**Sanctifying Grace Talk**

**Linda Morrow**

**New-Ark Area Men’s Walk to Emmaus #50**

*(Gentlemen, please turn to page 48 in your Worship book and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.)*

**Come, Holy Spirit and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and we shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.**

**Oh, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.**

**Introduction:**

How many times have you prayed that prayer this weekend? Do you have it memorized? Do you know what all the words mean**?** A couple weeks ago I asked my six year old granddaughter, the same granddaughter to which my husband Roger referred in the talk on Prevenient Grace, what the word “kindle” means, and what do you think she said? “A computer tablet that you can read on.” Mmmm. I don’t think that is what we mean when we pray, “Come, Holy Spirit, and kindle in us the fire of your love.” But what do we mean? What comes to mind for you when you hear “kindle in us the fire of God’s love?

Step back into time with me to 1965. A summer church camp in east Central Ohio. An awkward, bookish middle school girl who loves God, but isn’t so in love with her life. And a campfire. The shy girl is weighed down with sadness and doubt…about her family that seems constantly in chaos; about her friends, no wait a minute, what friends; and about her self-worth. And yet, in this quiet wooded setting, surrounded by new-found friends that don’t seem to make fun or judge, focused on the fire crackling in front of her, she finds peace. And as she tentatively joins her voice to the voice of others, the words of the song that they sing soak into her heart just as the warmth of the fire soaks into her soul.

Let’s listen to the words the campers were singing:

Spirit of the living God,Fall afresh on me.Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.Spirit of the living God,Fall afresh on me.

And the young girl knows that God is there, right there: in her and with her, loving her, comforting her, and strengthening her…regardless. What she didn’t know was what God’s power in her was...and could be…when she recognized, acknowledged and sought it. That took another twenty years to begin to understand…and she is - I am - still learning and experiencing it. And for that I give God thanks and praise!

**\***The title of this talk is **SANCTIFYING GRACE** and my name is **\***Linda Morrow.

**This weekend you are learning about and experiencing God’s grace, God’s unconditional love.**

*Slide:* **\*All grace is God’s grace.**

*(Repeat):* **All grace is God’s grace.**

God’s grace is God’s unconditional love given as a gift to each of us.We experience the gift of the one grace of God in many different ways as we continue on our spiritual journey. The leg of that journey that you are all on this weekend is a Walk to Emmaus. However our spiritual journeys continue throughout our lifetimes.

In the grace talk given by Roger Morrow, you heard that Prevenient Grace is the gift of God’s grace that is God’s activity from the moment of our conception to the moment we say yes to God and beyond.

In the grace talk given by Ron Griffin, you learned that Justifying Grace is the gift of God grace by which we accept for ourselves the relationship God offers through Christ.

In the grace talk given by Keith Taylor you discovered that God uses many Means of Grace, or channels through which God pours His grace into us to help us celebrate and strengthen our relationship with God.

And in the grace talk given by Karen Osborn, you heard that there are many Obstacles to Grace: that we have attitudes and actions that hinder our relationship with God and with our neighbor. Thank God that, through the cross, Jesus Christ has overcome every obstacle.

You have been learning and experiencing what’s so amazing about God’s grace throughout the weekend. We are going to continue our exploration of God’s grace by looking at another facet or dimension of it: Sanctifying grace.

*(Slide)* **\*Sanctifying grace is the gift of God providing the desire and the power to grow in our relationship with Him – forever.**

*(Repeat)* **Sanctifying grace is the gift of God providing the desire and the power to grow in our relationship with Him – forever.**

Just as physical birth begins the physical process of growth and maturity, spiritual birth through God’s justifying grace or salvation begins the process of spiritual growth toward maturity. That process of spiritual growth towards spiritual maturity takes placed through God’s sanctifying grace.

In other words, sanctifying grace is the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit working in and through the heart and life of every believer. What are the characteristics of sanctifying grace?

It is God’s active love – toward me, toward you. And it is God’s love in action -- toward others and toward the world God created through me, through you. Our response to God’s sanctifying grace involves both love and action.

**You see,** *(slide):* **\*Sanctifying grace is the process of opening ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us.**

*(Let me repeat that):* **Sanctifying grace is the process of opening ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us.**

Sanctifying grace is divine power transforming our hearts and lives. It transforms us into new people, a bit at a time.Sanctifying grace makes us ripe for glorifying God, obediently loving Him and loving others.

**\*** *(Slide of RIPE and a visual of grapes here.)*

See these grapes, how ripe and juicy they look? We need to remember they don’t ripen all at once. To begin with, they are little and sour. But over time, as sunlight, water, and nutrients from the soil pour into them through the vine, these grapes become soft and sweet, able to be used for a variety of delicious purposes for which they were designed. We are the same way; after we have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, God continues to pour His grace into us, and we become more and more able to be used for the delicious purposes for which He designed each of us. So what does it mean to be ripe for glory?

