

## Completing Sanctification

**Refuting the Hyper-Grace Gospel**  
**Richard T. Ritenbaugh**  
**Given 21-Apr-14; Sermon #1209A**

In my sermon on the first day of Unleavened Bread, just one week ago, I began my remarks with a discussion of a disturbing trend within some sectors of modern Christianity in which they downplay the preaching of what they call moralism, and they use that word especially, they do not want to use the words doing good or being moral, or even preaching morality, they use a pejorative term, moralism, so it sounds bad.

We saw that by definition moralism is the teaching of morals. That is what it meant originally before it took that pejorative meaning. It got that pejorative meaning because people would overdo the preaching of moralism and get on people's nerves, then it became a *bad* word. In a bad sense moralism is the over-emphasis of morality, doing it so much that you get a reputation for being someone who is constantly picking on people to be better.

The preaching of morality is not a bad thing, it is actually a good thing, and there are those of us who have been asked to do it. Many modern Protestant preachers are teaching that instruction in getting our lives straight before God distracts from the gospel message. That is essentially their argument: that if we are going to do anything that makes us feel proud of the way that we have grown, then that is actually distracting from what Christ brought us and therefore that kind of preaching should be curtailed, because it is not preaching the gospel, in their way of looking at things.

They are afraid that even a hint that God requires a person to do any kind of works, or law keeping, or doing good as part of the Christian way of life, is bad because it distracts from or belittles grace. Now this attitude exists in churchianity, if we want to call it that, particularly in the new Calvinism, which is a branch of the Reformed Christianity and it springs from what they teach the gospel is. Because they teach the gospel to be a certain thing, any kind of law keeping or any kind of emphasis on morality is bad in their point of view.

What is the gospel? It is this question of what the gospel is that prompted me and others of my family to finally leave the Worldwide Church of God (WCG). Because in late 1991, the Tkach administration of the WCG published its new understanding of the gospel, and the bombshell in that was that the Kingdom of God was taken from its primary place, because we have always taught that the gospel is the gospel of the Kingdom of God, but that was then relegated to a distant third behind the gospel of Jesus Christ Himself and the gospel of grace.

So by late 1991, this was already being infused into WCG and we saw the writing on the wall. It was very clear, we had been noticing it for years, probably from about 1987. We saw things coming down the pike and knew that it was just a matter of time before the WCG turned into a full-fledged Protestant organization. We left in the beginning of 1992.

Now if you want to know what these people in the Protestant world teach about the gospel, if you are not aware of it already, I want to give you two paragraphs from R. C. Sproul. There are a lot of people here who are either born into the WCG, Church of the Great God, or some other church of God, so they do not have the knowledge of what is taught in those churches from their own experience.

R. C. Sproul is a well known major theologian in the reformed area of Christianity. He is a well known author, he has written many books on theology and Christianity and I think that these fairly long paragraphs pretty much encapsulate what they preach.

The gospel is called the good news because it addresses the most serious problem that you and I have as human beings and that problem is simply this: God is holy, He is just and I am not and at the end of my life I am going to stand before a just and holy God and I'll be judged and I will be judged either on the my own righteousness, or lack of it, or the righteousness of another. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus lived a life of perfect righteousness, of perfect obedience to God, not for His own well being, but for His people. He has done for me what I could not possibly do for myself. But not only has He lived that life of perfect obedience, He offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice to satisfy the justice and righteousness of God.

He goes on a little further down the page here:

The gospel is something objective, it is the message of who Jesus is and what He did. It also has a subjective dimension. How are the benefits of Jesus subjectively appropriated to us? How do I get it? The Bible makes it clear that we are justified not by our works, not by our efforts, not by our deeds, but by faith and by faith alone. The only way you can receive the benefits of Christ's life and death is by putting your trust in Him and in Him alone. You do that, you are declared just by God, you are adopted by God into His family, you are forgiven of all your sins and you have begun your pilgrimage for eternity.

