

Russell Kelfer

The Grace of Holiness: Making It Work

#1350-B

Series: God's Amazing Grace



DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

The Grace of Holiness: Making It Work

Our Father and our God, we just rest in the awesomeness of Your sovereign power. You know the beginning from the end. There is not a word in our mouth, Father, but you know it all together. Even before the foundation of the world, You knit us together in our mother's womb and scheduled each day of our lives even before we were born.

So, Father, You have not been caught unawares by the needs of people, but plan rather to use each and every incident, none of which are accidents, to bring about glory to Your name.

Now, Father, as we give this time to You, we recognize this study can only be fruitful if Your Spirit is our teacher and if Your Word is our guide, and if our hearts are opened by grace. So, we ask that You would tenderize our spirits; take away those things that tend to distract us. May this crucial look at Your holiness and what we need to do about it, somehow penetrate our hearts in a way we cannot grasp or understand except that it be of grace.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

You may have heard of him. He was a mastermind at understanding automobiles. He understood the way the internal combustion engine was designed. He had a grasp of the concepts behind automatic transmissions. He even knew more than anyone else around, how a computer module controlled the flow of gasoline and how the cooling system worked. He was a mastermind when it came to understanding automobiles.

In fact, engineers would contact him from all over the world just to get his expertise. He was offered jobs in Tokyo, Detroit, and Berlin. In his head were the secrets General Motors and Honda wanted to explore. There was only one problem. His family knew, but no one else knew that though he had this amazing knowledge *about automobiles*, he had never driven one. You see,

he was afraid to drive. Whenever he got behind the wheel panic set in. So here is a guy who was considered an expert in the field of transportation, totally unable to enjoy or appreciate the fruits of his labors. He was petrified of the very thing he taught others about.

Don't laugh. God has the same problem with some of us. We search the Scriptures, ponder the principles, grapple with the Greek, try to handle the Hebrew, and we convince ourselves that by nature of having all this information, we have become experts on living the Christian life.

But God isn't impressed. If you can't drive the car you designed, you're still on foot. If you can't operate the computer you built, you just have an expensive paperweight. And, beloved, if you have an intellectual grasp of grace, but don't know how to appropriate it on a minute-by-minute basis, it's an affront to God, for He said, "*To whom much is given, much will be required*".¹ God judges our faithfulness in proportion to what we know. And if we understand how to let God be Himself in us, and then in the marketplace of life we never quite let go and believe that it is His life to live and not ours, we are of all men and women, "Hypocrites of the Year."

Grace is not simply an intellectual pursuit. It is an experiential walk in the real world, utilizing the supernatural, enabling power of God to live *in* the world, while living *above* it. It is God being allowed to do what we can't do, and we can't live the Christian life. He never asked us to. He only asked Jesus, as He walked this earth, to be an image, an obedient reflection of the Father. He is only asking us to do the same.

I would remind you; you have to die before you can be resurrected. And you have to die to self before grace can make strength out of weakness and take control of your life. None of us likes the idea of dying, and none of us likes the idea of losing control. So, we study faith, grace, and sovereignty with the same intellectual intensity we would use to study geography, psychology, or mathematics, and it doesn't work. This is not an academic pursuit. This is the pursuit of holiness, and it will not be achieved simply through knowledge, but through the appropriation of grace.

¹ Luke 12:48

The Grace of Holiness: Making It Work

Unless we leave this study having allowed Jesus Christ to take control of our thought life, our eye gate, and our self-motivated desire to live for God in our own strength, we will only be more accountable and less spiritual. Therefore, this third and final lesson on the grace of holiness will be devoted almost exclusively to the practical aspect of letting the grace we've learned about actually flow through our lives. Our goal is to ask God to make it work for us.