*(Slide):* **The “R” in “Ripe” refers to \*restoring our relationship with God and others.**

*(Repeat)* **The “R” in “Ripe” refers to restoring our relationship with God and others.**

**R – Restore:**

God restores us to a relationship with Him. We cannot earn God’s love or have relationships with God or even meaningful relationships with others by changing our ways. Rather we change our ways because God first loves us. The first letter written by John, Chapter 4, verse 19 says: ***“We love him, because he first loved us.”*** God gives us the grace, sanctifying grace, to make a fresh start, day by day, hour by hour. That grace that God pours into us is the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through us day by day and hour by hour. The power of the Holy Spirit “bears witness with our spirit” confirming that we are beloved children of God.

Our knowledge, acceptance, and belief that our most basic identify is that of being one of God’s children forms the foundation for all our other relationships. And once we have repented of our sins and recognize that the bottom line is that we are now a part of God’s forever family, we can begin to be restored to the wholeness that God desires for each of God’s children through this continued outpouring of His grace. And we are restored into a relationship with Him.

In medical terms, one could say restoration that restoration is the recovery of our health, needed because of a physical sickness. In spiritual terms, restoration is the recovery of our relationship with God through Jesus, needed because of a spiritual sickness…and what is that sickness – sin!

At the beginning of this talk, I mentioned that the talk on prevenient grace was given by my husband Roger. He looked like a picture of health, didn‘t he? But almost four years ago such was not the case: Within three days after arriving at the hospital to be re-hydrated due to the flu, Roger was placed on a ventilator and rushed to Riverside Hospital with MRSA-based sepsis, pneumonia, and acute kidney failure. A ka-zillion prayers surrounded him on his journey. And, as one medical specialist after another worked to solve the puzzle of what turned his so-called flu into multi-body-system failure, there was a point in time that Roger moved from continuing to become sicker to beginning to be restored to health. We knew that God was performing one healing miracle after another as he began to regain health. It was a long journey. Upon arriving home after 19 days of hospitalization, he was not strong enough to pull the blankets up from his chest to his neck. But little by little, day by day, that strength returned. God’s healing miracles continued and we give God the glory!

**The “I” in “Ripe” represents the word \*“Imparting”**

*(Repeat)* **The “I” in “Ripe” stands for the word “Imparting.”**

Imparting means bestowing, granting, or giving. God’s sanctifying grace bestows, grants, gives us, imparts to us new life, new light, new strength, and a new heart.

Sanctifying grace is the process by which the righteousness of Christ is imparted to us – it becomes a part of us, and we experience a change of heart. And, as I mentioned earlier, it is a day by day process, just like Roger’s healing was, as we become more like Christ in our attitudes and actions. Having been born again through justifying grace, we grow and mature spiritually through the work of sanctifying grace. Hear this prayer that Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus in Ephesians 3: 14-19:

***“For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15from whom every familyin heaven and on earth derives its name. 16I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”***

**The “P” in RIPE refers to how God \*perfects us in the image and likeness of Jesus Christ.**

*(Repeat)* **The “P” in RIPE refers to how God perfects us in the image and likeness of Jesus Christ.**

Conversion is a process. It happens once, but not all at once. It is a lifelong process of dying to what is evil and rising to what is good and true (Christ in us). And as a Christian matures, his/her live displays certain qualities known as the fruit of the Spirit. In Paul’s letter to the church in Galatia, Galatians 5: 22, Paul says,

***“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”***

We also need to keep in mind that ripening, or perfecting involves pruning. The Bible tells us that every vine and fruit tree requires pruning, and so do we. The Gospel of John 15:2 says:

***“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15%3A+2&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26702a)***] so that it will be even more fruitful****.*” A life in grace is a life in process, and some of this process is painful.

We need to remember that the journey to Christian perfection, our ripening process, is both instantaneous and progressive. The Greek work for perfect can also be translated as “mature or complete.” Just as a person can be mature and complete as a five-year-old, the same person years later can be quite different and still be a mature or complete fifteen year old, or a mature twenty five year old, or sixty-five year old, etc. So we become more and more mature over time, because…

Slide here: **\*Sanctifying grace is the doctrine of “the more.”**

*(Repeat):* **Sanctifying grace is the doctrine of “the more”.** God has more love, more power, more peace, and more joy in store for us.

Remember your means of grace talk? What were some of the means of grace? Give examples here: The means of grace are means of growth. As we practice these means of grace, prayer, studying the Bible, celebrating Holy Communion, worshipping together, serving others, etc. we become more and more like Jesus. We find that our deepest joy and greatest good comes from living out of the grace God pours into us as we likewise pour it into others. **\***

**The “E” in RIPE stands f or the word \*“equipping.”**

*(Repeat)* **The “E” in RIPE stands for the word “equipping.”**

God’s sanctifying grace is equipping us to do the work of Christ in the world – to be the hands and feet of Christ

Sanctifying grace is the work of the Holy Spirit empowering us to see and serve Christ in the least and lost of our city, state, and world. In the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25: verses 31-40 Jesus says:

**\**“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.***

***“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’***

***“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’***

***“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’***

Feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick and the prisoner – these are all essential activities of a Christian.

