

Divine Grit and Grace

Luke 9:51-56

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The Bible gives us four accounts of Jesus' life, not just so we can learn the most about Him, but so we can learn the most about His disciples too. In His 12 followers, we see men dedicated to their Lord but constantly falling short, missing the big picture, and struggling to grasp the magnitude of the moment they are living in. Ultimately, they struggle to recognize the magnitude of the Person they are following. This truth is so encouraging to believers today, who also fall short and miss the mark, but continue to strive after Jesus and follow His example. In Luke 9, that example is a demonstration of divine grit and divine grace.

If you somehow knew that you had only eight months to live, and you had a guarantee of health up to the time of your death, what would you do with those remaining months of your life?

A prayer of Moses is included in the Psalms which encourages the believer to number their days in order to present a wise heart to the Lord (***Psalms 90:12***).

Literally, count the number of days you think you might have to live and that will have a profound impact on the decisions you make in your heart and life.

How many days do you have left? Well, you don't know for sure, but let's assume you'll live to be 77—the average lifespan in America right now.

- If you're 17 years old, you have 21,900 days left—that's 720 months—if you do, in fact, live to 77.
- If you're 21 years old, you have 672 months left.
- If you're 35, you have 504 months left.
- If you're 45, you have 384 months to go.
- If you're 55, you have 264 months remaining.
- If you're 65, you have 144 months left.

- If you're 75, you have 24 months left before you reach the average life span in our country today.
- If you're 85, you can sit there and just smile! You beat the average!

But more than likely, you definitely realize that time is short.



How much time do you have left based on this equation? If you knew for sure that you had only one year left to live, what would you do with that time?

You can appreciate what Charles Ryrie, the author of the Ryrie Study Bible once said; he taught several courses here at Shepherds seminary years ago when he was in his 80s. He preached for me on occasion and once said that he was so old he wouldn't even buy green bananas, it was too risky!

Many years ago, when I was around 40 years of age, I decided to put the prayer of Moses into something tangible that I could see. So, I put little glass marbles in a vase, and I keep it in my office.

Each marble represents a month that I have left if I live to the average age of 77. Every month I take one out to mark the passing of yet one more month of my life.

I brought this vase with me into the pulpit and told you about it 11 years ago. That surprised me; I would have thought it was

only a few years ago, but it was 11 years ago when I showed this to you.

When I was 40, it seemed like a long way to 77. I started out with over 400 marbles in here.

I'm 64 next month, so I counted them yesterday to make sure it was adding up. If I live to the age of 77, I should have 156 marbles in here. The troubling thing is that I came up with 144; I was 12 marbles short. So, I counted them again and got the same result. I'm missing a year.

Either I can't count, or somebody's stealing my marbles. You're not supposed to steal somebody's marbles. I'm going to put a camera in my study!

Maybe God knows I'll live to be 76 instead of 77. I've been thinking of changing the formula and making it 88 years, my mother's age when she passed away, or 92 years and counting to match my father's age.

Actually, I've decided to keep it at 77 and if I empty this vase and live on, I'll start putting marbles back in each month to represent extra time the Lord gave me to live.

This isn't a morbid exercise contemplating the brevity of life; according to God's Word, it creates a perspective on life that leads to a heart of wisdom. I recommend you get your own vase and consider it carefully.

But, back to my question, what would you do if you knew you only had 8 months left? You're down to 8 marbles.

What would you change? What would you want to accomplish? What would you decide to do in your last 8 months of life on earth?

Well, that's exactly what Jesus knows about his own earthly life. He has about 8 months left before His death.

And with 8 months to go, Jesus transitions His ministry.

As you arrive with me at Luke's Gospel and chapter 9, you can draw a line in between verses 50 and 51.

Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Luke* (Zondervan, 2012), p. 250

You might write "8 months to go" in the margin of your Bible, as I have.

Verse 51 marks a decisive moment in His ministry.

Look at it with me as Luke writes:

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

Luke 9:51

He set His face. One commentator called this "steely resolve."

David E. Garland, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke* (Zondervan, 2011), p. 417

You could call it divine grit.

R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: Volume One* (Crossway, 1998), p. 369

Even though Jesus will briefly return to Galilee, it will no longer serve as His home base of operations.

John MacArthur, *Luke 6-10* (Moody Publishers, 2011), p. 309

At this moment, Jesus sets His sights on Jerusalem. He has been there several times already, but this time is different.

With steely resolve, Jesus begins His final tour of ministry which leads Him toward His final visit to Jerusalem, to the cross and a borrowed tomb.



What do we learn about Jesus from knowing that He is fully aware of the death that awaits Him but still diligently and faithfully journeys toward that fate?

