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SERMON

PREACHED BY MR L S B HYDE

AT

'SALEM' CHAPEL, CARSHALTON

Text  
Acts 20, verse 35

Sunday afternoon  
8th August 1982

I have shewed you all things, how that so  
labouring ye ought to support the weak, and  
to remember the words of the Lord Jesus,  
how he said, It is more blessed to give  
than to receive.

How much notice do we take of the Lord Jesus and His words? If we took more notice of Him and of His words, might it not be that our lives would be very different from what they are? The Apostle here exhorts those people at Ephesus and also the generations of the people of God since those days, to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, 'how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.' We need those precious words to be brought to our attention, because sometimes we may be tempted to think that we have done enough. But if we read through the life of our Lord Jesus, shall we ever find anything to encourage us to believe there were times when He said: I have done enough? We read of Him being wearied, in the 4th chapter of John, when He sat on the well. But though He was weary, in His body, yet He was not too weary to speak to a poor, wretched woman of Samaria. What an example the Lord Jesus Himself gave, and surely, since none of the words of Jesus were empty words, we may say that He felt what He had spoken, that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

This was a solemn time with the Apostle. He had ministered to the Ephesians for upwards of three years, and had not failed to declare unto them the whole counsel of God. We ought to consider that his presence amongst those people at Ephesus was to a large extent continuous. He did not occasionally

speak to them; indeed we might even suggest that his preaching was comparatively little compared to the time that he might have been privately speaking to the people that came to him with their enquiries and with their anxieties. Now, in the opening of our text he says: I have shewed you all things. He had shewed them the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and he had shewed them the experience of the doctrine in the hearts of the people of God. Now in just a few words he shews us the precept that will confirm that we have both learned the doctrine and had the experience of it: 'I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak.' We may look at many of the precepts of the Scriptures, and some of them might even encourage us, because what we have done is so right and so proper, and we might even think that it is exalting our Lord Jesus Christ; and may be it is, but we have a word before us which would be most taxing to our natural mind. Certainly that would find no attraction in supporting the weak. But if we look at the Apostle's words in the Epistle to the Romans, we find that one chapter opens with these very words: 'We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.' Now listen to the words that are recorded concerning Jesus Christ: 'For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.'

So then, the Apostle continued in this line of things, for here he sets this before the people of Ephesus: 'I have shewed you all things.' In shewing them all things, they all seem to converge to one point - 'how that so labouring, ye ought to support the weak.' But then, if we are to support the weak, we will need to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, 'how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Well, it is generally thought that the strong win, and it is a well-known expression that the weak go to the wall. But I say, where would we be, some of us, if the Lord Jesus had followed that

5

kind of line and had said: 'You are weak, and therefore you go to the wall; we will pass you by and take our men and women from those that are strong in the faith. Where would some of us be? But we are attracted to that word:

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On thy kind arms I fall,  
Be thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my all.

764

How that connects up with the word here - 'so labouring ye ought to support the weak.' Has God supported us? You know, we shall be sympathetic to others as we have been in certain conditions ourselves. If we have not been in certain conditions ourselves, even though we may attempt to sympathise, yet our sympathy is but in word and virtually empty.

Now, if we have felt weak in spirit, weak in faith, then we shall understand those that are also weak in faith. It may be that we shall regard the patience of some toward us in those days when we have been weak, and when we have been supported by the words that they have spoken and the prayers that they have offered. If we should look at these words in a spiritual way - ye ought to support the weak - then it will only be done as a result of spiritual exercise. We cannot convey strength ourselves, whatever that strength may refer to, for it is God that giveth strength. The Apostle himself knew something about weakness, and he tells us about it in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. In that remarkable experience of his, when he was caught up into the third heaven and had wonderful views of the things in heaven, so wonderful that he could not begin to describe them in human language, he says: 'And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.' This was because of the abundance of the revelation. Now if we are left to ourselves, and we have wonderful revelations of divine truth, then it can only do one thing, and that is to puff us up; we shall be looking down upon others and we shall be despising the weak. Paul would have been in just the same position, but it was not the purpose of God that Paul, though favoured, should lord it over others; no. It was important

that Paul himself should be weak. When we think of the Apostle preaching before the people we think of him, do we not, as a man of remarkable stature, of splendid oratory and wonderful persuasion, having a remarkable success in his labours. But that is our carnal thinking. What does he say of himself? 'And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.'

