

Series: Blessed to Be a Blessing
"How Should I Use God's Blessings?"
Acts 20:33-35

Introduction:

1. In our text, the apostle Paul is meeting with the leaders of the church at Ephesus. He is reviewing his ministry among them and admonishing them in several areas. Paul realizes he will probably never see their faces again.
2. Understanding this context, let's read verses 33-35. In these three verses Paul teaches them the proper attitude they are to possess towards material gain, prosperity, and money.
3. Paul gives a direct quote from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus said, "**It is more blessed to give than to receive.**"
 - What does the word "blessed" mean? I think we know what it means. We say, "I sure was blessed the other day. Let me tell you about my blessing."
 - Something happened that brought joy and happiness to you.
4. "*More blessed*" indicates that I've **already** been blessed. So Jesus teaches that I am more blessed when I learn how to take my existing blessings and share them with others.
5. In other words, I am blessed in order that I might be a blessing to someone else!
6. Many people are blessed, but they live their lives using all of those blessings on themselves and then they die. What a wasted life. Christian, this is not God's plan for your life.
7. You may ask, "You mean I have to take my blessings and give them all away?" Certainly not. But what is God's plan for the believer today? Let's look into this text and learn.

First, God has blessed you to provide for your needs. vs. 34a

1. Paul had needs just like all of us do. Paul says that he worked with his hands (**Acts 18:3**) to minister unto his necessities.
2. There is nothing wrong with believers taking a portion of God's blessings and using them to meet their physical needs. This is valid.
3. If we are physically able to work and God blesses our work with income, God allows and even expects for us to meet our physical needs out of that income. **2 Thessalonians 3:10** (Get out and get a job if you expect to eat.)
4. Here is the obvious question - what are our needs? As Americans I think we have a problem defining "needs" (satellite TV, NFL package, eating out two or three times a week, a new car, big screen TV, cell phones, computers, brand name clothes, Ipods, etc.).
5. Because we live in a land of prosperity, we have a real problem distinguishing between "needs" and "wants" (needs and creature comforts.)
6. The Bible defines what "needs" are in **1 Timothy 6:6-8**.
 - Food to sustain your physical life.
 - Clothing to cover your physical nakedness.

Second, God has blessed you to provide for your loved ones. vs. 34b

1. Paul worked to provide for his own necessities, but also to provide for those that were with him.
2. Are there people who are dependent on you? It is God-honoring when you provide for their needs, also. **1 Timothy 5:8**
3. Again, as Americans, we have a distorted view of what it means to provide for the needs of our children. This doesn't mean spoiling them with the latest toys, video games, trendy clothes and gadgets, TVs in their rooms, cell phones, and an all expense paid college education.
4. Meeting their needs is making sure they have proper food, clothing, time, attention, and spiritual instruction. It also means teaching them a proper work ethic so that you aren't still providing for them when they are adults.

Third, God has blessed you so that you can bless others. vs. 35

1. Up to this point in our study it has been all about us and our families. Here is the danger. We spend so much of God's blessings on ourselves that we have nothing or very little left to be a blessing to others (give example of a stretched budget).
2. This is a tragic mistake. According to Jesus, God has blessed you so that you could, in turn, be a blessing to others. vs. 35
3. According to the Bible, one of the prime motivations we should have for working (getting up Monday and going in) and making money is so that we can give.
Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 6:17-18
4. Paul says that we labor, not so that we can hoard God's blessings and spend them all on ourselves, but so that we can help the weak.
5. This is what the local church should be all about - helping those who are struggling and weak (weak in the faith, weak through infirmities, weak in mind, weak through trials, weakened and crippled by sin and in desperate need of the gospel).
6. As we give through our local church, we are impacting lives eternally. It is our blessing and privilege to be able to give.
7. Why is it more blessed to give than to receive? Think about it - if you are on the receiving end, it means there is some sort of weakness whereby you **can't** give.
 - You are physically sick and unable to provide for yourself, or mentally weakened and no longer have the mental capability to provide for yourself. It could be you are weakened through unforeseen trials and unable to provide for yourself.
 - But, by the grace of God, this could be any of us next week.
8. Paul says when you are able to give you are "*more blessed.*" Giving should never be viewed as drudgery or something **I have** to do.
 - During offering time, if we have had the physical, mental and emotional ability to be able to work and provide for our needs the past week, we should be hopping up and down, praising God, and can't wait to give to show our appreciation to God for His blessings.
 - This is what Paul meant when he said that God loveth a cheerful giver.

