



The Gift

The Gift that Nobody Wants (Part 1)

Luke 1:5-13, 39-45

Objective Statement: Everyone can prosper after famine by walking in the steps of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Introduction: Dr. Paul Wilson Brand, (July 17, 1914 – July 8, 2003) was a pioneer in developing tendon transfer techniques for use in the hands Born to missionary parents in the mountains of southwestern India in 1914, Brand attended London University, where he met his wife, Margaret Berry. The two surgeons returned to Vellore, India, to teach at the Christian Medical College and Hospital. During his outstanding career Brand received many awards and honors. He was awarded the Hunterian professorship of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1952, and the Lasker Award in 1960. Queen Elizabeth honored him with a title of the Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1961. He served as President of The Leprosy Mission International based in London and was on the Panel of Experts on leprosy of the World Health Organization (and the list goes on). While working at the Christian Medical College as the first professor of orthopedics and hand research, Brand pioneered surgical work with those suffering from Hansen's disease, a bacterial infection more commonly known as leprosy. He was the first surgeon to use reconstructive surgery to correct deformities caused by Hansen's disease (leprosy) in the hands and feet, and he also developed many other forms of prevention and healing from the disease. He was the first doctor to appreciate that leprosy did not cause the rotting away of tissues (as was supposed), but that it was the loss of the sensation of pain which made sufferers susceptible to injury. He saw pain as vital for the preservation of healthy tissue in anyone leading a normal life and he gives horrifying descriptions of the results of insensitivity in those with Hansen's disease or congenital absence of pain. Pain is a necessary part of one's life experience. Brand contributed extensively to the fields of hand surgery and hand therapy through his publications and lectures. One of his best known books, co-written with Philip Yancey, is entitled *The Gift Nobody Wants* published in 1993 and republished in 1997 as *The Gift of Pain*.

Pastor Dan: Elizabeth the wife of Zechariah the priest was a relative of Mary the mother of Jesus. She was barren and had never been able to conceive a child. Now she aged and had passed through the change of life. Barrenness was a burden she had carried all of her life. Zechariah, in spite of his prayers for a child, had carried this burden and esteemed their situation as a curse.

But God visited Zachariah and Elizabeth and her body was healed and revitalized; she became pregnant. Six months into the pregnancy Mary conceived Jesus through the Holy Spirit and came to help Elizabeth in the final three months of her pregnancy.

#1. *Don't allow what God hasn't done in your life to hinder what He plans to do* (Lu. 1:5-7, (13) *Don't be afraid Zacharias your prayer is heard and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son*)

A. *How do you deal with disappointment; with what God hasn't done in your life? John Quincy Adams: Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.*

1. *Walk in the Word* (Luke 1:6 *walking in all the commandments of the Lord*)

a. **Ex. 15:26; 23:25** If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord and do what ...

b. **Pastor Dan:** Zecharias and Elizabeth were careful not to allow themselves to be discouraged even though it appeared that their dream and desire for a child would never be realized.

c. **Joshua 1:8-9; Matthew 4:4; John 15:7**

d. **Thomas Adams:** The [Word of God] is to us what the star was to the wise men; but if we spend all our time in gazing upon it, observing its motions, and admiring its splendor, without being led to Christ by it, the use of it will be lost on us.

e. **Pastor Dan:** You have the ability turn your adversity into ministry and opportunity by putting God first in your life. **Psalms 119:11, 105, 165**

f. **Author Unknown:** The Word of God contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's guide, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, the Christian's character.

