[SLIDE 1~ Blank]

Sanctifying Grace

Mark Chow

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Introduction~ “Fat Baby”

I know a man, maybe you know him, too

You never can tell, he might even be you

He knelt at the altar, and that was the end

He’s saved and that’s all that matter’s to him.

His spiritual tummy, it can’t take too much

One day a week he gets his spiritual lunch

On Sunday he puts on his spiritual best

And gives his language a spiritual rest

He’s just a Fat little Baby

He wants his bottle and he don’t mean maybe.

He sampled solid food, once or twice,

but he says doctrine leaves him cold as ice.

He’s been Baptized, Sanctified, Redeemed by the Blood

But his daily devotions are stuck in the mud

He knows the books of the Bible and John 3.16

He’s got the biggest King James, you’ve ever seen!

I’ve always wondered if he’ll grow up someday

He’s momma’s boy and he likes it that way!

If you happen to see him, tell him I said:

He’ll never grow if he never gets fed.

He’s just a fat, fat, fat, fat, fat, fat fat, little baby.

“Fat Baby” words and music by Steve Millikan/Rob Robison

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Are you a FAT Baby? Or are you growing in Grace? I am Mark Chow and this talk is entitled, Sanctifying Grace.

[SLIDE 2~ Title]

By now, you have heard a lot about Grace. A lot of talks about Grace. There is One Grace. God’s Grace. Grace is the unmerited favor of God. God’s love reaching out to us.

Let us reflect on what you have heard about God’s grace.

On Friday morning, \_ Bill Koppert\_\_ shared with us that God is wooing us/drawing us/inviting us into a personal relationship. That is Prevenient Grace. It is like the courtship period in a relationship.

Later that day, \_ Matt Van Winkle\_ told us about our need to say “yes” to God. that is Justifying Grace. It is when we accept Christ for ourselves. It is likened to the marriage. Both persons say “yes” to committing to each other.

On Saturday, \_\_ Jeff Belt \_\_\_\_ shared the ways we can experience God’s grace. Means of Grace are those sacred moments of holy connection. Ways we experience God’s unconditional love.

That afternoon, \_ Tom Snyder\_ explained those things that can come between God and us. Obstacles to Grace otherwise known as SIN can be anything that keeps us from living the life of Grace.

This morning, we come to Sanctifying Grace~ the maturing of the relationship. And like all others before me, I will give you several definitions and lists to write down.

[SLIDE 3~ Sanctifying Grace is…]

Sanctifying Grace is the work of the Holy Spirit:

1. perfecting our relationship with God
2. strengthening our faith
3. cleansing us of all sin and impurity
4. equipping us to be like Jesus
5. moving us toward wholeness and perfection

Sanctifying Grace is living the life of grace

Just as life is a learning process each day, so our spiritual life is an ongoing process. Just as our physical bodies need nourishment, so do our spirits. If we decided to neglect our bodies and not eat or exercise anymore, what would happen? We would grow tired and weak and eventually die. The same principle is true in our spiritual lives. We need to maintain a healthy balance of spiritual food and practice/exercise.

Think about it. Imagine if all you ever ate was milk and soft, strained baby food, (Tasty!) and you NEVER exercised. What do you think would’ve happened to your body? Scary thought! You probably wouldn’t have been able to participate in sports and other physical activities? you would just be a FAT Baby!

We are reminded in Scripture, that growing, maturing Christians need to stop living on milk, but need the solid food of God’s word. That’s right! We need to get off the bottle! The baby bottle! And we need to start sinking our teeth into solid food.

In Hebrews 5.14, we read: “Solid food is for those who are mature, who have trained themselves to recognize the difference between right and wrong and then do what is right.” Hebrews 5.14 NLT

Boy, all this talk about food makes me think of one of my least favorite places to visit~ the Dentist. I despise going to that fearful, dreadful place of soft music, sterile instruments, and that unforgettable: “Open Up and say ‘Ahhhh.’ This won’t hurt a bit.” And then, as you are backed up against that Monstrous chair, the all-too-familiar sound heads for your ivories.

[VVvvvVvvvrrhhhhhhhvrhehrhrhhr!??#%??&^](mailto:no_reply@apple.com?subject=email%20subject)

Then, you rinse and spit. And ahhhhh, that wasn’t so bad. (lick teeth) actually, I feel pretty good….until the next time!

The Dentist, cleaning your teeth, removing the plaque and bacteria that has built up over the months and years (perhaps), is a lot like the Holy Spirit. If we don’t go to the Dentist and have our teeth cleaned periodically, then eventually, our teeth will rot and fall out. But by going regularly, we prolong the life of our teeth.

