

## **The Gables – Chance**

### **Dialog between Rick and Donna:**

**Rick:** I heard a really interesting story on the radio this week.

**Donna:** Oh really? What was it?

**Rick:** A man decided to take a different route on his walk home from work one evening. It was dark and probably summertime. As he walked, he heard a woman's muffled screaming coming from behind some bushes nearby. He wasn't sure what to do. The woman continued screaming. He thought about going to her rescue, but became afraid for his own safety. Finally, he decided he had to do something and asked God to help him. He left the road and he ran behind the bushes to investigate. He found a woman there being attacked by a hoodlum. The man pulled the hoodlum away from the woman and struggled with him. Eventually, the hoodlum ran away. The man turned to the woman and said, "It's OK now, Miss. You're safe." The woman said, "Daddy? Is that you?" The man was puzzled, then looked closely at the girl and realized it was his youngest daughter.

**Donna:** Wow! What an amazing coincidence. That girl sure was lucky.

**Rick:** Lucky? I don't believe in luck. Do you really think the man just happened to take a different route home that night and that the attack just happened to occur at precisely the same time that he was walking home?

**Donna:** What else could it be?

**Rick:** The man credited God for working everything out so he could rescue his daughter.

**Donna:** God?

**Rick:** Yes.

- In the Bible, Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."
- And 1 Chronicles 16:22 says, "Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm."

**Donna:** I didn't know that God protects us.

**Rick:** Of course He does. Like the father in the story, our father is there to rescue us in our hour of need.

**Donna:** But don't bad things sometimes happen to Christians too?

**Rick:** Sure. We're not immune to bad things in life, but we know that God has it all under control and that he has a plan for our life.

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**Donna:** A plan?

**Rick:** Yes. Jeremiah 29:11 says, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

**Donna:** But don’t Christians grow old and frail, get cancer, get stuck with big bills to pay, and have other bad things happen to them in life?

**Rick:** Absolutely! But the difference is everything that happens to a Christian must first be filtered through God’s will.

**Donna:** What do you mean?

**Rick:** Allow me to read a short section from Job chapter 1...

Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.” “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.” The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.”

What can we take away from this passage?

**Donna:** Hmm... Well, the most obvious thing is that God protects us.

**Rick:** Correct.

**Donna:** The second takeaway is that Satan had to ask permission from God before he can afflict us.

**Rick:** That’s right. What’s the third one?

**Donna:** That God controls the level of our affliction.

**Rick:** You’ve got it. God doesn’t give us more than we can handle. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, “...God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.”

**Donna:** So if bad things do happen to us, we know that God is in control of it.

**Rick:** Exactly. We are to rejoice in all our circumstances. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, “... give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

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**Donna:** That’s all well and good, but surely God doesn’t control everything. I mean what about random things that occur like rolling a dice to a particular number. Surely God doesn’t control that?

**Rick:** God can do anything. Genesis 18:14 says, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” He can control the numbers rolled on a dice if he wants to. Did you know that before Pentecost, whenever Jews or Christians wanted to know what God’s will was, they cast lots?

**Donna:** No, I didn’t. What does it mean to cast lots?

**Rick:** It’s kind of like rolling a dice or flipping a coin. Lots might be uniquely marked straws or stones. For example, after Judas died there were only eleven disciples left. It was decided that a replacement apostle was needed. They narrowed their choice down to two men. Acts 1:26 says, “Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.”

**Donna:** So, God can control anything, even seemingly random circumstances?

**Rick:** Yes.

**Donna:** But don’t we have free will?

**Rick:** Of course we do. God allows us to make our own choices in life, even horrible choices, but his overarching will is always accomplished. We can choose to follow Him, or choose not to follow Him; it’s up to us. We’ll have joy in this life if we live according to His ways. After all, joy is a fruit of the Spirit, as found in Galatians 5. But sorrow will be our lot in life if we go our own way. Proverbs 14:12 says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.” (That was from the ESV translation.) The Message translation is even more direct: “There’s a way of life that looks harmless enough; look again—it leads straight to hell. Sure, those people appear to be having a good time, but all that laughter will end in heartbreak.”

**Donna:** Do you really believe there’s a hell?

**Rick:** Yes.

**Donna:** Why? How do you know?

**Rick:** Because Jesus said there’s a hell.

**Donna:** He did? Where?

**Rick:** In Matthew 10:28 Jesus said, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

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**Donna:** Oh! How do we make sure we don't end up in hell?

**Rick:**

- **Romans 3:23** says, "... for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." This means that none of us are good enough to get into heaven on our own – based on our own merit or our own personal holiness – because of the sins we've committed in life.
- **Romans 6:23** says, "... the wages of sin are death." This means that the penalty for our sins is spending an eternity in hell.
- **Luke 13:3** says, "But unless you repent, you too will all perish." Repentance means we need to tell God we're sorry for our sins and that we want to turn away our sinful way of life. He'll help us if we ask Him.
- **Romans 10:9** says, "That if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart, God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." This means that if you ask God to forgive your sins, he will.
- Don't take a chance on your eternal destiny. If you haven't already done so, pray to receive Jesus as your savior today. You'll be eternally grateful if you do. Don't put it off. 2 Corinthians 6:2b says, "... I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation."
- Finally, **Luke 15:7** says there will be much "... rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents..."