We would agree with most of that actually. It is not that bad, but did you notice where the whole emphasis is? I think the explanation of the gospel here is rather tedious and pedantic, but that is my own opinion. It took two very long paragraphs to describe the gospel, but it really comes down to two catch phrases that we have used in the past and it is this: 1) Jesus did it all for you, and 2) believe and you will be saved. That is as far as it goes.

Now he did say you have begun your pilgrimage for eternity, those were his final words in this description that he gave of the gospel. But that is the only hint of anything beyond justification, of God's calling, and you accepting what Jesus did for us. That is it, you have begun your pilgrimage. I guess the logical conclusion was that you have begun your pilgrimage and someday you will end up in heaven, but what do you do in the meantime? Even if he did mention eternity, what does this mean about eternity? It will really only go so far as making the altar call.

Now please open your Bibles to Mark 1, and we will see Jesus' own explanation of the gospel and you know it takes only two verses. Actually His explanation of it only takes one verse and Mark adds a little bit of an explanation about how all of this came about. This is so clear, so black and white, so simple. There is a lot behind it, but he puts the emphasis where the emphasis need to be. You can say, as Mr. Armstrong often told us, this was His opening salvo on His ministry and as the opening salvo, it told us everything we need to know about what His mind was focused on and what He wanted our minds to be focused on.

**Mark 1:14-15** Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, [this is what Jesus says here] "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

He gives us what Sproul gave us in terms of believing the gospel because Sproul actually said nothing about repentance in his couple paragraphs. All he talked about was believing the gospel, where it is all God's doing, everything is God's doing, and we do not have to do anything except just believe, and even though repentance is clearly in the Bible, they take that away.

Billy Graham had his buddy sing that song, "Just As I Am" every time he got up to speak and that is what they think, that God will take you just as you are, all you have to do is just believe. When Peter talked about when the Jews came up to him and said, "What do we need to do, we have killed the Savior!" He said "Repent and be baptized and believe the gospel." But Protestants do not really talk about that repentance. God just has to accept you as you are.

This new understanding that they have of moralism and not teaching moralism just throws all kinds of repentance and any kind of change out the window, because it is all done by grace. So what we have here in black and white here in Mark 1:14-15 is the good news of the Kingdom of God. I do not think it can be any plainer. It is a message of the soon-coming worldwide and eternal reign of God. It is a message that emphasizes the plan and purpose of God.

Yes, He does want to save people from their sins, that is why He sent His Son, that is why He named Him Joshua, or Jesus, because He is going to save them. That is what Joshua means, Savior. So obviously the saving from the sins is a major part of the plan, that the redemption He gave through His blood is a necessary prerequisite to everything, because God will not accept us unless we are clean.

So when He calls us, we repent and we believe and come under the blood of Jesus Christ, then we enter the Family of God under Christ's righteousness, through His holiness, and we go from there. This has to take place, but there is more to it, there is more to the plan than just saving us, and the plan is all about the Kingdom of God. It is what God is doing with and for humanity. It is the *gospel of the Kingdom of God*. If you want to put it in modern terms, it is the endgame.

What is the endgame of God's creation? What is He trying to accomplish? When He set out, how many millennia ago, to figure out what He was going to do with His life as it were, His life goes on and on, and without children, without others, He did not feel like it was worthwhile. So He set out with a purpose to create sons and daughters to share His creation with, to share everything with, to rule with Him over the universe and all the galaxies that are in it.

He wanted sons and daughters like Him, so He had to come up with a purpose for not only creating sons and daughters, but making sure that they were like Him when they were changed to spirit and were fully like Him. So He began 6,000 years ago or so, in the Garden of Eden, creating fleshly people, people that He knew would sin.

So Jesus Christ, His Son, known as the Word at the time, said, "I will pay for their sins. This is the only way we're going to be able to create spiritual, divine, holy character in these people. I have to start the ball rolling and take away their sins from them and then open their minds to the truth, so that they can grasp it themselves and put it into their lives and grow with Our help. Once they grow and have this holy righteous character themselves, we can change them to spirit and that character will be set for all eternity. They will want to do what is right and good and will never rebel like Satan has rebelled, because they want to be with Us, please Us, and live with Us for all time."

