

## Giving

Sunday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1988

### Acts 20:35

*“I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring 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.”*

I'm reading today from a passage of Scripture from the Book of Acts, Chapter 20 verse 35. The Apostle Paul spoke to a gathering of elders, preachers and pastors, said to them; *“I have showed you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support the weak and to remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, how He said; it is more blessed to give than to receive.”*

I feel impressed today to bring a message on the subject of “GIVING,” what the Bible and the Word of God says about giving.

There is so much false teaching about giving and I really am astounded; I'm amazed at what I see going on in the name of God, in the name of the church and in the name of preaching. There are so many preachers, especially on television who are taking advantage of people. They are misusing people. It is really dishonest. I am astounded and I am ashamed.

I feel impressed by the Spirit of God to bring a message on the subject of “Giving.” What does the Bible say about giving? Are you really interested to know what God says about giving? It does not matter what I say, or somebody else has to say, but what God says about giving.

I want you to listen carefully to this message. I am not just talking off the top of my head. I have given some study and prayerful consideration to the subject of giving. I want you to listen. I will say four things; listen to these four things:

We are told and exhorted today to give, give, and give. We are to give to the church, give to television preachers, and give to others because it is said to be our duty. Most preachers preach that believers are under a law to give 10% of all that they have to the church. This is called a “tithing.”

Where do they get this idea? Where does this come from? Well, these preachers go back to the Old Testament Levitical Laws that were given to Israel. That is where they get it. Tithing is not taught anywhere in the New Testament, not anywhere. On one occasion

our Lord speaking of the tithes to these Pharisees said, *“These things you ought to have done.”*

They should have because they were under that Old Testament dispensation. They were under that Levitical Law. They were under the Sabbath Day, Feast Days the Passover and all of these other Days. They were supposed to tithe. That was the law given to Israel.

That is not the law given to the church. These same preachers who go back to the Old Testament to teach 10% belongs to God, don't encourage all the men to be circumcised. What happened to that? Circumcision was an ordinance that was under the law. They don't require all people to keep Saturday the Sabbath Day. Saturday is the Sabbath Day; it has always been the Sabbath Day. There has never been any other Day. They don't keep that Day.

They don't keep the Dietary Laws of the Old Testament. There were certain things that you were not suppose to eat. They don't keep the Passover, and they don't keep the Feast Days. They don't keep any of these things. Paul specifically said, “If you are going to get under the law you have to get under all the law.” *“You that would be under the law, don't you hear what the Law says?”*

I'm saying dear friends, that 10% of what I have does not belong to God; it all belongs to God. *“The earth is the Lords and the fullness thereof, the world and all they dwell therein.”* So, God doesn't tax His people. God doesn't put His people under the tithe. They are not under the tithe today. No apostle in the New Testament, nowhere in any of the Epistles taught or exhorted people to tithe, not a one. There is another motive for giving. We give because we love Christ. Don't you be pressured by those that would put you under the law; don't you be pressured at all. Giving is not a duty.

Second, another wrong motive for giving is rewards. I hear these preachers say, “Now, if you give to my church, to my program, and to my television program, God will reward you. You plant a seed and when it comes up, you give that to me. Be sure to give to me and you will get something in return.”

They say, “You will get a better job, you'll get a bigger home, and you'll get a boat and an automobile. They say that, “God will prosper you materially.” In other words, you have to give to get something in return. This is contrary to the grace of God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us to give. He said, *“Hoping for nothing in return.”* We give not to get something back from God; that is mercenary. We give because of love;

we love Christ. We love His people. We give because we want to give. We don't do it to get a return on our money. That is nothing in the world but a financial arrangement. That is what most of it sounds like.

This is the wrong principle. This is not grace. This is not taught in God's Word. We don't motivate people to give for reward or to get something in return. I don't promise you that if you give that God will prosper you. What God has in His Divine providence and purpose for you, I do not know.

I will tell you this; we are not always blessed by being blessed. We are blessed many times when we have to go through trials, heartaches and difficulties in order that we might learn something about our Redeemer and His will.

Another wrong motive for giving today is fear. They will say, "If you don't pay your tithe, God will make all kinds of bad things happen to you." One preacher said, "If you won't pay your tithe, God will take you out the door in a coffin." Isn't that horrible? It doesn't sound like the Lord at all does it?