This is where Satan puts his slimy foot down. He hates it when we study grace, but as long as we file it away in our notebooks under "Layman's Guide to Intellectual Information," he can live with that. He'll only laugh, assuming that we now know what we're missing, but we will only be more frustrated by it. What he can't handle is when we leave here prepared to experientially appropriate that grace until it multiplies itself, as the power of God flows through us and we become images that reflect His nature. That makes the devil very nervous. So, expect warfare, but know the *incredible blessings that accompany that grace make the warfare more than worth it.*

We are in the process of applying the grace principles to the holiness of God. His holiness is that all-encompassing attribute which is kind of a valve that releases all of His other attributes. His holiness is that part of His nature that separates Him from man and separates His children from the world of contamination and sin. That holiness brought about the release of mercy because it demanded that He deal with the sin question or we could never again have fellowship with Him. And it released grace, because unless He imputed His holiness to us, we could not experience His love even if we had been forgiven. So, His holiness became the central focus of our redemption. It revealed that while God hates sin, His love was so great that He would pay the price for our sins lest we be cut off from Him forever. Oh, what love!

The problem is, and we've mentioned this before, we accept His saving grace as having been accomplished and we praise Him for it. We sing about it, pray about it, and rejoice over it. But, on a day-to-day, minute-by-minute basis, we don't oftentimes experience the incredible freedom that comes when we draw on that grace, so we begin to play-act rather than find a way to experience what God wants us to have.

The Grace of Holiness: Making It Work

If we are appropriating God's holiness, as we ought, several things will be characteristic of our lives. I would ask you to check yourself as I try to check myself.

1- We will be spending more and more time alone with God.

It won't be something we *have* to do. Wild horses won't be able to keep us from His presence.

2- We will be hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Our appetite for the Word of God will become insatiable. We will want to memorize it, meditate on it, and personalize it. It will not depart from our mouths. It will be like frontlets before our eyes.

3- We will become increasingly sensitive to sin.

This is the key. Your anger, your pride, your lust, your discontentment will be passing away. Things we once thought were acceptable will break our hearts because the closer we get to the center of the will of God, the more we realize they break the heart of God.

4- We will be growing more into His likeness every day.

Spiritual maturity will become a natural by-product. We will begin to sense wisdom we never had before. A ministry will develop out of that wisdom; a ministry we couldn't produce on our own no matter what we did.

5- Our hearts will become increasingly pure.

We will begin to be honest with God; an honesty that comes only when we know He knows what we really think, and we don't want to play games anymore. The theater of our minds will stop playing fantasies for us to enjoy, pretending that God doesn't see them because He does. We will know that until every thought is captive to Christ, we are not really growing spiritually.

No one but you can judge whether those things are happening in your life or not. But most of us, if we're honest, would have to admit that not only is that *not* a picture of our lives; *in many ways, some of us are actually lowering our standards of holiness to conform to the degenerate condition of the world we live in.* And we are unconsciously justifying things we considered sin before.

We are going to look at three major issues as we conclude this

study on the grace of holiness.

THE DYNAMIC OF DECISIONS

Throughout Scripture there is one thing that is crucial and often overlooked in the Christian life, and that is the dynamic of decision-making. The decisions of life are the keys that make up the course of your life. There are some key ones in all of our lives that we can take note of. If you were creating a map of your life, you would see certain decisions that actually, ultimately made up the difference in the course of your life. Eve made a decision in the garden that changed her life. It changed ours, too. Adam made a decision to do what Eve did. Cain made a decision based on jealousy and anger. Moses made a key decision. Do you remember?

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

[Here is the decision that changed his life.] Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,

Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

Here is his motivation.

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

(Hebrews 11:24-27 NKJV)

Decisions—they make or break your life. Somehow, we see that in the physical realm—what school to go to, what person to marry, what city to live in, what job to take. One decision can change the course of your life. But what we sometimes miss is the importance of the little *spiritual decisions we are called to make, and they* are more crucial than all of the other choices combined. *They* impact, not just your environment, not just your circumstances, but the three things in life that are most important: your eternal destiny, your eternal rewards, and your inner peace with God. Over and over, the children of Israel were told to do two things:

1- Decide once and for all what place God was going to play in their lives.

2- They were to make some kind of memorial or remembrance

The Grace of Holiness: Making It Work

so they wouldn't forget the choice they made and they wouldn't forget what God had done.

In Joshua, chapter 24, they were faced with a decision and what a decision! Listen carefully.

'I have given you a land for which you did not labor [grace], and cities which you did not build [grace], and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant [grace].'

"Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!

