

## BLAME GAME VS. FACE OF GRACE

(1 Kings 17:17-24)

- Intro: It seems to be part of our human nature.
- When things don't go:
    - #Right.
    - #Way we would like them to go.
  - We have a tendency to play the blame game.
    - #To point the finger at somebody else.
    - #To blame them:
      - \*For the mess that's been made.
      - \*For the predicament we're in.

### I. Exhibit A: The Oil Leak In The Gulf Of Mexico.

- A. April 20, 2010.
1. 10:00 P.M.
  2. Explosion on an oil rig in the Gulf.
    - a. 11 people killed.
    - b. 17 injured.
  3. Drilling platform.
    - a. Caught fire.
    - b. Two days later.
      - April 22.
      - #Capsized.
      - #Sank.
  4. Oil.
    - a. Thousands of barrels.
    - b. Hundreds of thousands of barrels.
      - Began flowing into the water.
      - Eventually began washing:
        - #Onto beaches.
        - #Into wetlands.
          - \*Louisiana.
          - \*Mississippi.
          - \*Alabama.
          - \*Florida.

- B. May 11, 2010.
1. Three weeks after the blow out.
    - a. Congressional hearing.
    - b. Washington, D.C.
  2. CEOs.
    - a. British Petroleum.
    - b. Transocean.
    - c. Halliburton.
      - Sat before the Senate's:
        - #Energy and Natural Resources Committee.
      - To give an account of what was happening.
  3. These are the major players.
    - a. British Petroleum.
      - Owns the rights to the oil.
      - Operates the well.
    - b. Transocean.
      - Built the drilling platform.
        - #Deepwater Horizon.
      - Leases it to British Petroleum.
        - #For almost \$500,000/day.
    - c. Halliburton.
      - Subcontractor.
      - Helped with drilling the well.
  4. You may have seen what happened at the hearing.
    - a. Finger pointing.
    - b. Blame game.
      - BP blaming:
        - #Transocean.
        - #Halliburton
      - Transocean blaming:
        - #Halliburton.
        - #BP.
      - Halliburton blaming:
        - #BP.
        - #Transocean.
  5. On Wednesday.
    - a. I sat in Shirley Bryant's hospital room.
      - As her kidneys began to shut down.
      - As her doctor told her.
        - #There was no cure.
        - #There was no treatment.
        - #There would be no more going home.
        - #Shirley was dying.
        - #They would try to make her as comfortable as possible.

- b. There was a whole lot of shaking going on.
    - Shirley's:
      - #Hands.
      - #Shoulders.
      - \*Would shake.
        - +From time to time.
      - \*I grabbed her hand.
        - +To keep it from shaking.
      - \*I told Bill:
        - +If he got jealous.
        - +I'd trade places with him.
    - My corner of the room would shake, rattle, and roll.
      - #Maybe not roll.
      - \*But it was:
        - +Shaking.
        - +Rattling.
      - #Because of something:
        - \*Upstairs.
        - \*Out in the hallway.
          - +It felt like an earthquake.
      - #In order to:
        - \*Lighten the mood a little bit.
        - \*See how tuned in Shirley still was.
          - +I asked her a juvenile, third-grade riddle.
            - = "What did one earthquake say to the other?"
          - +Shirley didn't know the answer.
          - +So I told her.
            - = "What did one earthquake say to the other?"
            - = "It's not my fault."
        - \*Shirley laughed.
          - +Last time I heard her laugh.
6. That's what was going on in that congressional hearing room.
  - a. Finger pointing.
  - b. Blame game.
    - "It's not my fault."
7. When that didn't play so well.
  - a. In the hearing room.
  - b. Around the country.
    - Those three companies tried a different spin:
      - # "We're responsible."
      - # "We made the mess."
      - # "We'll clean it up."

8. But what we saw on May 11.
  - a. That's their human nature.
  - b. That's our human nature.
    - Point fingers.
    - Play the blame game.
    - # "It's not my fault."

## II. Exhibit B: The Death Of The Son Of The Widow Of Zarephath.

### A. Elijah Appeared On The Scene When Ahab Became King Of Israel.

1. Ahab married Jezebel.
  - a. Phoenician princess.
    - To cement an alliance between their two countries.
  - b. She introduced the worship of Baal.
    - Into Israelite culture.
  - c. Ahab bought into the whole deal.
    - 1 Kings 16:29-34.
2. God did not buy into the whole deal.
  - a. God shut up the heavens.
  - b. God decided there would be neither:
    - Dew.
    - Rain.
    - #As long as Baal was worshipped.
    - #Elijah was God's messengers of that decree.
    - \*1 Kings 17:1.
3. God took care of Elijah.
  - a. Sending him to the Wadi Cherith.
    - East of the Jordan River.
    - #Where Elijah had water to drink.
    - #Ravens brought Elijah:
      - \*Bread in the morning.
      - \*Meat in the evening.
    - #Until that little stream dried up.
    - \*1 Kings 17:2-7.
  - b. Then sending him to Zarephath.
    - Zarephath was on the Mediterranean coast.
    - #Between Tyre and Sidon.
      - \*Ancient Phoenicia.
      - \*Modern Lebanon.
    - To live with:
      - #Widow.
      - #Her only son.
      - \*Who were down to their last meal.

- God saw to it:
  - #Her jar of meal was never empty.
  - #Her jug of oil never ran dry.
  - \*1 Kings 17:9-16.