I heard one preacher out in Texas, say this; "Now, if you will tithe, a lot of bad things that would have happened, won't happen and a lot of good things that wouldn't have happened, will happen." He also said, "If you don't tithe, good things that would have happened won't happen."

You know, that is a very poor reason to give. This is contrary to God's Word. This is contrary to the principle of grace. Get people to fear and they will support you. That is bad news.

Another wrong motive they use is praise and recognition. We are exhorted to join different clubs. We are to send thousands of dollars to join this club and that club. They want to get your name on a plaque, get your name on a billboard, get your name in the bulletin, and get your name on the wall. They want you to receive a certificate, wear a badge that says that you gave more than somebody else did.

Our Lord condemns this kind of giving. What shocks me is how preachers can get into this thing when they know that Jesus Christ our Lord specifically condemned this kind of giving. He said, "*Don't give to be seen of men; when you pray, pray in secret, when you fast, fast in secret.*" He also said, "*When you give, do not sound a trumpet. Do not let your left hand know what your right hand does.*"

Don't even tell it to your dearest friend. Give out of your heart "*As unto the Lord*" in secret. He says, "People who give out of reward, out of a motive to get a reward, when they get their reward that is all they get." People give out of fear. People who give to be seen of men, when they are seen of men and praised of men, that is all they get. They have accomplished their purpose.

Now, I'm not being unkind; I'm trying to be honest. Somebody has to say this. It may fall my lot to say it, but I'm going to say it. I'm trying to speak kindly and positively; I'm trying to tell people the truth that this present day emphasis in telethons, television programs, the giving away of books, gimmicks and badges is done with badgering and pressuring of people.

They pressure people to give pledges, having them cry by telling them that they are going to go off the air if you don't do something. It is ungodly! This is not Scriptural and it is unchristian like. This is not of God. This is commercialization of the Kingdom of God. This is prostituting the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I wish I could think of a stronger word.

This present day emphasis on giving as a duty to receive a reward, about a fear to be recognized of men is so contrary to the Word of God, that it is embarrassing. This is a denial of the very principles of grace.

Let me tell you something very important, grace is a heart principle. Grace is a principle of love and not law or duty. My prayer is that God will give me a believing heart. I want a believing heart, don't you? I want a loving heart. I want a praying heart and a generous heart. I want to do what I do not to be seen of men and for the praise of men, or the glory of this flesh; I want to do it for the glory of my God, the glory of God!

Do you really want to know what God's Word says about giving? Do you really want to know? Are you interested? If you are, I can tell you. This message is for you to hear, for you to share and for you to give. I'll back up what I am preaching by the Word of God.

In the New Testament, two whole Chapters are given to the subject of giving, found in Second Corinthians 8 and in Second Corinthians 9. Several words in these two Chapters are very prominent in this matter of "*Giving as unto the Lord.*" I will give them to you. Jot them down and I will give you the Scriptural reference.

This is the first one: This has to do with giving and the first word is "*grace.*" This is in Second Corinthians Chapter 8:7. I'd like for you to read what Paul was writing to the

church, *“As you are bound, over flowing in everything, in faith, in preaching, in knowledge, in diligence and in love, see that you abound in the grace of giving.”*

What is giving called? Giving is called *“grace.”* It is a grace. He said, “You are a church noted for your faith in God; you are a church noted for your strong preaching of the Word of God. You are a church noted for your knowledge of doctrine and truth. You show great love toward the Apostles. See that you abound, see that you overflow, and see that you excel in this grace, in this grace of giving.”

So, the very first thing that we learn about giving is that it is not a duty; it is a grace. Generosity is a mark of the grace of God in the soul. Generosity is a mark or evidence of the grace of God in a person’s heart. In other words, the grace of God in a saved man or woman’s soul makes them a generous person.

That’s right! He is a generous person. This generosity flows from the grace of God that is within him. Giving is a grace. Giving is not a rule, a law, a duty, or a forced issue; it is a grace. This grace flows from his soul, like love flows from his soul.