And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. [Those are the only two choices.] But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:13-15 NKJV)

The issue was that everything they had was free and undeserved. The lands, the cities, and the vineyards were all of grace. They didn't work for them. They didn't deserve them. They couldn't earn them if they tried. Joshua wanted the people to understand that they couldn't have presumptuous expectations based on their worth or their work. They deserved nothing. The decision they had to make was, either acknowledge that it was all of grace and that God owned 100% of their life and their lands, or that, by not giving God *total control*, *they were yielding to the gods of this world*. There was no third choice.

Joshua shared with them that he had personally come to that fork in the road and made his choice. He said, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" No matter what! He was not being proud. It was in humility, that as a leader soon to depart to glory, he wanted them to understand there was a singular choice to make, and he had made it. Jehovah was not an important part of Joshua's life; *Jehovah was Joshua's life*.

The people responded this way:

So the people answered and said: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; [Not us, Joshua, not us.]

For the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers

The Grace of Holiness: Making It Work

up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed.

And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God. (Joshua 24:16-18 NKJV)

Pretty neat decision, huh? Well, sort of. They made the right decision. They gave God the glory based on what He had done, and they said, “We’re going to follow Him and serve Him.” But what was the problem? Anybody see it? The problem was, they were serving Him for the wrong reason. “Therefore, will we also...” in verse 18, is the key. They weren’t worshipping Him for who He was; they were worshipping Him for what He had done. And as long as He continued to do those kinds of things, He would be their God. Joshua backed up and said, “You need to understand something, beloved. God doesn’t need any fair-weather friends.” And he warned them about making a decision that God was going to be everything, and then when the contrary winds began to blow, making Him out to be anything less than what He was, which was everything.

But Joshua said to the people, [You had better be careful what you are saying—loose translation.] “You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good.”

And the people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the LORD!” [We mean business.] (Joshua 24:19-21 NKJV)

They walked down the aisle, signed commitment cards, and sang seven verses of “Just as I Am.” It was a moving time, but Joshua didn’t let them out of the parking lot yet. I think that was good. I wish we could remember this. He created a memorial, a remembrance, to keep in the forefront of their minds.

But Joshua said to the people, [Okay guys—loose translation. That’s the Texas version.] “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him.” And they said, “We are witnesses!” [Amen. Preach it.]

The Grace of Holiness: Making It Work

“Now therefore,” he said, “put away the foreign gods which are among you, [if you mean business, show God] and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel.”

And the people said to Joshua, “The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!”

So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.

And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God.” (Joshua 24:22-27 NKJV)

He did two things. He told them not to waste any time doing whatever they had to do to make things right with God. They were to put away the strange gods immediately while it was fresh in their minds. Immediately! There was to be no peaceful coexistence between God and Satan. They had to get rid of every habit and every thought pattern that was in any way a compromise. The second thing they had to do was to write down what they decided and build some kind of a remembrance to it as a witness in the days to come.

I wish somehow, we would realize that the decisions we make are only as good as the memory we have, and for some of us that's a problem. Most of us who think we have the memory of elephants have the memory of birds. And if we don't have something written down, some kind of living memorial the way Joshua made, we forget.

I want to remind you that every time you are confronted with truth, you have a decision to make. I also want to remind you that there are at least a handful of times in every person's life when we have to make the kinds of decisions that will alter the course of our lives spiritually. It's not going to happen every Sunday, and it's not something you can manufacture. For some, it may come only once every five, ten, or fifteen years. But over and over in Israel's life, and I would have to say in my life and perhaps in yours as well, on occasion, God leads us to the foot of the mountain and says, “Choose you this day what you are going to

The Grace of Holiness: Making It Work

do with the rest of your life.” Choose whether or not God is going to be your co-pilot, or whether you’re going to get in the back of the plane and let Him fly. He may not take you everywhere you *want* to go, but He’s the only one who knows where you *need* to go.

Do you want to be God’s man or woman *no matter what it costs*? Then choose you this day. Are you willing for your life to be poured out for the gospel, *dying if need be*? Then choose you this day. Do you want to grow increasingly holy *no matter what it costs*? Then choose you this day. Not tomorrow. Today. Make a decision. Drive a stake in the ground and do something so you will never, ever forget that decision.

