

# “Give and It Shall Be Given Unto You”

By Chris Ulrich

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Thank you. Please remain standing; Phil is going to come up and lead us in a word of prayer for the sermon.

Phil: Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we pray that You would bless and anoint the messenger this morning as he brings forth Your Word, and that it would minister to the hearers who have many needs. We just pray that the message this morning would be anointed, and that it would spiritually feed people here, and that we would all focus on receiving what You have for us to receive, today, Lord Jesus. In Your holy, righteous name, we thank You, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Thank you. You may be seated.

So, our theme this month has been a few different verses from the Book of First Peter, chapter four, and it's right up here in front of everybody.

**1 Peter 4:8-10** *And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

This message had three points:

- 1 We can all give something
- 2 We're not in competition with each other
- 3 God will reward us

This might sound kind of strange way to start a sermon, especially as the opening statement, but Christianity is not for everyone. I'm not saying that God couldn't save everyone, He certainly could, but we had a Bible study recently, and it was about faith, and there is a verse in the Book of Thessalonians that says, "... for all men have not faith." (2 Thessalonians 3:2) So it's true that Christianity is not for everybody because not everybody does have faith, even though it says in Hebrews that God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him, but without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). But, I'm going to take it a step further, by saying that, not only are there people in the world who don't have any faith, but there's people who don't have any desire to give. Give in a ministering capacity of their talents, of their friendship, of their hospitality, of their money, and whatever other ways we can give because I know there are more. I'm not saying these are bold proclamations, I'm just saying that when we look around we see a lot of selfishness in the world. And that's one thing that you made a point of, in your sermon, weeks ago, Parrish. And it seems like it's become like a plague, and it's just spreading everywhere. So, why is that? To be honest, I don't have a one-word answer or a one-statement explanation, but suffice it to say that morally and spiritually speaking we live in a corrupt society, we live in a corrupt world. Iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold (Matthew 24:12). I mean, these are things that we learn in our foundation in God. I'm just going to say that, having said all that, and it seems to be worsening, it doesn't sound like encouraging news, does it? Well, fortunately that's not the end of the story. Maybe ministering and giving isn't for everyone but it sure is for some.

**2 Corinthians 9:1-7** *For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia*

*was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness. But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

So, he that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, but he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.

## **1st Point – We Can All Give Something**

For many of us that remember, last summer we had a Founder's Day celebration and I know there were some different messages given but, I know that one that really stood out to me was titled, "All In." How many remembers that from last year? So whether it's a business venture, or embarking on a new relationship, or going on an expedition somewhere, or travel abroad, the world is full of opportunities to take chances. But the message of being "All In" was about laying down our life for the gospel and the humble beginnings that this ministry was founded on, about pooling our resources, about getting together—and I'm not talking socialism. I mean, I know that there are things that you can look at, and there's a reflection of governments that are modeled after Christianity; I mean, that's the truth, but, when it comes right down to it, left, or right, or somewhere in the middle, it's democracy or communism, or socialism, or whatever it is, God's Word is God's Word. And we have to respect that. We can't look at it like, "Oh, we'll just twist it around and make it suit our own agenda, or make it fit our own personal direction. We have to get on board with what God's Word is, it's not the other way around. We don't adjust it and tweak it and change it around... I know that's something we talked about quite a bit last month, about changing the Word of God. It can't be done; we'd be foolish if we tried, because even the very, very last verses in the Bible, in Revelation, the very last chapter, it talks about if any would add to, God would add to him the plagues that are written in this Book (Revelation 22:18), and, if any man takes away, God will take our name out of the Book of Life (Revelation 22:19). Now, I get that there's people who, "Oh, I don't care; it doesn't make a big difference." It makes a difference to me, and I believe it makes a difference to us, us that take the Word seriously. Now, I get that we are not facing insurmountable challenges every day of our life, because there are times when we enjoy the fruit and peace of our labor I God. But let's not forget that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and the power of wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12), and that's something that's been ongoing since the beginning of time. Now, think about this, you wouldn't have thought that the iniquity that is permeating would be the first two children of the first two people, Cain and Abel. I mean, if you look at that account, Cain slew Abel. I mean, you're talking about right off the bat, something happened that you know Satan had his claws in people very early on. But, you know what? We do have an escape. We do have a way of getting out of here, and that's trusting in God. And, there are evil forces that are vying for our soul and the Bible tells us that Satan is as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour. Do you believe that today? It's without a shadow of a doubt it's a spiritual force that exists. The Bible talks about the world is framed by the Word of God, and things which are made are not made of things which do appear (Hebrews 11:3). So, it's like, behind the curtain. I mean, behind this existence, behind this atmosphere that we're in, there is a spiritual existence. And, I know that we know that, but it's a matter of trusting in God and continuing to retain that as we go through life.

