A man said: Indeed, I will give in charity. So he took his charity out and placed it in a thief's hand. Next morning, people were saying: Charity was given to a thief

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "A man said: 'Indeed, I will give in charity.' So he took his charity out and placed it in a thief's hand. Next morning, people were saying: 'Charity was given to a thief.' The man said: 'O Allah, praise be to You. Indeed, I will give in charity!' So he took his charity out and placed it in a prostitute's hand. Next morning, they were saying: 'Charity was given to a prostitute last night.' So the man said: 'O Allah, praise be to You concerning the prostitute. Indeed, I will give in charity!' So he took his charity out and placed it in a rich man's hand. Next morning, they were saying: 'Charity was given to a rich man.' The man said: 'O Allah, praise be to You concerning the thief, the prostitute, and the rich man.' Then he was approached and told: 'As for your charity to a thief, he might refrain from theft. As for the prostitute, she might abstain from fornication. As for the rich man, he might take a lesson and spend from the wealth that Allah has given him.'"

[Authentic hadith] [Narrated by Bukhari & Muslim]

The Prophet told us about previous nations, so we may learn from their stories. This Hadīth relates the story of a man who gave in charity on three different occasions, and indeed, charity should be given to the poor and those in need. However, this man's first charity fell into a thief’s hand. This made people say the next morning that charity had been given to a thief. Granted, a thief should be punished rather than given something that increases his wealth, however the man who gave the charity thanked Allah, for Allah is worthy of praise in every situation. Then the man said that he would give more in charity, but this time his charity fell into a prostitute’s hand. So the people gossiped next morning that charity had been given to a prostitute. It was something unbelievable and unnatural, but the man praised Allah again. Thinking that his first and second donations were not accepted, he said that he would give in charity a third time. This time his charity fell into a wealthy man’s hand, and a rich person is not eligible to receive charity, although he may receive presents, gifts, and the like. So the next morning people gossiped that a wealthy man had been given charity last night. The giver of the charity again praised Allah, but wished that his charity had fallen in the hands of a poor, chaste, person, rather than a thief, a prostitute, or a rich man, but the situation had already been decreed by Allah. The prophet of his time told him that all his three donations had been accepted, due to his sincere intention to do something good, although he had not been able to do it. The morale of the story is that charity given to a thief may satisfy his needs and prevent him from stealing, a prostitute might be helped to stop

her prostitution for the sake of money, and a wealthy man might take a lesson from this and give in charity himself.

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