

# 11. Grace giving

July 8, 2012

I read a story about grace giving. This is how it went:

One morning on a subway in New York, people were sitting quietly – some reading newspapers, some lost in thought, some resting with their eyes closed. It was a calm, quiet scene.

Then suddenly, a dad and his children entered the subway car. The children were so loud and rambunctious that instantly the whole climate changed.

The dad sat down next to me and dosed his eyes, apparently oblivious to the situation. The children were yelling back and forth, throwing things, even grabbing people's papers. It was very disturbing. And yet, the man sitting next to me did nothing. It was easy to see that everyone else on the subway felt irritated, too. So finally, I turned to him and said, "Sir, your children are really disturbing a lot of people. I wonder if you would control them a little more?"

The man lifted his gaze as if to come to a consciousness of the situation for the first time and said softly, "Oh, you're right. I guess I should do something about it. We just came from the hospital where their mother died about an hour ago. I don't know what to think, and I guess they don't know how to handle it either."

Can you imagine what this author felt at that moment? Suddenly he saw things differently, and he thought differently, he felt differently, he behaved differently. His irritation vanished. His heart was filled with the man's pain. Feelings of sympathy and compassion flowed freely... Everything changed in an instant. That is grace giving.

During this second round of speeches from chapter 15 to 21, their verbal fire becomes hotter as the three friends focus more on proving Job wrong than on giving Job help. Why were they coming after Job so viciously? If Job was not a sinner being punished by God, then the three friends' understanding of God was all wrong. If obedience is not a guarantee of health and wealth, then what happened to Job might happen to them. That's unthinkable to them.

For this selfish reason, they'd rather argue with Job than giving him words of comfort, not even a cup of cool water, nor tending his wounds on his body.

What an important reminder for us to be grace givers! We often don't know the pain and sorrow that others may be experiencing or the hurtful situation that may be causing them to speak or act in a certain way, even wrong way. Let's make it a point to offer a kind word and a helping hand to those around us who may be desperately in need of grace.

## A. ELIPHAZ THE ELIMINATOR

*Job 15:1-6 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: 2 "Should a wise man answer with empty knowledge, And fill himself with the east wind? 3 Should he reason with unprofitable talk, Or by speeches with which he can do no good? 4 Yes, you cast off fear, And restrain prayer before God. 5 For your iniquity teaches your mouth, And you choose the tongue of the crafty. 6 Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; Yes, your own lips testify against you.*

Great theologian Thumper from one of the Disney movie "Bambi" taught Bambi an important lesson: "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." What great advice! These three friends of Job should have taken that advice.

Eliphaz used sarcasm and harsh words against Job to insult him, pronounce him guilty, and condemned him with a pride filled heart throughout chapter 15.

There is a time and place for confrontation for those who are going in a wrong direction, but we ought to do everything in love in our hearts for that person.

The concept Eliphaz and his buddies had was a religion. Please allow me to explain it to you. If people serve God only for what they get out of it, then they are not serving God at all, they are only serving themselves by making God their servant. Their "religion" is only a pious system for promoting selfishness and not for glorifying God.

In other words, religion is a man-made ritual and endorsed by satan that puts a god within the understanding of religion-maker. Men start their own religion to appease the void in their hearts that only can be filled by Jesus Christ, no one else.

## **B. MISERABLE COMFORTERS ARE Y'ALL**

*Job 16:1-2 Then Job answered and said: 2 "I have heard many such things; Miserable comforters are you all!*

Obviously Job was from South. All of their attempts to comfort him only made him more miserable! You know what they say, "With friends like you, who needs enemies?"

Throughout the rest of chapter 16, Job pleaded with God for justice and vindication. He felt like God had painted a target on his forehead and handed everybody bows and arrows. If Job looked up, God was against him; if he looked around, his friends haunted him. He had no place to turn to. He yearned for someone to plead with God on his behalf.

The Christian believer has this heavenly Advocate in Jesus Christ. As our interceding High Priest, Christ gives us the conquering grace we need when we are tempted and tested. If we fail, then He is our Advocate to forgive us and restore us when we confess our sins to Him.

From heaven, the Lord Jesus ever lives to make intercession for His people and to perfect them in the will of God. We come to a throne of grace, not a throne of judgment; and we have confidence that our loving Father will do that which is best for us.

## **C. JOB'S PLEA FOR DEATH**

*Job 17:1 "My spirit is broken, My days are extinguished, The grave is ready for me.*

One reason Job wanted his heavenly Advocate to act quickly was because he sensed that death was very near. When people suffer so much that their spirit is broken, then they lose their fight and want life to end. However, at no time did Job ever consider taking his own life or asking someone else to do it for him.

God did not answer Job's plea for death because He had something far better planned for him. God looked beyond Job's depression and bitterness and saw that he still had faith.

In the darkness of despair and the prison of pain, we often say things that we later regret; but God understands all about it and lovingly turns a deaf ear to our whining words but His tender eyes to our wounds.

The best way to help discouraged and hurting people is to listen with your heart and not just with your ears. It's not what they say but why they say it that is important. Please don't argue or try to convince them with logical reasoning. There will be time for that later; meanwhile, patiently accept their feelings – even their bitter words against God – and build bridges, not walls.

