



Sunday, February 7, 2021  
Pastor Don Denyes

## **Intro to Acts 20:35**

There are many things about the Christian life that are paradoxes. The way to live is to die. The way to be exalted is to humble yourself. The way to be rich is to give. Now, these are paradoxes because on the surface they appear to be absurd or ridiculous. However, when you carefully examine them in light of the realities described in the Bible, they become more sensible than the alternatives.

The last of those three (the idea that the way to be rich is to give) is perhaps one that strikes us most deeply. In a sense, the others are more abstract. Concepts like “dying to self” and “humbling yourself” are more matters of the heart than anything. No one can see those things taking place, and we often can’t see them in ourselves. But the idea of giving strikes us deeply because we feel the opportunity cost of giving our money away.

However, the realities of the Bible make it clear that material wealth is just that—material. And if there is one thing we know about this material world, it is that it is passing away. One day, there will be a new material world—a New Earth. But our existence on that earth will not correspond to our bank account in this one. You can’t buy your way into heaven. So, we must take God at His word, living contentedly here and now, but giving as much away as we can so that we will certainly prosper in the life to come.

## **Context**

This is Paul’s last speech to the Ephesian church. Paul had spent a lot of time with them. In fact, he spent more time with that church than any other. It was a wealthier church, and so Paul knew that in his final interaction with them, he had to exhort them to not place their trust in wealth, but in God, who richly provides everything we need.

**Read and Reflect** *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Acts 20:35; Rom. 8:32; Luke 6:38; 2 Cor. 8:9

“Happiness according to Jesus”

Giving Reflects the Nature of God

Giving Accomplishes the Work of God

Giving Brings to Us the Blessing of God

## Discuss

- 1) In what ways does our financial giving reflect the nature of God?
  
- 2) Pastor Don quoted Gordon MacDonald saying, “We as human beings have a God-inspired desire for the generous life.” Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Why?
  
- 3) Pastor Don also said, “Churches are evaluated not by what they take in, but by what they give out.” Of course, what matters most is God’s evaluation, not men. What kinds of things do you think the Lord is looking for in a church when He makes His evaluation?
  
- 4) If you got a raise, do you think your first inclination would be to increase your standard of living or increase your level of giving? Why do you think that?
  
- 5) What kinds of blessings have you experienced when you give to the Lord’s work (either the local church or to other needs or ministries)?