

Some Things are Given – Some Things are Bought
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I'm preaching a message today entitled Some Things are Given – Some Things are Bought.

This kind of message is difficult for some people to hear because many popular teachings on grace that are out of balance. Grace is a powerful part of God's character. But some people act like it's the only part. They teach that once you are saved, you no longer need to confess sin or repent. They say that the Holy Spirit never convicts you of your sins or points out your faults – so preachers should never talk about repentance or consequences of sin for believers.

That's why we must teach a balanced view of grace. We must understand that we are saved by grace alone. Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.

Salvation is only by grace – not by our works. But that does not mean that there is not a place for good works! In fact - but Eph. 2:10 goes on to say:

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

In other words, salvation is not the result of good works, but rather, good works are the result of salvation.

What I want you to understand today is this: some things are given by God's grace and some things are earned by our works.

Our belief leads to salvation – our behavior leads to rewards.
Our faith determines our eternal destination – our behavior determines our eternal rewards.

Salvation is a result of God's work for us.
Rewards are a result of our work for God!

The choices you make in this life affect your life in heaven. This may surprise some people because they think everyone will have the same life in heaven. Not true! We will all have awesome pain-free happy lives in heaven. No one will have a bad life in heaven – let's make that perfectly clear. But some people will be more rewarded than others.

Some people get this false humility that says, "I don't want to be rewarded for my

giving or my works.” But Jesus says when you give with the right motivation, your heavenly Father will see it and He will reward you openly. In Revelation 22:12 Jesus said -

Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

How we live here on earth impacts our life in heaven. What you believe in this life determines where you spend forever. How you behave in this life determines your reward in heaven. Some things are given – some things are bought.

The Bible mentions many things that God rewards. I don't have time to teach on them all today. Let me just mention some of them. Psalm 37:18 says:

Day by day the Lord observes the good deeds done by godly men, and gives them eternal rewards.

When you do good – it does not matter if anyone else sees it, acknowledges it or thanks you for it! What is important is that God sees and He will reward you for it! In fact – the Bible teaches there's a special reward when we do things for those who cannot repay us! Luke 14:14 says:

Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

If you can grasp this – it will help you deal with your disappointment when you do something for someone and they don't even thank you! No longer will you need to say “Nobody seems to see anything I do for God” because you know God sees and He will reward you!

The Bible lists 5 crowns that God gives as rewards in heaven.

- 1- THE CROWN OF LIFE – given to those who persevere
- 2- THE IMPERISHABLE CROWN – given to those who take the Christian life seriously and discipline themselves
- 3- THE CROWN OF REJOICING – given to those who lead others to Christ
- 4- THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS – given to those who live their lives longing for Christ's appearing and who stay faithful to the end.
- 5- THE CROWN OF GLORY – given to those who are faithful servants and examples to the church.

Not everyone will receive these crowns. Some things are given – some things are earned. In Revelation 3:17-19 Jesus said this to the church at Laodicea:

You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear,

so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline.

We get obsessed with money, material things, and how much we have. But Jesus is saying that we are needy and don't even know it. We need the refiner's fire, the righteousness of Christ and spiritual vision.

And those things must be bought!

We need to understand is that you cannot buy salvation with anything – but following Christ will cost you everything. You don't believe me? Well, look at what Jesus said in Luke 14:27-30

And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it — lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

Jesus also said in Luke 14:33

In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple.

This is what I mean when I say, “Some things are given – some things are costly.” I mean that salvation is given – but discipleship is costly. Righteousness is given – but holiness is costly. Receiving new life is given – living out that life is costly.

Some things are given – some things are bought! That's why Jesus said in Revelation 3:18:

I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

Jesus tells us to what to buy. Buy gold – buy white clothes - and buy salve for your eyes. What does this mean?

First, we must buy gold refined in the fire. Malachi 3:2-3 says:

He will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; He will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.

All believers are made righteous – right with God – the moment we are saved. But all believers are in a life-long process of being made holy.

And we buy that refined gold by how we respond to the trials we go through.

1 Peter 1:6-7 says:

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

To buy this gold is costly because it requires us to give up some things:
Our sin – our selfishness – our self-sufficiency.

Secondly, we must buy white garments. What are these white garments?
Fortunately, Revelation 19:7-8 tells us.

The wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

This can be confusing unless we understand the different types of righteousness. There is positional righteousness and there is conditional righteousness.

Positional righteousness is speaking of the gift of righteousness we receive when we place our faith in Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says:

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

Positional righteousness is a gift that we receive when we are born again. It cannot be bought. Romans 5:17 says:

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 61:10 says:

I delight greatly in the Lord. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness.

This robe of righteousness is given – but there are white garments we must buy. That's what I mean by conditional righteousness – it affects your condition!

We don't receive Christ by working for it or by walking right! We receive Him by faith which means we rest in what He did! Our works and our walk flow out of our position in Christ – they do not put us into that position!

People mess up when they only teach positional truth.
That truth must always be walked out and worked out.

