

The Blessings of Giving

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Paul, the Apostle, was called of God to carry the gospel message to Jews and then to Gentiles. He was a tireless worker and in Acts chapter 20 starting with verse 17, you will find Scriptures describing the sacrifices he was willing to make that people might hear the gospel message. His goal was to return to Jerusalem by the first day of Pentecost and he was finishing a three year ministry in Asia. He gave this speech before he left those whom he had ministered to for that period of time. The Jews caused trouble for him, but he pressed forward to finish all that God had called him to do. He told the people that he had served the Lord unselfishly, he had cried over the people that he was ministering to, and he preached to them holding back nothing from them that he thought would help them. He taught publicly as well as privately in homes. He warned both Jews and Greeks to change their way of living by turning to God and believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. He told them that they would never see him again for he needed to obey the Holy Spirit and return to Jerusalem. He explained that if they rejected the truth that he had taught them that he would not be held responsible for he had given his best to them. In verse 33, he declared to them that all the time he had spent with them, he didn't ask for their money or fine clothes. He worked to take care of his own needs and the needs of those who assisted him in the ministry. He taught them by example that they should work and help those who were unable to work. He ended by saying these words, "Remember the words Jesus said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'."

Our perception of "ownership" for the things that are in our possession determines the value that we place on "things" and how we distribute them or hoard them.

When we think about the truth that we came into this world with nothing and we will exit this world in the same state, it gives us a proper view of the things that we consider "ours". Jesus said, in Mark 12 to be careful and guard against all kinds of greed for Life is not measured by how much one owns. He then told a story of a story of the man whose crops yielded an abundant crop. He didn't have room in his barns so he decided to tear down his barns, build bigger barns and store all of his goods. Then he could sit back, relax and say to himself, "I have enough good things stored to last for many years. Rest, eat, drink and enjoy life." But God said, "Foolish man! Tonight your soul will be required of you. So who will get those things you have prepared for yourself?"

Those whose goal is to store up things for themselves without thought of God will end up as this man whose treasures were all in this world without any thought of God.

In 1 Timothy 6:7-20, it tells us that serving God makes us rich, if we are satisfied with what we have. We brought nothing into this world and we cannot take anything out when we die. If we have food and clothes, we should be satisfied with that. Those who seek to be

rich bring temptation onto themselves and are caught in a trap. The love of money causes all kinds of evil. See Ecclesiastes 5:15.

In Psalms 24:1 it tells us that the earth is the Lords and everything that is in it, the world and all of the people. He built it on the waters and set it on the rivers.

In 2 Timothy 3:1, it speaks about the last days when there will be much trouble. People will be self-centered, love money, be boastful and full of pride; they will speak evil of others and be disobedient to parents and unthankful. They will not be the kind of people God wants. They will not love others, they will refuse to forgive, they will gossip and lack self control. They will be cruel, hate what is good, turn against friend and do foolish things without thinking. Paul warned Christians to stay away from such people.

In 1 Samuel 16:7, God spoke to Samuel concerning how different He looks at people than we do. He sees people differently because He looks at the heart and men look on the outward appearance and make judgments from what they see.

In Luke 6:45 and Matthew 12:35, the Bible says that a good man brings good things out of the good stored up in their hearts. But evil people bring evil things out of the evil they stored in their hearts. From out of the heart, the mouth speaks.

Jesus came to GIVE. In John 4:7, he asked for a drink of water from the Samaritan woman who had come to Jacob's well to draw water. Jesus used this to draw her into a conversation wherein he would be able to reveal to her who He is and what He came to do. He said, "If you only knew the free gift of God and who it is that is asking you for water, you would have asked him and He would have given you living water. The water I give will become a spring of water gushing up inside of you giving living water."

The disciples returned from buying food supplies and asked Jesus to come and eat with them. He told them that He had food to eat that they didn't even know about. They thought someone brought food to him. He answered, "My food is to do what the One who sent me wants me to do and to finish his work." The woman rejoiced when she realized that Jesus is the Messiah and she left her water pots, ran into the city telling men to "come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Is not this the Christ?"

Consider the blessing the young lad received by offering his small lunch to Jesus and the fact the as he watched, Jesus broke bread and blessed it, and handed fish and bread to his disciples to distribute to 5000 men plus women and children.

See Matthew 14:13, Mark 6:30, and John 3:16.

Attitude is what Jesus looks for. In 2 Corinthians 9:7 it says that God loves a cheerful giver. When the widow put in 2 mites compared to all the wealthy people who were dropping large amounts of money into the church treasury, Jesus said that she had given more than all the rest because she gave from her poverty and they gave from their abundance. In Acts 9:34, Tabitha was described as a woman full of good deeds and kind acts. When she died, people brought articles of clothing that she had made for them and wept. Peter, the Apostle was ushered in and life was restored to her. Give and Receive.