

"Do Not Withhold Good to Whom It Is Due"
(Proverbs 3:27-28)

Introduction: Solomon, having given to us further admonition and encouragement to walk according to the wisdom of God's Word last week, now turns to some very practical instructions on exercising that wisdom towards our neighbors. Our relationship with our neighbors is very important to the Lord. As a matter of fact, it was important enough to Him to make it the second greatest commandment. When Jesus was asked by a certain lawyer, "TEACHER, WHAT SHALL I DO TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE?" Jesus answered, "'WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE LAW? HOW DOES IT READ TO YOU?' AND HE ANSWERED AND SAID, 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' AND HE SAID TO HIM, 'YOU HAVE ANSWERED CORRECTLY; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE.' BUT WISHING TO JUSTIFY HIMSELF, HE SAID TO JESUS, 'AND WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?' JESUS REPLIED AND SAID, 'A CERTAIN MAN WAS GOING DOWN FROM JERUSALEM TO JERICHO; AND HE FELL AMONG ROBBERS, AND THEY STRIPPED HIM AND BEAT HIM, AND WENT OFF LEAVING HIM HALF DEAD. AND BY CHANCE A CERTAIN PRIEST WAS GOING DOWN ON THAT ROAD, AND WHEN HE SAW HIM, HE PASSED BY ON THE OTHER SIDE. AND LIKEWISE A LEVITE ALSO, WHEN HE CAME TO THE PLACE AND SAW HIM, PASSED BY ON THE OTHER SIDE. BUT A CERTAIN SAMARITAN, WHO WAS ON A JOURNEY, CAME UPON HIM; AND WHEN HE SAW HIM, HE FELT COMPASSION, AND CAME TO HIM, AND BANDAGED UP HIS WOUNDS, POURING OIL AND WINE ON THEM; AND HE PUT HIM ON HIS OWN BEAST, AND BROUGHT HIM TO AN INN, AND TOOK CARE OF HIM. AND ON THE NEXT DAY HE TOOK OUT TWO DENARII AND GAVE THEM TO THE INNKEEPER AND SAID, 'TAKE CARE OF HIM; AND WHATEVER MORE YOU SPEND, WHEN I RETURN, I WILL REPAY YOU.' WHICH OF THESE THREE DO YOU THINK PROVED TO BE A NEIGHBOR TO THE MAN WHO FELL INTO THE ROBBER'S HANDS?' AND HE SAID, 'THE ONE WHO SHOWED MERCY TOWARD HIM.' AND JESUS SAID TO HIM, 'GO AND DO THE SAME'" [Luke 10:25-37]. The lawyer asked who his neighbor was, and Jesus answered by showing him what a true neighbor does. The one who proved to be a neighbor to the injured man, was not his own countryman, but one who was a born enemy. And if this man who was the Jew's enemy showed him mercy, how much more ought you to show your neighbors, your enemies and friends alike, the love of God? This is what your Lord says to you through Solomon this morning, namely, that

When someone has the right to receive some good from your hands, you must not delay in giving it to them.

- I. *First, the Lord Tells You That You Are Not to Hold Back Any Good.*
Solomon says, "DO NOT WITHHOLD GOOD."
 - A. *Obviously the Good That You Are Not to Withhold Will Be Determined by the Need.*
 1. *If someone is hot and thirsty and ready to die from a lack of water, then the good that he needs is something to drink.*
 2. *If someone is starving, and ready to die for lack of food, or if they have been for some time without food, then the good that they need is a meal.*
 3. *If someone is struggling under the guilt of their sins, having a desire to love and serve Christ and yet not finding the strength that they need, then the good that they need is the spiritual encouragement of the Gospel.*
 4. *But if someone is puffed up with pride, thinking themselves to be in the grace of God, and yet by their actions showing that*

they are far from it, the good that they need is for the Word of God to search their heart to strip away their mask of hypocrisy and to show them their need of Christ.