Too many Christians have right doctrine, but the way they live contradicts what they say they believe! To have Christian doctrine without Christ-like living is a contradiction! Works without faith are dead works, but faith without works is also dead! That's why Philippians 2:12-13 says:

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

It doesn't say to work FOR your salvation, but to work OUT your salvation. You can't do enough good works to save yourself. You are saved by grace through faith and that salvation that God works in us must be worked out by us into our daily walk.

We are all in this process of sanctification – of being made holy. 1 Thessalonians 4:7 says:

Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

Notice that we have a responsibility to purify ourselves – to keep ourselves pure. But even that is a work of God's grace. Titus 2:11-14 says:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, zealous for good works.

Salvation is free, but it's not cheap. It cost the blood of Christ. That's why the Bible tells us we need to buy eye salve, or ointment. We need our eyes open to the truth of God's word. And over and over in the Bible, Jesus urged His followers to count the cost of following Him.

Throughout the history of America, it has been relatively easy to be a follower of Christ. But that's not been the case throughout world history.

The world has been a difficult and deadly place for those who are serious about following Christ. Listen to the following statistics from the World Evangelical Encyclopedia:

- Since the death of Jesus Christ 2000 years ago, 43 million Christians have become martyrs who died for their faith
- Over 50% of these were in the last century alone
- More than 200 million Christians face persecution each day
- Every day over 300 people are killed for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Somewhere along the way we became convinced in this country that Christianity is 'easy.' All you have to do is ask Jesus into your heart, read your Bible from time to time, go to church occasionally, say a few prayers and you're good to go. You can go on living however you want to live, you can do it "your way", still get to heaven, and all would be good.

But is that what Jesus intended? What does it really mean to be a follower of Christ? Following Jesus as a disciple comes at a cost. It involves sacrifice. No servant is above His Master. If Jesus was rejected and harassed and criticized and even killed, the followers of Christ should expect no better treatment.

To be a disciple of Christ means you must be willing to sacrifice many of the pleasures of this world.

You must be willing to suffer for the sake of Christ.
 You must be willing to die to self, and to live for others.
 You must daily take up your cross and follow Him.
 Are you willing to pay the price?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran pastor who stood up to the Nazi's and was killed in a concentration camp in 1945. He knew what it meant to count the cost and in his classic book "The Cost of Discipleship," he said - "When Christ calls a man he bids him come and die."

You don't hear much about dying for Christ or even dying to self today. Most people don't like to talk about the cost of following Christ. They just want to reap the benefits. But Jesus tells us if we want the benefits, we first must count the cost. The point is this: Following Jesus is costly.

You can't buy salvation with anything – but discipleship will cost you everything! Yet for some of us – any cost is too much. Too many people want a no-cost Christianity. They want cheap grace. They want cut-rate commitment. They want a bargain-basement belief. They want a thrift-store theology. They want a marked-down Messiah. They want a second-rate super-cheap salvation. They want to pay the absolutely lowest rock-bottom clearance-rack price.

I call them minimum wage believers. Their 2 questions are:
 What's the least I can do for God and get by?
 And what's the most wrong I can do and get away with it?

If those are your questions, you are not truly following Christ with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. As Bonhoeffer said, "Only he who obeys truly believes, and only he who believes truly obeys."

Some people don't like it when they discover that following Christ requires complete commitment. They say things like:

I love Jesus, but I'll pick and choose what areas I will follow Him in.

I'll follow Jesus until He tells me to forgive that person who hurt me.

I'll follow Jesus, but don't talk to me about giving my money.

I'll follow Jesus, but don't tell me I have to abstain from sex outside of marriage.

But Christianity that says, "I will follow Jesus only in the areas I want to" is not really Christianity at all.

There is no forgiveness without repentance!

There is no salvation without surrender!

There is no believing without commitment!

Way too many people want a little touch up work when Jesus wants to give us a complete renovation.

Way too many people want a little tune up when Jesus wants to give us a complete overhaul.

Way too many people want to put on a little spiritual makeup, but Jesus wants to give us a complete spiritual makeover.

So, you've heard the COST of following Jesus. Are you willing to pay the price? You might say, "The cost is too high." But I urge you to consider the cost of NOT following Him!

Following Jesus means you have His presence wherever you go.

Not following Jesus means you're on your own.

Following Jesus gives purpose to life.

Not following Jesus leaves you purposeless.

Following Jesus ends in eternal life.

Not following Jesus ends without eternal life.

Following Jesus ends in heaven.

Not following Jesus ends in hell.

You see, there's a cost either way. I submit to you today that the cost of not following Jesus far outweighs the cost of following Him!

Are you willing to count the cost?

You don't receive anything from God apart from prayer.

And some things are only received through prayer and fasting.

Some things are given – some things are costly.

Going to heaven is free to those who trust in Jesus for salvation.

But there will be crowns given in heaven to those who earned them!

Some things are given – some things are costly.

The children of Israel were given the Promised Land – but they had to fight to take every inch of it.

Some things are given – some things are costly.

When Saul had his Damascus road experience, he was saved by grace.

God told him that he was chosen to take the name of Jesus to Jews and Gentiles and kings.

Then – oh by the way - he will suffer much for My name!

Some things are given – some things are costly.

Some things are given – some things are bought.

But it all starts with receiving the free gift of salvation through faith in Jesus.