

A Righteous Response

The precious truths that we began to study last week from the Book of Luke chapter 6 are very deep and very difficult. And that is especially so involving this matter of our “will” and our “free will” responses to the people and their behaviors that we encounter each day.

And no, none of this is new to our day or to our culture. It has been this way almost from the beginning.

Yes, when God first created mankind, He truly did create us in His image. By that is meant that we were created in most ways very much like God. And in those first days of existence, mankind, Adam and Eve, began their life with attributes and desires and a “Will” that would have looked almost exactly like God, pure and holy.

And though it is not said within these scriptures, I believe that it is safe to believe that because these first two people, Adam and Eve, had the Holy Spirit so full within their souls, they had most of the many precious attributes of the Holy Spirit dwelling within them . . . love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. And they were fully able to obey all that God desired for them to be and to do.

But again, along with all of those good and righteous attributes, the image that God put into Adam and Eve also included a “Will”, a “Will” that was in many ways, just like His.

But unfortunately, for Adam and Eve, their condition of being was only an image of God. They were like Him but not exactly the same as Him. God was, and is, Perfect in every way, Righteous and Holy, able to know and do all things in a righteous and holy way, and powerfully able to absolutely control all of His desires and behaviors in every situation and circumstance. Perfect, absolutely Perfect!

But again, Adam and Eve were only an image of God and not a God themselves, and not able to be exactly like God. And when it came time to experience temptation from their own flesh and from the devil, they, through their own abilities were not able to control their emotions and desires. They didn't have perfect self-control. And because of the “freedom” they had with

their “Will”, they were able to make wrong choices, wrong decisions. And they did!

And within that one defining moment, Adam and Eve, lost every vestige of goodness that God had created within them, and they became corrupt. They immediately lost their “freedom of the will” and became a slave to a “new nature” within them, a “sinful nature”, a nature that held them captive to a new and different behavior and conduct, a nature that was now unable to choose those things that were truly righteous and holy, every future choice and decision would be tainted by desires for sin and for self.

And also unfortunately, that same condition of soul, that sin nature, would then and now be passed on to every child born to Adam and Eve and to every child born to their children and their children’s children throughout time.

Which then leads us up to this precious gospel that we have before us today. Here, as we have been studying in this Book of Luke, we find that God has given us the perfect answer to the dilemma that mankind has been suffering through since those days of Adam and Eve.

Here, and all throughout these precious gospels, we are being told that the Lord Jesus has come to earth to change all of that corruption that man’s “free will” has worked into our souls. For those who would receive Him as Savior and Lord, He has brought new life into our dead souls and has given us new abilities to help us as we deal with the corruption that has filled us for so long. And also, to deal with the corrupt conditions that surround us in our daily lives.

And part of the blessed condition of the new life that Jesus has brought to us are His precious instructions in righteousness. And we read about some of those today in this passage here in Luke chapter 6.

Turn there to Luke chapter 6, beginning in verse 27, and read along with me.

²⁷“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. ²⁹To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold *your* tunic either. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask *them* back. ³¹And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

³²“But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you lend *to those* from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. ³⁵But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. ³⁶Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

³⁷“Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:27-38)

Folks, God has many wonderful attributes, but it seems that of all His attributes, His “Holiness” undergirds all of them. Yes, God is “love”. But His Holiness requires Him also to be “Just”. And because God is “Just”, both He and we are held accountable to be and do right things, such as these that Jesus is talking about here in this passage.

These instructions from the Lord Jesus are truly precious, and they express the holy and righteous desires of God's heart. But for us as we read them, because of all the corruption that we have been so accustomed to harboring within our souls for most all of our lives, these instructions really can seem to be very daunting to us. These are truly difficult responses and behaviors that are completely foreign to our accustomed way of thinking. And as we read them, our hearts ask, “How can we ever hope to do these things”.

For me, as I pondered through these words of the Lord Jesus, I was first taken to the Book of 1 Peter where we are given the command from God about “Holiness”. There He tells us to “Be ye holy”, and to “be holy in all your conduct”. Listen to those words! 1 Peter 1,

¹³ . . . gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; ¹⁵but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:13-15)

I have often considered the requirements of this word “Holy”. But now again, in light of Jesus’ statements here in today’s passage, as I consider all that these words require of me, I must confess, I am intimidated by the possibilities. Because the manner in which these words are given is not just a general statement of life circumstances. These words are an actual command from God, a command that I must obey.

And the usual understanding that we have about such commands is that if God commands me to do it, then I am able to do it, because God will never command me to do something that is beyond my abilities . . . or will He?

Folks, this is one of those special mysteries that God has designed into our sanctification that reaches beyond all human ability to comprehend.

In these words, God is actually commanding us to do something that truly is impossible to do within the strength and abilities afforded to us through natural birth, which leaves us with a dilemma.

Thankfully, God is gracious and does not leave us long at our impasse. He quickly reveals answers within His scriptures that we might never have seen before.

One answer that speaks directly to the mystery of holiness is found in 1 Corinthians 1:30 where we are told, that “It is of God that Christ Jesus has become within us, wisdom, holiness, righteousness and redemption.”

Simply put, that impossible thing that God requires of you and me, “Holiness”, He accomplishes Himself by breathing the Spirit of Christ, and His “Holiness”, into our spirit, enabling us to be Holy as He is Holy.

Just as God did not require you and me to redeem our own selves from our sins, neither does He require us to make our own selves holy. He knows that we can never do that, even with our very best efforts and abilities. And so, He accomplishes our holiness by putting the Holy Spirit of Christ within us to enable us to do things that we cannot otherwise do.