5. The good which Solomon refers to here can be many things. The general principle is that the good is what the person needs, or is entitled to.

B. Solomon Says that You Are Not to Withhold the Good.

II. Second, the Lord Says that Those You Are Not to Withhold It From Are Those Who Are Entitled to Your Help. "DO NOT WITHHOLD GOOD FROM THOSE TO WHOM IT IS WE."

A. This Literally Means Not to Keep Back Good from Those Who Own It, or Who Are Entitled to It.

B. But Exactly Who Is It That Does Have a Right to Your Help?

1. The answer really is everyone who is in need.
2. There is a big difference between our responsibility in this area and God's. God has the authority to withhold good from whomsoever He wills.
 - a. God is a debtor to no man. He owes each man exactly nothing.
 - b. If God wills, He can withdraw His kind gifts of rain and food from His people. He says to Israel, through the prophet Amos, "'BUT I GAVE YOU ALSO CLEANNES OF TEETH IN ALL YOUR CITIES AND LACK OF BREAD IN ALL YOUR PLACES, YET YOU HAVE NOT RETURNED TO ME,' DECLARES THE LORD. AND FURTHERMORE, I WITHHELD THE RAIN FROM YOU WHILE THERE WERE STILL THREE MONTHS UNTIL HARVEST. THEN I WOULD SEND RAIN ON ONE CITY AND ON ANOTHER CITY I WOULD NOT SEND RAIN; ONE PART WOULD BE RAINED ON, WHILE THE PART NOT RAINED ON WOULD DRY UP. SO TWO OR THREE CITIES WOULD STAGGER TO ANOTHER CITY TO DRINK WATER, BUT WOULD NOT BE SATISFIED; YET YOU HAVE NOT RETURNED TO ME, DECLARES THE LORD" (46-8).
 - c. If God wills, He can withhold the ability to conceive and bear children. When Rachel said to Jacob, "'GIVE ME CHILDREN, OR ELSE I DIE.' THEN JACOB'S ANGER BURNED AGAINST RACHEL, AND HE SAID, 'AM I IN THE PLACE OF GOD, WHO HAS WITHHELD FROM YOU THE FRUIT OF THE WOMB?'" (Gen. 30:1-2).
 - d. The reason why the Lord can do this, is because man, by his sin, has forfeited any favor from the hand of God. He says to His covenant people through the prophet Jeremiah, "YOUR INIQUITIES HAVE TURNED THESE AWAY, AND YOUR SINS HAVE WITHHELD GOOD FROM YOU" (Jer. 5:25).
 - e. Really, God is never bound to give good to any, except that it is His nature to do so. Even in the midst of man's sin and wickedness, the Lord does not completely withdraw His good gifts, but His mercies are over all of His works (Ps. 145:9). He still gives to all, satisfying their hearts with fruitful seasons (Acts 14:17).
 - f. But the point is that He is not bound to do so. It is purely an act of God's kindness to His enemies. God is "KIND TO UNGRATEFUL AND EVIL MEN" (Luke 6:35). But He does not owe him that kindness.