Now during this period that Paul was in Ephesus not only did he preach with his lips, but he preached with his walk; he preached by the things that he did as well as the things that he said. Thus he summed up the whole matter: 'I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring' not just talking, not just debating, but 'so labouring ye ought to support the weak.' In another of his Epistles he refers to the labour of love, and the patience of hope, and the work of faith. So that - 'so labouring' - there is a labour of love in supporting the weak. You will need a lot of love to support the weak. We do not have to become aged before we become weak and need support. Then there are those lambs in the fold that need to be supported. We are to support them as God may help us, with encouraging words, but more particularly through prayer and supplication unto God. The church that prospers is the church that supports the weak by prayer.

There was a reason for the weakness in the Corinthian church. There were many weak and many sickly among them, and this was because they were entangled with those things which contributed to a bad spiritual state. What labouring will be required, and how much grace will be required to labour that ye might support the weak! There is nothing that is more calculated to weaken any soul than going astray. We can so easily read these words: 'I have gone

astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant.' If we just take the natural example of a lost sheep going astray, if we could get a glimpse of its heart, I believe we should see there is a deep sense of anxiety and agitation, and maybe we would discover there is a loss of weight, or there would be those things which show it is no easy thing to go astray. If we have gone astray, even like a lost sheep, then we shall need someone to have compassion on us. We read about the lost sheep in the parable, and of how the shepherd went after that lost sheep. What did he do? He engaged in the very thing that is before us now, 'how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.' When the shepherd found that sheep he picked it up and put it upon his shoulder; he rejoiced over the sheep that was lost. He realized what weakness the sheep was feeling because of its straying. Straying, of necessity, must bring on weariness. One says: 'Weary of wandering from the Lord, and now made willing to return.' But a weary person, because of weariness, will have no strength to return. What is to be done then? What is to be done amongst ourselves? Are we concerned about the wandering sheep returning? A minister was speaking to me a little while since about his concern among the churches. He said: "It seems to me that people are quite willing to discipline some of their members, and then they leave and go away. There is no following up; they are just left; yes, they are just left." Well, is this supporting the weak? Surely we may ask ourselves: What would the Lord have done under these circumstances? They are people to whom you may once have felt a union, you were persuaded that the grace of God was in them; but now they have gone away. Was it a sorrow that you had to administer some discipline? And did they continue straying? Are they still straying? Well, 'I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak.' Is there any prayer for those people, is there any desire that they might be restored, is there any concern that they may come amongst you again? Why I should be saying this this afternoon I cannot tell.

You may be saying: But we cannot do it. Remember. O, how we shall

8

have to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, 'how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.' The Apostle says: 'I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought - ' That is a very positive word, ought, to support the weak. Now we can well imagine that this is something which you will say you cannot do. "I have not sufficient grace, I have not sufficient strength." No, then the exhortation is for us to 'remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.' You know, a sight of our Lord Jesus in His life and in His walk, and the words that He spoke, if the Lord gives you a glimpse of it, it will put strength into you and you will be willing to support the weak, whatever that may mean.

Now, we have spoken about a person that has backslidden and strayed away, but what about the young in the faith? You see, sometimes there are those people who cannot seem to come to any good settlement concerning their own estate before God; and this requires a great deal of patience. They are young in the faith, and the word of God tells us that we are not to despise these people or cast them <sup>to</sup> one side. 'Him that is weak in the faith,' says Paul to the Romans, 'receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.' When we come to this point, of receiving any person, let us bear this in mind if we are come to a point of saying: I don't know what to think! <sup>Let</sup> us consider this - would the Lord have received him?

This just brings to my mind an incident that happened many years ago at one of our churches in London. A woman came before the church and gave her testimony, but after the church had heard it they said: No, we think you ought to wait a little while. So the woman waited and then she came again. The same thing was said to her. Then she came the third time and gave her personal witness; and the church said: No, we cannot receive you. As she was about to leave their assembly she said: "Well, friends, if you cannot receive me, the Lord has received me." The godly pastor immediately said: "Come in, woman. If the Lord has received you, who are we that we should not receive you?" 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations,' mark you, not with a

7

big question mark, but receive them wholly, truly and fully. 'For one believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand.' How often we forget that, yes, how often we forget that! We say that a person is weak and we cannot rely upon that person, for we say that he seems to be competent today and not so competent tomorrow so we are not quite sure where we are, for we cannot put any confidence in him. Here is our natural mind working and contravening every commandment, for God has said that ye ought to support the weak, not to despise the weak in faith, but receive him.