Obviously what I have said is very simplified, but it requires more than just salvation, in the original sense of justification. Christ's work does a great deal, but there is more beyond it and that is what these people seem to ignore. They ignore that God is reproducing Himself and He wants to expand His government over all creation through His children, through His sons and daughters who are going to be just like Him.

In I Corinthians 15, the first five verses, as Martin went over on the Sabbath, is pretty much the clearest exposition of the gospel that is most commonly taught in Protestant churches and we agree completely with what is written here. It is part of Scripture and Paul did preach this when he went from town to town in the Mediterranean basin there. It is amazing and that is about as far as they go in this chapter and it is telling too because when they ignore the rest of the chapter, they ignore where Paul was headed in saying this.

**I Corinthians 15:1-5** Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.

What this does is he talks about that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, as was prophesied in the Old Testament. He was buried, and He rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures. So basically what Paul was talking about here was that Christ came, died for our sins, so it is His death, His burial, and His resurrection and that is as far as it goes. That is what they say is the gospel of God, just that little bit and they preach this over and over again.

Now what is incredible is that while they quote these scriptures incessantly and in fact, verses 3-4 make up the original of the creeds of Christendom that churchmen put together back in the Dark Ages and before. But even though they quote these verses incessantly, they completely ignore where the apostle Paul takes this declaration, because he does not stop with Christ's resurrection.

Paul takes this declaration to go further into the understanding of what Jesus did and what it means. He goes on as we know (we call I Corinthians 15 the resurrection chapter), because not only did Christ rise from the dead, but Christ rising from the dead made it possible for *us* to rise from the dead. And if we, as His firstfruits, can rise from the dead, what does that mean for the future?

**I Corinthians 15:22-26** For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: [now does that not sound like God has a plan?] Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. [He is coming back now. There is more to this plan and more to this gospel than Jesus dying, being buried, and being raised from the dead. We can rise from the dead too, He is coming back and what is He going to do?] Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. [So, Christ is going to reign for a time, this is what we call the Millennium.] For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

Now let us think about this for a while. How do you put death to death? How do you ultimately destroy death? *You have to get rid of sin entirely because the wages of sin is death.* So what Christ's

main purpose, throughout the Millennium, throughout the Great White Throne judgment, is ultimately to get rid of all sin in all of us, all the people of the world, so that He can then, as it says, “give up everything to the Father.” The Father can return to the earth and it will be totally purified and clean for Him to live here forever.

Obviously as we go through this whole process here, God, in Christ, is working to remove sin from everything. And what are we doing this week? We are commemorating in these holy days the removal of sin from our lives. We are the firstfruits, we get first crack at this process and if He does it in us, it is going to be the same way that He does it in others eventually.

So what they have done here by ignoring the rest of the chapter in I Corinthians 15, is that they ignore the rest of the plan of God. The rest of the plan of God, up to a certain point, has a lot to do with getting rid of sin and its counterpart—putting on righteousness. They just throw that out. All they see is that Christ has delivered us from our sins by His blood and that is it.

The carnal mind is enmity against God, and does not want to be subject to the law of God and neither can be, so it is a willful ignorance of the next steps. They would not put it that way, but that is what it is. They do not want to face that because it means that they have to work, they have to obey God's law and conform to Him.

They do not want to do that, there is no fun in that as they would look at it. If they did do that, they would lose control. They have to give over control to God over their lives and they do not want to do that. The carnal mind wants control, it wants to do what it wants to do.

So what they have done here is squeezed the preaching of the gospel down to the life of Christ and once He rose from the dead, it is done. They really lean on Christ saying “it is finished.”

I was reading a comment on another article on this particular subject and this guy had written in and said, “It’s so wonderful that Christ says that it is finished because it is finished, it’s all done. It has all been done for us, there’s nothing more that need to be done, it is finished.” That is not what He meant, he did not mean that everything was done. He meant that His part in redeeming humanity—that initial justification and getting rid of our past sins—that had been paid for. He had finished His human life and His work was done.

Now that work was done, but as soon as He was raised from the dead, a new work began. And what did Jesus say during His life? “My Father works and I work.” They never stop working and if They never stop working, we never stop working, not until we are dead and in the grave.