3. But on the other hand, you owe good to all whom the Lord providentially puts within your path.

- a. You are not allowed to withhold good gifts to those to whom it is due.
- b. Though God is indebted to no man, you are indebted to all.
- c. It is not because they have helped you or have done any good to you, but it is because the love of Christ binds you to it.
- d. Remember, Jesus said, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' THIS IS THE GREAT AND FOREMOST COMMANDMENT. THE SECOND IS LIKE IT, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' ON THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS DEPEND THE WHOLE LAW AND PROPHETS" (Matt. 22:37-40).
- e. Do you love the Lord your God? He commands you to love your neighbor just as yourself.
- f. How do you love yourself? When you are hungry, do you feed yourself? When you are thirsty, do you give yourself something to drink? When you are cold, do you put warm clothing on your body? When you spend too much time outside, do you go inside where it is warm?
- g. Now, if you are called to love your neighbor as yourself, isn't it true that you should be as willing to do the same things for him as for yourself? to feed him, to give him drink, to cloth him, and to shelter him?
- h. But you might ask, Does Jesus really expect me to help others in that way? What do you think that Jesus meant by saying that you should love your neighbor even as you love yourself? Didn't He make it as clear as it is possible to do, for whom do you love and care for more than yourself? Jesus even showed you that the Good Samaritan loved his enemy even as himself, and told you to do the same. He was not from the same race as the Jewish man, nor was he from his religion, neither did he even know the man. But when he saw him in need, he recognized him as a fellow neighbor; he inconvenienced himself by going out of his way and taking time to help him; and he paid for his recovery out of his own pocket, even until he was healed from his wounds.
- i. Now I am aware that there are those who try and make a living out of deceiving Christians and other charitable people, and sometimes we may err in helping them, for the Lord said through the apostle, "IF ANYONE WILL NOT WORK, NEITHER LET HIM EAT" (2 Thes. 3:10).
- j. But let us not, on the other hand, so close our hearts that we become unwilling to help any who may have a legitimate need. There are those who do not have even their daily necessities. And if we close our hearts to them, they may perish, and the Lord may require it one day from our hands. Remember, Jesus said that that which will separate the sheep from the goats is that the sheep will have responded out of love to their brethren in need, and the goats will not have.
- k. God has the right to withhold help, but you and I do not. He has indebted us to every man with a debt of love.
- l. Charles Bridges writes, "Not indeed that it may be demanded by our fellow-men. But the obligation lies upon the conscience; and to **withhold the due** will be our eternal condemnation [Matt. 25:41-45; cf. Deu. 23:3-41" (Proverbs 38).

III. Third, Realize as Well That the Lord Only Wants You to Do What Is In Your Power to Do. "DO NOT WITHHOLD GOOD FROM THOSE TO WHOM IT IS DUE, WHEN IT IS IN YOUR POWER TO DO IT."

- A. If the Person's Need Is Too Great, You May Not Be Able to Help.
 - 1. Sometimes the requests are too large. It is difficult enough to maintain your own household in these days, without having to maintain another's as well.
 - 2. If a family comes to you and is in need of food and clothing and shelter, you probably would not be able to do much to help them.
 - 3. However, don't jump to the conclusion that this absolves you from all responsibility in the matter. Though you may not be able to do all, you may be able to do some.
 - a. Even the poor have the responsibility to help those who are poorer than themselves.
 - b. Paul writes, "LET HIM WHO STEALS, STEAL NO LONGER; BUT RATHER LET HIM LABOR, PERFORMING WITH HIS OWN HANDS WHAT IS GOOD, IN ORDER THAT HE MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE WITH HIM WHO HAS NEED" (Eph. 4:28).
 - c. The one who steals usually does so because he is in need. But such a one is to steal no longer, but to work and to have something to share with the one whose needs are even greater than his.
 - d. And don't forget the Lord's wonderful promise in Proverbs 19:17, "HE WHO IS GRACIOUS TO A POOR MAN LENDS TO THE LORD, AND HE WILL REPAY HIM FOR HIS GOOD DEED."
- B. On the Other Hand, If the Lord Has Blessed You with Plenty, Realize that You Have a Greater Responsibility to Help.
 - 1. Jesus said, "AND FROM EVERYONE WHO HAS BEEN GIVEN MUCH SHALL MUCH BE REQUIRED; AND TO WHOM THEY ENTRUSTED MUCH, OF HIM THEY WILL ASK ALL THE MORE" (Luke 12:48).
 - 2. This principle applies to anything which the Lord has given to you.
 - 3. If He has given to you physical strength and energy, then He will expect more out of you than others in using it for His glory.
 - 4. If He has given to you a great deal of free time, then He expects you to employ more of it in His service.
 - 5. If He has given you a good mind and entrusted you with a large measure of biblical knowledge, then you are more responsible to use it to teach and edify the Lord's people.
 - 6. So also, if He has entrusted you with a larger measure of the world's goods, then you carry a greater responsibility to use those goods to do good to those who are entitled to it.

