

Responding to God's Generosity

March 10 and 11, 2012

Genesis 18:1–8 (NKJV)

¹Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

²So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground,

³and said, “My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.

⁴Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.

⁵And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.” They said, “Do as you have said.”

⁶So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes.”

⁷And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it.

⁸So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.

- *The Lord appeared to Abraham while he was resting in the middle of the day and immediately Abraham bowed down to the ground and worshipped Him.*

³and said, “My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.

- *Abraham had only one request from the Lord.*
- *If we were in Abraham's shoes what would we request?*
- *Abraham was still waiting for the promised son to be born to him through Sarah.*
- *Abraham was still wandering as a nomad and had not yet received the Promised Land as an inheritance.*

⁴Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.

⁵And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.” They said, “Do as you have said.”

- **“Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves**

under the tree.” - *Abraham’s request was not to receive something from the Lord but to be able to give something to Him and to bring rest and refreshment to the Lord.*

- *Abraham knew something about God that many Christians have not yet grasped.*
- *Abraham understood that God has a heart and that God experiences both joy and sorrow.*
- *We have been created in the image of God and thus even as we experience the full gamut of emotions so does our God.*
- *He has given us the ability to bring both joy and sorrow to His heart.*

³and said, “My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.

- *“if I have now found favor in Your sight” – Because God’s grace was extended to Abraham he was permitted and able to minister to the Lord.*
- *Abraham understood that God had given him the ability, the opportunity and the privilege to bring joy and rest to the heart of God.*

Isaiah 66:1–2 (NKJV)

¹Thus says the LORD: “Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?”

²For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist,” Says the LORD. “But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.

- *And where is the place of My rest? – In Isaiah the Lord points out He has created all things but even though the universe cannot contain Him there is one place where He finds rest – in the hearts of those that are humble and tremble at His word!*
- *When we keep our hearts and lives pure because of our love for Him this brings great joy to God!*
- *Abraham’s one request from God was not for something from Him but to allow him to ministry and give to God.*
- *“And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts.” – Abraham did not make his gift for God sound like some great heroic feat but described it as a simple morsel.*

⁶So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes.”

⁷And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it.

⁸So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before

them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.

- *Abraham gave the very best he had but he did not boast in his gift or feel he was somehow some great generous soul but looked upon God and His faithfulness and wanted to do something to show his appreciation.*
- *Abraham fully recognized that all he had was from God and compared to all that the Lord had done for him his gift was only a small token of appreciation.*

Romans 8:32 (NKJV)

³²He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

- *We don't give to God with the attitude that we are repaying Him but recognizing that what He has done for us is so great that nothing we can give Him is comparable but only a token of our appreciation.*

Matthew 6:2–4 (NKJV)

²Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

³But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

⁴that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

- *If we are giving to God or trying to serve God with an attitude that we making some great sacrifice and wanting the accolades of men then we will soon find ourselves filling the role of a hypocrite.*
- *Our attention will be upon ourselves instead of God and we end up either offended because we are not receiving those accolades or weary because we are not doing our service with the right motivation.*

⁵And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.” They said, “Do as you have said.”

- *‘They said, “Do as you have said.”’ – These are gracious words, for the Lord gave Abraham the privilege to serve and give to God as if God had a need that needed to be met!*
- *Many Christians act as if it is either a chore or an unreasonable burden to give to God and to serve Him but in reality it is one of the greatest privileges He has given us.*
- *“and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.” – Abraham set before the Lord all the food that had been prepared and just stood there and watched them enjoy the meal.*
- *This is really a picture of a burnt offering because in the burnt offering the offerer did not reap any personal benefit but it was all for the Lord.*

- *Abraham did not partake in the meal but simply stood by them and watch in satisfaction as the Lord rested and ate.*
- *Many times our attitude toward worship is distorted and therefore we find it unfulfilling.*
- *We treat worship as if the purpose is to make us feel good and to meet our needs.*
- *Worship is meant to bring joy to the heart of God.*
- *Just as Abraham enjoyed putting on a meal for the Lord even though he did not even taste a single morsel so should our attitude toward worship be.*
- *We put on the feast of worship and praise to Him and our delight is that He is the One feasting on our praises.*
- *When we ask, “How was the worship service?”, the answer does not lay in how much we enjoyed it but if God enjoyed it.*

John 4:24 (NKJV)

²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

1 Timothy 2:8 (NKJV)

⁸I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;

- *Worship that brings joy to God’s heart is one that comes from a pure heart that is surrendered to His will.*

1 John 4:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹We love Him because He first loved us.

- *Our motivation for giving is not so that we will receive from God but because we have already received from God.*
- *We don’t love God so that He will love us but because He already loves us.*
- *When we give and serve with the right motivation it positions us so that we are able to receive from God.*
- *What do we give to God for the food and the health that He gives to us?*
- *Thanksgiving!*

Psalms 136:1 (NKJV)

¹Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

- *When we give thanks for our food it is much more than praying that our bodies will be strengthen or protected but it is giving something to God that brings joy to His heart – thanksgiving.*

- *We have a very special opportunity in this life that we will never have in eternity.*
- *In this life we are able to serve God joyfully in faith in the midst of trials and oppositions.*
- *The last day on this earth will be the last time in eternity that we will have the opportunity to praise and worship Him in these carnal bodies that are subject to temptation!*

Psalm 23:5 (NKJV)

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.