In Conclusion:

1. God has blessed you to be a blessing.

2. What we hoard and spend on ourselves will all be left behind and forever gone when we die.
3. What we give away will impact lives on this earth after we are dead and gone, and throughout eternity.

Series: Blessed to Be a Blessing
"What Happens When I Share God's Blessings?"

Introduction:

1. What if I were to say to you, "I know something you can do that will bring you contentment and joy, will bring other people to Jesus, bring you treasure that will last forever, and insure that God meets your every need?"
2. You would probably respond, "Sign me up. That sounds great!" Let's read **Philippians 4:10-19** and see if you can discover what this church did that, in turn, brought all the wonderful blessings that I just mentioned.
3. Here is what they did. They shared God's blessings with the apostle Paul so that he could continue to do the work of the ministry and see souls come to Jesus Christ.
4. Last week we looked at the words of Jesus, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" We learned that God blesses us with resources, not just to meet **our** needs, but to be a blessing to others. We are blessed to be a blessing. This is renewed-mind thinking.
5. What happens when a believer, by faith, believes the words of Christ and handles God's blessings with this mind-set? What happens when you become a channel of blessing to others through sacrificial giving? Let's look into this text and see.

First, you gain the joy of true contentment. vs. 10-12

1. There is a major misconception that Satan has planted in the minds of people - the more I have, the more content I will be, the happier I will be, the more fulfilled I will be.
2. This is nothing new. It is an age-old lie.
 - Eve believed it when she ate the forbidden fruit.
 - Lot believed it when he chose the well-watered plain of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - Achan believed it when he took the spoils of war from Jericho.
 - Ananias and Sapphira believed it when they pretended to give sacrificially but really possessed covetous hearts.
 - Do I need to remind you how these people's lives ended?
3. We live in a very discontent society. Enough is never enough. People are drowning in their thirst for more. Their covetousness leads to broken marriages, kids who never see their parents, depression (can't get what you want or can't enjoy what you have), chemical addiction, drunkenness, stress from the debt load, etc.
4. When a believer has learned contentment, he has a peace in his heart that is priceless. Paul had learned contentment through the ups and downs of life. vs. 10-11
5. Do you know how you learn contentment? When you believe the words of Jesus, that you are blessed to be a blessing, and you begin to practice the grace of giving. You are then on your way to leaving the barren fields of covetousness and entering the fruitful and blessed fields of contentment.

Second, you help the gospel of Christ to advance. vs. 15-16

1. Paul was a missionary. He was all about ministry - preaching the gospel of Christ and teaching God's Word to others.

2. According to the Bible, Paul had financial needs (vs. 16 - "*my necessity*"). Why is this? Because money is necessary for ministry. It takes money to sustain ministry and reach people with the gospel. We all know this.
3. God uses believers to meet the financial needs for ministry (vs. 18). The gospel has changed their lives, therefore they want other people to be able to hear it.
4. Because these people gave sacrificially, a great multitude of Greeks in Thessalonica were saved. **Acts 17:4**
5. If the gospel of Christ is to advance, it will only happen through the sacrificial giving of God's people. The **world** will not give to advance the gospel (they are all about accumulating stuff for themselves - they think this life is it). As believers, we know better. **Colossians 3:2**