So, what does that have to do with giving? Well, how much do you like giving? How much do I like giving? It takes an effort to be able to give, and a heart to be able to sustain that. And, even in worship—we just had some worship time—it takes an effort. I mean, we can't just flop in, like, "Oh, I'm here entertain me." You know what I mean? It's like, I appreciate that effort, because, even when we were talking about the talents, there was a ministering—and we're going to get into that. This is about ministering. I woke up this morning, and I had put together a lot of things in the last week and a half, you know, looked at it again, looked at it again, did some tweaking, and the first thing God dealt with me—I believe laid on my heart was, "It's about ministering. This is about ministering." I said, "Thank You, God," got up, wrote it down, came in, made some more adjustments, but, I mean, there's always a matter of looking at it like, okay... Now, if you don't like ministry, we're in the wrong place. That's an honest-to-God fact. If you don't like giving, then we're going to reap sparingly. We're not going to get much out of it, and where does our soul stand then? I don't want to take that chance. I don't want to just, "Cheap, cheap, cheap, cheap, cheap, cheap," and that's all I'm going to do with God, I'll just give as little as possible in whatever capacity it is. I'm not talking about the convenient type of giving that's easy. Just showing up to church is something; it is, but there's more to it than that. There's more to it than just coming. And, I'm talking about sacrifices in the way we live, in the time we spend in prayer and reading, in the choices we make putting God first, in the places we live, in our service to one another, and in our financial decisions. No, we can't out-give God and I think everybody here understands that. But are you glad to be able to give, today? To be able to give something. Because that is the first point, that we can all give something. Because, after all, God loves a cheerful giver.

## 2nd Point – We're Not in Competition with Each Other

**2 Corinthians 10:12-18** *For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.*

Jim and Yvette, it's good to see you today, and Roger, it's good to have you up here from Florida.

So, we're not to compare ourselves with each other. This might sound like another sort of unusual statement to make but here it goes, "We're not in a race to the bottom, and we're not in a race to the top of the heap in the ministry." What I mean by that is, we're not here to try to say, "Okay, I'm looking to just take over, and be able to call the shots." And when I say, "we're," I mean us, and that needs to be the overriding mentality among all of us. In fact, Christ said Himself, "He that is greatest among you will be your servant." So it's not some glory road where the top dog's getting the big paycheck, and, it's just, you know, all the minions down below, and, you know... I'll be honest with you, a lot of people that do start businesses—and this isn't about getting into all that, but—a lot of times those early days of a business, or whatever it is—Jim, you own your own business—I mean, it's not always, like, fun and games, right? I mean, there's a lot of legwork and follow-up, and, you know, deal with customers, and all that kind of thing. Ken, you've got your own business. I mean, it's not just like, "I just want to stand up here and bark orders at people." It doesn't work like that. It just doesn't work like that. On the other end of

the spectrum, we're not looking to see who can grovel the best, and have the appearance of, "Oh, I'm the most humble and willing to do the worst sacrifice the most, or be willing to make the most unreasonable sacrifices, usually for the purpose of making some kind of outward statement. "Oh, I'll just quit my job, and let somebody else take my car, just for the glory of God. Or, nobody else will give in the offering so I'll just throw in everything, including the kitchen sink, for the glory of God. Or, nobody's going to visit somebody in the hospital, I'll just go up there with a chip on my shoulder..." A million times until they get sick of you, and then it's like, "But I visited them!" But what kind of attitude did you have going in? That's when it's, like, it's about ministering, not about competing. It's not about, like, trying to go off on somebody, "You did what? That wasn't—" "No, it isn't about that. It's not a competition. Competing with one another can sometimes lead to irrational behavior. What we need to understand is that we have a common goal, there are enough blessings to go around, and Heaven is big enough for all of us. And Heaven is big enough for us all. It's not a matter of looking at it like, okay, I know the Bible says, "Covet earnestly the best gifts, yet show I unto you a more excellent way," (1 Corinthians 12:31) so, in case you were thinking of that, that's still not competing with each other. Coveting the best gifts, those are from God. If we do something, and we live a life, dedicated in holiness, and God sees fit to say, "I'm going to give this person the gift of teaching," or, "...helping." The fit of helps is a very underestimated gift. Because, you know why? Because you're getting your hands dirty. I mean, it's not glamorous it's not one of those where it's like, "Oh, yeah, yeah, I'm up here," or something. It's like doing dishes, or answering the phones, or like changing a transmission, or like sweeping the floor. Grunge work, they call it. But we have to be willing to even do those things, sometimes.

