

The Father of Mercies and God of All Comfort*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

The Father of mercies and God of all comfort is the Father in the story of the prodigal son. When the wayward son came to himself in the far land, he came back to his father hoping for mercy. He never expected comfort, but that is what he received from his loving father. Even though our sin breaks the heart of God and put Jesus on the cross, our Father wraps us in his loving, forgiving, comforting arms when we come to Him in repentance. In His eyes, our sins were washed away by the blood of Jesus and He sees them no more. What amazing grace!

God is the Father of mercy and comfort. Consider the ways an earthly father might respond to a son's transgression.

Suppose a father has a treasured collection of beautiful model airplanes. These airplanes are not made from a kit, but from the tools that the father has himself put together. He designs the airplane model, cuts the pieces himself, and puts the pieces together very carefully so that the result is evidence of a gift of creative genius. He autographs each one of them upon completion. Even though other models of the airplane type do exist, his is truly one of a kind.

While this father makes his models, he invites his son to watch him in his workshop. The son, too young to be trusted with actually working with the model, is just an observer. It brings delight to the father to have his son in the workshop and the son is so impressed with his father's ability to create the model.

Upon completion of the model, the father places it carefully on the shelf reserved for it in the house and carefully instructs his son, "Now, remember how delicate this is and how much work went into it. It is not a toy to play with. It is a piece of art to admire. Please don't touch."

There comes a day when the little boy, now ten years old, cannot resist the temptation to play with the model. He takes it down from the shelf when his father is not at home and in the process of playing with it, he drops it and shatters it into pieces.

When the father comes home, he finds his son uncontrollably sobbing with the broken pieces of the airplane model in his hands. "Father," he says, "I know you told me not to play with it. You warned me what would happen. Look, I disobeyed you and it is broken beyond repair. Can you forgive me?"

The father has a choice. He might respond like this:

"You are right. I did warn you. Now you see what has happened. It cannot be fixed. I can forgive you, but not only are you forbidden to touch the models, you cannot go into the room that contains the models any longer, and I don't believe that I want you to work with me in my workshop anymore."

You can just visualize how the son walks out of the room after his father has said these words. Not only is the model beyond repair, but the relationship between the two of them will never be the same. Crushed, this ten-year-old boy tries to figure out how he can right the relationship; but he comes up empty.

Or the father might respond like this:

Reaching out his arms, he says, "Come here, son, sit on my lap. You are right. I did warn you that the model was very delicate, but I want you to know that you are more important to me than any model could ever be. You see, I created this model for you. Someday the entire collection is going to be yours. I always wanted you to have something that I created that you could enjoy even when I was gone. You are also right about the fact that this model cannot be repaired. However, you know that I have the tools and the workshop and the supplies and we can make another one. Yes, son, I said, 'we.' I believe you are now old enough and wise enough to help me in the workshop. You now know the value of the work and I know you will be careful. I love you, son, more than I can say." As the father put his loving, comforting arms around his son, they walked together out to the workshop.

This time imagine the reflections of this ten-year-old boy. Yes, he disobeyed. Yes, he destroyed the model. However, he learned more than the reality that the model would break and that he was capable of breaking it. He learned that his father loved him more than he ever imagined or dreamed. His relationship with his father would never be the same. It was better.

That is what it is like to feel the mercy and comfort of a God who forgives, the Father of mercies and all comfort.

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