Now, the second word is found in the next verse, Second Corinthians 8:8: The second word is *“love.”* Paul is plainly telling the church to abound in the grace of giving. He says, *“I speak not by commandment”* (I’m not telling you how much to give; I’m not telling you when to give; I’m not telling you what percent to give). *“I’m not speaking by commandment, but to prove the sincerity of your love.”*

Paul is saying, “I’m not commanding you to give or ordering you an amount to give.” Giving is motivated by love, or it is worthless. Giving is a revelation of love. I do it to prove the sincerity of my love. I do it for the love of Christ, and for the love of His people.

Do you know what Paul does next in verse 9? He uses the example of our Savior’s love for us. He said, *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ how that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor”* (2 Cor. 8:9). He gave Himself because He loved us. This thing of giving, the very first word that Paul uses in reference to giving, is that it is a grace and it is born of love. It is motivated by love, the same love, the same kind of love that motivated our Lord to come down here into this world and obey the law, die on the cross and bear our sins. This is the same love out of which we give to share with others and to help others.

Actually, Paul said this in First Corinthians 13; *“If I give my goods to feed the poor and have not love; it profiteth me nothing.”* You think about that! When we go to motivate

people to give because it is a duty, or a responsibility to get a reward, or to do it out of fear, remember that if they give for those reasons, it profits them nothing. It is worthless!

Giving has to be motivated by love. Paul said, *"The love of Christ constraineth me."* That is why you give gifts to your wives, your children, your husband, mothers, and fathers and to your children. Why? Do you have to? No, you give because you love them.

Did someone tell you how much to spend on the gift? Suppose it is your wife's birthday. Somebody might say, "You have to spend 10% of your pay this week on her." I don't have to do that. I can spend it all, if I want to. She's my wife and it is my money. That is what Peter told Ananias; he said, "You didn't have to do this; it was yours, who told you to sell it?" Love, love, love is the motive for giving.

Third: The third word is in 2 Corinthians 8: 12. The word is "willing." Paul says, *"For there first must be a willing mind. It is accepted according to what a man has, not according to what a man has not. God loves a cheerful giver."* There is nothing here about duty, it is willingness. There is nothing here about being pressured.

This is what irritates me. If you have a need and you feel it is necessary that it be known, make it known and drop it. Don't pressure a man to cry. Don't keep badgering him, drop it. If God lays it on his heart and makes him willing, he will help. Leave him alone!

You are the one applying the pressure; the Holy Spirit is not. There is nothing said here about debt; it is willingness. It is that which is given willingly, cheerfully and from the heart that God loves. *"God loveth a cheerful,"* (hilarious and happy) *giver,"* who gives, because he is willing.

I will tell you something else. It is as wrong as wrong can be, and it is these pledges that churches give out to have people sign. The pledges say, "I will give so much next year; I will give so much for the next 12 months." Do you remember reading that verse a moment ago? *"There first must be a willing mind; it is accepted in according to what a man hath right now, not what he has not,"* it is not according to what he has not.

I'm not supposed to pledge what I don't have. I don't have any idea what I will have next month or next year. I don't have the faintest idea; only God knows. The amount is unimportant anyway. A man is not required to give what he does not have. He is not required to give what he is expected to have. He is not required to give except what he has right now. That is not even required. That is motivated by love because he wants to. He is led by the Spirit of the Living God.

I'm telling you the truth! This is what God's Word says. "*Abound in this grace.*" I don't command you to give. I want you to prove the sincerity of your love. There first must be a willing heart, a willing mind, and a cheerful heart. This is what I want to do.

Now, watch this fourth word: The word is "*purpose.*" In Second Corinthians 9:7, listen to this very carefully; "*Every man as he purposeth in his own heart, (not as he is ordered, not as he is required, not as the preacher says), so let him give.*" That is you and I, as we purpose in our heart. "*So let him give.*"

Don't give grudgingly, not of necessity, for "*God loves a cheerful giver.*" This word alone will do away with the duty of the tithe. This one word, "*purpose,*" what does it say? The Scripture says, "*Every man as he purposeth in his own heart.*" That does away with the tithe. If I am to give or if I am ordered to give 10% of everything I have, I have no reason to "*purpose.*"

I have no reason to even think about it. I have no reason to even consider this subject. I will just fill out my required amount, my tax, church tax, that is what it is and send it in. I'm griping all the time and complaining all the time. That is sinful giving and God won't honor it. I will tell you this, a preacher that promotes that kind of giving is misleading his flock. The Word says, "*As a man purposeth in his heart.*"

Are we afraid to leave people alone to their own hearts as God the Holy Ghost leads them? I want to tell you something; for over 37 years, I pastored the same church and for over 35 of those years I have been on the radio and television. One time I was on the radio every morning in Ashland. I have been on this television station for 14 years.

