

# Delivering the Helpless

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God hates bullying.

That needs to be stated not only because there is truth found in the quotation of George Orwell that “restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men.”

It needs to be said, because it is the truth: “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood...” (Prov. 6:16-17).

God hates bullying because God loves and cares for those whom bullying victimizes: “All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and needy from him that spoileth him?” (Ps. 35:10).

God hates bullying because too often it is committed by one member of God’s family to wound another member of his family. In other words, it is a sin against the covenant of God itself. Hatred is shown against the one whom God has commanded us to love (John 15:17).

We use a word that has lost its force—bullying—to describe something that God views as murder: “That neither in thoughts, nor words, nor gestures, much less in deeds, I dishonor, hate, wound, or kill my neighbor” (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 105).

The story that opened this magazine relayed the story of a girl who was murdered. There was “innocent blood” shed on that bus (Prov. 6:17).

What do we say when we read this story? Does the fact that it was perpetrated by Christians against a Christian fill us with horror? It should. Does it fill us with anger? How could it not?

Although we cannot do anything about that incident, we can examine our own responsibility when confronted with such a situation. The question could be asked, “In the absence of teachers or parents, what can be done?” The answer lies in the children who witnessed it, and Job’s life is instructive as to the solution.

We are all familiar with the history of Job. Given great riches, many children, prestige, and honor; all of it taken away by the devil who was convinced that Job worshipped God only because of his earthly circumstances.

What may be less familiar to us is the defense that Job gave of his own life in chapter 29. He was determined to prove to his friends that he was not being punished for his previous sins, as they alleged. In fact, the truth was very much the opposite. We read Job’s confession of his own life in chapter 29, “I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet as I to the lame. I was father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out.” And then this in Job 29:12, “I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him.” Job “delivered...him that had none to help him.”

This girl had none to help her. She was in the true sense of the word, helpless. All it would have taken was one voice, one boy or one girl to say, “Stop, this isn’t right! We should not be doing this!”

All of this could have been stopped just as soon as it began. You see, when a child or young person is being bullied, there are no teachers around, no parents, no playground monitors, only other children; the bullies see to that. Although the responsibility to stop this murder starts with the bullies themselves, those who are witnesses also have the power in their hands to stop it. And

if they will fulfill their calling before God by protecting those who are persecuted, the young person could be spared. Job teaches us by his own example how we ought to act when we witness someone being bullied. We too are called to “deliver...him that has none to help him.”

Our calling is to speak out in defense of the bullied person. Step in between bully and bullied and say to the oppressor, “Stop it! This has to stop right now!”

Oh, how our flesh cries out against this! Our mind says, “Step in the middle of this? Are you kidding me? Then the bullies will turn on me! Best just to be quiet and let this run its course.”

So, the persecution continues and the holy Spirit of God is grieved (Eph. 4:30).

But we are no longer ruled by our flesh (freed from the “bondage of sin” according to the Belgic Confession Article 24). Although our flesh is prone to cowardice, a sin for which the ungodly perish everlastingly (Rev. 21:8), it is a sin which the redeemed Christian, by the strength of the Holy Spirit, can overcome.

Our calling before God is to step in, to speak words of justice and love, and according to Psalm 82:3-4 to “defend the poor and the fatherless, do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.” This calling comes to all of us, young and old alike. Do justice and judgment! Help those who cannot help themselves, and deliver those who are oppressed!

God hates murder (“abhors” according to the Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 106). He especially despises the persecution of the vulnerable. He is determined to bring swift judgment on those who oppress the weak, as we read in Malachi 3:5, “and I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against...those that oppress...(the) widow, and the fatherless...”

But so too the commandment comes to help those in need, when it is “in the power of thine hand to do it” (Prov. 3:27).

And yet, how many reading this (and especially the one writing it) look back on events in their own life and find that we did exactly that? We sat quietly by while a child or young person was bullied—murdered, really— and we did nothing to “deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor” (Jer. 22:3). Or perhaps we joined in? Or led the persecution ourselves?

The memory of these events is impossible to shake, and the shame seems to linger as smoke on a garment.

Job gives us an example of how we are to deliver the oppressed, but Job can never do more than that. Job was merely a type, a shadow of someone greater. A shadow itself has no lasting glory, it is there for a moment, and then it is gone. It simply draws our attention to something or someone else.

Where then for relief, for the bullied, the bully, and bystander alike? For that we must look to the one of which Job was merely a type. And it is that someone greater that not only provides a *perfect* example of a holy life, but himself gives courage to the redeemed bystander, so that they no longer stand idly by, but jump up to the defense of the bullied person, and show “mercy and compassion every man to his brother” (Zech 7:9).

Where else for relief but the cross that stands at Calvary? At the foot of that cross three parties come together in peace at last, the bullied, the humbled oppressor, and the repentant bystander, all clinging to the One crucified. For it is the bullied child herself, the reed that was not broken, and the flax that was not extinguished, who finally by the grace of their Savior experienced “judgment unto victory” (Matt. 12:20). It is the bully himself who is transformed by God into a

blessed peacemaker, and who now is at peace with his God through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).

And for you, the young person who doubts they have the strength to stand up for the bullied person? You are right. When God's people rely on their own strength, "even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall" (Isa. 40:30). You don't have the strength. You will fail time and time again. Until you finally find your strength in the Son of God, the Son who not only stood up for you, but gave *himself* for you (Gal. 2:20). This is the one who empowers you courageously to defend the weak and powerless, so that when you have against all odds delivered "him that had none to help him," your victory cry will be, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

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