Third, you store up eternal reward. vs. 17-18

1. According to verse 18, did God see their sacrificial gifts? What effect did their sacrificial giving have on God? It was well-pleasing to God. It was like a sweet fragrance to God.
2. Now look at verse 17. Do you realize what this is teaching? These believers actually **shared** in Paul's ministry through their sacrificial giving. All that Paul was able to accomplish through their giving **abounded** to their account in heaven.
 - It was laying up eternal treasure for them that they would enjoy for all of eternity.
3. When you give of your blessings to CrossRoads or any other ministry that is teaching God's Word, you are sharing in everything good that happens through that ministry.
4. Have you ever noticed how **big** \$100 looks when you take it to church to give, and how **small** it looks when you take it to Disney World or Sea World? It won't even get you through the front gate. It goes to enrich their pockets and it is gone forever.
5. But what we give to God's work will provide enrichment for eternity.
6. We learn here that God takes note and keeps a record of every gift.

Fourth, you insure God's provision. vs. 19

1. These believers had sacrificed to give to the ministry, but look at the glorious promise they received. vs. 19
2. Some of you may be thinking, "I can't give to God's work, my budget is tight. I don't have any extra." According to verse 19 you can!
3. You are blessed to be a blessing. God has promised to meet the needs of the believer who is generous with God's blessings.
4. There is no such promise for those who hoard God's blessings and keep them all for themselves.

In Conclusion:

1. There is a promise for the greedy and covetous, though. It is found in **1 Timothy 6:9-10**.
2. But there is also a promise in **1 Timothy 6:17-19** to those who take God's blessings and use them to be a blessing to others.
3. So God has promised to work on the givers' behalf in two ways:
 - He will meet our needs while here on earth.
 - He will reward us eternally when we get to heaven.

How to Become a Channel of Blessing Philippians 4:10-18

Introduction:

1. Jesus said, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."* **Acts 20:35**
 - Jesus is teaching that I am **more** blessed when I learn how to take my existing blessings and share them with others.
 - In other words, I am blessed in order that I might be a blessing.
2. We have learned that some awesome things take place when I begin to understand that God wants me to share my blessings, not hoard them and keep them all for myself.
3. The Philippian believers understood this principle. They had given sacrificially to the work of God. The result was that the gospel of Christ had been proclaimed and was changing lives. Paul tells them that this fruit was abounding to their account in heaven.
4. Paul tells them that even though they had given sacrificially to the work of God, God would be faithful to meet their needs. vs. 19
5. I want to get very practical this morning and answer this question, "How can I become a channel of blessing that God can flow His power through and use me to help further His work here on this earth?"
6. Let's examine these Philippian believers and learn from their example.

First, it requires a personal decision. vs. 15

1. Paul makes an amazing statement in verse 15. Let's read it.
 - Philippi was in the province of Macedonia. Paul left Macedonia and headed for Athens and Corinth. He was at Corinth a year and a half.
 - How many churches gave to Paul's ministry after he left Macedonia? Only one, and that was the church at Philippi.
2. They understood that they were blessed to be a blessing and they made a personal decision to share their blessings to help further the work of God.
3. Giving is a personal decision of the heart. It is between you and God. It doesn't matter what others are doing. We give out of the grace that has been extended to **us** by God. We give out of a personal love in **our** hearts for God.
 - The grace giver gives whether anybody else does or not. What others do is not an issue. **John 21:21-22**
 - Paul said, "You're the only ones that gave, but the spiritual fruit that I am seeing (made possible by your gifts) is abounding to your account in heaven."
4. If I am to become a channel of blessing for God to flow through and use, it requires a personal decision on my part. **2 Corinthians 9:7**
 - The word "purposeth" means "to choose for oneself." We become a channel of blessing when we make a conscious choice of our will to give.
 - God will not take anything from you by force. He wants it to come from your heart, a willing heart that is in love with Him.

