

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

The previous Sabbath Thought discussed Giving & Receiving from the perspective of *givers*. As Paul said:

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-11 But this *I say*: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So **let each one give as he purposes in his heart**, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 **And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency [the minimum required] in all things, may have an abundance for every good work [not for themselves]**. 9 As it is written: “**He has dispersed [abundance] abroad, He has given to the poor [by supplying abundance to others]**; His righteousness endures forever.” 10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have *sown* and increase the fruits of your righteousness, 11 while **you are enriched in everything for all liberality [so you can give to the needy]**, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.

While it is “more blessed to give than to receive”¹, the blessings are in the form of abundance so it can be given to the needy. It is vital to note that verses 8-9 say that an ABUNDANCE IS FOR THE POOR OR NEEDY, not the person receiving it. It does NOT imply givers are more *righteous*. In truth, blessings upon the poor or needy are greater—much greater:

LUKE 6:20-21 Then He [*Jesus*] lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: “**Blessed are you poor**, For yours is the kingdom of God. 21 **Blessed are you who hunger now**, For you shall be filled. **Blessed are you who weep now**, For you shall laugh.

Jesus said that those who are poor, who lack food, and who are grieved are BLESSED. While it refers to both a spiritual and physical lack, these blessings are so much greater than physical abundance because they are the blessings of eternal life, of being richly satisfied, and joy and peace fulfilled. Those who receive, especially from God, have the greater blessings whether they are physical or spiritual.

So, why do the poor or needy exist? Some might think God not pleased with them. But is that true? Are they being punished? Do they lack faith or love? How should the poor or needy view themselves before God? And why do many have a reluctance to receive help from others? To begin answering these questions, first of all note what Jesus Christ said about BOTH givers and receivers:

MATTHEW 10:7-8 “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ 8 “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. **Freely you have received, freely give.**

Jesus commanded the disciples to FREELY give AND receive. The Greek word *freely* means undeservedly. Givers are not *deserving* of the abundance that they are to use to provide for the needs of others. Neither are the poor or needy *deserving* of those things they

¹ Acts 20:35.

receive because everything is from God, who provides the necessities of life for both the evil and the good². He also makes this promise to both:

MATTHEW 6:25, 33 “Therefore I say to you, **do not worry about your life**, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? ... 33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and **all these things shall be added to you**.

First of all, understand that Giving & Receiving is NOT a spiritual distinction between those who have *physical* abundance and those who are lacking. Is everyone complete in fruits of agape love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control³? Do those given physical abundance never need comforting, mercy, or compassion? Are they somehow more perfect? No! ALL are poor or needy before God in some regard. The parable of the Talents⁴ starts with GOD giving to the servants; therefore, *all* giving begins with Him. But what is our responsibility in all this? We must ASK!

MATTHEW 7:7-8 “**Ask [God], and it will be given to you**; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 “**For everyone who asks [God] receives**, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

When there is a lack or need—whether physical or spiritual—we are to pray in FAITH and ask God to provide. And Jesus gave us an unbreakable promise to do so:

JOHN 14:13-14 “And **whatever you ask in My [Jesus’] name, that I will do**, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 “**If you ask anything in My name, I will do it**.

This promise is mentioned NINE times⁵. In spite of that, when our prayers go seemingly unfulfilled, I have heard some people say, “sometimes God’s answer is ‘no’.” But is that true? Is that not a denial of Jesus’ PROMISE? Certainly our prayers are not answered if we “ask amiss”⁶ and there are situations that are “common to man”⁷ or of “time and chance”⁸. These may seem to be a denial of prayers; however, some things are just a part of this physical life. The fact that all MUST die does not mean God says ‘no’ to healing. Instead, God must defer some answers to prayer for the resurrection. But a delayed answer does not mean God says ‘no’ to ANY prayer. Did Paul believe that God would NEVER remove his “thorn in the flesh?”⁹ No! God *gave* to Paul that which he needed to be perfected so He COULD answer that prayer by raising him to eternal life. Will his ‘thorn’ continue in the Kingdom? Absolutely not! God cannot lie so Jesus *will* fulfill His PROMISE to Paul and everyone else. NO ONE—not one single person—will enter into the Kingdom without God fulfilling His promise to answer every righteous prayer from His people. So, God’s answer is NEVER ‘no’, it is ALWAYS ‘yes’ because He loves us. But waiting on God is why longsuffering¹⁰ is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit we are to have. This allows God to fulfill His work of perfecting us:

² Matt. 5:45.

³ Fruits of the Holy Spirit—Gal. 5:22.

⁴ Matt. 25:16-30.

⁵ Also Matt. 7:8; 21:22; Luke 11:10; John 15:16, 23, 24, 26.

⁶ Jas. 4:3.

⁷ 1 Cor. 10:13.

⁸ Eccl. 9:11.

⁹ 2 Cor. 12:7.

¹⁰ Also Rom. 8:28.

PHIL 2:13 for it is God who works [works take time] in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure [or PURPOSE].

2 THESSALONIANS 3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

All must patiently wait upon God¹¹ because His work in us requires time and, sometimes, suffering. But God answers righteous prayer—ALWAYS. Sometimes it takes time. They can be a direct miracle or, many times, come through brethren or strangers!