**Matthew 6:1-4** *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.*

I've got to admit, I had to look in the Concordance for a good definition of the word "alms" because, quite honestly, I've read through that passage a lot, but, this isn't a word or a term that's used very often anymore. I mean, how many used the word, 'alms,' yesterday in conversation? I know I didn't. I mean, even reading it, it's like... "Yeah, but this week, I'm going to go give alms, so..." "I'm going to go to alms..." It just doesn't... But I had to look it up, it just means an act of generosity to someone in serious need, often referring to giving gifts of substance or money. It's true that we can't be private about everything I mean, sometimes people are going to see things. And, a lot of times, those things, even if they aren't done in public, I mean, how are you going to hide it? But, it's an important part of ministering, and, yet, it's never about boasting of ourselves, or thinking that our righteousness is of ourselves, because it isn't. It never is, it never was, it never will be, and a couple of us were talking yesterday, we were talking about giving glory to God, or giving credit to God; it's the same thing. It's—glory to God, we see that in the Bible a lot, about, the glory is of the Lord. But you hear, a lot of times, today, like, the term credit, like, "Yeah, I gave credit to my dad," or, "I gave credit to, like, my employer," or, "I give credit to this person for winning an academy award," or whatever. Things like that, you know. But it is a matter of giving credit to God, or glory to God, no matter what the situation, no matter what the circumstances are. And, no matter how many acts of generosity that we're on the giving end, or that we accomplish, it's not a competition, and it's always a matter of giving credit to God.

### 3rd Point – God Will Reward Us

I think I can speak for most of us when I say that it feels good to be able to do something nice for someone, as it does to be on the receiving end as well. I recently lost my grandmother and I know, in many ways, that does seem kind of weird to say, and I've shared that, because I'm 48 and she was 91, so this wasn't a tragedy, like—and, thank God, it wasn't a long drawn-out illness, either. I know, a lot of us here, have lost their parents, or one of their parents, or siblings, that are close to my age, and my heart goes out to them. So, it's not a matter of looking at it like, "Wow, this is just, you know, I'm just floored, or I'm devastated..." Even my mom, she was like, "We knew that was going to come." But, be that as it may, I can't say thank you enough for those that did express condolences, and gave me cards, and well-wishes, and thoughts and prayers and love offerings. My mom and uncle had asked me to do the eulogy, and I had never done that before, but I definitely sought the face of God about it. And I feel like it went well, and I give credit to God for that. I feel like there are memories that I have, a lot of good memories. Now, I have to share this, because I give credit to God, I mean, you can't sit there and—I think sometimes when somebody gives us a compliment, how do you receive it? Do you say, "Thank you?" "Thank God?" whatever way you do it, it's not like, there's kind of a fine line, but, just after the end of the eulogy, my mom went to high school with a couple that are still together after fifty-two years or whatever, and she's originally from the country of Latvia he's from Maryland. So, they've been good friends of the family for a long, long time, and I stayed with my parents at their house while we were there. But, one thing that I did learn is that, a lot of times, in that type of event, it's a lot about people just sharing memories, and being willing to come up and share some memories. But, just after the end of the eulogy, this gentleman, he came over to me, and I've got to say this, I've thank God because I look at it like, I'm not going to sit there and pat myself on the back, like, "Oh, yeah, I really controlled..." That has nothing to do with it. It's just a matter of continuing to give credit to God. But he said, kind of kiddingly, kind of seriously, "What do I have to do to get you to do my eulogy?" Well, confirming that, the next morning, we were out to breakfast, and, just as we were parting ways, he said it again. "Now, do I have to give you a down-payment or something?" And I said, "No, no." And I have a lot of good memories about him. And I think part of it is that, where we can find the good in something. And, in some cases, it's much easier than not; I'll say that much.

But, this last point about God will reward us. I want to read a verse; you don't have to turn to it. It's a very short verse:

**Hebrews 6:10** *For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

And there's that word, 'minister,' again. It's not necessarily our motivation to get because we give, but it's not as though we give away everything and expect nothing in return. Now, I'm going to start talking a little plainly, I mean, unless you're on your deathbed or very philanthropic then it's true that we still need to have some means in order to survive, in order to live day-to-day. There is an old expression, probably a lot of us have heard, it says, "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." How many have heard that? Okay. It simply means, I'll do something for you if you look out for me. And it's just tit-for-tat; it's just, however you want to measure that... But that's human nature at its most basic, but you know what? I don't know that I would be all that willing to give, in much of anything, if I didn't think I was getting something in return from God. I'm going to say that again: I don't know that I would be all that willing to give much at all, if I didn't think I was going to have a reward with God in Heaven; eternal life, for the different things that we do. And, again, we refer back to, "All in." Are we all in? Am I looking at this like, "Well, I'm just kind of on the outskirts looking in. Oh, I don't know. You know, this just doesn't

seem like it's a glamorous ministry."? Which it's not. But you look at, like, in the Biblical examples, just Old and New Testament, it was never about glamour. I mean, Christianity is far from that. It's like the exact opposite of that.