Many of you may have heard of Dr. Tim Keller, he is another famous Protestant theologian and preacher. Listen to what he says the gospel is: “The gospel is news about what God has already done for you, rather than instruction and advice about what you are to do for God. In other religions, God reveals to us how we can find or achieve salvation. In Christianity God achieves salvation for us. The gospel brings news primarily rather than instruction. The gospel is all about historic events.”

Now notice where Paul, in I Corinthians 15, ends his discussion of the resurrection.

**I Corinthians 15:51-53** Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

**I Corinthians 15:58** Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

So what did he tell us? Now that you have the gospel preached to you about what Christ did and what the plan of God is for the future, and how we have such a wonderful ending, we will be made like God, immortal and incorruptible. What do we do? We are steadfast, let us keep on going. Be immovable, do not let anything knock you down, always abounding.

Abounding makes us think of a lot of extra energy that we put into work, God's work. What is God doing? The work of God is that you believe in His Son. That takes hard work, because believing in His Son is not the easiest thing. We cannot see Him, we know things imperfectly, we make mistakes. So we keep having to do more and more, read more, study more, learn more, go through more, have more trials, whatever it takes, but God guides us through these things, because His work right now, through Jesus Christ, is to bring us into Christ's own image.

That is not easy to do because we are human, and being human we are sinful, and being sinful means that we are far from the image of Christ. We need a lot of work, we need all of those rough edges smoothed out and there are a lot of them.

So Paul does not preach that the gospel is history. Paul preaches that, yes, Jesus Christ did these wonderful things for us in the past, but it is all focused on us now toward the future. What are you doing in your life right now that is going to make your future reach the epic heights that God wants it to reach?

Our whole life, all of our focus is on that goal—the Kingdom of God, just what Jesus Christ said. Living, reigning, ruling with the Son under the Father. That is the goal.

This version of the Protestant gospel is beginning to be called the hyper-grace gospel. They think that everything is about grace. Grace is a wonderful thing, but after grace comes life, living, changing, growing, and becoming like the Son. So the major problem with this version of the gospel is that it covers only a part of what God is actually doing. It skews God's purpose and it ends up rejecting the vital process of sanctification through overcoming, growth, and producing fruit and producing godly character in preparation for our roles in the Kingdom of God.

This hyper-grace gospel preaches only imputed sanctification. We are sanctified and made holy through Christ and that is it. There is nothing that we can do to add any kind of righteousness or holiness in any way. That is how they preach it. So it is only the setting apart as Christians and the setting apart before God that covers us and that is only through the blood of Christ.

So because of the belief that he has, as R. C. Sproul said, “done for me what I couldn't possibly do for myself,” which rejects the works that are necessary for what I would call experiential, and others

have called progressive, sanctification. That just does not take place under that gospel. As we have seen, they actually think that it is a repudiation of the gospel to do any kind of sanctification, any kind of works to grow in character.

This is essentially modern Gnosticism. It is antinomianism to the core and it is sad to see, but this is the direction that many of them are going these days.

Now with the time I have left, we will consider this kind of sanctification, experiential sanctification or progressive sanctification, mostly from a New Testament point of view, so that we can see that after Christ died the apostles were telling us to do this. Because believe it or not there are some Protestants preachers out there telling their people that you do not have to do what Jesus said, because that was all under the Old Covenant.

So not have they only thrown the Old Testament out, which they do, but they have also thrown the Gospels out too, because Christ said only a few words after He came back from the dead. So they have thrown out the Sermon on the Mount. They justify it by saying He was preaching to the Jews, He was not preaching to the church. But if you notice who it actually says He preached that to, it was to His *disciples* and others were just listening in. But that is how far things have gotten in some of these hyper-grace churches.

They believe that Acts 4 is all you need and even some of that is questionable. Pretty soon they will be down to a few select verses here and there. I Corinthians 3-4 will probably be at the top of the list, and the “God is love” verse, they love that one. These verses are well and good, but they are not there for them to pick and choose where they want their beliefs from. It all boils down to God does everything for me.

