

Understanding God's Grace #2

God's Grace In Holiness & Sanctification

Pastor Ken Birks

I. Introductory Remarks.

In this series of messages we are looking at the subject of God's grace and how it works in our lives. In this particular message I want to share with you God's grace in relationship to our holiness and sanctification.

We will be examining the idea that God in His grace sees us as perfectly holy in Christ. God in His grace sends His Holy Spirit to create a new heart within us and to write His law on our hearts, thus changing our basic character traits. And then we will see that God in His grace continues to work in us through His Spirit to transform us more and more into the likeness of His Son.

***Ephesians 1:3-4** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love... to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.*

My goal in this message is to simply show us how we are continually accepted by our Father God, because of the grace that has been poured into our lives through Jesus Christ. Often times when we look at our sinful condition that still seems to exist no matter how hard we try, we find ourselves in a battle over God's acceptance of us.

***Hebrews 10:9-10** ... then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God. " He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

II. Holiness Is A Gift Of God's Grace.

When we consider that God want us to be perfect and without blame it's important for us to understand that holiness is a gift of God's grace as much as our salvation experience in him was.

To live by grace is to live solely by the merit of Jesus Christ. To live by grace is to base my entire relationship with God, including my acceptance and standing with Him, on my union with Christ. It is to recognize that in myself I bring nothing of

worth to my relationship with God, because even my righteous acts are like filthy rags in His sight. Even my best works are stained with mixed motives and imperfect performance. I never truly love God with all my heart, and I never truly love my neighbor with the degree or consistency with which I love myself.

– (Jerry Bridges - Author of *Transforming Grace*) --

The Bible speaks of both a holiness we already possess in Christ before God and a holiness in which we are to grow more and more. The first is the result of the work of Christ. The second is a result of the work of the Holy Spirit in us. The first is perfect and complete and is ours the moment we trust Christ. The second is progressive and incomplete until the day of perfection.

Hebrews 10:14 *For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.*

In one aspect of sanctification we are already Holy because of Christ's holiness being imputed unto us. We have been made perfect forever. In another aspect we are being made holy day by day through the work of the Holy Spirit imparting the life of Christ to us.

III. The Holiness We Possess In Christ Before God.

As we have already seen there are two kinds of holiness. There is the holiness we already possess in Christ before God and there is the holiness in which we are to grow more and more in. This second aspect of holiness is progressive and incomplete until the day of perfection. Let's take a look at the Holiness we possess in Christ before God.

1 Corinthians 1:30 *But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God; and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.*

Jesus has become our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. We understand that Christ is our righteousness and the basis for our justification. But He is also our holiness. The truth is that all believers are sanctified in Christ, even as we are justified in Christ.

Through justification we are forgiven and are declared righteous in the courtroom of God's justice. Through the perfect holiness we have in Christ, our moral filth is removed, and we become fit to enter into the very presence of an infinitely holy God and enjoy fellowship with Him.

Colossians 1:22 *And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight.*

Hebrews 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

How can we who are not only guilty but morally filthy possibly be holy in the sight God, who knows our every motive and thought as well as our words and actions? The answer is that because of our union with Christ, God sees His holiness as our holiness.

When our Father looks at us, He does not see our miserable performance. Instead, He sees the perfect performance of Jesus. And because of the perfect holiness of Jesus, He sees us as holy and without blemish.

IV. Grace To Grow In Holiness.

Now that we have seen that we possess a holiness in Christ that enables us to continually come into the throne of God's grace let's look at the holiness that we grow in through God's grace.

Sanctification or Holiness in us begins as an instantaneous act of the Holy Spirit and is carried forward by His continued action in our lives. It takes a deposit of God's grace to continue to grow in this progressive sanctification. We cannot do it on our own.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

This scripture explains to us the progressive nature of our sanctification and holiness. It is also the work of the Holy Spirit, but it involves a response on our part so that we as believers are actively involved in the process.

God does not bring us into His kingdom then leave us on our own to grow. He continues to work in our lives to conform us more to the likeness of His Son.

2 Corinthians 7:1 *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

1. Through God's Grace He Creates A New Heart Within Us.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*

It is God who puts His own Spirit within us and moves us to follow His decrees. God gives us a growing desire to obey Him. We no longer have an aversion to God's commands, even though we may not always obey them.

Psalms 40:8 *I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart.*

Romans 7:22 *"For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.*

We find that His commandments are not burdensome as it says in 1 John 5:3, but rather are "are holy, righteous and good" as it says in Romans 7:12.

Submission to God's law arises out of a love for God and a grateful response to His grace and is based on a delight in His law as revealed in scripture.

2. It Is God Who Works And Wills In Us To Act According To His Purpose.

Philippians 2:12-13 *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, 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.*

Paul's strong exhortation to the Philippians was based on the confidence that God's Spirit was working in them. He is working in them to enlighten their understanding of His will, to stimulate in their emotions as desire to do His will, and to turn their wills so that they actually obey and then He gives the enabling power to do His will.

Progressive sanctification very much involves our activity, but it is an activity that must be carried out in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

3. The Christlike Character We Are To Grow Into.

When we take seriously the long lists of Christlike character traits we are to put on, as well as the negative traits we must put off, we see how impossible it is to

grow in Christlikeness apart from the sanctifying influence and power of the Spirit in our lives.

Galatians 5:2-23

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Self Control

Colossians 3:12-15

- Compassion
- Humility
- Kindness
- Gentleness
- Forbearance
- Forgiveness
- Thankfulness

The important thing to keep in mind is that all of these Christlike character traits are called the "fruit of the Spirit"--the result of the Spirit's work in our lives. This means we are both responsible and dependent. We are responsible to clothe ourselves with Christlike character, but we are dependent on God's Spirit to produce within us His "fruit." Our response is always obedience to God's Spirit.