So, how does this giving and it shall be given unto you work with God? I want to read that again, from First Peter. I'm just going to come up here and read it.

**1 Peter 4:8-10** *And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

So, I'll ask that again: how does this giving and it shall be given unto you work with God? I'm going to read from Luke, so that you'll know what I'm talking about, as far as this passage. It says:

**Luke 6:38** *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

So, how does it all work, when it's not a 'you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours?' When it's not that, but it's giving, and we get in return? I don't know, but I'm going to tell you this much, how does 'fervent charity shall cover the multitude of sins' work? I don't know; it just works! It works in God, because it's God's Word! The Bible says, "Have fervent charity, and it shall cover the multitude of sins," and I'm not re-preaching what Parrish preached two weeks ago, that's one of my favorite verse, because it's intangible. It's not like, "Well, if I show three acts of charity, God will cover nineteen sins," or, "If I give this much, then these sins will be marked out." I don't know how it works; we don't need to know how it works. It's written in heaven! It's written in heaven!

I'm going to share a story—this is my last story, today, anyway—a lot of us know Rod Williams, he's the director of our fellowships, and he was up here, about a month and a half ago. Anyway, Rod's a real good guy, and, a lot of times when he comes up here—don't tell him I told you this, okay? When I get to the end, you'll know why—When he comes up here, a lot of times he'll stay at the apartment building that a few of us own, and, you know, I usually work from home, and he'll come up, and, "Hey, Chris-Chris! What's going on?" And I'll say, "You want some coffee?" And he'll say, "Yeah, I knew you'd offer me, that's why I come over here." So, I appreciate that, and I feel like... I'm like, "You want the Dunkin' Donuts Hazelnut, or the plain?" "I like the hazelnut." And I'm like, "Okay, good." So, this particular afternoon, I had actually finished work, and I was looking at a website to get a pair of sunglasses, for bike-riding season. Well, Rod's a bike-rider, too, and he says, "Oh, you're looking for some sunglasses?" I'm like, "Yeah." He goes, "Oh, well, I've got an extra pair; I'll just send them up to you." So, check this out. So, I'm thinking, "All right, cool." I'm not going to hound him, though. I'm not going to be like, every time I see him, "Hey, don't forget to send the glasses." I'm thinking, "He's offering it," but I'm looking at it like, "All right. All right." So, check this out. Like a week later, the mail, the postal carrier comes: Big box. A big box, like this (pantomiming holding a big box). I'm like, "Sunglasses? That's kind of big box for sunglasses." So, I open the box, you know, with an Exacto knife, six bags, six pounds of Dunkin' Donuts coffee, and a pair of sunglasses. I'm like, "Oh, my God." I texted him, "Now this is like going ten extra miles beyond." I appreciated that, tremendously, and what I mean about that, he didn't do that for a show. He didn't do that to be told in a story, although I'm doing that. But I appreciate that, and it's—how does it tie to, "Give and it shall be given unto you?" It's not about strings attached, or, "I'm going to do something nice only if they do something," and, then, if nobody makes the first move, then nothing's ever done. Then everything's just left up in the air, and nothing nice gets done. Then people are afraid to take that step of faith to like cross over, to like, reach out and shake somebody's hand. I'm going to just share,

Malcolm said, "Just walk around and shake hands a little bit," so I'm on the front row, and I had gone back, and come up here, and I was kind of like looking back, just kind of, "Who's here?" and then Sonia comes over, "Hey, Chris!" Real big smile, and I smiled, but I thought, if my reaction would have been like, (unenthusiastically) "Hey." Don't you think she would have thought, "What's wrong with that guy?" So, it's like, what I mean by that is, charity and hospitality is infectious. I believe a lot of times people can be cooped up, and that was uplifting. It really was.

"Give and it shall be given unto you." That is the title of the sermon today, and it ties in with God's reward for us. Knowing that we have a reward with God is what keeps us going when it feels like there's nothing left in the tank. And I know that many of us have been there. It's what keeps us going when we feel like we've run out of all the strength that we thought we could ever muster. And it's what keeps us going when we feel like, "I can't take another step." And I'm not talking about just in life, I'm talking specifically in Christianity. And I'm closing here in a moment.

We all received the gift of the ability to minister the day that we got baptized in Jesus' name. And I know it doesn't always feel right, or doesn't always seem easy to give, and we may not even always know in what capacity God is asking us to give. And, yes, God is asking us to give something. And in the end God is going give us all something in return that is going to far exceed our greatest imagination.

God bless you, and thank you for your time.

