

The Gables – Full View

Dialog between Rick and Donna:

Rick: Hey Donna! It's January, you know what that means.

Donna: What?

Rick: Taxes.

Donna: Oh, I hate doing taxes. It's so boring ... and so much work. I can't stand giving the government money.

Rick: Yeah, I know what you mean. But we have to make sure we're completely honest when filing our tax returns.

Donna: Why? What has the government done for us lately except waste our money on stupid projects and over-paid bureaucrats? They won't miss my puny little contribution.

Rick: Did you know that Jesus said we should pay our taxes?

Donna: He did? Where?

Rick: In Matthew 22:17-21, the Pharisees asked Jesus a question: "Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?" But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

Donna: Oh, I didn't know that. I usually make up whatever deductions I can.

Rick: You do? I didn't know that.

Donna: Sure. Who's ever going to find out anyway?

Rick: God will! He knows everything.

Donna: Well, I'm not too worried about getting caught.

Rick: You may manage to avoid fines or prison time, but it will catch up with you eventually. Have you heard of Al Capone, the Chicago gangster from the 1920s?

Donna: Yes, I've heard of him.

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Rick: He was involved of all kinds of organized crime including bribing Chicago government officials, bootlegging liquor, prostitution and murder. The Feds weren't able to convict him on any of those things, but do you know what they finally caught him on?

Donna: No.

Rick: Tax evasion. They got him for filing false tax returns, because he never declared all the money he "earned" illegally. They put him in jail. He was released after 8 years because of bad health.

Donna: How's God going to know about a little thing like my taxes? Isn't He too busy running the universe?

Rick: God sees everything.

- **Proverbs 5:21** says, "For your ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all your paths."
- **Hebrews 4:13** says, "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

Donna: What does it mean to "give an account?"

Rick:

- **Hebrews 9:27 (NKJV)** says, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment..."
- Christians will stand before the Bema judgment seat to be rewarded for the work they did for Christ while on earth. Non-Christians, and people who become Christians during the tribulation period, will stand before the Great White Throne Judgment, as recorded in Matthew 25:31-46:
 - ✓ To the Christians standing before Him, Jesus will say, "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'"
 - ✓ To the non-Christians standing before Him, Jesus will say, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Donna: I've been cutting corners on my taxes for years. How come God hasn't done anything about it?

Rick:

- **Revelation 22:11** says, "Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy."
- **Job 24:23** says, "He may let them rest in a feeling of security, but his eyes are on their ways."

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- God allows us to do whatever we want because he’s given us free will. But because He loves us, He convicts us of our sin through the Holy Spirit. He’s also built us with a conscience, to tell us when we’re doing wrong (Romans 2:15).
- But if we won’t listen to the Holy Spirit or to our conscience, there is wrath waiting for us. **Romans 2:5-8** says, “But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God “will repay each person according to what they have done.” To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.”

Donna: I’ll have to camouflage my deductions a lot better then.

Rick: Are you kidding me? Do you really think you can hide from God? He not only sees what you do, but he knows what you’re thinking and even what your motives are.

- **Jeremiah 16:17** says, “My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes.”
- **1 Chronicles 28:9b** says, “... for the LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought.”
- **Proverbs 15:11** says, “Death and Destruction lie open before the LORD—how much more do human hearts!”
- **Psalms 90:8** says, “You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.”

Donna: God knows what I’m thinking? He knows everything I’ve done wrong, even the sins that nobody else knows about? ... I can’t hide anything from Him? ... [Sigh] I guess I’d better change my ways, then.

Rick: Yes, you’d better, before it’s too late. God is a god of mercy and of second chances. He’s always willing to forgive and forget if you ask Him to, if you admit you’re a sinner and receive Jesus as your savior.

Donna: Is that really necessary? I mean, I haven’t killed anybody. I’m not that bad of a person.

Rick: Oh really? Here is an excerpt from a sermon preached by Billy Graham in 1949:

- *Darkness doesn’t hide the eyes of God,” Graham said. “God takes down your life from the time you were born to the time you die. And when you stand before God on the great judgment day, you’re going to say, ‘Lord I wasn’t such a bad fellow,’ and they are going to pull down the screen and they are going to shoot the moving picture of your life from the cradle to the grave, and you are going to hear every thought that was going through your mind every minute of the day, every second of the minute, and you’re going to hear the words that you said. And your own words, and your own thoughts, and you own*

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*deeds, are going to condemn you as you stand before God on that day. And God is going to say, 'Depart from me.'*¹

- Are you sure you aren't that bad?

Donna: I guess you're right. What should I do?

Rick: In **John 3:3**, Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

Donna: What does it mean to be "born again?"

Rick: When we come out of our mother's womb, we are born *alive physically*, but *dead spiritually*.

Donna: What do you mean that we are born dead spiritually?

Rick: **Psalm 51:5** says, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." That means we are spiritually dead when we are born. Only Jesus can make us alive spiritually. That's why Jesus says we must be born again. If we want to live with Him in heaven one day, we must be born again.

Donna: How can we be born again?

Rick: We must repent, believe and receive.

- Luke 13:3 says, "I tell you, no! But unless you **repent**, you too will all perish." Repentance means to turn away from our sinful life and follow the path God has for us.
- John 3:36 says, "Whoever **believes** in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them." If we believe that Jesus' death and suffering on the cross paid the penalty for our sins, then the righteousness of Christ is transferred to our account, and our slate is wiped clean. It's as if we'd never sinned.
- John 1:12 says, "Yet to all who did **receive** him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God..." We must ask Jesus to be our Lord and Savior and receive the gift of eternal life. God doesn't force Himself on us.
- Romans 10:9 says, "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."
- So, Donna, are you done cheating on your taxes?

Donna: Absolutely. Those days are gone. I don't want to sin anymore. I want to live for Jesus. I want to live a life that's pleasing to Him. I want to live the rest of my days for Him instead of for myself.

¹ Laura Hillenbrand, *Unbroken*, (New York: Random House, 2010), page 373. Excerpts taken from "The Only Sermon Jesus Ever Wrote," sermon by Billy Graham, © 1949 Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Used with permission. All rights reserved. Author's transcription from audio recording.