But that does not mean that there is no requirement of us, there is, and it is deep and it is difficult. God requires you and me to “surrender” every jot, every tiddle

and every hidden part of our souls to Him, so that he can bring His character of wisdom, holiness, righteousness, and redemption into our character.

Yes, it is truly a very difficult thing to achieve, but it is the only plan that will really work if we ever hope to be holy and to be able to get about doing the things that Jesus speaks about here in our text. And we can do it!

Later on in 2 Peter, chapter 1, God explains the provision He makes for us and the transition that will take place if we will surrender ourselves to His Spirit in us. There He tells us,

³His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Peter 1:3-4)

Folks, this is an amazing reality that has taken place within us. From that first moment that we took that step to receive the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior, God's Spirit immediately began to indwell our Spirit and to give us answers that we never had before, and especially the solution to the dilemma of how a wretch like me can become Holy, like Him, an impossibility that becomes possible.

But again, as we know, His holiness is not just miraculously implanted into us. Much effort is also required of us. Why is that so? It has to do with verse 35 of our passage here in Luke chapter 6. Here He tells us

³⁵But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. (Luke 6:35)

In Christ, you and I become actual sons and daughters of God, family members, with family responsibilities. Hired men and servants don't own the kingdom and do not have the same responsibilities and obligations as do the King and as do His sons and daughters. And the King and His sons and daughters must be diligent to learn about and to tend to the responsibilities of the kingdom.

What are those responsibilities? The first responsibility is that we must allow ourselves to be trained up in the ways that befit sons and daughters of the King.

We read about that on further down in 2 Peter 1. Listen! It first begins with the faith we exercised in receiving Christ as our Savior, and then goes on from there. Listen, beginning in verse 5 of 2 Peter 1,

⁵ . . . giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. (2 Peter 1:5-7)

Folks, these are the very personality and nature of God our Father. And they are to also be our ways, our personality, our nature as God's sons and His daughters. And we are to show forth His nature every moment, as we live and breathe and have our being among men.

And as we do that, (listen to these words)

⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:8)

As sons of God, children of the King, we need to be trained up and to stay trained up in the very nature and personality of the King. And to the extent that we are, we will then be able to respond to the world and to its ways with a personality of holiness that others do not have.

And that also is a strange part of this mystery. The mystery of holiness allows us to walk within the world but to not be a part of it, to remain "separate" from it. As the Spirit of Christ lives within us, He will convict and convince us to continually pull ourselves out and away from the ways and the behaviors of the world.

And we must be able to accept and agree with that separation. We cannot remain a part of the world, yoked together with it, and participate in its ways and still hope to be holy. In 2 Corinthians 6, we are clearly told,

¹⁴Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵And what accord has Christ with Belial (the devil)? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

"I will dwell in them
And walk among them.

I will be their God,
And they shall be My people.”

¹⁷Therefore

“Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you.”

¹⁸ “I will be a Father to you,

And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the Lord Almighty.” (1 Corinthians 6:14-18)

Folks, from the first moment we received Christ as our Savior, we truly did become sons and daughters of the King of Glory and we no longer have a place of living in among the habits, the behaviors, and the lusts that were once ours, before we were saved.

And we must intentionally separate ourselves out from them, else we will lapse right back into them.

And we dare not underestimate the power of the old life and the old lusts that still remain within us. Their allure is great.

The world and its lusts are in some ways like an old girlfriend or boyfriend that we had before we were married. She or he still comes around to flirt with us and to tempt us into coming back to them. And they offer the same lusts that we once enjoyed.

But we dare not give in to their temptations. We must continually remind ourselves that we have been changed. In Christ, we have a new Bridegroom and we are His Bride, forever united to Him as “one”. And in Him we have a whole new life. And we now have a greater, more needful obligation before us and we must separate ourselves out from that old life.

New behaviors must be developed and practiced, behaviors that befit the sons and daughters of the King.

That is what Jesus is explaining to us here in our scripture passage for today. Here, He is saying to us, “yes, before you were saved, you did try to do things in

a way that seemed right to you. But now, you must be different!" Listen again to some of that very different manner of thinking and behavior. Verse 27,

²⁷. . . "I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. ²⁹To him who strikes you on the *one* cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold *your* tunic either. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask *them* back. ³¹And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

³²"But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴And if you lend *to those* from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. ³⁵But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. ³⁶Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

³⁷"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." (Luke 6:27-38)

Folks, there is a differentness within these words that is beyond anything we have ever known before. While these words do sound like a collection of "dos and don'ts", they are more than that, much more. Yes, we must abstain from certain behaviors. But this "differentness" is very different from just "doing" or "not doing" some difficult things. This "differentness" is a "separated" kind of moment by moment "lifestyle" that will bring about the kind of holiness that God desires.

And yes, the words of each of these verses take us against the grain of our ordinary behaviors. And our pride causes us to reject such humble responses. We, by our nature, want to defend our own position and to keep the possessions we have worked hard to own.

But here, God is reminding us to take a close look at our attitudes towards our pride and our possessions. Are our pride and our possessions worth the cost of our own souls or the souls of others?

Is not the soul of another person worth a few moments of discomfort and inconvenience on our part? If we were to humbly give up our right to our self in matters like these, who knows, we might, by our behavior, win the heart of another person to Christ.

Would you not enjoy, as you someday stand in judgment, having another be a witness before the Lord of Glory and saying, "that one, he or she humbled themselves and treated me justly even when I was very unjust to them, and I was changed by their behavior. So then,

²⁷. . . "I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. ²⁹ To him who strikes you on the *one* cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold *your* tunic either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask *them* back. ³¹ And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. (Luke 6:27-31)

May we pray.