

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

The previous Sabbath Thought discussed Giving & Receiving as a statue in the OT but the people were too hardhearted to carry it out as God intended. In the New Covenant, God gives His people the Holy Spirit so they can become agape love and have a heart for Giving & Receiving. Above all, the NT emphasizes that God GAVE to us FIRST—His agape love and sacrifice unto salvation. No one of the flesh is worthy of it nor can it ever be repaid. That gift is meant for us to become as He is in agape love, mercy, and compassion and these things ought to provoke us unto Giving & Receiving.

So, what exactly IS Giving & Receiving? Is it something of the heart that bonds us together in our strivings for the eternal Kingdom? Is it praying for one another, visiting the lonely and the prisoners, caring for the afflicted and sick, tending to widows and orphans, or counseling with godly wisdom? Is it reconciling offenses or resisting being offended? Is it reaching out to someone who wandered from their calling or helping someone when they sin? Or is it the more practical aspects of giving money, physical items and clothing, food and drink, shelter to the homeless, or provisions needed in weather-related disasters? The answer is 'yes' to all of these. A number of them are mentioned in the parables of the Good Samaritan and Sheep & Goats but the NT abounds with examples of Giving & Receiving:

JAMES 1:27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to **visit orphans and widows in their trouble**, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

MATTHEW 5:7, 9 **Blessed are the merciful [to others]**, For they shall obtain mercy. ... 9 **Blessed are the peacemakers**, For they shall be called sons of God.

ACTS 6:2-3 Then the twelve [*apostles*] summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and **serve tables [this still needs to be done]**. 3 "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may **appoint over this business**;

GALATIANS 5:13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another**.

ROMANS 12:16 *Be* of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high ambitions; rather, be **accommodating with those of low estate [the poor and afflicted]**. Do not be wise in your own eyes.

JAMES 5:16 Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and **pray for one another**, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

1 TIM 5:5 Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and **continues in supplications and prayers night and day**.

HEBREWS 6:10 For God *is* not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have **ministered to the saints**, and do minister.

Matthew 18, generally thought of as the chapter on reconciling offenses, actually has many principles of Giving & Receiving:

MATTHEW 18:5 “Whoever **receives one little child [help, teach, guide, encourage “babes in Christ”]** like this in My name receives Me.

MATTHEW 18:12-14 “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains **to seek the one that is straying [from salvation]**? 13 “And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that *sheep* than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. 14 “Even so it is **not the will of your Father** who is in heaven **that one of these little ones should perish**.

MATTHEW 18:15 “Moreover if your brother sins against you, **go and tell him his fault between you and him alone [and reconcile the offense]**. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

MATTHEW 18:27 “Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and **forgave him the debt [offense]**.

Jesus said He came to fulfill the Law¹ by revealing it has a greater spiritual meaning. That realization establishes Giving & Receiving as a WAY OF LIFE. Listing the NT scriptures that describe acts of Giving & Receiving is not practical—there are just too many. But reading the Bible from that perspective will shine a whole new light on Scripture by revealing what Jesus meant when He said, “I am **the way**, the truth, and **the life**”² because His way and the life IS Giving & Receiving. To understand how it works, examine the way of giving:

ACTS 20:35 “... And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘**It is more blessed to give than to receive.**’ ”

Being blessed to give is always preferable to receiving because no one wants to have needs and rely upon others. But what is God’s perspective? To be “more blessed” sounds as if the giver has more favor with God. Jesus said it is “**more blessed**” to give than receive; however, He does not say the one who gives is more *righteous*. Notice what God *expects* of the giver who is “more blessed:”

1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19 **Command those who are rich** in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but *trust* in the living **God, who gives us richly** all things to enjoy. 18 **Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share**, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on **eternal life**.

¹ Matt. 5:17-18.

² John 14:6.

Those who are blessed are COMMANDED by God to be “ready and willing” to share with others. This is conditional for eternal life! Moreover, God requires those who are blessed to give with gladness of heart:

2 CORINTHIANS 9:7 So **let each one give as he purposes in his heart**, not grudgingly or of necessity; for **God loves a cheerful [full of gladness] giver**.