Now we are going to connect this feast to this idea of experiential or progressive sanctification, because this feast is about purging our sins and becoming unleavened and as we know these are major parts of our Christian walk to the Kingdom of God. So let us go to Exodus 12 and see the original instructions on the days of unleavened bread.

**Exodus 12:15-16** Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them [so this is a Sabbath, a holy day, a day of ceasing]; but that which everyone must eat [So you are allowed to fix what vittles you put down your throat.]—that only may be prepared by you.

So the work that you do has to do with eating, which is interesting because this feast has a lot to do with eating, does it not? It is a good point that the eating that a Christian, or a person is to do is spiritual work and God commands us to do this spiritual work.

**Exodus 12:17-20** So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut

off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.”

So here are God's instructions on this feast. Now He speaks of the first day being the day that He brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and because of tradition, the logistics of the people, the mileage, and the conditions that they had to go over, we understand the crossing of the Red Sea took place on this seventh day of the feast.

By crossing the Red Sea, as well as the destruction of the Egyptian army as the walls of water came crashing down on them, they, the Israelites, were completely out of Egyptian land, out of Egyptian hands, and completely out of bondage. They had come fully out by the seventh day, which is also another interesting type. So they started out on the first day and by the seventh day they were completely out and completely free.

Now the thing we are to understand here, in terms of getting them free, is that *God did it*. God performed acts of grace, things that we would not normally think of as acts of grace, but actually are. An example is that of the plagues, that was an act of grace. He did those things to bring them out of their bondage. He did so much for them that you can almost say that He did everything for them, but it is not really true. We have to leave that smidgen of what He did not do and that is, He did not walk for them out of Egypt.

They had to walk to get themselves out of Egypt. Their job was to walk. God did almost everything else, but they did have to *walk* and that of course is a type of our Christian walk. Yes, I believe in grace, God did almost everything for us that had to be done to free us from sin, all the way to the most precious and costly price of giving His Son, but there is still the element that once He taps us on the shoulder and says “follow Me,” that we do follow and that we walk out, that we repent, and then we are sent to walk across the wilderness to make it to the Kingdom of God.

He is always helping along the way, but there is still the walking that must be done. There is still work to be done to get there and we do it in tandem or in cooperation with God. He helps us along the way. Now notice verse 39 here, it says

**Exodus 12:39** And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves.

So in leaving Egypt in such a hurry, they did not have the opportunity to make anything leavened, there was not enough time. When you put leaven into bread, there is a certain amount of time that it has to rise, and they did not even have that time. They had to get out and go.

So here we have another indication about this feast. The most significant part of this feast revolves around leavening and unleavening. God worked it out so that when they left Egypt they had to go out unleavened because they did not have the time to become leavened. So from the Passover on until they were out of Egypt, He took care that they were physically unleavened. He did so much for them and we know that in this case.

So as we prepared for this feast, all leavening is to be removed before the first day and then nothing leavened is to be eaten throughout the feast and throughout the feast we are charged to eat unleavened bread throughout the whole time. So this whole period is to be unleavened and what it



does is, it is a type to show the three spiritual steps that we all know so well: 1) remove all sin that we see in our lives; remove what we can see. 2) Avoid eating anything leavened; refrain from sinning, either going back to the old sins or starting up some kind of new sin. 3) Eating unleavened bread means that we are to grow in righteousness and grow in godly living.

What we see here in this feast is a constant process, it is not just to happen in this week, it is to happen in all 52 weeks of the year. It is a constant process of recognizing sin in ourselves, overcoming it, resisting temptation, and producing godliness and righteousness by doing good, speaking the truth, and being a good example to everyone that we meet.

This whole feast pictures a life of growth and improvement and bearing good fruit. And as I said, it is the Christian walk described in type. This is what we are supposed to do once the Passover has been sacrificed for us, we are to purge sin and put on the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

God talks about this time and time again. He puts it in different ways, He gives us different symbols, He gives us different views of people doing this. Think of David's sin. It took Nathan to help him to recognize it but then he put it out and did not do it again. That is what made David the king such a wonderful person to God, because when he recognized sin, he immediately got rid of it and did not do it again because he loved God and hated to disappoint Him. He feared God and wanted to make the most of himself and his life.