So then, if we are at a point this afternoon, may the Spirit of God cause us to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, 'how he said.' Now you know, this makes a big difference, 'how he said,' because these are the words of Him that cannot lie, so a great deal depends upon 'How he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Now many right words have been said in a wrong way. We may make this point in relation to this - how He said. Many may have spoken truthful words, but the spirit has been wrong. That is not the way to speak to one who is weak and needs to be supported. Perhaps our temperament is such that we would be ready to speak harshly and impatiently, but let us consider these words: 'How He said.' Has God ever spoken to you? I am sure He has to some of you. How did He speak to you? I say, how did He speak to you? Then bring back the tone of His voice, so to speak. Was there not love in it? Was there not tenderness in His voice, was there not compassion which was conveyed? Did you not feel that: 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.' 'Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Now, we would look a little more closely at this, and make application to our own cases: It is more blessed to give than to receive. In the prophecy of

Isaiah we read: 'The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.' It is good to have a liberal mind in the things of God. The Lord Jesus Christ was liberal in His teaching, and that liberality is expressed in things like this: 'Whoso cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' Now, you know that if anyone comes to us, then it means that we have got to give something. It does not necessarily mean that we have got to give something financially, but it does mean that we have to give something of ourselves to them. Now, constantly keeping Jesus Christ in view and remembering, not so much what He said, although that is important, but how He said: it is more blessed to give than to receive. Then if you look at the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, He gave much. Do you think He was blest in it, or do you think He did it because He had to? There is nothing in the Scriptures to support that idea; but when we come down to fallen men and women, how many things that are done are done under a measure of duress, rather than as a result of love and affection! But whatever the Lord Jesus Christ does and gives to a sinner, it is out of love; it is not done out of duress. We would have an entirely wrong view of the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ if we thought that at any time He did anything which was motivated by anything else but love.

Now, have you received anything from Jesus Christ, has He bestowed His blessing upon you? Then how did you feel about it? If He has spoken to you, how did He say it? Have you any other view of Him than that He spoke to you in love? In Isaiah 40 we read: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem.' In the margin it says: Speak ye to her heart. If God speaks to your heart, you know your heart will be touched, it must be touched, and you will feel the Lord's own heart going out to you, and feel a responding in your soul. How much love there is in that! 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Before we can really have an entry into this precept it will be necessary for us to have a clear and blessed view of the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilling His great word: It is more blessed to give than to receive. Doubtless the Lord received much kindness when He was here upon earth



because certainly there were those that loved Him. But what did He give? He gave what can only be described as the supreme sacrifice, He gave His life to be a ransom for many. Listen to what He says, It is more blessed to give than to receive, and therefore He speaks of it as the joy that was set before Him, the result of His having given more than He could ever receive, He gave His own life for the ransom, for the redemption of His Body, the church. 'It is more blessed to give.' Listen, and O, that we could feel the heart-beats of our Lord Jesus Christ in saying that, because it was not half-hearted. The work that God did was fully and deeply impressed upon His own heart.

How willing was Jesus to die,  
That we fellow-sinners might live! 159

Now it is more blessed to give than to receive, but to whom did the Lord give? Well, the whole church of God must of necessity be described as weak because they had no power to save themselves. They were completely weakened by their own sin and they could not keep the law of God. How are we going to support the weak? How did the Lord Jesus support the weak? Well, He took their case entirely in hand.

When Jesus undertook  
To rescue ruined man,  
The realms of bliss forsook,  
And to relieve us ran. 448

What a demonstration of this word is here: It is more blessed to give than to receive. You see, the Lord Jesus gave Himself, His all. It must be so, because we read: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.' What did Jesus do for you? Did He lay down His life for you because you were His friend? 'When we were yet in our sins, Christ died for the ungodly.' I have been thankful for that word, and perhaps some of you have, that Christ died for the ungodly, when we were yet in our sins. Had we been living at the time of the Lord Jesus we should have been amongst those that with loud acclaim said, Away with this Man, away with this Man, let Him be crucified. O what weakness, and what destruction did Israel then desire! That destruction has come about <sup>through</sup> their unbelief, through enmity, and not only through what might be

called agnosticism, but infidelity. "We will not have this Man to reign over us." When those people said that, and you know, you have said it too, they were ignorant that He was the Saviour of the world, the only One Who could save their souls from utter destruction. They said: Away with Him.