B. But Then The Son Died.

1. This was a catastrophe.
  - a. Where women didn't ordinarily:
    - Have careers.
    - Own property.
  - b. They were very much dependent on the men in their lives.
    - Fathers.
    - Husbands.
    - Sons.
  - c. For this widow.
    - To lose her only son.
    - To lose her future.
2. So it began.
  - a. Finger pointing.
  - b. Blame game.
3. Widow blamed:
  - a. Herself.
    - Little.
  - b. Elijah.
    - Lot.
    - #Bringing her sin to remembrance.
      - \*Whatever that might have been.
      - \*She blamed herself.
        - +In some way.
        - =Little way.
        - +For the death of her son.
      - #Mostly she blamed Elijah.
        - \*"Before you came,"
        - + "We weren't doing great."
        - + "But we were getting by."
        - \*"Then you showed up."
        - + "Now my son is dead."
      - \*She blamed Elijah for the death of her son.
4. Who could Elijah blame?
  - a. God.
  - b. "O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?"
    - 1 Kings 17:20.

- c. God sent the draught.  
Draught caused famine.  
Famine produced hunger.  
Hunger contributed to sickness.  
Sickness resulted in death.  
-It's not my fault.  
-It's God's fault.
- 5. That's how it goes.
  - a. With oil executives.
  - b. With widows.
  - c. With prophets.
  - d. With you and me.
    - Playing the blame game.
    - Pointing fingers.
      - #If not at one another.
      - #At God.

### III. What Does God Do?

#### A. God Could Point Fingers, Too.

- 1. Point the finger at us.
  - a. Our addiction to oil.
  - b. Our imperfect stewardship of God's creation.
  - c. Our imperfect care for one another.
  - d. Our finger pointing.
  - e. Our Baals.
  - f. Our sin.
- 2. That's what God's Word of Law does.
  - a. It points fingers.
    - At you.
    - At me.
    - At widows.
    - At prophets.
    - At oil executives.
  - b. It brings to remembrance our sin.
    - “You messed up.”
    - “You fell short.”
- 3. But pointing fingers doesn't solve the problem.
  - a. It doesn't stop an oil leak.
  - b. It doesn't bring a widow's son back to life.
  - c. It doesn't forgive a single sin.
- 4. God does more than point fingers.

B. God Shows Us A Face Of Grace.

1. Grace that pointed Jesus' fingers.
  - a. In love.
  - b. In mercy.
    - To receive the nails.
    - #Of death.
    - \*On the cross.
  - c. Face of grace.
2. Grace that can raise an only son back to life.
  - a. Not only the son:
    - Of the widow of Zarephath.
    - Of the widow of Nain (Luke 7: 11-17).
  - b. But God's son.
    - Easter morning.
    - Resurrection.
    - #Face of grace.
3. Grace that enables us:
  - a. To move beyond the finger pointing.
  - b. To see God's face of grace.
  - c. To put on our own face of grace.
4. I'm a baseball fan.
  - a. Wednesday evening.
    - I was out on my bike.
    - #Along the river.
    - I was listening to the St. Louis Cardinals baseball game.
    - #On my earphones.
  - b. Cardinal announcers.
    - Describing not only the Cardinals/Reds game.
    - Talking about the Tigers/Indians game.
    - #In Detroit.
  - c. Armando Gallaraga.
    - Detroit pitcher.
    - #Had a perfect game through eight innings.
    - \*Perfect game:
      - +Every batter that comes up goes down.
        - =No hits.
        - =No errors.
        - =No walks.
        - =No hit-by-pitcher.
      - +There have only been 20 perfect games.
        - =In the entire history of Major League Baseball.
        - Two of them this year.
    - Gallaraga retired the first two Indian batters in the ninth.
    - #Only one more out needed for a perfect game.

- Jason Donald.
  - #Indians batter.
  - \*Hit a ground ball.
  - +Between first and second.
- Miguel Cabrera.
  - #Tigers first baseman.
  - \*Fielded the ball.
  - \*Tossed it to Gallaraga covering first.
- Gallaraga.
  - #Stepped on first.
  - \*Before Donald's foot hit the bag.
- Jim Joyce.
  - #First base umpire.
  - \*Called Donald safe.
  - #It was a blown call.
  - \*Umpire got it wrong.

- d. When things go wrong.
  - It's the perfect time for:
    - #Finger pointing.
    - #Playing the blame game.
- e. But instead this baseball game produced a face of grace.
  - Jim Joyce put on a face of grace.
    - #First base umpire.
    - \*Watched the replays.
    - +After the game.
    - #Admitted he had made a mistake.
    - \*He said:
      - + "I blew the call."
      - + "I cost that kid a perfect game."
    - \*He later apologized to Gallaraga.
  - Gallaraga put on a face of grace.
    - #He got the next batter out.
    - \*To win the game.
    - #Next day he took out the lineup card.
    - \*Gave it to the home plate umpire.
    - +Jim Joyce.
      - =Who had tears in his eyes.
    - \*They shook hands.
      - +No finger pointing.
      - +But two faces of grace.

Concl: When you come the altar.  
-Your hands will be open.  
#To receive:  
\*Bread and wine.  
\*Our Lord's body and blood.  
-What you will see.  
#No fingers pointing.  
#But the face of grace.