Second, giving must become a regular practice. vs. 10, 16

1. Did you notice, there was a **pattern** to their giving?

- Paul said "...*your care of me hath flourished again.*" vs. 10
 - Paul said that they had sent once **and again** unto his necessity. vs. 16
 - These people had a habit of giving. It was a practice in their lives.
2. This is so important. Giving should be a regular grace that you practice in a systematic fashion.
 3. The opposite of this would be erratic, occasional, or spontaneous (when the urge hits you or there happens to be a big surplus).
 - It's the idea, "I have an extra ten bucks this week, so I guess I'll give it to God." We kind of tip God.
 4. The grace of giving is far too important to a Spirit-filled believer to treat in such a casual, flippant way.
 - You are giving to your Lord and Savior (the One who saved you from eternal hell, redeemed you, and changed your life) and the Bible says you show your love for Him this way. **2 Corinthians 8:8, 24**
 - So, when you give, it is a serious thing to you. There is a regular, definite, systematic way you approach it. **1 Corinthians 16:1-2**
 5. Is giving a regular practice in your Christian life? There is an easy way to find out. Look at your check book entries for the past year. It will most likely tell the story. Are there regular systematic entries to your mortgage company, FPL, car, etc? What about God?

Third, trust Christ to give through you. vs. 13

1. Giving can very easily become a work of the flesh.
 - A ritualistic law - we do it thinking that somehow we are **earning** God's favor. We're scared if we don't. We want to conform to what others expect.
 - An act of greed - we approach giving like a magic genie in a bottle - "Let's rub it and God will bless us."
 - An act of pride - Jesus said in **Matthew 6:2** that the Pharisees gave that they may have glory of men. They were giving in order to get attention.
 - In every one of these instances, giving becomes a work of the flesh instead of a **reflection** of our walk with Jesus Christ.
2. You may be thinking, "I hear what you're saying, but I just can't bring myself to give. I love my stuff." **You** can't do it, but Christ can do it **through** you. vs. 13
 - Only Christ working in us can bring the ability to shed the cultural trappings of materialism and greed.
3. If you are saved, you have the ultimate grace giver living inside of you - Jesus Christ. **2 Corinthians 8:9** We are saved by His amazing grace!
 - Giving is the normal and natural response of a person that is walking in a close relationship with Jesus Christ. It is a fruit of that relationship.
4. Let me show you the key to the Philippians' giving hearts. **2 Corinthians 8:2-5**
 - As they yielded themselves to Christ who lived **in** them, the gracious and giving heart of our Savior was living **through** them. This is why they had become such channels of blessing.

Series: Blessed to Be a Blessing
“How to Accomplish the Work of God”
Exodus 35-36

Introduction:

1. The tabernacle of God was a huge, moveable tent 45 feet long by 15 feet wide and 15 feet high. This tabernacle was to be the center of worship and revelation for the Israelites as they traveled through the wilderness.
2. This was a huge undertaking. It would take a massive amount of material wealth and resources to build the tabernacle. Where would it come from? God reveals the plan to Moses in **Exodus 25:1-8**.
3. The needs for the building project would be met by the people of Israel.
 - The people were to give, and as the people gave, the work of God would be accomplished.
 - Did you know that people are the only means God has of getting His work accomplished? God is committed to using people.
4. It is the same way today in the church age - this dispensation of grace. The church could not function, teach the Bible, and get out the gospel without the faithful giving of God's people. God still uses people today.
5. This morning, let's look into God's Word and see exactly how God's work of building the tabernacle was accomplished.

First, the people gave with a right attitude.

