

## THE GRACE OF RECEIVING

In Acts 20 we learn that Paul was at Miletus, from which he summoned the elders of the church at Ephesus for a farewell address. In verses 33-35 he says:

"I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Paul here reminds the elders at Ephesus of the grace of giving. "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

But in order to give, we must first have something. Paul says that he had something because he worked for it with his own hands. In this way he supplied his own needs, the needs of his companions in ministry, and the weak and the poor. He did not have something to give by greedily desiring (i.e., coveting) what other people had, but by working hard.

Paul displayed the grace of giving by earning something, and then giving it freely to those who were in need. In this he mirrored the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, having earned eternal salvation, gave it to us freely when we were in desperate need. We know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich. In His incarnation He gave up what was rightfully His, and in His atonement He took what He earned at such great cost and gave it to us freely by His grace.

Giving to those who do not have, without asking them to earn it, is indeed an expression of grace, and in that sense we can speak of the grace of giving.

However, although it is more blessed to give than to receive,