IV. Last, Realize that If You Have the Ability From God to Help, You Are Obligated to Help Immediately. Solomon Writes, "DO NOT SAY TO YOUR NEIGHBOR, 'GO, AND COME BACK, AND TOMORROW I WILL GIVE IT,' WHEN YOU HAVE IT WITH YOU."

- A. To Put Off What You Know You Must Give Is to Sin in Any Circumstance.
 - 1. Isn't it selfishness that is at the root of all of our reluctance to help?
 - 2. Isn't there something else that we would rather do than to help our neighbor?
 - 3. Isn't there always something else that we have been planning to

do with our money?

4. Isn't it always too inconvenient for us to take the time out of our day to see whether or not the need is really a legitimate one or not?
5. And aren't our hearts really disinclined to helping them anyway? We put them off hoping that someone else who has, in our estimation, better resources, or a call to minister to such as these, will take care of them, and we won't be bothered.

B. I Would Like to Close this Sermon by Quoting Some Penetrating Words by Charles Bridges that We All Need to Hear.

1. "Christian benevolence will also do good in the kindest manner. Delay is an offence against the law of love. Too often the cold repulse -- **Go, and come again** -- is a cover for selfishness. There is a secret hope that the matter will be forgotten, dropped, or taken up by some other party. Often an application is put off from mere thoughtlessness. **We have it with us.** But it does not just now suit our convenience. This is a serious injury to the applicant. A little given in time of need is more than a larger sum when the time is gone by. We should cultivate a quick sensibility of the wants and sufferings of others; putting ourselves as much as possible in their place; not only 'doing good,' but '**ready** to every good work.' (Tit. 3:1. 1 Tim. 6:18). If we are to '**do justly**' -- which sometimes (as in the punishment of criminals) may be our sorrow; we are like our gracious God (Mic. 7:18), to **love mercy** Ib. 6:8. cf. Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 9:7); seizing the present, perhaps the only (Chap. 27:1. Gal. 6:10), opportunity; rather anticipating the need than wantonly or thoughtlessly delaying to relieve it. (2 Cor. 8:10.) The Gospel presents every neighbour before us as a brother or sister needing our help, and to be loved and cared for 'as ourselves.'" (Lev. 19:18.) Why do we not more readily acknowledge this standard? The Lord raise us from our selfishness, and mould us to his own image of mercy and love! 38-9). (Dr. South's caustic application may be wholesome probing -- 'Was ever the hungry fed, or the naked clothed, with good looks or fair speeches? These are but thing garments to keep out the cold, and but a slender repast to conjure down the rage of a craving appetite. My enemy, perhaps, is ready to starve; and I tell him I am heartily glad to see him, and should be **very ready** to serve him. But still my hand is closed, and my purse shut. I neither bring him to my table, nor lodge him under my **roof**. He asks **for** bread, and I give him a compliment -- a thing indeed not so hard as a stone, but altogether as dry. I treat him with art and outside, and lastly, at parting, with all the ceremonial **of** dearness, I shake him by the hand, but put nothing into it. I play with his distress, and dally with that which was not to be dallied with -- want, and misery, and a clamorous necessity.' -- Sermon on Matt. 5:44" (39n).
2. People **of** God, let us learn from these words **of** Solomon, which are also the words **of** our Lord, to love our neighbor with deeds, and not only with words. **If** we see someone in need and are not even moved with compassion towards them, how can the love **of** God dwell in us (1 John 3:17)? **If** we try to hold onto the worthless things **of** this earth, when the Lord would clearly have us give

them up, won't we be letting go of something far more precious?
the hope of eternal glory? Let us be like *our* Lord then, and be
ready at all times to show *our* love by giving. May God grant us
His grace and mercy. Amen.