There is true consolation in our faith, but it is not dispensed in convenient doses like cough medicine to our children. It can be shared only by those who know what it's like to be so far down in the pit that they feel as though God has abandoned them.

John Henry Jowett, a 19th Century British pastor, said, "God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters." I like that. God's comfort is never given; it is always loaned. God expects us to share it with others. That is grace giving.

With that thought, let me give you a warning to those who would like to be Christian counselors. Do be careful what you want to be. If you really want to be used by the Lord to counsel others who are in need, He may allow you to go through your own share of trials and difficulties so that you can be a great counselor and comforter.

#### **D. BILDAD THE BABBLER**

*Job 18:5-6 "The light of the wicked indeed goes out, And the flame of his fire does not shine. 6 The light is dark in his tent, And his lamp beside him is put out.*

Bildad started to babble his second speech with the same words he used in his first speech, but using a much worse weapon than the sarcasm he used previously – fear tactic.

Mother Teresa once said, "Kind words are short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." Unfortunately, the echoes of unkind words are endless, also. I am sure that you've heard about an old English nursery rhyme that says, "Sticks and stones may break my bones; but words will never hurt me." Yeah, right! All of us can remember painful words and actions of others that occurred years ago. Some of these hurts are so fresh in our minds that they seem like they happened just yesterday!

Fear is a normal human emotion and there is nothing wrong with having it. We use the fear of sickness, injury, or death to teach our children to keep them safe. Fear of financial loss motivates people to buy insurance.

As a matter of fact, fear of death and the judgment that follows is a legitimate motive for trusting Jesus Christ and being saved. Jesus used it in His messages after He preached a gracious message of love. When the Great American theologian and preacher of the 18th Century Jonathan Edwards preached his sermon "Sinners in the hands of an angry God", the unbelievers among the people at his church felt that the flames of hell were licking their feet.

However, Bildad's speech about the fear of death to Job was preached to the wrong man with the wrong motive because there was no love for Job in his heart.

*Proverbs 12:18 There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health.*

Grace will keep us tolerant and loving, while knowledge will keep us strong. Grace will make us compassionate, while knowledge will make us discerning. Grace will help us smile, knowledge will help us think. Grace will result in vulnerability, knowledge will result in stability.

Grace is acceptance without reservation, forgiveness without condemnation, pardon without probation. It is unrestrained love poured out on the undeserving. That is exactly what God has done for us through Jesus Christ our Lord. While we didn't deserve His love, He poured out His love upon us. While we were sinners, He extended His mercy upon us. While we were His enemy by our wicked nature, He draped us with His grace.

Legalistic people like Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar choose not to embrace the grace of God, nor do they want to extend it to others. Because if they do, they have to be humble which goes against the grain of their prideful hearts.

### **E. FOR I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES**

*Job 19:25-26 For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God*

I just love these two verses. In these verses, Job expressed confidence that, even if he died, he would still have a Redeemer who one day would exercise judgment on the earth. Furthermore, Job affirmed that he himself expected to live physically again and see his Redeemer. It was an affirmation of faith in the resurrection of the human body.

The Hebrew word "gaal" translated "Redeemer" in v25 refers to the 'kinsman redeemer', the near relative who could avenge his brother's blood, reclaim and restore his brother's property, and set his brother free from slavery. The kinsman redeemer could also go to court on behalf of a wronged relative. In the Book of Ruth, Boaz is the kinsman redeemer who was willing and able to rescue Ruth and give her a new life in a new land.

Of course, this Kinsman Redeemer is Jesus Christ. He took upon Himself a human nature so that He might reveal God to us, experience all that we experience, die for our sins, and then return to heaven to represent us before the Father. He is willing to save and able to save. One day He shall stand upon the earth and exercise judgment; and He will vindicate His born-again Christians.

### **G. JUDGE NOT, YOU WILL NOT BE JUDGED**

*Job 19:28-29 If you should say, 'How shall we persecute him?'-- Since the root of the matter is found in me, 29 Be afraid of the sword for yourselves; For wrath brings the punishment of the sword, That you may know there is a judgment."*

Job closed his speech with a word of warning to his three critical friends. They too will stand at God's judgment throne, so they had better be ready.

*Luke 6:37-38 "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and run-*

*ning over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."*

These are two of the most misinterpreted verses in the Bible. Many carnal Christians somehow memorized and are ready to use them whenever the Holy Spirit convicts them through other mature Christians. Instead of repenting, they excuse and hide themselves by using these verses out of context.

Within the context here as well as Matthew 7:1-5, Jesus is not calling for a universal acceptance of any carnal lifestyle or doctrine. Actually, these verses should remind us that we reap what we sow and in the amount that we sow. In other words, as we judge others' words and actions, we will be judged with the same standards. Obviously Job's friends didn't think about that.

## **F. APPLICATIONS**

- 1) God does not save us by grace so that we may live in disgrace.
- 2) Listen to the needies with your heart, not just your ears.
- 3) Judge and forgive others as much as you want to be judged and forgiven by God.