give for us to merely take, but to give back to His glory. (Something HE delights in, and we are blessed by.)**
 3. **We cannot view the gospel through the consumerist lens!**
- b. The gospel invitation to the privilege of giving can be demonstrated with the contribution for needy saints – **2 Corinthians 9:6-11**
 - i. In our giving God blesses us with more, but it is a blessing of more to give more.

- ii. **2 Corinthians 8:8-9** – this is a microcosm of the giving of the gospel.
 - c. Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders of the blessedness of giving by firsthand experience before even quoting Jesus' statement – **Acts 20:17-24**
 - i. Giving to God as a matter of reciprocation – **(vv. 19, 22-24)**
 - ii. Giving to the Ephesians out of His supply that God gave – **(vv. 20-21)**
 - iii. God gave to Paul so that Paul could give to Him, and to others! In this, Paul partakes in supreme fellowship with God.
- III. The Gospel in Practice
- A. The Gospel is Meant to be Lived Out
 - a. Jesus emphasized the gospel plan of Divine giving to His disciples, and on the same occasion indicated the call for them to partake in the activity of giving – **Mark 8:31-34**
 - i. **"the things of God" (v. 33)** – include His nature to give, even of Himself for those who are undeserving.
 - ii. **(v. 34)** – the giving of life through the cross is meant as an invitation to give our lives in return.
 - iii. Not just receiving, but the greater blessing of giving! – practically, faithful obedience, fellowship with God.
 - iv. **(vv. 35-38)** – essentially, to receive without giving in return is a refusal to receive – a refusal to engage in a relationship, which is by nature reciprocal.
 - b. **Galatians 2:20; 5:24-25; 6:14-15** – what we've receive through the gospel is meant to be reciprocated in the giving of our new lives in faithful, sacrificial service to Him.
 - c. Those who have received the blessings of the giving of God in the gospel are given the privilege and duty to participate in the gospel through the pattern of giving seen in it – in all forms, whether to God or others.
 - B. The Gospel of Giving in Practice
 - a. Paul's example – **Acts 20:32-35**
 - i. **(vv. 32-33)** – spiritual perspective that leads to the pursuit of giving.
 - ii. **(vv. 34-35)** – the supply of Paul not viewed as something received (God is the ultimate source) merely, but then to be given to others.

1. **Cf. 2 Corinthians 9:8** – Paul’s work was a blessing given by God for him to be equipped to participate in giving.
2. **“support”** – *antilambanomai* – *anti* (instead) *lambanō* (to take) – i.e. they are too weak to take it, and you take it instead.
 - a. “to help, to be a partaker of” (THAYER)
 - b. This is the essence of the gospel – **Romans 5:6**
- iii. When we give to those in need, we are more blessed than when we received (though that was a blessing) because we engage in the activity of Christ!
- b. **“It is more blessed to give than to receive”** – this is true in so many practical ways.
 - i. The giving in marriage, parenting, friendship.
 - ii. The giving in spiritual relationship – exhortation, restoration, longsuffering, teaching, worship to God, etc.
 - iii. The giving of money, resources, time, etc.
 - iv. When the gospel message and its transforming power leads us to give when we have opportunity and resources to do so, we are blessed because we engage in fellowship with the very God who authored the gospel and revealed Himself in it.

Conclusion

1. The gospel is a giving gospel, and God’s grace gives us everything through it. Though at the foundation of God’s grace, and our need for it, is the truth that we have nothing to give of ourselves that could rectify our betrayal, it is a mistake to suggest that the gospel does not beckon us to give.
2. Jesus’ statement in **Acts 20:35** applies to our relationship with God and others. It finds practical significance in countless areas of our lives devoted to Him.
3. We need to realize that though we are in desperate need of what God gives us, and that to receive it is a tremendous blessing, it is nevertheless more blessed to give in return and give to others. Such is the God we serve and who is our Father.