

# FAITH REQUIRED

## 3: FOR TRUE GENEROSITY

*“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

Acts 20:35 NIV

Early one morning years ago an American serviceman was making his way back to the barracks in London. He saw a little boy with his nose pressed to the window of a bakery, staring in silence. The serviceman’s heart went out to the little boy, probably an orphan. He asked him if he would like to have one of those baked goods.

“You bet I would!”

The serviceman stepped inside and bought a dozen. He took the bag outside to the boy and handed them to the little boy.

As he turned to walk away, he heard the child ask quietly, “Mister, are you God?”

### 1 WHY GIVERS ARE BLESSED?

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When we give, we act as God does. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son ...” (John 3:16). As God’s people, we should be givers, not only at the Christmas season, but as a way of life.

In his final address to the Ephesian elders, Paul reminds them of his own example of being free from greed and that he worked to provide for his own needs and even for the needs of his co-workers.

The most important message in this recorded event is that he told them to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, *“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”*

*“Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. <sup>33</sup> I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. <sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. <sup>35</sup> In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Acts 20:32-35 NIV*

Jesus’ words here are not contained anywhere else in Scripture.

Apparently, they were part of the oral tradition handed down from those who had been with Jesus during His earthly ministry.

Jesus was a teacher of divine truth that challenged culture and our human nature.

*By our fallen nature, we all are takers, not givers.*

But by God’s sanctifying grace, He wants us all to grow to be givers.

As we do, not only will others be blessed, but so will we!

**BUT WHY ARE GIVERS MORE BLESSED THAN THOSE WHO RECEIVE?**

## 2 GIVERS ARE **FREED** FROM THE DESTRUCTIVE SIN OF GREED.

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Perhaps Paul is contrasting himself with the false teachers that he has just warned them about, wolves who come in to feed on the flock, rather than to feed the flock.

But Paul’s example shows us that ...

### A. SPIRITUALLY MATURE BELIEVERS MODEL FREEDOM FROM GREED.

- Elders should not be “a lover of money” (1 Tim. 3:3).

- Both elders and deacons must not pursue “dishonest gain” (Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2; 1 Tim. 3:8).

Money should never be the object of our intent to serve and teach.

## **B. GREED IS A SIN THAT DESTROYS THE GREEDY PERSON.**

The Bible ranks greed or covetousness alongside immorality and idolatry, warning that “because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 5:5-6; Col. 3:5-6; see also Mark 7:21-23; 1 Cor. 5:10).

Paul said that those who desire to get rich get snared by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction (1 Tim. 6:2b-10).

*These are the things you are to teach and insist on. <sup>3</sup> If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, <sup>4</sup> they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions <sup>5</sup> and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.*

*<sup>6</sup> But godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. <sup>8</sup> But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. <sup>9</sup> Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

Greed is always easy to recognize in others: They won't share what they have with me! But it's not so easy to spot it in ourselves.

Pastor, Charles Simeon, in a sermon on Luke 12:15, developed three criteria to judge whether we are under the influence of greed (Expository Outlines on the Whole Bible, Zondervan Publishers, 12:468-471).

He said that we should examine -

1. The **manner in which** we *seek* material things,
2. The **degree to which** we *enjoy* them; and,
3. The **manner in which** we *mourn* or are anxious when we lose them.

Givers are blessed because they are freed from this sin that brings both temporal and eternal destruction.

### C. THE SOLUTION TO OVERCOMING GREED IS TO WORK TO PROVIDE FOR YOUR OWN NEEDS AND TO GIVE TO PROVIDE FOR THE LEGITIMATE NEEDS OF OTHERS.

In **Ephesians 4:28**, Paul wrote, *“He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with the one who has need.”*

When he was in Ephesus, Paul had been an example both of hard work and generosity.

He had made tents to meet his own needs, and from any surplus, he had helped support the men who worked with him in the gospel.

Apparently, he also had enough funds to help some in the church who were needy (20:35a).

Paul’s example affirms the dignity of work, including physical labor.

All Believers are responsible to work in order to provide for their families’ and their own needs.

We are also responsible to help those who are weak, that is, who are under unusual circumstances, the marginalized, underprivileged people in our society.

Jesus quoted Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 61:1-2) in a synagogue with this announcement in **Luke 4:18-19**:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the **prisoners**  
and recovery of sight for the **blind**,  
to set the oppressed free,  
<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

Giving to those in need is the drain plug for greed.

Giving is more a matter of mindset than of amount.

Paul was never wealthy, but he demonstrated a lifestyle of giving.

Givers are blessed because they are freed from the destructive sin of greed.

### 3 GIVERS ARE BEING **CONFORMED** TO THE IMAGE OF THE LORD JESUS.

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Jesus warned, *"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions"*, **Luke 12:15**.

Jesus also said, *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* **Matthew 6:19-21**.

You store up treasures in heaven by investing in God's kingdom here below.

Jesus Himself is the embodiment of giving.

He came to give Himself as the sacrifice for our sins.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 8:9**, *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”*

I want to make it clear that no amount of giving or self-sacrifice will get you into heaven.

- Jesus’ death is the only satisfaction for our sins before the holy God.
- He offers this unspeakable gift to everyone who will receive it.
- Receiving God’s salvation in Christ is the starting point for becoming a giver, because it is the starting point of being conformed in your character to the Lord Jesus.

In this way, we are being more conformed to His image, and we will be blessed.