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# **The Unvarnished Truth**

## **LUKE 12:49-53**

### **Introduction**

1. Have you ever been around a friend who was carrying a heavy burden?
2. You knew them well enough to tell that something was wrong, but you couldn't put your finger on it.
3. Finally, that person shared it with you and suddenly you knew the burden which they had been carrying.
4. Here, in this body of teaching, Jesus has covered several things:
  - a. First, He taught about our need to confess Him, fearlessly and unashamedly (vv. 1-12).
  - b. Second, He warned against measuring our lives by the abundance of our possessions and encouraged us to be rich toward God by laying up treasure in heaven (vv. 13-21)
  - c. Next, came instructions about why we should not worry, but instead seek God's kingdom first and use what He has given us to help others (vv. 22-34).
  - d. Last week, we looked at His exhortation for us to be ready for His return (vv. 35-48).
5. But there was something else which Jesus had to tell His followers and us as well.
6. Please follow with me as we look more in depth at this truth of which Jesus informed His disciples.

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## **I. Jesus' Internal Struggle**

**A. HIS DESIRE**

“I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!”  
(v. 49).

1. Jesus clearly stated that His mission was to “cast fire upon the earth,” but what did He mean by this?
2. Prior to Jesus’ ministry, during the days of John the Baptist, the message was there:
  - a. “So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Luke 3:7)
  - b. “His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Luke 3:17)
3. Several times in this chapter, Jesus has spoken about judgment:
  - a. “. . . fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!” (Luke 12:5).
  - b. In His parable of the rich fool, God said to the farmer, “You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?” (Luke 12:20).
  - c. Of the abusive slave in Luke 12:46, Jesus said that his master, would “come on a day when he does not expect and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with unbelievers” (Luke 12:46).
4. In chapter 25 of Matthew’s gospel, Jesus spoke of His second coming and judgment, “He will say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

5. After telling His disciples that He came to “cast fire upon the earth,” Jesus also said, “how I wish it were already kindled.”
6. If I understand Jesus correctly, He was ready to repay those who were afflicting His people and would afflict His church (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8).

“For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” (2 Thessalonians 1:6–8)

7. The real longing of Jesus’ heart was to “bring justice and equity on the earth” (Hughes, *Luke*, vol. 2, p. 68).

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## **B. HIS DISTRESS**

“But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!” (v. 50).

1. However, before that day would come, Jesus had a baptism of His own which He must undergo.
2. Back in Luke 9:51, we learned that Jesus had “set his face to go to Jerusalem” (ESV).
3. Since that time, He had been pressing forward toward what He knew awaited Him in Jerusalem.
4. Following Peter’s confession of Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16), Jesus began telling His disciples what awaited Him in Jerusalem (Matthew 16:21).

“From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.” (Matthew 16:21)

5. As Jesus continued toward Jerusalem, He constantly reinforced the fact that He was going to Jerusalem to suffer, die and rise again.
6. After His triumphal entrance into the city, John quotes Him as saying to His disciples, “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name’ ” (John 12:27-28a).
7. In the Garden of Gethsemane, the night before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42).
8. After this, “an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground” (Luke 22:43-44).
9. Before He could kindle fire upon the earth, Jesus had a baptism of death on the cross to undergo in order to save us.
10. He was determined to accomplish the purpose for which He had been sent — our salvation.

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## **II. The Results of the Cross**

### **A. THE DIVISION IT BRINGS**

“Do you suppose that I came to bring peace upon the earth? I tell you, not, but rather division” (v. 51).

1. When we read these words, we suddenly sit up and take notice, because there are a number of passages which speak of Jesus bringing peace.
2. One of the titles which the prophet Isaiah used to describe Jesus in Isaiah 9:6, was “Prince of Peace.”
3. At the birth of John the Baptist, his father, Zachariah, spoke of how his son would “go before the Lord to prepare His ways” and of how “the Sunrise from

on high will visit us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:78,79).

4. Following the angel’s announcement of Jesus’ birth to the shepherds in the field, there suddenly appeared with the angel a heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased” (Luke 2:14).

5. But Jesus spoke of division, and He illustrated it with a family of five (father, mother, daughter, son and daughter-in-law):

“for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.” (Luke 12:52–53)

6. The choice to follow Jesus or speak on His behalf brought division in the days of the early church:
  - a. Stephen was stoned to death because His defense of the gospel (Acts 7:59-60).
  - b. Saul put men and women in prison because of their belief in Christ (Acts 8:3).
  - c. James, the brother of John, was put to death by Herod (Acts 12:1-2).
  - d. In almost every city where Paul preached Christ, he found opposition and persecution (i.e., Antioch, Acts 13:50; Iconium, 14:4; Lystra, 14:19).
7. It has not changed in 2,000 years:
  - a. In China, you could be put in prison for following Christ.
  - b. In Islamic countries it may cost you your life.
  - c. Some years ago, a Lance Corporal posted her favorite Bible verses in her workspace at Camp Lejeune Marine Corps base. Her supervisor ordered her to remove them because, as he said, “I don’t like their

tone.” When she declined, the military court-martialed her. (*Serving God and Country*, by Steve West, World Magazine, 9/18/20).

- d. Speak to some of your children and grandchildren who are pursuing a higher education at a public university or secular private university. Ask them if they have encountered any push back in a class when it was learned that they are Christians?
8. If you attempt to follow Christ, you will experience division.
9. Remember, Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12, that “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (ESV).

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## B. THE PEACE IT PROVIDES

1. In spite of the division, there is peace to be found in following Christ.
2. *Peace with God*
  - a. There was a point in time when, as sinners, we were destined for the wrath of God.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,” (Romans 1:18)

- b. However, through Jesus’ death on the cross, those of us who came to Him in obedient faith now have “peace with God” (Romans 5:1).

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” (Romans 5:1).

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3. *Peace In Our Hearts*

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6–7)

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4. *Peace With One Another*

“And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.” (Ephesians 2:17–18)

## **Conclusion**

1. One day, Jesus will return in order to “judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:31).
2. On that day, “the earth and its works will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10), and those who have not prepared for His return will be told, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).
3. Jesus, however, underwent a baptism of death, the likes of which we cannot begin to imagine, in order to save us from such a punishment for our sins.
4. Please don’t treat such a sacrifice lightly.
5. Recognize the peace which can be yours and respond to His invitation to you to come today, in obedient faith, leaving your old life behind, confessing Jesus as both Lord and Christ, being baptized in His name.