Now, if we have been in that place where we have said: "Away with Him; we will not have this Man to reign over us;" and He has said - and notice if you can feel how He said it: It is more blessed to give than to receive. He gave His life, <sup>in</sup> ~~not~~ because the people said: Die for us. O no; but it was because He loved the people and because He was willing. He loved His people so much that He gave His life as a ransom for many. The Spirit of God was honoured in it, that the children of God might receive that which God gives, which is eternal life. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

If you should be concerned about giving, on any account, this afternoon, remember that whatever we receive from God is a gift. 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' Knowing this, and having been persuaded of the performance of these words of the Almighty, and that constantly, may we not seek grace that we may follow in this precept, to support the weak? You know, the hymn says that the people of God in themselves are weak as worms, so 'how can poor believers stand?' And yet they do stand. Do you feel that you are a weak believer? Then how do you stand? If you stand it is because 'He lends an unseen hand, and gives a secret prop,' and causes you to stand. 'Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand.' In your experience, have you found that to be true, that God is able to make you stand? Perhaps some of you have had hosts of enemies rising up, and you have felt that you would never be able to stand. Job said: 'Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me.' Well, what is that? 'Remember,' reminding you of the words of the Lord Jesus, 'how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.' And so the Lord gives freely of His grace, of His wisdom, of His strength, and that enables you to stand.

Now God knows all our needs, and He knows what He has to give. The amount He gives to His children we cannot begin to measure, can we? Just think of your temporal benefits, can you begin to measure what God has given to you? Then may we hear these words: It is more blessed to give than to receive. If you get a view of the Lord's mercies, that they are new every morning, and great is His faithfulness, will it not be some strength to you when God says: Support the weak? You might say: "Well, I am a weak person, and God has supported me."

Upheld by thy supporting hand,  
We pass, O Lord, from year to year. 1116

Yes, we are supported. The christian's hope may sometimes be assailed, but how is it that your hope does not fail?

Huge sorrows meet us as we go,  
And devils aim our overthrow;  
But vile infernals can't prevail;  
The Christian's hope shall never fail. 245

A great deal is contained in these words: Support the weak. The Lord is continually doing that for His children, and as we are called upon to be helpers together with Him in the church of God, may we remember that 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Now if God should give us strength, we receive it; if He should give us grace, we shall receive it; and O, what a benefit to us to be able to do those things which will glorify His great Name, and honour Him in all things! 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Now just let us look at it from another point. What have we received of the Lord? Have we received His approbation? Have we received the witness in our own spirit that he that believeth hath the witness in himself, that he is a believer, or she is a believer? Then again, have we received the love of God into our hearts?

If once the love of Christ we feel  
Upon our hearts impressed,  
The mark of that celestial seal  
Can never be erased. 344

You know, if we have any love to God, it is because we received that love from God. Have we received it? Has that love been shed abroad in our hearts, so that we have been patient under tribulation and willing to endure all things for His sake? Have we received this, and more, a good hope through grace? I say, a good hope through grace. What is this? The hymn puts it like this:

Let the sweet hope that thou art mine,  
My life and death attend;  
Thy presence through my journey shine,  
And crown my journey's end.

1010

Have we received that? And have you been tempted to give it up, because you might feel there are so many things that come against it? "My hands are too weak to hold it." And yet you do hold it, because you cannot give it up. You can never give up the hope that God may have compassion upon you. 'And if no grace the Lord will grant, I must lie down and die.' Then there is also this, that since Christ is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, 'I'll not despair, for who can tell?' Say, my soul, why not for thee? These various things, then, are all ingredients in the hope that God gives. Since it is written that 'this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' then, "as I am a sinner, may I not hope in God?" 'Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him,' said the Psalmist, when he was in the depths of trouble. It is more blessed to give than to receive; so as we have received something from God, it is now our turn to give. And what shall we do? One passage in Scripture says: 'Give honour where honour is due.' Have we given honour to God, in respect of the things that we have received? Can we say with the Apostle: Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day. Well then, we have received something; but have we told anybody about it? Doubtless, if you told the ungodly, the uninitiated, they would look at you very strangely. But David says: 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.' In other words, what He has given me, what I have been able to receive. "I want to give

honour to God, so therefore, come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." As we have it elsewhere, how He has had compassion on me.

Now, if you say: "But how can I come? I could not think of it." Well, the word says: 'I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak; remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.' There is a word in the Book of Ezra which is very helpful and instructive in this important matter. In the 10th chapter, we read in the fourth verse: Arise. Now if God says, Arise, it means that He will give power to arise. Think of the man, the beggar, in the gate Beautiful, when Peter said to him: 'Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have I give thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.' In Ezra we have this word: 'Arise: for this matter belongeth unto thee; we also will be with thee; be of good courage, and do it.' It belongeth unto thee, whoever that might be this afternoon. But you might say: Well, I am standing alone. Let us look at the words of our text: 'I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak.' This is what the church says: We also will be with thee. It is a wonderful thing to have the support of others, isn't it? But this is what He has commanded to others, to support the weak. 'This matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it.' If there should be many fears arising in your heart, then remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, as well as what He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. 'Freely ye have received, freely give.'

Amen.