1. God specified the attitude that was to be present in those who gave for the tabernacle. 25:2 - What is the key word? The key word is "**willingly.**"
2. Moses reiterated this in 35:5. Let's see how the people did. 35:21-22, 29
 - To give willingly implies that they were giving voluntarily or eagerly.
3. It is interesting that God not only knew **what** the people gave, but He knew the attitudes and motives of their hearts when they gave.
4. Did you know that God is very interested in our motivation? During Jesus' earthly ministry to Israel, Jesus taught that one's motive in giving will determine his eternal reward. **Matthew 6:2-4**
5. The apostle Paul also taught the importance of one's attitude when giving in **2 Corinthians 9:7**.
 - To give grudgingly is to give with sadness, grief, or sorrow.
 - Have you ever asked somebody to do something and they act like it is really putting them out? How did it make you feel?
6. God wants His people to give willingly, out of love for Him. This is why God did not tell Moses to use gimmicks to obtain gifts for the tabernacle. There were no door prizes, bingo games, church raffles, church suppers, or church rummage sales.
 - The need was simply laid out before the people and their hearts responded.
7. Christ is our example of giving willingly. He gave His life on the cross for our sin because He willingly chose to do so. The Father didn't coerce Him. **John 10:17-18**
 - When we give willingly, this is so Christ-like.

Second, the people gave as God enabled them.

1. Notice **Exodus 35:5**, "*Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord...*"
2. The people could only give what God had blessed them with. Notice the phrase, "with whom was found." vs. 23-24
3. Notice all the different things people brought (vs. 22-28). Everyone gave of what they had. They gave as God enabled them to give.
4. We see this same principle in the church age today. In **1 Corinthians 16:2**, Paul instructs church age saints to give "*...as God hath prospered*" you. In other words God doesn't expect us to give what we don't have. cf. **2 Corinthians 8:12**
5. This is why Moses did not say, "I want every Israelite to bring \$1,000 to help build the tabernacle." Some of them probably didn't have \$1,000. Some had silver and gold they could give, but others had cloth and linen they could give.
6. God says, "You give as I have enabled you to give." Much more important than the amount is the heart and the sacrifice involved. This is what God looks at.
7. Again, Christ is our example. He didn't have wealth or possessions to give to the world. But He had a perfect, sinless body, and He offered it for us.
Hebrews 10:5, 10, 12

Third, the people gave more than enough.

1. As the gifts started pouring in, Moses got his builders started on this building project. **Exodus 36:2-3**
2. Something rather unusual happened at this point. The men stopped working and came to Moses with a problem (36:4). What do you think the problem was?
 - Verse 5 - "Moses, you've got to stop the people from giving. We've got more than we can use." What a problem to have!
 - So Moses stands up before the people and says, "Enough, enough - please stop giving." Verse 6 is amazing - "*...the people were restrained from bringing.*"
3. I don't see this happening much in churches today. Can you imagine me standing before you saying, "Enough, please stop giving. We don't know what to do with all this money."
4. Of course we live in a different dispensation today. They were trying to build a tabernacle, but our work today is far bigger. Our work is to preach the gospel of God's grace to everyone in this world. **Colossians 1:27-28**
 - Until that happens, we must keep sending missionaries, keep planting churches, keep starting new ministries, keep reaching out, keep teaching and training people in God's Word. The LIFE building is simply a tool to accomplish these things.
5. Here's the point from our text - when God's people's hearts are right, there will always be sufficient resources to meet the needs. God's work will be accomplished.
 - I remember 13 years ago when our church was up against a seemingly insurmountable wall. But God's people met the challenge. They gave with a right attitude, they gave sacrificially as God enabled them, and God met every need.
6. Again Christ is our ultimate example. When He died on the cross and shed His blood, it was enough to save the entire world. **1 John 2:2; 1 Timothy 2:6**

7. Will everyone in the world be saved? No, because not everyone will choose to believe, but it is not because Christ's death wasn't sufficient. It is more than enough to save anyone and everyone who will come by faith and trust Him as their Savior.

In Conclusion:

1. Do you see from God's Word how God's work is accomplished? It's accomplished through people.
 - People who give with willing hearts.
 - People who give sacrificially through God's enablement.
2. The result is that God's work is able to move forward and be accomplished. Souls can be saved and believers can be taught and rooted in God's Word. All of this results in changed lives, and that is what CrossRoads is all about.