- *We can learn to have a banquet with the Lord even in presence of our enemies.*
- *The enemies can be the trials, temptations, hardships and pains of this life.*
- *The story of Stephen, the first martyr in the New Testament is a wonderful example of giving joy to God.*

Acts 7:55–60 (NKJV)

⁵⁵But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,

⁵⁶and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”

⁵⁷Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord;

⁵⁸and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

⁵⁹And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

⁶⁰Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

- *Stephen stood in the presence of his enemies and testified about the Lord Jesus Christ in even in the face of death.*
- *“Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” – Stephen’s final words reflect the heart of Christ.*

⁵⁵But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God

- *One of the many remarkable things about Stephen’s testimony is the response from Jesus.*

Matthew 26:64 (NKJV)

⁶⁴Jesus said to him, “It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

- *“Jesus standing at the right hand of God” – Stephen’s joyful willingness to testify about Jesus in spite of all the opposition and threats caused such a response in Jesus Christ that He even stood up from His throne.*
- *Stephen was able to bring such joy and refreshing to the heart of God that God Himself stood up from His throne to usher Stephen into His presence.*
- *Stephen’s name in the Greek means “crown” and he is one whose life and death was an act of worship unto God.*

- *Through Stephan's death God impacted Saul to become the apostle Paul and the writer of much of the New Testament.*
- *Stephan's sacrifice, through the writings of Apostle Paul, is still impacting the Church to this very day.*

2 Corinthians 9:6–7 (NKJV)

⁶But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

⁷So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

“He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” – This is one of the principles that will determine how fruitful our lives will be for eternity.

- *Christians that hold onto this life tightly end this life with great disappointment.*
- *Christians that surrender all to Christ enter into eternity with great joy and fulfillment.*

⁷So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

- *Before one can give one's money or belongs one must first give one's life fully to Christ in absolute surrender.*
- *If one gives grudgingly then it means we really are insulting what Christ has done for us and valuing the temporal things of this earthly life on par with Christ sacrifice.*
- *If one gives out of necessity then it means that we are seeing this as more of a business transaction than an act of love and worship. “I will give to You and therefore You will bless me.”*
- *“God loves a cheerful giver” – We are to give to God because we understand and appreciate God's super generous grace and mercy that He has showered upon us.*
- *The expectation of instant gratification is something that distorts our perception and leads to unnecessary disappointments.*
- *We give to God out of an expression of love, gratitude, thanksgiving and faith – worship.*

Psalm 50:12–15 (NKJV)

¹²“If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is Mine, and all its fullness.

¹³Will I eat the flesh of bulls, Or drink the blood of goats?

¹⁴Offer to God thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High.

¹⁵Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”

- *God does not want our gifts because He is lacking something but because He has given us the opportunity to co-labour with Him.*
- *Giving to God opens the door to being able to receive God's provision.*
- *Giving does not deal mainly with money but it really deals with the surrendering of our lives to Christ and then everything we possess.*
- *For us to share our faith effectively we must be willing to pay the cost. Some will mock us, reject us or persecute us.*

- *For us to give our time means that God can use our time the way He wants to and not the way we would want to. It means we become servants to serve others.*
- *For us our to share our hearts means to allow disappointment and hurts to touch us.*

Grace in Action

All the passages below are taken from Philip Yancey's book "*Grace Notes---Daily Readings with a Fellow Pilgrim*," published in 2009.

When the world sees grace in action, it falls silent. Nelson Mandela taught the world a lesson in grace when, after emerging from prison after twenty-seven years and being elected president of South Africa, he asked his jailer to join him on the inauguration platform. **He then appointed Archbishop Desmond Tutu to head an official government panel with a daunting name, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission**(<http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/>). **Mandela sought to defuse the natural pattern of revenge that he had seen in so many countries where one oppressed race or tribe took control from another.**

For the next two-and-a-half years, South Africans listened to reports of atrocities coming out of the TRC hearings. **The rules were simple: if a white policeman or army officer voluntarily faced his accusers, confessed his crime, and fully acknowledged his guilt, he could not be tried and punished for that crime.** Hard-liners grumbled about the obvious injustice of letting criminals go free, but Mandela insisted that the country needed healing even more than it needed justice.

At one TRC hearing, a policeman named van de Broek recounted an incident when he and other officers shot an eighteen-year-old boy and burned the body. Eight years later van de Broek returned to the same house and seized the boy's father. The wife was forced to watch as policemen bound her husband on a woodpile, poured gasoline over his body, and ignited it.

The courtroom grew hushed as the elderly woman who had lost her first son and then her husband was given a chance to respond. "What do you want from Mr. van de Broek?" the judge asked. She said she wanted van de Brock to go to the place where they burned her husband's body and gather up the dust so she could give him a decent burial. His head down, the policeman nodded agreement.

Then she added a further request, "Mr. van de Broek took all my family away from me, and I still have a lot of love to give. Twice a month, I would like for him to come to the ghetto and spend a day with me so I can be a mother to him. And I would like Mr. van de Broek to know that he is forgiven by God, and that I forgive him too. I would like to embrace him so he can know my forgiveness is real."

Spontaneously, some in the courtroom began singing "Amazing Grace as the elderly woman made her way to the witness stand, but van de Broek did not hear the hymn. He had fainted, overwhelmed.

Justice was not done in South Africa that day, nor in the entire country during months of agonizing procedures by the TRC. Something beyond justice took place. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good," said Paul. Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu understood that when evil is done, one response alone can overcome the evil. Revenge perpetuates the evil. Justice punishes it. Evil is overcome by good only if the injured party absorbs it, refusing to allow it to go any further. And that is the pattern of otherworldly grace that Jesus showed in his life

and death. [277-278]

Rumors of Another World (223-234)

Points for Prayer:

- 1) *Let us ask God to open our eyes to see His generosity that He has poured out upon us.*
- 2) *Let us ask God to touch our hearts that we may become generous even as He is generous.*
- 3) *Even as Christ gave His life for us let us ask God that we may learn to become those living sacrifices for His glory.*
- 4) *Let us pray that we as His children will bring forth fruit for eternity.*
- 5) *Let us ask God that we will become cheerful givers.*