Giving must not be with reluctance or resentment. Nor, as with the Pharisees, done out of necessity. Helping someone must be done joyfully because being “more blessed” by God comes with conditions. Paul continues:

2 CORINTHIANS 9:8 And **God is able to make all grace abound toward you [the rich], that you**, always having all sufficiency in all things, **may have an abundance for every good work**.

God says that HE *provides* the means to give so the abundance may not be taken away if someone is NOT a cheerful giver and seeks opportunities to do “good works” to those in need. This is similar to the warning to Esther:

ESTHER 4:13-14 And Mordecai told *them* to answer Esther: “**Do not think in your heart that you will escape** in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. 14 “For **if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place**, but you and your father’s house will perish. **Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?**”

If Queen Esther refused to speak to King Ahasuerus on behalf of the Jews, then God would destroy her and find another to deliver them. A giver who has been blessed with abundance to help others has the same warning. “God is able to make **all grace abound** toward” the giver, but He can just as easily to take it away. Being “more blessed” comes with a greater condemnation to those who refuse to “give as he is able”³ or they do it “grudgingly or of necessity.”⁴

God is constantly testing the hearts of His people. Giving should be a joy—not so that someone can be “more blessed,” but because the giver is an instrument of God to help the poor and afflicted. Jesus said, “**you have the poor with you always**,”⁵ but notice the rest of what He said:

MARK 14:7 For you have the poor with you always, and **you are able to do good for them whenever you desire**; ...

There it is. There will ALWAYS be those who are needy and God provides for them through the giving works of others. Could it be *that* is the REASON there will always be poor people among us? God provides the MEANS to give but the test is whether the giver will do so out of a DESIRE of the heart! Paul says it this way:

2 CORINTHIANS 9:9-13 As it is written: “**He [God] has dispersed [abundance] abroad [to some so that], He has given to the poor**; His righteousness endures

³ Deut. 16:17.

⁴ 2 Cor. 9:7.

⁵ Also Matt. 26:11.

forever.”⁶ 10 Now **may He who supplies** seed to the sower [*the giver*], and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have *sown* and **increase the fruits of your [the givers’] righteousness**, 11 while **you [the givers] are enriched in everything for all liberality [to give to the poor]**, which causes thanksgiving through us to God [*both the givers and the poor*]. 12 For **the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints**, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, 13 while, through the proof of this ministry, **they [the poor] glorify God** for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for **your liberal sharing with them [as givers]** and all *men*,

God “multiplies” what He gives to some for the very PURPOSE that they can provide for the poor and needy, not to enrich a few. It is GOD who does this so that the “**fruits** of righteousness” may be increased in the GIVER. The reason God enriches some is so that they can GIVE LIBERALLY and “**supply the needs of the saints.**”

What are the riches that God supplies? Could they be physical things (shelter, clothes, food, etc.) as well as money? Could they be riches of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles,⁷ a heart of encouragement and caring, or an ability to mediate offenses? God blesses a giver with those things necessary “for the **equipping** of the saints..., for the edifying of the body of Christ [*in agape love*],”⁸ to ensure that:

PHILEMON 1:7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because **the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you**, brother.

Yes, a giver is “more blessed” than the poor. But it is NOT because the giver is more righteous than the receiver. In truth, a greater responsibility is put upon the giver. The way of Giving & Receiving provides for ALL saints. At the same time it tests the hearts of those who will attain salvation. Take note:

ROMANS 15:1 Now **we who are strong [Gk. *dunatos* = capable] are obligated to support the ones who are weak, and not to please ourselves.**

Being “more blessed” to give is NOT to please oneself! GOD provides for the poor by multiplying “riches” of some to care for the needs of others. God gives to us FIRST so it is the result of agape love. Giving is always “**as [the giver] purposes in his heart**”⁹ so that God’s grace and abundance might be upon ALL the saints! Giving & Receiving is cornerstone of GIVING thanks to God! It is THE Way and THE Life!

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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⁶ Quoted from Ps. 112:9, which shows Giving & Receiving was a part of the OT as well.

⁷ 1 Cor. 12:7-11.

⁸ Eph. 4:12-16.

⁹ 2 Cor. 9:7.