

Man's Ways and God's Ways

by Horatius Bonar

God's way of relieving is immediate, free, suitable, abundant, and from His own hand, contrasting with man's way of sending people away to buy.

Scripture: Matthew 14:15

Topics: "God's Provision", "Trust in God's Ways"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the contrast between man's ways and God's ways in providing for needs, illustrated by the feeding of the five thousand. While the disciples suggested sending the crowd away to buy food, Jesus demonstrated His compassion by insisting they need not depart and providing for them directly. Bonar highlights that God's provision is immediate, free, suitable, abundant, and comes from His own hand, showcasing the grace of Christ as the ultimate provider. This sermon encourages believers to trust in God's ways rather than relying on their own limited understanding and resources.

Transcript

"And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat."--Matthew 19:15-16.

The scene of this great gathering was the desert of Bethsaida, the open and uninhabited region on the north-east of the Sea of Galilee, and evidently close upon the sea, so that Jesus, when He fed the multitude, did not need to create water for them, and also when He was done feeding them, he could at once dispatch his disciples by a boat.

The time is toward evening. All the day Jesus had been teaching and healing. The afternoon drew on; the sun was getting low; the people were weary and hungry; some of them far from home. There was still time enough to provide a repast for them before sending them for it would be about three o'clock, but still the day was far spent.

The persons in this transaction may be arranged into three classes,--the multitude, the disciples, the Lord himself. As for the multitude, they are merely presented to us (1) as the objects of his compassion; (2) as the objects of his bounty. They come to hear and to be fed; to give Jesus an opportunity of shewing his love and fullness; they come not to minister, but to be ministered to, by the Lord. As for the disciples, they were of little service here. The Lord would have used them, but they would not be used. They shew

coldness, not compassion; littleness and narrowness, not generosity. It is the Lord himself who is shewn here, in solitary and unapproachable love and pity.

But it is with the mode or manner of blessing that we have specially to do here. It is this that brings out the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and draws us to him as the great provider for our wants, the great feeder of soul and body; and as is the Son, so is the Father; and he that has thus seen and known the Son, hath seen and known the Father.

This mode of blessing will be best seen by contrasting the disciples with the Master, their proposal for supply with his.

Before he does anything himself, he goes to them, for we read in John (6:5.) that the first thing was his question to Philip, "Whence shalt we buy bread that these may eat"? Thus He gives them the opportunity of providing, before He undertakes it himself. This only draws out their emptiness and inability to do anything in the matter; for the whole twelve now come to Him upon the subject, and it is their proposal that meets us first in this scene, "Send them away, that they may go and buy." It did not occur to them to appeal to the Master and his bounty. They were slow of heart to believe. Had it been a blind man brought for cure, they would have done this. But the feeding of five thousand was such an enormous miracle, that they never thought of this; and, besides, they had not yet exhausted human help, they were not yet at an extremity, for there were villages a few miles off. They do not apply to Him till they can do no better; He is the last, not the first, to whom they go.

Their remedy is quite characteristic, quite like man: "send them away that they may buy." But this brings out the Lord and his mode of meeting human wants all the more wonderfully. "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." Such is the contrast between the disciples and the Lord, between man and God, between the heart, the thoughts, the ways of man, and those of God. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord." Man's way of relieving man is, "Send them away that they may buy." God's way is, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." And this, too, is our way of relieving ourselves; we would go and buy, instead of at once, and on the spot, taking the blessing at the hands of Jesus.

Let us mark then the way in which Christ relieves, in which God deals with us, as the God of grace. The supply He gives is--

(1.) Immediate. It is given upon the spot; it comes to us just as we are, hungry and weary. It does not keep us waiting; it does not send us away to be fed. It is put into our hands, our lips, at once.

(2.) Free. We need no money; all is without price. God is the great giver; we are but receivers. We are only blessed when we learn this. God has respect simply to our wants, not to our qualifications or our means of purchase. He does often indeed make use of others to impart his bounty, "give ye them"; but whether directly or through a medium, all is free. The water that flows to us through the river's channels, is quite as free as that which descends in showers.

(3.) Suitable. He gives the very thing we need. His eye sees our want, and He supplies it exactly. We are sure that what we get from Him will be suitable.

(4.) Abundant. He giveth liberally. His stores are plentiful. It does not matter what the greatness of our need may be, or the number of the needy, He has enough, and He pours out liberally. He fills us; there is enough, and to spare.

(5.) From his own hand. Sometimes more directly than others, but still the supply comes from himself. Take it as either from the Father or the Son, it matters not. It is the Divine hand stretched out to give. We get all from himself, from his fullness, from his love. It is with Him we are to deal, and in dealing let us trust, let our transactions be ever those of simple child-like confidence.

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