

# Don't Stop/ Don't Settle

(A thought from our daily Bible reading for 10/12/16)

As I was reading today's Bible reading (Matthew 11) I saw something I thought I would share. We see that Jesus preached and taught (vs. 1), and did miracles (evident in vs. 20) in the surrounding cities. His miracles were not simply so that people could experience earthly healing and provisions, but to reveal/affirm that the Kingdom of God had come; and had come with power. Jesus chastised those in the cities where He did the miraculous because they didn't **repent** (Matt 11:20) when met with the realities of the Kingdom.

I believe this indicates that God's blessings are two-fold. First they provide immediate grace, favor and provision for our earthly needs. Second, they provide the means, or the "aha" moment, or the opportunity for greater submission to Jesus' Lordship and for the ministry of the Kingdom.

I've never heard anyone preach or teach that blessings (should) prompt submission, but I think this chapter certainly affirms that idea. When we are healed it's not just so we can be healed, but so we can both preach and embody the message of healing. If we get a financial blessing, it's not simply for us to spend on our wants or needs. It may be to spend it or save it to be used as a blessing for someone else.

For example, let's say I had an electric bill that was \$200 and didn't have the money for it and God blessed me un-expectantly with \$200 I would be thrilled. My first thought would be, "God has given me this for my bill. Thanks be to God!" But what if God told me the next day to give that money to somebody else? He provided no context or explanation on why or how they would use it; He just said give it to them. Would I be frustrated? (Of course I would be, if I were honest.) Maybe I would think (like with Abraham being told to kill Isaac), "God has another way to provide for me." Now what if after being obedient my electricity was shut off because I didn't pay that bill? Would that seem fair? Might I have heard God wrong? (Stay with me here. I'm trying to stretch us here- and remember I've got to live this too☺ )

This idea may frustrate us and we may ask the question: "Why would God give it to me if it wasn't for me to use it, enjoy it, spend it, utilize it?" I believe the answer is because we are conduits of all that is from God's Kingdom. God gives some things to us because He knows we are faithful stewards who can be trusted to give

them away when He tells us to; not seeing every gift as something directed to and for me. We often quote the phrase “Love isn’t love until you give it away.” Well one of the ways God’s children should experience and express the love and joy of God is when they get to bless others by giving away that which the Father calls them to. In this we share in the joy that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have when doing for mankind.

Now you might say, “Ok that’s great, I get your point! But let’s get back to the \$200, and whether we heard correctly, and if we did why God didn’t provide another way for the bill to get paid before the power was shut off!” Honestly, I cannot directly speak to that. Maybe God’s plan in providing for the bill required that we go a couple of days without electricity and God knew we’d “been there, done that” and could handle it (see Romans 8:28).

Scripture does indicate that when we suffer as a result of our obedience to God that this is a righteous thing. (We often think of suffering for righteousness sake as being persecuted by others for preaching Jesus and that could be a narrow view of this idea). I’d say it’s just like Jesus to give for the benefit of others even if it meant suffering loss personally.

Overall, we have sufferings on this earth, whether we are disciples or not. God does not promise to deliver His children from all of their sufferings while on earth. Jesus said we could be of good cheer (John 16:33) because He has overcome the world (with its sufferings); not avoided them.

So back to the thought I want to leave with you (and remind myself). All of God’s blessings (physical, emotional, psychological, material, etc.) provide for us, both in time and in eternity. They are for us, as well as for others. May we remind ourselves and others of this “long view” and think to ask the submission question whenever the Holy Spirit does something for, or in us. Don’t stop, don’t settle for, or limit yourself to temporal blessings! Consider God’s blessings as seeds to be invested/replanted for a greater harvest. When God shows you something or gives you something turn around, thank God for it, give it back to Him and ask what your response should be?

I hope you have a great day!

Michael