However, it seems many find it hard to receive answers to prayers if they are not directly from God. When they come through other people, there is a reluctance to receive it. No one denies God's direct intervention. But if we pray for help in times of grief or sorrow, do we reject the comfort of a brother or sister? Hopefully not. Many times there is reluctance to receive help from people who are often the instruments of God for answering a prayer. The preference is for God to directly intervene. Why is that? If there is no money to pay a bill, why is there a reluctance to receive it from a brother or sister? Are we expecting God to pull out His wallet? We call it a miracle when someone gets a raise or better paying job but it is also a miracle if extra money comes from a brother or sister. No one has ever received an envelope stuffed with cash having a return address of Mt. Zion in the Third Heaven. Still, it is harder to accept help when it comes through a brother or sister. Why? Because pride wants us to believe we become indebted to that person. But is not *everyone* indebted to God? Even those who have received an abundance *for* the poor?

God determined that the poor will be with us *always*; therefore, He also gives some an abundance (2 Cor. 9:8-9—FOR the poor, not themselves) for the very purpose of providing for them: "For **the poor shall never cease** out of the land: therefore **I [God] command thee**, saying, **Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy**, in thy land." (Deut. 15:11)¹². This was recorded in the OT, so it is a statute from the *beginning*. God provides some with an abundance to supply the poor or needy. Why, then, is it so hard to accept that God answers their prayer through others instead of directly from Him? Is not every answered prayer a miracle regardless of who was involved? Everyone is expected to do what they can to provide for themselves but sometimes it just is not enough. So, if we ask God for help, why is it reluctantly received when He works through others to answer it?

Sometimes healings fall into the principle of Giving & Receiving. There are many differing views regarding physicians but nowhere in the Bible are they condemned. There are about a dozen cases of medical treatment in the Bible¹³. While physicians could not heal Asa's foot disease¹⁴ or the woman with an issue of blood¹⁵, Jesus acknowledged the healing abilities of physicians¹⁶. Can physicians heal everything? No, they still cannot heal a common viral cold. Is there a lack of faith if a physician is involved? Again, no. In fact, Asa's situation clearly shows that seeking God can make all the difference in the results from a physician. Is it a lack of faith in God's promise if He answers a prayer through the hands of a physician? No, that is no different than a prayer that is answered by someone giving money to pay a bill. In fact, the ability to heal is a *gift* of God¹⁷. Are gifts only given

¹¹ Ps. 5:5; 59:9; 62:1, 5; 69:3; 123:2; Isa 25:9; 64:4; Jer. 14:22; Hos. 12:6; Mic. 7:7; Rom. 8:19.

¹² Also Matt. 26:11; et al.

¹³ Isa. 1:6; Jer. 8:22; Ezek. 47:12; Luke 10:34; 1 Tim. 5:23; Jas. 5:14

¹⁴ 2 Chr. 16:12.

¹⁵ Mark 5:26-27; Luke 8:43-44.

¹⁶ Matt. 9:12; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31.

¹⁷ 1 Cor. 12:9, 28, 30.

to those in the Body of Christ? No. Many possessed their gifts before conversion. But even if a physician can help, sometimes a person cannot afford their services. If God answers a prayer for healing and it involves a physician, God can also provide the means to pay for it if necessary. This is no different than when someone asks God for food and another person buys it for them. It is all part of Giving & Receiving.

The point of this is not to convince anyone they must seek medical intervention or to call their faith into question. It is to emphasize that many times God answers prayer through *people*—including physicians who are often avoided in times of need. Someone who asks God for healing does so in faith—whether or not that includes help from a physician. Physicians can do many incredible things today but ONLY GOD CAN GUARANTEE THE OUTCOME. (I realize also that traditional medicine is sometimes NOT the answer.)

God provides for BOTH the giver and receiver for the purpose of good works and so that ALL give thanks to Him! He *gives* to both—HOW and WHEN He does so is up to Him. The bottom line is that God established Giving & Receiving as a statute for important purposes:

2 CORINTHIANS 9:11-13 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*,

Giving & Receiving is an Administrative Service established by God as the means by which HE provide for the needs of the Body of Christ. Blessings of gifts and abundance are for the sole purpose of serving and providing for OTHERS. This Administrative Service “**not only supplies the needs of [ALL] the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God.**” Giving & Receiving is an Administration Service for the perfecting of the saints:

ISAIAH 57:15 For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “**I dwell** in the high and holy *place*, **With him who has a contrite and humble spirit**, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Only those who are CONTRITE (repentant) and HUMBLE will be God’s eternal children. BOTH givers and receivers require a contrite and humble spirit for Giving & Receiving to function as intended by God!

Giving & Receiving is an Administrative Service ordained and established by God as a means for perfecting His works of growing agape love in us!
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God chooses who has abundance and who is poor or needy. Whichever state we are in is not a measure of righteousness. As in all things, it is according to His will, which is for His works in us to bring us all unto perfection as His children. Giving & Receiving is The Way and The Life that are the foundation of eternity with Him. And, whether through abundance or poverty, all have opportunities to give thanks to God our Father and Jesus our Lord!

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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