2. *Center your life around serving* (Lu. 1:8 *while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division*)

a. **William Barclay:** In the time we have it is surely our duty to do all the good we can to all the people we can in all the ways we can.

b. **Luke 1:8** Zachariah served others in ministry. **Mother Teresa:** We are all pencils in the hand of a writing God, who is sending love letters to the world through us.

c. **Helen Keller:** So long as you can sweeten another's pain, your life is not in vain.

d. **Matthew 23:11-12** Greatest among you

e. **1 Cor. 15:58** Always abounding in the work of the Lord

f. **Pastor Dan:** Zecharias and Elizabeth gave their lives to others in service and did not allow themselves to become idle and non-productive in their walk with God. Giving, in spite of the adversity they experienced, was a way of life for this couple.

g. **Einstein:** Only a life lived for others is worth living

h. **John 21:15-18** Feed My sheep

i. **Elbert Hubbard:** Down in their hearts, wise men know this truth: the only way to help yourself is to help others.

k. **Eleanor Roosevelt:** When you cease to make a contribution, you begin to die.

- 3. Make God's house a priority (Lu. 1:9 *he went into the temple*)**
- a. **Heb.10:25** *Augustine of Hippo*: He who does not have the church as his or her mother does not have God as their father.
 - b. *Pastor Dan*: Zecharias chose to deal with their disappointment by exemplifying a positive faith in God and the temple [church].
 - c. **Matthew 16:18** I will build my church
 - d. *R. Brokhoff*: If ever a man could have felt the church to be unnecessary, he was Jesus. Yet he did not stay away from the "church" of His day. It was his custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath, and He made many trips to the temple.
 - e. **Hebrews 3:13** Exhort one another daily
 - f. *Irenaeus*: If you do not join in what the church is doing, you have no share in this Spirit. For where the church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the church and every kind of grace.
 - g. **1 Cor. 12:12-27** *Pastor Dan*: The Church can live without one of its hands but not a one of the churches hands can live without its body.
 - h. *C. H. Spurgeon*: I know there are some who say, "Well, I have given myself to the Lord, but I do not intend to give myself to any church." Now why not? "Because I can be a Christian without it." Are you quite clear about that? There is a brick. What is it made for? To help build a house. It is of no use for that brick to tell you that it is just as good a brick, while it is kicking about on the ground, as it would be in the house. It is a good-for-nothing brick. So you rolling-stone Christians, I do not believe you are answering your purpose. You are living contrary to the life which Christ would have you live, and you are much to blame for the injury you do.
- 4. Seek the Lord by praying always (Luke 1:9-10 *praying at the hour of prayer*)**
- a. *Robert Murray M' Cheyne*: God will either give you what you want or something better. *Pastor Dan*: Even though the prayer this couple had prayed for years had gone unanswered they continued to make prayer an important part of their lives.
 - b. *Pastor Dan*: The most important part of prayer is not the material answer that God grants but the time we spend with Him being transformed into the image of His son 1 Cor. 3:18 but we all with unveiled face
 - c. **Luke 18:1; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**
 - d. Zecharias and Elizabeth were not stingy and did not allow themselves to become self-centered, they reached out to God in prayer
 - e. *Mother Teresa*: Love to pray. Feel often during the day the need for prayer, and take trouble to pray. Prayer enlarges the heart until it is capable of containing God's gift of Himself. Ask and seek and your heart will grow big enough to receive Him.
 - e. **1 Tim. 2:8; James 5:16; Jude 20** *C. H. Spurgeon*: We may be certain that whatever God has made prominent in His Word. He intended to be conspicuous in our lives. If He has said much about prayer, it is because He knows we have much need of it.
 - f. *Pope Pius XII*: A person without prayer is like a tree without roots.
 - g. *Martyn Lloyd-Jones*: Prayer ... is the supreme expression of our faith in God. *Madame Guyon*: The only way to heaven is prayer.

Closing and Invitation: There is an old legend which says that at creation the birds felt cheated and hurt because they received wings. Wings appeared to be burdens which none of the other animals were asked to carry. All was changed, however, when one day a strong wind began to blow across the land. The birds spread their wings in the wind and found themselves being lifted into the air. Instinctively, they began to flap their wings and learned to fly. That's when they learned that their wings were not a burden but blessing. On their wings they could rise above the earth and see sights which no other animal could see.