

Response To Grace
Luke 12:48

In my favorite hymn, Amazing Grace, we sing about God's "indescribable free gift" of grace and of the salvation that His grace brings to us. And God's gift of "grace" truly is free, completely free, undeserved, and unearned by anything that we could ever do, so free that all we can do is bow as low as we can bow and say back to Him, Amen and Amen.

And then also, and thanks be to God, His grace does not begin and end with our salvation. He has also given us the sweet gift of His Grace of Sanctification, the Holy Spirit power through which we are able to "work out" the precious salvation that He has put within us. And that is to be our grateful response to His blessed grace, to "work out the salvation that the Lord Jesus has worked into us". Those words in Philippians chapter 2. Listen!

¹²Therefore, my beloved . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)

From these words, we can clearly see that while we cannot do anything to earn the salvation that we receive, we really do have some responsibilities required of us after we are saved. And this working out of the salvation that God has worked into our souls is the focus of our scripture passage for today, here given to us in Luke chapter 12, verse 48. Listen!

⁴⁸. . . Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. (Luke 12:48)

As we read these words of the Lord Jesus in today's passage, though they be stern and demanding, He really is a kind and patient Savior. Like a loving father with a strong voice, He reasons with us about the matters that so often grab hold of us and carry us astray.

Here, with simple reasoning, Jesus says,

⁵⁴Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. ⁵⁵And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. ⁵⁶Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how *is it* you do not discern this time?(Luke 12:54-56)

These are simple words of reasoning, but given with sternness, and necessarily so! But why, and who were these ones Jesus called “hypocrites”? Were they just those Scribes and Pharisees and other “would be” believers in God?

Yes, they were those, but not only those. Among the crowd that day were probably also men and women just like you and me. Believers who truly want all that Jesus has to offer, but are still also weak-willed and easily distracted and easily wearied in “well-doing”.

I use the word “simple” to describe these words, because they are simple, and seem to be on the order of “milk”, and not of the nature of real “meat”.

And why would that be so? It’s because those people then, and even you and I now very often choose to remain at a very simplistic level in our relationship with Christ, knowing very little and doing very little in response to the loving and generous gift of “grace” He has shown to us in our salvation.

And here in these words, Jesus is calling out to each of us who has ears to hear saying, “listen to me, there is more, much more, that is required.” Verse 48

⁴⁸“For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.
(Luke 12:48)

You and I must not allow this warning and this reasoning to fall onto deaf ears.

I’m reminded of the reasoning that God used in the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 30. There also, His words are simple, but the consequences of refusing to understand and of refusing to follow them are stern and more difficult than we will ever want to face. There in Deuteronomy 30, beginning in verse 11, God tells us,

¹¹“ . . . this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. ¹²It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹³Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹⁴But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.
(Deuteronomy 30:11-14)

Folks, how much clearer can God be? His truths and His requirements of us are not as difficult as we make them out to be. We don't have to do as so many do and go on some long pilgrimage in search of some mystical wisdom. As God tells us here, His commands and His plans for us are not far off. And they are not above our ability to hear and understand, especially for us now who have the Holy Spirit living within us. The Holy Spirit gives light to His words and to His meanings. And because of that, we are without excuse.

Listen also to the words that follow on to these there in the Book of Deuteronomy. There God tells us,

¹⁵"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you . . .

¹⁷But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish.

. . . ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curses. Therefore choose life.(Deuteronomy 30:15-19)

These words, "therefore choose life", remind me of a time when, as a student, our oldest son, Jason, shared his testimony in an evening service at French Camp. The subject that he spoke about, and that he returned to over and over again as he talked, was that "life is a series of choices that we make". And so it is, choices, both right choices and wrong choices. And all those choices will eventually come together to define the outcome of both our daily life and of our eternity.

And that is what Jesus is telling us here in this passage. Here, He's saying, I have given you so very much. I have given you everything that it takes for life and godliness. I have given you salvation, salvation that has cost you nothing, salvation that I alone have paid the fullest of costs to obtain for you.

And He is saying, But now, you must respond! Now, you must begin to give your part in this equation of righteousness. Though it might often be deep and difficult for you to do, you must do it! I have given you so very much, and "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required."

And here also, Jesus speaks about a fire, and that fire is a Holy Fire that will begin to burn within the hearts of His people, a fire that will not leave us alone in our efforts to overcome the demands and the temptations of this world. His Spirit and His fire will live within us and will constantly provoke us on towards living lives that are filled with what He calls “life and godliness”.

Listen to those words given to us in 2 Peter 1.

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)

How often do we hear foolish and weak-willed words flowing out of our mouths, words like, “I don’t know why I keep letting myself get caught up in all those wrong things that I do, wrong choices, wrong habits, wrong behaviors, especially when I know these words spoken here to be true?”

