



Don't Start What Grace Can't or Won't Finish!

Reflections of Jitterbuggery

Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake . . . he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear . . .”

“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” Mt 13:1-23

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, “This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” Lk 14:28 - 30

It is not good to have zeal without knowledge,
nor to be hasty and miss the way. Pr 19:2

Jitterbuggery – busy, but not accomplishing anything significant or lasting! There are Jitterbugs physically, financially, emotionally, spiritually, etc. Jitterbugs love to start something new, but never “stick with it” through the rough spots (trials) on any road to success; at the first obstacle they give up, look for a new, better, way and jitterbug in that direction – the chicken with his head cut off or the hare (as and in the *Tortoise and the Hare*), always looking busy, but really not doing anything except driving themselves and others crazy! Jitterbugs are both “hasty and miss the way” and fail to count the costs, before they begin, to see if they can finish. Everyone is a jitterbug to some extent and at some times – the objective is to minimize our Jitterbuggery and see it decrease as we age and hopefully mature.



The devil is not in the least threatened by spiritual jitterbugs, instead he loves and uses them! Spiritual jitterbugs run “hot and cold;” when extreme trials or sins come they call out to God (the last time being 9.11.01 when many last went to church), get serious about spiritual matters and run hot for a while . . . the trial passes, they then slowly backslide until the next crisis. Up and down . . . up and down – jitterbugging through life from one crisis to the next. They never grasp the truth that the right time to seek God is before we do something, not after; before the next trial, not when it is upon us! They see God, not as counsel on what to do but, as one to get them out of jams. The problem for us when in this mind-set, however, is that God has bound Himself to certain truths and principles He has set – thus we should be careful we don't start what Grace can't or won't finish! There are certain places grace won't go and many things grace won't do. For example:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. Ro 1:18-28

“God made you like you are, He understands and will accept you like this . . .” – baloney! There are things we do, places we go, that unless we humble ourselves, admit we are wrong, repent and turn toward God, we have no hope of finding grace or having God's help! Like it or not that is the Gospel!

Slowly developing, purposeful, disciplines are the only antidote to Jitterbuggery! It is not how fast or even how far we go, but how far we make it in the right direction!

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **because** you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Jas 1:2-3

“But,” someone may ask, “How do I know what trial is coming? How can I prepare for a trial I can't specifically identify?” There are four responses to this:

1. Life is fairly predictable. Health-wise look at your genes (parents) and lifestyle and most of the major likely future health issues are foreseeable. Neglect your spouse and you will probably, sooner or later, “fall out of love” or into an affair. Borrow as the answer for any physical want and financial disaster is almost assured. Fail to work on being thankful and unhappiness is inevitable . . . Then we hear the sure excuse: “but I couldn't help it!” And in a sense they are right – they let things slid so far they could not help themselves; disciplines have as their purpose to thwart the otherwise inevitable or likely by anticipatory and preventive actions.

One of the great benefits of trials (even when we fail in them) is leading us into asking, “What could I have done/can in the future do to eliminate this or similar trials?”

- Sick AGAIN? Am I getting adequate sleep? Or, am I exercising to build up my immune system?
- Short of money AGAIN? Am I living on the edge, forgetting there are always going to be unexpected expenses and repairs I have to plan for?
- Dissatisfied AGAIN with others and things I thought would keep me happy? Am I failing to exercise the discipline of thankfulness – the only “cure” for unhappiness?

Maturing should bring increased and more effective disciplines to take control, rather than always being at the mercy, of life! Much, if not most of life, is predictable – and in the same way, much can be successfully controlled with proper and effective disciplines – look at the issue, THINK, and some answer will come as to how to make the situation better.

2. The ultimate trial, death, comes to everyone, it is not an option; for this we should even more be preparing because eternity is forever.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 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. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. ^{1Pe 1:3-9}

Jitterbugs are too busy running around to see or think about the “end of the line.”

3. Trials, and the faith they build when we persevere (and don’t give) in them, are synergistic – it really matters little what the trial is, only that we face it by the disciplines of faith. Faith enhanced by and in one trial will help facing and conquering the next. Jitterbugs don’t fight any trial long enough to build faith as only perseverance will.
4. Preparation for trials eliminates many potential trials before they take root. An excellent physical example being diabetes – the great majority of those with diabetes would have thwarted this trial by simple good diet and exercise disciplines; and many could yet reverse the clock by exercise and diet, eliminating both their need of insulin and the disease’s sure caustic damage. In the same way, not falling prey to borrowing at each little financial “itch” or trial – exercising financial discipline in both good and bad times will significantly reduce financial future trials.

Effective disciplines build our “immune” systems (physical, mental, spiritual . . .) against impending trials; not 100% perfect, but thwarting trials and the enemy much of the time. Otherwise, we are at the mercy of each and every trial – we tend to “catch” every germ that passes within 100 feet of us! Jitterbugs have lousy immune systems! It seems almost unfair, those best able to cope with trials, because of their disciplines of preparation, are less likely to have trials!

Life should have a purpose, objective and pattern – disciplines offer this structure. In spite of what the devil, through even religious people, tell us: there are many things we do, many places we go, that unless we humble ourselves, admit we are wrong, repent and turn toward God, we have no hope of finding grace or having God’s help! This is the Gospel and in our hearts we know it! This will be the mirror against which we are judged – did we seek to learn the disciplines of starting only what Grace could and would finish?

Slowly developing, purposeful, disciplines (the most important is learning how to hear the Voice of God above and in spite of the many other voices assailing us) is the only antidote to Jitterbuggery! It is not how fast or even how far we go, but how far we make it in the right direction!



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The jitterbug – maybe a fun dance but not a good lifestyle!