I can only recall two or three times in my Christian experience when God confronted me in such a demonstrable way. In my spirit I knew what He was asking me to do. It was to go to a deeper level of intimacy with Him, and to do nothing was to say “no.” The last time was only recently, and it had been years since I had felt such a clear word from God. It was like He said, “Kelfer, either you make a decision to finish the course well, and that includes the fact that you cannot do it apart from grace, or I’ll let you go on and live your own life. The choice is yours.”

There may be some of you here who are sensing in your heart of hearts right now that God has been reaching out to you saying, “Dear one, there is more to knowing me than you have experienced.” There *is* a place of quiet rest near to the heart of God. There is a place where your heart and God’s heart seem to be beating as one, and you can be so at one with Him, that His holiness will overwhelm you and control you. And like leaves that fall in the autumn winds, the sins that have so easily beset you begin to blow to the ground below; the gusts of God’s grace their downfall.

Some of us may need to make a decision today. Quietly tell God, “Whatever it takes Lord. I don’t want to live another day, and I certainly don’t want to live the rest of my life play-acting; pretending to be something I’m not and in the meantime, trying for the best of both worlds.” I’m not saying it’s some kind of big, emotional experience. Emotional experiences sometimes call attention to themselves rather than to God. The call needs to come from our spirit, not from our emotions. But I ask you sincerely,

is God speaking to you? Is He saying, “Don’t waste another day? There is more to life than this.” If so, I would encourage you in your heart, to respond to Him. Surrender your will. It doesn’t take some big, overt action. You simply say, “Lord, I’m yours. And no matter what it takes, from now until you call me home, You have everything I am. I’m Yours. Amen.” You can do that right where you are. No fanfare. Just quietly in Your heart say, “Lord, it’s decision time and I’m going to make one.”

Let’s have just a moment of silence, so if there is anyone here who feels the prodding of the Holy Spirit, you can do that. You may or may not have felt led to share anything with the Lord during that time, but if you did, you may not feel all warm and fuzzy inside. That’s not the issue. The issue is decision. Is God who He says He is? If He is, He will take you at your word, and you can take Him at His. And in the days to come you will find a deeper walk with God. He keeps His Word.

THE CRISIS AND THE CRIES

Secondly, once a decision has been made, there comes the crisis and the cries. The second issue facing us has to do with the intensity of our search for purity. Somehow, we live in an age where man seems to be intense and committed, but to the wrong things. We are emotional about things that are not eternal. Grown men and women go completely berserk on Saturday over our football teams. We wear strange hats, strange clothes, and ridiculous colors, and we scream ridiculous things like, “Hook ‘em Horns.” Not too many using that today, but on occasion. Or “Gig ‘em Aggies,” or something like that. No wonder our children draw wrong concepts about what’s important in life.

On the other hand, when faced with great spiritual issues, we think, *don’t get too intense; we don’t want to get carried away*. So, we take this somewhat phlegmatic approach into the prayer chamber, and we pray as though we were reading the Gettysburg address backwards in Hungarian. We say words, but with no deep involvement of the soul. We read off the names on our “prayer lists” and instruct God as though He were some kind of new employee who has just reported for duty.

We thank Him for who He is without contemplating who He is in the first place. We read Scriptures without really being in

The Grace of Holiness: Making It Work

awe that, at that moment, God is speaking to us. We ask Him to open our eyes that we might behold wondrous things, but our physical eyes are barely open. Often, we glance at our watches to see if our time is up, as though we have been sentenced to some kind of study hall in school, and the minute we have put in our time, we're out of here. Then we wonder why there is no power as we leave the quiet place for the marketplace. Beloved, there is no power, because our bodies were there, but our souls were absent.

Have you ever read the Psalms and looked for how many times the psalmist said he called upon the Lord, and then he said, “*I cried unto the Lord?*” It’s not just a reflection of his emotions; it was a testimony of the depth of his despair, not only of his condition, but of his sins. I’ll give you just a few of them.