I have never, never, never, ever preached tithing, required a tithe, or asked anyone for one dime or one nickel. I have never; under any circumstances put anyone under any pressure to give one dime to have them buy a pledge card, a promise, a tithe, or anything else. Yet, God has always abundantly, and in a wonderful matter, met our every need.

How has this happened? I will tell you how; the grace of God is in the hearts of His people. You see; we are stewards of the Lord of the grace of God. We are His sons, His people, and we are His stewards of the grace of God. We are stewards of what God has given us. We look upon His churches, His people, His preachers, and those who are in need. We know the need. We have learned the need.

Then, we go alone by ourselves. We go apart from the crowd. We think about this need. As God directs us, as God leads us, impresses us, enables us, and allows us, we give because we want to. God leads me to give.

Some of you help support this program. I have never asked you. God leads you. You feel impressed to give. You say, "I want to share in this, or share in that and the other." You do it because you want to. You do it because you are willing to. You do it because of what you hear, or you love someone and you help them financially. You love that person and God lays it on your heart to do it. You purpose in your heart and "*You do it as unto the Lord,*" and God gives you a blessing. Is that not true? I will tell you this, this is Scriptural giving. That is grace giving, love giving and that is New Testament giving.

I will tell you the fifth word, "*proportion.*" In First Corinthians 16: 1 and 2, Paul says concerning the collection for the saints; "*Upon the first day of the week, let everyone of you lay by him in store as God has prospered him.*" Do you know what that means? There are two words to be considered here, let everyone as God prospers in him, in proportion as God as prospered him, there is the word "*everyone.*"

Every believer is a giver. Some are not to be burdened while others are eased. Every believer is a giver. Everyone wants to share and have a part, rich or poor, old or young. Every believer is generous and wants to share what he has with others. He wants to and he delights to. It is a blessing to give. It is a blessing to share. It is a blessing to take that which God gives to us and share it with someone else.

The other word is "*As God prospers you,*" as God has blessed you. You know, everything we have is given to us of God. Paul said this, "*Who maketh thee to differ? What do you have that you didn't receive? Now, if you received it, why do you boast as if you didn't receive it?*"

Another Scripture says, "*A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above.*" So, out of thanksgiving to God, out of love to God and love for others, a believer realizes that God has blessed Him and God has prospered Him. God has enabled him to have these things. He wants to share. He says, "Take half of mine."

When children go out on the playground and they have a bar of candy, they say; "Do you want half? I have an apple; do you want half of my apple? I see, you don't have one and I do and I will share it with you." I delight to do that.

Don't come up to me and say, "It is the law that I get half of what you have; it is a rule and a requirement." You have robbed me of my blessing. You have given me a



rebellious heart and you have taken by theft what doesn't belong to you. That is exactly right!

Those that have more proportion are able to give more. Those that have less, give less. All give and share with others as God enables them. I will tell you this; in Second Corinthians 9:8 says this; *“And God is able to make all grace abound towards you that you will have all sufficiency in all things and be able to do good works.”*

In other words, a man or woman who wants to give will never lack for something to give because God is going to make sure that you have all sufficiency. That is what it says there, *“God is able to make all grace abound towards you.”* You abound in the grace of giving and God will make all grace abound for you. *“You will have all sufficiency in all things and you will be able to do good works as unto the Lord.”*

*“My God will supply all your need according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus.”* Trust Him, but don't get under rules. Don't obligate God and say, “I'll do this if God will do that.” Our Lord God does not operate that way; it is free grace. *“Give as unto the Lord.” “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift (2Cor. 9:15).*

This is what I have tried to say throughout this message. This is it right here! *“The love of Christ constraineth me.”* This is my motive, and it ought to be for all that I do whether it is preaching, witnessing, giving, or whatever. I will do it not out of duty, obligation, nor necessity. I will do it because I love Christ. Does that help? I hope it does!