We know that we really do have His Holy Spirit abiding within us giving us everything that we need to live and to do right and righteous things. And along with His pressing words,

⁴⁸“For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more. (Luke 12:48)

We really do want to change. But the question that seems always to come to my mind is, “How do I get from where I am to where I know I need to be? How do I get from my unrighteous behavior on into the righteous behavior of Christ?”

Unfortunately, I believe that some of the roadblocks lie within our own misguided perspective about our Christian religion. Most of the time, it seems that we want our religion to do all the work for us. And it can, and it does.

But intertwined within all that God does in and for us, are some things that are on our side of the equation, some things that are still required of us, of you and me. And until we are willing to step up and do our part, that “life and godliness”

that God spoke about here does not move forward, and we will continue to suffer the consequences of our behaviors.

I'm reminded time and time again of that all-important moment when the Levites were carrying the Ark of God across the Jordan River. With the Ark resting on their shoulders, they needed to put their foot into the water before the water would begin to part. When they did, then God did His part. He parted those waters and the whole nation of Israel was then able to pass through on dry land.

God is constantly telling us about things like this. And He is constantly showing us that He will do His part. But we need to also do our part in this divine equation of life.

And right after His words here in 2nd Peter that tell us that He has given us everything that we need for life and godliness, God adds the part that you and I are required to do.

These are "our steps into the waters". And for each step that we take, God will enable the next, and the next and the next. Listen! Those words from 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 5,

⁵For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8)

Folks, those words that we just read before these, "His 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." Those words can begin to mystically become real and true in the ordinary daily behaviors of our life. But it is only as we step on forward and begin to do our part, to add to our faith goodness and to goodness, knowledge and to knowledge, self-control and to self-control, perseverance and to perseverance, godliness and to godliness, brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness, love.

And again, we need to understand! These are words of intentionality, words and plans and actions, words that require something of us.

We cannot expect to have this kind of "life and godliness" develop within us if we insist on just "floating" through our days, living with whatever circumstances that come our way. Yes, to some extent, that can be appropriate, but not as a rule of daily life.

Life and godliness requires being intentionally dedicated to these pursuits of adding to your faith goodness and to goodness, knowledge and to knowledge, self-control and to self-control, perseverance and to perseverance, godliness and to godliness, brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness, love.

A former boss of mine used to love the expression, "let's play it by ear". And we did that often. Instead of making plans and living by those plans, we would take life as it occurred each day. And that had some advantages.

But here in these words, God is saying to you and to me, that there is a point in time when we must move on from playing all of the things of life by ear. If we ever want to experience real life and real godliness, then we really must . . .

⁵ . . . make every effort (note those words) make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. .(2 Peter 1:5-8)

If we will do these things, then there will be a reward for us, a great reward.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. And if we will do those things, then our reward will be, as we are told in 2 Peter 1, verse 4,

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 1:4)

And

⁸For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.(2 Peter 1:8)

If we possess these new qualities of righteousness, then we will be effective and productive in our knowledge and service to the Lord Jesus. And that is a promise from Him.

Folks, these are practical works and behaviors, works and behaviors that will keep us from the corruption in the world caused by evil desires that the Apostle Peter warns about, those daily stresses of life, especially those within our families and those within our workplaces. Practical works and behaviors that will keep us from getting caught up in some of these wrong behaviors that Jesus speaks about here in this passage. Verse 45,

⁴⁵But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk.(Luke 12:45)

While you and I may not think of ourselves as being someone like this, or even be able to personally relate to these words, there are some people, even some who faithfully attend their churches, that do exactly this, they physically abuse people, especially their family members.

And there are others who may not physically abuse people, but do mistreat them all the same, especially family members, and coworkers, and subordinates at work.

And folks, we need to take warning that instead of receiving a reward for a job well done, there will be a deserved recompense that each person will receive for their behaviors, a recompense that we really do not want to suffer. Listen! Verse 45,

⁴⁵But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, ⁴⁶the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.(Luke 12:45-47)

Again, you and I might not be able to closely relate to this kind of behavior, or this kind of punishment, but even so, some or even all such similar behaviors may be taking place either by us or at least through our lack of doing that which is right in the daily patterns of our life.

But God is calling you and me into a pattern of life that is far above all of this, a pattern of life that is summed up in the words “life and godliness”.

And again, He has fully enabled us to do it. 2 Peter 1,

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.(2 Peter 1:3)

Our required response to God’s divine power and His divine grace will be a series of daily life “choices”, choices that we must make if we really want our life and our eternity to turn out right.

Think about it now folks while God has opened our minds to it! And consider the warnings that Jesus gives here in this passage and the punishments that go along with these kinds of wretched behaviors. And then consider all the blessings that go along with “life and godliness.” Which choice should we make?

Isn’t the best choice an obvious one? That is why Jesus uses such simple reasoning with us here in this passage. It really is just a matter of making the simplest of right choices.

These words again from Deuteronomy chapter 30, and we’ll close.

¹⁵“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you . . .

¹⁷But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish.

. . . ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curses. Therefore choose life.(Deuteronomy 30:15-19)

Let’s pray.