Series: Blessed to Be a Blessing
"God's Grace: Abounding Through Us"

Introduction:

1. In 1 Chronicles 17 King David had a desire in his heart to build the Lord a house. He wanted it to glorify the Lord and His name (17:24).
 - From that desire he began to make preparation and prepare Solomon (his son) - 22:5
 - But David realized that this couldn't be a one-man building project. He had to have help.
 - David took the need right to the people and they responded in a big way (29:6-9). Notice that they offered willingly, joyfully, and with perfect heart (Israel had some sour moments in their history, but this is one of their most glorious).
 - The need was met, and a few chapters later we see a magnificent temple erected and the glory of the Lord filling it.
2. I realize that we aren't building a temple today. **We** are the temple of God today. He doesn't dwell in physical structures, but in people!
3. But I wanted to read this to you to get you to see what can happen when a group of people join their minds and hearts together toward a common goal, with the basis of it all being to glorify the Lord and His name.
4. This story fascinates me because the people gave willingly - they didn't give out of law, but out of love. They didn't give grudgingly (David is the king so we better get involved), but out of grace.
5. Did you know this is how God wants the grace believer to give today? Not out of guilt, fear, law, coercion, or even necessity, but out of love and pure grace.

Grace giving involves three principles:

God's grace abounding to us

1. Do you know what grace is? It is receiving the favor, acceptance, and approval of God when you don't deserve it.
2. When we were abounding in sin against God, God abounded in grace towards us. **Romans 5:20** (We sing a song "Grace Greater Than Our Sin.")
3. Grace means that even though I have abounded in sin, God is offering me righteousness before Him and eternal life with Him. **Romans 5:21**
 - What is the basis of this offer of grace? Jesus Christ our Lord. (His cross-work).
4. Christ gave up everything for our sinful souls (**2 Corinthians 8:9**). We who were spiritually bankrupt are now spiritually rich before God and it's all because of Jesus.

God's grace abounding in us

1. In 2 Corinthians 8 Paul had a project he was trying to raise money towards. It was an offering to help the poor saints at Jerusalem (Hurricane Katrina).
2. Paul fully expected the grace of Christ to work in these Christians - **2 Corinthians 8:7-9**
3. Paul expected God's grace to do something in these believers. "You are abounding in faith, utterance, etc., and I expect you to abound in the grace of giving."

4. His grace that has abounded **to us** abounds **in us** and produces the fruit of a thankful, giving heart. Why do we give to God? Out of love and appreciation for His grace.
 - When we give our resources to God's work, it is a natural response to His grace that has abounded to us. It's proof that His grace is working in us. 9:13-14

God's grace abounding through us

1. In response to His grace, we have **hearts** that want to give. 9:7
2. But look at verse 8. God then abounds back towards us with all grace, providing all sufficiency in all things.
3. Why? So we can keep abounding in every good work! His grace keeps everything moving and flowing.
4. God's grace is the fuel tank (His grace provides the spiritual capacity to want to give), but then His grace keeps pumping fuel to the engine (providing the ability to give).
5. It is then we begin to **abound** in the grace of giving.
6. God's grace is no longer just a Biblical doctrine, it is abounding through you. You can **see it** at work in your life as you give cheerfully and bountifully to God.
 - This is the Christian life as it is supposed to be lived.

In Conclusion:

1. The world says, "Get all you can - and can all you get." Keep accumulating earthly treasure. You know what happens? You die and leave it all behind. Those you left it to live it up for two or three years and everything you worked your whole life for is gone.
2. There is another way to live. It's called the grace life. His grace not only saves you, but abounds in you and through you. You long to give, you love to give, you live to give.
3. And Paul says, the fruit of your giving abounds to your account in heaven. The fruit of your living the grace life is waiting for you when you get to heaven.