If we choose to live in obedience to God through the power of the Holy Spirit, over time we all will exhibit all of the FRUIT of the Spirit, to which we referred earlier: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

However, The Holy Spirit equips each of us differently with one or more GIFTS for ministry In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 12, verses 4-5, and 7-11 Paul writes:

***There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.***

***Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,and to still another the interpretation of tongues.All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.***

Every person is gifted, and every gift is needed if the whole will of God is to be accomplished. It is the Holy Spirit that equips us with the gifts God needs each of us to have to accomplish our pieces and parts of His whole will, which in a nutshell are His “Great Commandment” and His “Great Commission”

Slide here: **\*God’s will for us is to obey, to carry out the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.**

(Repeat): **God’s will for us is to obey, to carry out the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.**

*(Please put up a slide with the Great Commandment on it.)*

What is the Great Commandment? Jesus says in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 22, verses 37 and 39 that we should **\**“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind…love your neighbor as yourself.”***

*(Please put up a slide with the Great Commission on it.)*

And what is the Great Commission? Jesus says at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 28, verses 19-20 to **\*“…*go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”***

**\*How do we grow in sanctifying grace?**

*(Repeat)* **How do we grow in sanctifying grace?**

Just as grapes ripening is a natural process so is growth in grace. In the story of the vine and the branches in the 15th Chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus tells us that a **\***life in grace is as natural as the life of a branch connected to a healthy vine.

And how does this natural process take place? Again, that is where the means or channels through which we continue to receive an outpouring of God’s grace comes into play. We abide, or live, in Christ when we **\***pray and worship. Through prayer and worship we open ourselves to God; we are rooted and grounded in love and intimately connected to Christ.

And Christ’s word abides, or lives in us when we **\***study. Through Bible study, we give our minds to God and grow in the mind of Christ. John 15: 7 says***“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”***

In **\***Christian action we give our hearts to God and participate in the work of Christ. These works include works of mercy (providing food, water, and clothing) and works of justice (release to captives, freedom to the oppressed, etc. Luke 4:18 says

*“****The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.”***

But to be able to do all this, we need to do three things:

The first is that **\***we need to continue to open our hearts to receive the outpouring of God’s grace as a gift.

Romans 5:5 says ***“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”*** Please remember, we do not earn it or deserve God’s love; we simply open our hearts to receive it.

Secondly, **\***we need to share grace in the body of Christ, the community of followers of Jesus. Through participation in the gathered community and small groups in which we can more deeply share our spiritual journeys, we receive strength and nurture – just as a branch does from the vine. We come alive in Christ, learn the mind of Christ, and help one another remain rooted and grounded in God’s love.

And finally, **\***we respond by full participation in the mission of Christ in the world, the Great Commission. Repeat the Great Commission here:

**Closing**

**\***For three days we have prayed for the Holy Spirit to come and fill us with the fire of God’s love. We have learned that:

God wants a relationship with us even more than we want a relationship with God. And that God’s role in sanctifying grace is to fill us with the Holy Spirit, which we often imagine as fire, flames that may begin as a spark and grow into roaring fire. Our role is to open our hearts and walk in the Spirit with Christ day by day. In the early 13th century Richard of Chichester wrote these words, which some of you may remember as a chorus from the 1971 Broadway musical Godspell:

Day by day, day by day.

Oh Dear Lord

Three things I pray.

To see thee more clearly

Love thee more dearly

Follow thee more nearly, Day by day.

One way that seeing thee, loving thee, and following thee becomes more meaningful and easier is through being involved in small groups, which are another important means or channel of sanctifying grace for disciples. From the time Jesus called the first disciples – remember there were only a dozen of them – to this very day, small groups are an essential means of grace. In Emmaus, small accountability groups are called group reunions or share groups. When we meet with a small group, we follow the order on the group reunion card, which you will learn about later. Group reunions are the Emmaus community’s primary means of support on the journey toward spiritual maturity.

In our opening prayer to the Holy Spirit, we prayed “Come, Holy Spirit and kindle in us the fire of your love.” The fire of your love. As we close this talk about God’s amazing grace, let’s transport ourselves out of this room in cold, wintry Ohio to being seated around a campfire late on a breezy summer evening. And as we gaze into that fire, may the Holy Spirit kindle in us the fire of God’s love as we together pray *(or sing…I will decide at the time*) these words, knowing that growing in God’s sanctifying grace is going to continue to be an exciting, challenging, exceed our imagination part of the rest of our lives’ spiritual journeys.

*(Please put up a slide with the below words, but please break it into one sentence on a line).*

**\***Spirit of the living God,fall afresh on me./ Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.*/* Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me./Spirit of the living God,fall afresh on me.

*Let’s pray/sing it again,*

Spirit of the living God,fall afresh on me./ Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me./Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me./ Spirit of the living God,Fall afresh on me.

**\*De Colores!**