In the next few verses, the Lord is going to demonstrate two characteristics that should be demonstrated by every believer who thinks about the fact that life is short and should not be wasted.

The first characteristic is this:

A Demonstration of Divine Grit

Go back to verse 51 again:

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

Luke 9:51

"When the days drew near" could be rendered literally, when the days were

being fulfilled; in other words, this was all according to the plan.

Garland, p. 413

Jesus isn't wondering what's going to happen. He wasn't going to Jerusalem by accident, He was going by appointment.

And He knows everything about what's going to happen next. He knows all about the temporary reception on that Palm Sunday when the crowd comes out in droves to sing His praises.

They are initially ready to crown Him king. But instead of laughing and smiling, Jesus begins weeping.

He knows this national reception will soon turn into national rejection. He weeps in sorrow for the nation that will reject Him.

He knows exactly what's going to happen when He gets down, so to speak, to his final marble.

But you need to understand, in His mind it isn't all suffering and agony; in fact, Luke makes a point here to include *everything* that will happen in Jerusalem. Notice **verse 51** again as Luke writes:

*When the days drew near
for him to be taken up...*

Luke 9:51

The word **days** here is plural. There are multiple events that will take place in Jerusalem over the course of days, not just the crucifixion and not just the resurrection.

In fact, the verb here to **be taken up** isn't just about being raised up on a cross. This same verb is actually used later by Luke and also by the apostle Paul for the ascension of Christ—when Christ is taken up—into the glory of Heaven soon after His resurrection.

Ibid

All these events are now in the process of being fulfilled and it all ends in victory!

So, Jesus is **setting His face**—He's resolved afresh. He won't be distracted or diverted.

In fact, this phrase here for Jesus **setting His face** is the fulfillment of a messianic prophecy from Isaiah who writes with incredible precision in chapter 50 and verse 6:

*I gave my back to those
who strike, and my cheeks
to those who pull out the
beard; I hid not my face
from disgrace and spitting.
... Therefore I have set my
face like a flint, and I know
that I shall not be put to
shame. He who vindicates
me is near.*

Isaiah 50:6-8a

It isn't just a crucifixion, it's a vindication. Vindication is just around the corner; it won't be long now before the plan of salvation is completed.

There's a stinger Jesus plans on removing from death and the grave;

there's a serpent Jesus plans on crushing.

It's as if Jesus sets His jaw and tightens His lips and fixes His eyes now more than ever on Jerusalem.

Swindoll, p. 253

This is a wonderful transition verse here and a profound demonstration of divine grit.

May we have more of this in our own lives today.

Let's take what God brings us not as accidents, but as appointments.

Let's set our jaw to live for Christ.

There may be trouble ahead; stay the course. There may be sorrow and suffering ahead; stay on track. There may be ridicule and persecution ahead; stick to the plan.

Go and make disciples of all the nations, I am with you to the end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).

Now Jesus here not only demonstrates divine grit, but secondly, He provides:

A Demonstration of Divine Grace

Notice verse 52:

And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive

him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.

Luke 9:52-53

Most Jewish people would avoid traveling through a Samaritan area, they would certainly have no interest in spending the night in a Samaritan village.

Jesus is traveling here with His twelve disciples, along with a larger group of disciples. In the next chapter, the Lord will send out 70 of them to preach.

Jesus kindly sends an advance team ahead to alert this village that a large group is heading their way; to make sure the restaurants have enough food and Holiday Inn has enough rooms.

But they're turned away. The villagers post signs, as it were, "No trespassing." "Keep off the grass."

And frankly, this rejection isn't all that surprising. The mutual hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans goes back centuries.

It all began with Jewish people who remained in the land after the rest of the nation was deported by the Assyrians into exile. These remaining Jewish people intermarried with the Assyrians that had been appointed to live in the land.

This created what the Jews considered racial half-breeds as well as religious apostates.

Hughes, p. 370

The Samaritans rejected Judaism. They ended up creating their own sort of

syncretistic religion, choosing some things from Judaism and some things from paganism.

They wrote their own version of the Pentateuch and created their own liturgy; they even built a rival temple on mount Gerizim around 400 years before the birth of Christ, so that none of them would have to go to Jerusalem to worship God.

About 130 years before the birth of Christ, Jewish soldiers had destroyed that Samaritan temple.



Who are the Samaritans in your life? Who do you view as your enemy? Are you tempted to view a person or category of people as irredeemable or beyond God's reach?

All that to say, for hundreds of years this hatred has poisoned the relations between Jews and the Samaritans.

Jewish rabbis would pray every week in the synagogue that God would never allow Samaritans into eternal life. A Samaritan was not allowed to give testimony in a Jewish court. And Samaritans were just as likely to attack Jewish travelers.