I cried to the LORD with my voice, And He heard me from His holy hill. (Psalm 3:4 NKJV)

I can never forget a time in my life when I was in a grievous situation, probably the worst situation of my life. I was struggling with something, and I sat down and I opened my Bible and it fell to Psalm 34:6. I began to weep and claim this verse:

This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles [and He did]. (Psalm 34:6 NKJV)

I cried out to God with my voice—To God with my voice; And He gave ear to me. (Psalm 77:1 NKJV)

O LORD, God of my salvation, I have cried out day and night before You [can you relate to that?]. (Psalm 88:1 NKJV)

Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He delivered them out of their distresses. (Psalm 107:6 NKJV)

Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses. (Psalm 107:13 NKJV)

I cry out with my whole heart; Hear me, O LORD! I will keep Your statutes.

I cry out to You; Save me, and I will keep Your testimonies. (Psalm 119:145,146 NKJV)

In my distress I cried to the LORD, And He heard me. (Psalm 120:1 NKJV)

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD; [Is that how you pray?] (Psalm 130:1 NKJV)

The Grace of Holiness: Making It Work

In the day when I cried out, You answered me, And made me bold with strength in my soul. (Psalm 138:3 NKJV)

I cry out to the LORD with my voice; With my voice to the LORD I make my supplication. (Psalm 142:1 NKJV)

My favorite passage in the Psalms is Psalm 18. I shared it with you just a few months ago, and I would remind you of it this morning. It's an incredible passage to memorize and I asked you to memorize it back then.

In my distress I called upon the LORD, And cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, And my cry came before Him, even to His ears.

Then the earth shook and trembled; The foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken, Because He was angry.

Smoke went up from His nostrils, And devouring fire from His mouth; Coals were kindled by it.

He bowed the heavens also, and came down with darkness under His feet. (Psalms 18:6-9 NKJV)

The LORD thundered from heaven, And the Most High uttered His voice, Hailstones and coals of fire.

(Psalms 18:13 NKJV)

He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. (Psalms 18:16 NKJV)

He also brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me because He delighted in me. (Psalms 18:19 NKJV)

That Hebrew word, "cried," means to proclaim or call out, out of great need. It is not just the acknowledgment of a need, it is the personalization of that need, followed by despair. It is calling out "Help me!" If you were in a boat in the middle of the ocean, and the boat was sinking, and there was one boat passing by that could rescue you, would you wave your hand and quietly say, "I sure would like you to come help me?" Or would you cry out with all the energy you had inside of you, "Help me or I perish?"

In our generation, I think we have lost the concept of crying out to God, not just over our circumstances, but over our sins. The reason is, we don't see our sins as God does; we don't cry out for mercy as God expects us to. When we are in deep trouble circumstantially, sometimes we do cry out, and it's at those times, that so often He comes and rescues us.

The Grace of Holiness: Making It Work

The children of Israel had the same problem. It was only when the brooks were drying up and the storms were raging that they cried out to God, but *when they did, almost always, when they were desperate over their circumstances or their sins, He rescued them.* We need to learn to respond as David did when he was confronted with his sins. He said, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Over and over in the Psalms, David understood the gravity of what sins did. He cried unto the Lord.

That doesn't mean you work yourself up into an emotional state. It means you stay before God until you see sin as He does, and when you do, *you will cry out* because your grief is overwhelming. You will have broken the heart of the One who died for you, and you can't stand it. Secondly, you will cry out because you know that only the grace of God can enable you to overcome sin. You are tired of trying in your own energy, and you are crying out for God to do supernaturally what you cannot do naturally.

THE POWER OF HIS PRESENCE

Our challenge, then, is to come to see sin as God does and to make a decision to do something about it no matter what it takes. I think we have two problems.

1- Most of us don't consistently spend enough time with God to see sin the way He does.

2- We tend to forget that *if we really want to be convicted of sin, we need to ask God to give us the grace to see it the way He does.* Then hold on, because He will. But, unless you are willing daily, to ask God to expose your heart to the sin in your life, you won't see it.

In ourselves, we have programmed our spirits to become insensitive to sin. The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, and we don't realize we've done it; but in fact, we tend to believe we are becoming more spiritual because other people think we are.

The cure is very simple, but we tend to miss it. Revival comes because people pray. *Really* pray. Lives are changed because people pray. *Really* pray. When people *really* pray, they spend quality time in the presence of God and stay there until their hearts are one with His. That's a definition of prayer. Prayer is not

giving God a laundry list of what you want. Prayer is approaching the throne of God with such awe, that you want what God wants, and you want to stay there *until you know what He wants. That's prayer.*

Prayer is the process of fellowshiping with God until your heart and His beat as one. It is not a casual experience; it is spiritual warfare. It is not designed to make you feel good. It is designed to take you and break you so God can remake you, and that's painful, beloved. There is a lie that Satan has sold to the Christian community that says prayer is an emotional experience; it's designed to make you happy. Prayer is even described as an experience by many today. If certain things happen or certain feelings occur, we have prayed. Christians begin to try to work up in their own energy, an emotional atmosphere conducive to reproducing certain feelings, and then they have prayed.

No! Prayer is not an experience; it is a relationship. It is two people coming together, one of them being God, staying together until the worshipper so takes on the mind of the One he is worshipping, that all they want is to become like Him. That's prayer. Our requests only become the outgrowth of our wanting His will to be done in our lives. We are not trying to tell God how to run the universe or twist His arm into doing for us or for someone else what we think His will ought to be.

If we are really praying, we are being bathed in His Word. We adore Him for who He is, until all we want for those for whom we intercede is that His will be done. We have requests, and we believe based on the Spirit's leading, they are His will. We have desires that, if it be possible, we want to be His will. So, we tell Him. But having spent enough time before Him and adoring Him, the last thing we want is for our will to be done rather than His. So, like Jesus, we tell Him what we desire, then we add "Nevertheless, thy will be done."

One thing we know when it comes to our sin, *we know His will.* It is for us to repent and be changed. But we don't have the ability to be changed unless some kind of divine intervention occurs. Sure, we have the Holy Spirit in us, but we keep quenching the Spirit and sin continues to abound. And we mistakenly are led to believe that either God can't help us, or we can't let Him, or this is just the way it's supposed to be.

The Grace of Holiness: Making It Work

Beloved, that is when we need to cry out to God. He knows we can't do it, but He also knows that in eternity past, He created this wonderful thing called grace. So, He is simply waiting for us to become so disgusted with that sin and so grieved over that sin that we cry out in despair, "Lord, whatever it takes, take it away. Give me the power to do what I cannot do."

Then you name that sin. We aren't very good at that, are we? We like general terms when we are talking to the Lord. "Lord, forgive me for my attitude. You know what I mean, Lord." That is avoiding the issue. It ought to be, "Lord, I screamed at Beth again today. I screamed at Bill again today. Please forgive me for my anger and insensitive spirit. Unless You change my heart, I am hopeless and helpless. I cry out to you for grace." Or "Lord, I am still letting my mind run wild, reliving over and over what my boss said today. I refuse to see his authority as your authority. Forgive me. Lord. Only you can teach me. I plead for grace."

Get specific. Then write down what you asked God to do. Why? So you won't take it lightly. So you won't be presumptuous. So you won't forget to thank Him. Don't fail to be honest with God. He knows all about you. He heard that word on your tongue before you spoke it; in fact, he heard the words you never spoke, but wanted to. If they weren't exactly what Jesus in you would have thought or said, ask Him to forgive you. Ask Him to give you the grace not only, not to say those things again, but not to want to. No, you can't do it, beloved. You've tried. I've tried. We're not naturally holy, but God is. And He lives in your heart; He lives in my heart. And He longs to release in us the grace to become holy in ever-increasing splendor, from one degree of glory to another.

Folks, you have to ask to receive. To know what to ask for you have to spend time with Him. Lots of time. Quality time. Precious time. Sometimes painful time. Remember, this is war. Satan will do everything he can to keep you off your knees, and if he can't do that, he'll do anything he can to make you think you're a god, and all you need to do is tell God what He can and can't do. He sold the lie to Eve, and she bought it. And he has sold the lie to us. God help us.

Some of you may be saying, "But I don't know if I really want to go that deep with God. What if it means...? Oh, no, Lord, I'm not ready for that." I beg you, just tell God that. Ask Him to increase

your faith, but don't back down on asking Him to give you His best. Just ask for more grace. He will give it to you. Whenever you can't, He will. Whenever you cry, He listens. Whenever you humble yourself, He'll send you enabling power exceedingly, abundantly above all that you ask or think.

You say, "But I can't do it. I've tried and I've failed." Praise God. Those two statements prepare you for the greatest adventure of your life, the adventure of grace. It is the process by which you stop trying to do what only God can do and cry out for Him to do it. He is willing. The question is, are you?

This week *could be* one of the most important weeks of your life. It really could be the week in which you and God do business—and maybe you have already this morning—about what the rest of your life is going to be like. It could be the time in which you make a decision that, *whatever it takes*, you want to become progressively holy, progressively separated from sin, and more intimate in your fellowship with God.

It could be the week you drive a stake in the ground and say, "This is it. No turning back." It could be the week you create a remembrance of that decision so the seed-snatcher cannot steal it from you. It could be the week you and God begin a long pilgrimage together. It could be the week you begin to cry out to God for grace to become the holy man or woman that, in Christ, you already are. It could be. Or it could be...just another week.

Let's pray.

Our Father and our God, by Your grace, there comes times in our lives, individually and collectively, when decisions have to be made. To make no decision, we know, is to have decided to say no. As Your Spirit prompts, we pray decisions that have been made, will be made, and are being made could alter the course of each of our lives.

Some of us, Father, just simply need to choose this day, who we are going to serve. No, we can't do it, but we understand, Father, that You have something called grace. And the more we cry out for it, and the more we are willing to bathe ourselves in Your presence, the more we can appropriate it. As we do, the power to become is no longer ours to worry about; it's Yours, until in ever-increasing splendor, we can become, minute-by-

The Grace of Holiness: Making It Work

minute and day-by-day, men and women of holiness, men and women of purity. Men and women who want Your will and nothing else, and are willing to let You do whatever it takes to become that kind of man or woman.

Some of us at this very moment, are crying out to You, Father. We aren't whispering. It's not a matter-of-fact thing. We are crying out, "Dear God, give us the grace to become the men and women You designed us in eternity past to be.

None of us knows how much time we have. None of us knows how long before the trumpet sounds. None of us knows. But, Father, all of us know, from this moment forward, how ever many minutes or hours or days we have, can be all Yours. Some of us need to choose this day what it's going to be. By Your grace, may we choose to abandon ourselves into the arms of that grace and begin to live in a realm beyond what we ever dreamed was possible.

To Jesus, the giver of grace, be praise and honor and glory, forever. Amen.

A Challenge to Further Study

1- Read Hebrews 11:24-27 again. What was Moses' real decision? What were his choices? Can you liken it to a real world choice in today's society? Can you explain verse 27? What other Bible characters made similar decisions? Can you relate to what made them choose the way they did? How did those decisions impact the rest of their lives? Do you know of other Bible characters who made wrong decisions? What happened to them?

2- Read Joshua 24:13-27 again. How is Joshua describing grace? How many choices did they have? Did the decision really boil down to only one choice? What was it? Do you think the people understood the gravity of the choice they were making? Did Joshua think they understood? Do you understand?

3- Why did God keep asking the children of Israel to build altars or make memorials of their sins and of His deliverance? Have you ever done that?

The Grace of Holiness: Making It Work

A Challenge to Further Application

1- Why do we avoid making crucial decisions in our lives? What tools does Satan use to keep you from making key choices where spiritual things are concerned? If you know what they are, what do you do about it?

2- What kinds of “remembrances” do you have to keep your heart reminded of God’s great acts of love in your life? When last did you make one?

3- When last did you “cry unto the Lord” about your sin? When last did you stay alone in God’s presence until you saw sin for what it was and God for who He is? What keeps you from it? What can you do to change that?

4- Are you willing to take a week and ask God to give you the grace to want to be holy? Are you willing to let Him do whatever it takes? Are you willing to spend the time with Him to make it happen? Then tell Him. If not, tell Him that, and ask Him by grace to change your heart. He will.

A Challenge to Scripture Memory

Memorize Joshua 24:14,15 and personalize it.

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer

(07.26.22.dvd)