Those type of things are all through the Bible, this constant, you might call it, dwelling on, finding sin, getting rid of sin, keeping from sin, overcoming sin, and of course, putting on righteousness. It is on every page one way or another. The whole Book is about morality and becoming like God, but we have this week when we really focus on it to make sure that we get it into our heads that this is what we are supposed to be doing. Once we have been justified, the work starts, the work of walking to the Kingdom of God with Christ and with the Father.

So just from the type seen from this festival, *God's people are to be involved in their sanctification.* God's people are to be working. This is what the Israelites did, they were involved in their coming out of Egypt, they were involved in the wilderness wandering, they had to walk, they had to make certain choices. They had to decide to either run after the Moabite women or not. That was a moral choice. It took at least mental work to make these choices and not follow the crowd in order to walk toward the Promised Land. It was part of their job.

So, if God expects that of the Israelites who are unconverted, and were doing all this in type for our learning, do you not think that He would expect commensurate involvement from the members in His church, whose promises and goals are so much better? We are after something that is much higher than just making it to a silly old piece of property in the Middle East about the size of New Jersey.

That is what the book of Hebrews is all about, trying to get our minds to understand that God has given us something so much better than what He had given Israel under Moses. Christ's priesthood is so much better than what He gave Israel under the Levitical system. The Kingdom of God is so much better than a piece of property on the Mediterranean. *Everything* is so much better!

Now how does the apostle Paul bring all this down at the end of the book? It is with a stern warning. We can go a little further in the chapter and he gives us the picture of the Israelites coming to Mt. Sinai and how terrified they were that God was coming and He came down on them and he says, "You have come to a heavenly version of this."

**Hebrews 12:25-29** See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth [meaning they did not do what He told them to do], how much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken [Since we have such a huge, wonderful, magnificent goal in front of us, the great promise of God, what are we going to do?], let us have grace [first of all listen to what grace opens up for us], by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.

Here we have a people, these Hebrews, that were neglecting their salvation. They were not doing what they were supposed to be doing, they were letting things slip a little here and a little there, until finally they had come to the point where they had to be reminded again about the first things of God, they went back to “the milk.” Why could they not understand “the meat” anymore? Because they had forgotten, they had stopped doing things, their senses were no longer exercised to understand it and discern it and so they had to almost start all over again.

So Paul's warning here is, “Look, you guys have been given so much. God's grace is so overwhelmingly good and wonderful, so what's your response? Serve God. Do what God says to do.” So what we are to do, because we have been given such costly grace, is that we must respond to God with acceptable reverent service and godly fear. Service involves work.

You can jot down Deuteronomy 13:4 and also Ecclesiastes 12:13. “Fear God and keep His commandments.” This is the whole duty of man. That is what God wants us to do, fear Him, have the right attitude toward Him, and keep His commandments.

Deuteronomy 13:4 says pretty much the same thing and it is in an interesting spot too, about false prophets and such, but what we are to do is respond to God with obedience, respond to God with an attitude of service, of doing what is acceptable to God, of doing what is pleasing to God. That is our duty.

Now what is sanctification? Sanctification is one of those theological terms that, because of its length, makes peoples eyes cross. It seems like a big word, like something our feeble minds cannot quite grasp, but in actuality it is not hard.

In New Testament Greek the word is *hagiasmos*. It is *Strong's* #38, if you want to look it up. It conveys essentially three conditions or processes. Notice those two words. A condition is a state of things fairly static; a process, though, is something that happens by movement over time. The first condition is consecration. God, in this case, consecrates, He makes people holy, let us say, by dictate or legal maneuver. When God says something is holy, it becomes holy, because He is holy and He can make things holy through that manner.

In that way He made, let us say, all the vessels in the Temple holy because they were consecrated to Him. That is a state, those goblets, plates, and all those other things that were in the tabernacle, they were consecrated to Him, sanctified to Him for the use of the Temple in order to worship God.

Now the second is also a condition, and that is the idea of separation. This has an overlap with the first one. When God consecrates something, when God sanctifies something, it separates it from what is normal. So if you had two goblets and God said, “this one is holy and this one is normal, profane,” then this one is separated from that one because of God’s saying that this one is holy and this one is not. There is a separation between the two. So we have consecration on the one hand and separation on the other. This is when God sets something apart for His use.

The third thing is a process and that is purification. So we have consecration, separation, and purification. Now God, being who He is with all His power, can instantaneously purify something, but we are talking about people here and God cannot instantaneously purify us. He can cover us with another's righteousness, but that leaves what we are essentially unchanged.

So when it comes to people the purification is a process, it has to be done over time because we have free will. We can make bad decisions still. So, yes, we have holiness imputed to us because of what Christ did, but we are essentially still carnal, sinful human beings and we have to begin the process of changing. We are not going to be purified overnight. If you have a bunch of metals all mixed up in one lump, it takes a process of heat to bring those metals to a point of separation, so that you can take off the dross and what you do not want until you get to what you do want—the pure metal that is worthwhile.

So this is the idea that we are looking at here. You have two conditions: the condition of consecration and the condition of separation, and then you have the process of purification that takes time. These are all covered by the idea of holiness. When something is consecrated it is made holy, when something is separated by God it is made holy, when something is purified by God it is made holy. All of these ideas come under the major umbrella of holiness.

*Vines Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, on this idea of sanctification, reads that it is used of: a) separation to God, and b) the course of life befitting those so separated.

What he means is that over the course of life those people who have been initially separated as holy by God are to live a certain way and the way that they live produces purification—they become holy and they become righteous, or they are supposed to anyway.

Let us go to I Thessalonians 4, and see that this is exactly what God intends for us to do. I just want you to notice the language here. Notice what Paul says about holiness, or sanctification, so that we can understand that God wants us to do this, that Jesus Christ left us commands to do this, and that we are certainly supposed to be doing this.

**I Thessalonians 4:1** Finally then, brethren [he is getting to a point where he is reaching some conclusions about what he has already taught], we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more [we are getting the idea here that there is a lot of energy that needs to be expended], just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God.

The hyper-grace people claim that we do not essentially need to please God. They think we already pleased Him in Christ, so there is no reason for us to please God. But Paul says that we are supposed

to abound in our walk and to please God. This is what we are supposed to do. It is instruction that they had received before, that had been given to them over a certain amount of time. This was not something new.

**I Thessalonians 4:2-3** For you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. [“We” being the apostles and those who were assisting Paul in preaching had received from the Lord Jesus, the Head of the church, commandments for the people to follow that they were supposed to preach to the people.] For this is the will of God, your sanctification [He wants you to become holy.]: that you should abstain from sexual immorality.

He uses that as an example. A lot of people all through the ages have had problems with sexual immorality and it was an easy example to go to. It is not the only area of life we are to become holy and sanctified in, it is just one. He goes on a little bit later and talks about defrauding, which has to do with the eighth commandment. So he touches on two commandments here, seven and eight, as his example, then he concludes in verse 7.

**I Thessalonians 4:7** For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

He did not call us for us to stay sinful. He did not call us for us to stay leavened or corrupt. He called us in holiness. He called us to be holy, to become sanctified. Notice verse 8, and this is where I tremble for the men who are preaching this hyper-grace gospel.

**I Thessalonians 4:8** Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

Why does He say here, “who has given us the Holy Spirit”? Because He is telling us that is how we can do it. Why would God give us the Holy Spirit unless we had to do something with it? The doing something with it is to become holy, to be sanctified. It is so clear. This next verse adds the balance.

**I Thessalonians 5:23** Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not that we are alone in becoming sanctified. God has given us the Holy Spirit and He is actively involved in sanctifying us completely, meaning totally purified before Him. That is what He wants of us. He is working toward that end and we are not going to make it in this life, we are too carnal, we are too human. But He will make up the difference when our change comes as long as our minds and our characters are set that we are going to follow God, please Him, humble ourselves before Him, and do whatever He asks of us.

The bottom line here in sanctification is that *He wants us to be holy*. He wants us to be blameless before Him, He wants us to become holy through the process of making moral choices and making them more and more frequently as He would. That is why it says all over the Bible—I Peter 1:16, Leviticus 11:44, Leviticus 19:2, Leviticus 20:7, they all say: “Be you holy for I am holy.” That is what He wants from us. He wants us sanctified.

I want you to notice the verb in this next verse. He is talking about women here.

**I Timothy 2:15** Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.

So there is a continuation in holiness as part of our salvation. We are not just saved when He gives us justification at the beginning of the process, there is a salvation that has to be completed through the process of our lives living in holiness, in love, and in faith, as it says here. Works the same for everyone. Let us go to Hebrews 12:14. Notice the verb here.

**Hebrews 12:14** Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

This verb pursue, in the Greek, is much more aggressive and dogged than the word continue. This is the word *dioko* and it means, to go after zealously. The image behind the word here is of a hunt, like a fox and hound, for example. This is the image of the hound being let off its leash and just tearing after that fox with a fixed idea of doing anything to catch it.

So Paul says that we have to be fixed, we have to be undeviating and earnest in our quest to achieve or attain holiness as much as we can in this flesh. He goes even further than that. He says that if you do not do this, if you do not take off after that hound after the fox, then you are not going to see the Lord. If you do not have that zeal for pursuing righteousness and holiness, what he clearly meant as he writes in the next verse is that if we do not do this we will fall short of the grace of God and that is a scary thought. We do not want to be a dog that does not hunt, those kind of dogs are useless.

Now let us go back to Ephesians 4. This is just one of those scriptures where you say, “How did they miss this!”

**Ephesians 4:1-3** I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Drop down to verse 11. He is saying these things are gifts from God. Why are they gifts from God? He says:

**Ephesians 4:11-15** And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry [they are supposed to work, they are supposed to serve], for the edifying of the body of Christ [the building up. Now we find out where we are headed], till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man [a complete man, and look at what he says next. We are to grow up, are to put on holiness] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ [Can he get any higher a goal of our Christian lives? No.]; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.

All of that is imputed right? It has all been given to you at the beginning, you do not have to do anything? Those verbs say differently.

**Ephesians 4:17-24** This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind [Remember this is an already established congregation in Ephesus, so he is telling them to put that stuff out of your lives, leaven maybe. Do not walk as you used to walk, as they walked.], having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ [What Christ were they preaching in the first century church? A Christ who said repent of your sins and walk a different way.], if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts [sounds like getting rid of leavening], and be renewed in the spirit of your mind [the addition of the Holy Spirit], and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Sounds like what we are teaching and doing here in this feast. I wonder and I shake my head at why these Protestant preachers cannot see that the Christ that Paul taught, the gospel of Christ that he preached is a message of repentance and growth towards sanctification. A life of overcoming and producing fruit. It is incredible that they cannot see this.

We do not have time to go through the Gospels today, but even in the discussion or discourse that He had with His disciples right at the end of His life He said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." This is My command, do this. If you do My commandments, My Father and I will come and live in you and if you reject these commandments we will not live in you, we will have nothing to do with you. Keep My commandments. A new commandment I give you that you love one another, which just summarizes all of His commandments. That is what He taught and that is the Christ, the gospel, that the apostles taught. It is the same thing.

Let us finish in II Corinthians 7. These are the promises that he had enumerated at the end of chapter 6, things like: God will dwell among them, He will walk among them, He will be their God and they will be His people. He tells them to come out and be separate and then he says that if they do that, "I will be a Father to you and you shall be My sons and daughters." Those are wonderful, precious promises that we have been given. Paul is here again reaching another conclusion, he says:

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

Now that you know what the promises of God are, now that you know what is in store for you as the sons and daughters of God, this is what you need to do: get busy completing your sanctification before God in fear of Him, meaning that we do not want to disappoint Him. We want to please Him, we want to do whatever we can to make Him happy with His children.

So year after year, in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we are reminded that our job, as God's sons and daughters, is to doggedly persevere in holiness, to become holy as God is holy.