So, too, if we neglect the Holy Spirit and avoid being cleansed periodically, regularly, then the plaque and bacteria of sin will eventually eat away and destroy us. And our spirits will rot and decay and die. separated from God.

We need to let the Holy Spirit remove the plaque and bacteria from our lives everyday! That’s Sanctifying Grace!

Jesus gives us a beautiful picture of this in John 15. Jesus calls Himself the True Vine. We are the Branches. I always thought this meant that ALL of us together are the branches. However, there is another way to look at it.

“I am the Real Vine and My Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn’t bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-producing He prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken.” John 15.1-3 The Message

Jesus is the Vine. The Father is the Farmer/Gardener. I am ALL of the branches. YOU are all of the branches. Each of us is like a tree. And we must decide to let the Father lop off dead branches and to prune (cut back) good branches so they will produce even more.

What dead branches need to be cut off in your life? Maybe you have some branches producing bad fruit. Maybe you can relate with some of these:

Selfishness pride anger low self-esteem jealousy

Doubt fear Greed lust covetousness

It seems like everyday, I face the same old branches in my life producing bad fruit. These all need to be cut off and burned in the fire.

[SLIDE 4~ Sanctifying Grace: pruning]

Sanctifying Grace is the Pruning of the Vine of my life. Sometimes the branches just need to be cut off and burned. But sometimes, branches need to be pruned/cut back in order for good fruit to grow.

There is good fruit that wants to grow ~ Fruit of the Spirit, as described in Galatians 5.22,23:

love joy peace patience kindness goodness

gentleness faithfulness self-control

~ Galatians 5.22,23

In order to live a life of Grace, we need to make ourselves available to the Holy Spirit. With Jesus as our model, we strive to do our best.

In John 14.6, Jesus says: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father except by Me.” John 14.6

Jesus is the Way~ this is our Action. In His earthly life, Jesus spent a great deal of His time in serving others. His action was serving. So it is for us. Whether serving a meal at a soup kitchen, or helping to rebuild a home, or spending time with those in need, you can get involved in serving others. The Way of Jesus is Action~ Service.

Jesus is the Truth~ this is our Study. We perfect ourselves by studying the scriptures, the World and our community. Being part of a small group, a Bible study or a class is a great joy. Or maybe you feel led to lead/teach a class or study. As we study, we become more in tune with the Will of God in our lives.

Jesus is the Life~ this is our Piety. We strive to live a life of love to all people everywhere. We are not to keep it all to ourselves. We must share it. We must beware of the danger of being too holy for our own good. I remember in seminary being so wrapped up in my own devotional time, that I neglected the needs of my roommate. I thought it was more important to nurture my own spirit than to minister to his.

Piety. Study. Action.

This is our model for living the life of grace. But we cannot make it on our own.

[SLIDE 5~ Holy Spirit]

We need the Holy Spirit to empower us. Here are some ways the Holy Spirit helps us live the life of grace:

[SLIDE 6~ Helps for Living Life of Grace]

First, Identify a Spiritual Friend ~ someone you can trust and openly share with.

Second, Seek out a Support Group/Share Group for mutual accountability and support.

Third, Pray. Prayer must continue. We are in constant communication with God. but sometimes we choose to disconnect.

Finally, Worship, especially Holy Communion, needs to be a regular part of our lives. For in worship, we rehearse Who God is and who we are because of Who God is.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to be faithful in our journey to live the life of grace. We can have the plaque and bacteria removed from our lives. We can have the dead branches of our lives cut off and burned. We can be empowered to serve, grow and love.

Personal story. In December 2005, my wife Nancy was diagnosed with AML. An acute leukemia. Chemo treatments began immediately, preparing her for a bone marrow transplant. For about a month, she was so sick and weak. It seemed like the chemo was harder on her than the leukemia. But it was preparing her for the bone marrow transplant. Since the BMT which took place over four years ago, Nancy has been on the road to wholeness and healing. A slow, gradual, ongoing, daily process. It has had many bumps in the road. We have been learning to patiently wait and trust. Today, she is doing amazingly well, resuming much of her “normal” activity, while facing some occasional setbacks.

As powerful and toxic as it was, the chemo nearly killed her. but more than that, it killed off the leukemia producing cells, preparing her body for the opportunity for healing. Like chemo, Sanctifying Grace is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives~ perfecting, strengthening, cleansing, and equipping us.

[SLIDE 7~ Sanctifying Grace is…]

Because of the Holy Spirit, we don’t have to be Fat Babies. We can get off the bottle. We can grow and mature and become all that God intends us to be.

De Colores!

[SLIDE 8~ De colores!]