Adapted from Hughes, p. 450

As far as the Jews and the Samaritans were concerned, life was short and there was so much to hate about each other. If

they were down to their last couple of marbles, they would be happy to throw them at each other.

Now these Samaritans here in Luke 9 are no doubt very aware of the amazing miracle-working ministry of Jesus. They knew that if He spent the night in their village, He may very well have cured the sick, given sight to the blind and healed the lame.

But they're so filled with hatred that you'll notice here; they reject Jesus and this entire company of disciples. Why? Luke says it again here in **verse 53: "Because his face was set toward Jerusalem."**

The advance team had told the village leaders, "We only need reservations for one night because we're on our way to Jerusalem."

And with that, this village basically said, "Keep off our property! Jesus might be a prophet, but He's not our kind of prophet. We're not interested in anybody who's interested in Jerusalem."

Now verse 54:

And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

Luke 9:54

Do you want us to burn this place to the ground? How's that for an evangelistic strategy?! Could be effective?

I remember one of my sons, when he was around 5 years of age, playing at a playground. I saw him talking briefly to another child, and soon after, we got into the car, and he was excited to tell me that he had prayed with this kid for Jesus to save him. I said, “Wow, that didn’t take long at all, what did you tell him?” He said, “Well, I asked him if he’d like to be able to fly in heaven one day or burn in hell, and he said he’d rather fly in heaven, so we prayed.”

Well, that’s about as deep as it gets with James and John here: “You Samaritans either accept Jesus into your village or we will toast you. In fact, we won’t wait for Hell, we will bring the fire now!”

Now keep in mind that Jesus had already told the disciples that if a village rejects the gospel, they’re to shake the dust off their sandals as a ceremonial warning.

But James and John aren’t interested in shaking the dust off; they want to turn this village into dust and ashes.

The authorized version adds later manuscript evidence that includes the words, “‘Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elijah did?’ And the Lord turned and rebuked them, and said, ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you have. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.’ And they went on to another village.”

Now you can’t fault the disciples for their zeal. But it was zeal without knowledge. It was grit without grace.

Jesus has told the church to be a candle set on a hill providing light to our world.

There’s a big difference between a candle and a blow torch.

It’s possible to have zeal for Christ today and be unkind about it. To tell the truth, but to tell it without love; or to love without telling the world the truth.

These disciples have some important things to learn over the course of the next 8 months.

They haven’t yet heard the Lord tell the story of the Good Samaritan, who becomes a fellow neighbor; they have yet to see a Samaritan leper kneel in thanksgiving, becoming a fellow worshipper.

Adapted from Swindoll, p. 418

They have yet to see the power of the gospel—as Luke informs us later on—take root throughout Samaritan villages.

But for now, the disciples haven’t connected the dots yet. Jesus began His ministry in Nazareth by being rejected; now He begins His final journey to Jerusalem and is rejected by the Samaritans, and He will ultimately arrive in Jerusalem and be rejected by the nation Israel. Rejection is par for the course.

Adapted from Swindoll, p. 418

Disciples to this day have to learn how to engage with a culture that effectively says, “Stay off our property and stay out of our lives.” That’s especially true in the face of a world that is as angry with what

we believe as these Samaritans and Jews were with each other.

How do you live for Christ in a world that is growing more and more hostile to your understanding of God's Word?

I agree with Erwin Lutzer's recent book, *The Church in Babylon*, where he writes, "We need to stop pretending that we are a moral majority; that abortion, same sex marriage, sex slavery, transgenderism, explicit sex education in public schools are [exceptions to the cultural rule]. The truth is, our world now looks at us with neither appreciation nor respect."

Erwin Lutzer, *The Church in Babylon* (Moody Publishers, 2018), p. 67

The rhetoric is ramping up; the threats against Christians who dissent from politically correct dogma are becoming tangible; they are becoming a reality.

Sounds a lot like the early church to me and the church around most of the world today.

Listen to Paul describe what many of them were experiencing, he writes:

To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world.

1 Corinthians 4:11-13a (NASB)

Can you imagine that? Is that right? Is that fair? Maybe we should call down fire.

No. That's not the spirit we're to have, Jesus instructs His disciples here.

You see, the disciples weren't fully aware that Jesus also was on His way to Jerusalem to die for the Samaritans.

Adapted from R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), p. 558

They weren't the enemy; they would become the mission field.

So, like these disciples, who learned an unforgettable lesson here:

Let's not get sidetracked by the world's rejection; let's not respond to the world in like manner; let's not forget the world is our mission field.



In practical terms, how are you going to exhibit Jesus' example of grit and grace in your life today?

And let's remember we've been called to demonstrate to our world—for the glory of Christ who shall be vindicated—His spirit, His determination, His demonstration of divine grit *and* divine grace.

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