

Acts 20:32-35 “Input and Output”

For the Children: It is much harder to give money to others if you think you are going to need it for yourself. If you know that you will have enough for tomorrow, you will probably find it easier to part with some of what you have to help others in need. God promises to provide for His children, for He loves us. He promises to build us up and bless us in the future. We don't need to be worried about the future. That makes it easier for us to give, even if we don't have much. We want to help others because we are very thankful that the Lord Jesus has helped us so much. We want to be a “giver” like Him, rather than a selfish “taker.” **Questions:** What are some ways we can help others in the church? Give some examples of situations where God's people think too much of what they are receiving, rather than how they can give. If it is better to give than receive, should we give *all* our money to help others?

Introduction:

First Point: God Builds and Blesses His People

- 1) **The Elders Commended:** The apostle commends the Ephesian elders to God and to the Word of His grace. This means that the elders are encouraged to put their trust in God's love, care and salvation, as proclaimed in His Word. Those who do trust in the Word are built up, strengthened and sanctified. They will progress in sanctification.
- 2) **A Promised Inheritance:** Those who trust the Word and are sanctified will also receive an inheritance from God. But this inheritance will not be received by those who reject the Word and are not sanctified.
- 3) **A Basis for Giving:** This trust, in God's gracious provision, care, up-building and granting of an inheritance, gives the confidence that enables the believer to give sacrificially. The Lord's Supper reinforces that confidence. It leads to thankfulness in those who take part. Gratitude causes us to want to imitate the Lord Jesus as much as we can – by giving sacrificially.

Second Point: It Is Therefore More Blessed to Give Than to Receive

- 1) **Jesus' Saying:** The Gospels do not record the saying of v. 35. See, however, Lk. 6:38, Jn. 13:34-35. The OT background can be found in Lev. 19:9f. We demonstrate our faith in Christ by reflecting His love, mercy and charity.
- 2) **The Apostolic Example:** The apostle Paul put this into practice. He could have insisted on financial support from the church. Instead, he worked as a tentmaker, to support himself and those with him. In that way, he made sure he didn't burden the Ephesian church or give his opponents ammunition to use against him or the Gospel. In this practical way, he demonstrated the saying of v. 35.
- 3) **Reflecting on Christ's Person and Works:** The saying does not forbid receiving charity. It is designed to move us to think about Christ's person and work – and whether or not we are reflecting Him or living selfishly. It is all too easy for young and old in the church to think first of what we “get out of” different aspects of church life; rather than focusing on what we can give.

Conclusion:

