Clergy Talk: Sanctifying Grace

Please open your purple worship books 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.*

Please be seated.

After growing up in a church, we often think that we are Christians just because we attended worship. This was not any different for a young kid that frequented a town much like this one. He went to church each week, and even attended the youth group activities on Wednesdays. The problem was that he never took church with him when he left the building. He never mentioned God during the other days of the week. Moreover, the concept of living out the faith was not just foreign, but discouraged. He grew up in a household where Christians only had to be Christians at church—and only when people were looking.

This kid, this boy, lived this way throughout his formative years, until one day something happened. He was riding in the car with his mother when at an intersection a man stood holding a sign which read "will work for food."

MC900383920[1]This is Sanctifying Grace, and I am MC900383920[1]Matthew Van Winkle.

It is important to remember that each of the types of grace that have been discussed this weekend, are all part of the one grace of God. As we continue our spiritual journey, we will likewise continue to experience the impact of this grace.

Prevenient Grace: God's activity in our lives, from the moment of conception to the moment that we say yes to God and beyond.

Justifying Grace: the gift of God by which we accept for ourselves the relationship offered by him through Christ.

The Means of Grace: through these we become able to celebrate and strengthen our relationship with God.

Obstacles to Grace: these are the attitudes and actions which hinder our relationship with God, as well as our neighbor. However these obstacles can be overcome through the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ on the cross.

MC900383920[1]Sanctifying Grace is the gift of God, providing the desire and power to grow in our relationship with God—forever.

Let me repeat that: Sanctifying Grace is the gift of God, providing the desire and power to grow in our relationship with God—forever.

Did I mention that the relationship lasts forever? Just making sure.

Just as physical birth begins the physical process of growth and maturity, so too does spiritual birth begin the process of spiritual growth toward maturity.

That is to say, our spiritual birth, which is through Justifying Grace and conversion, salvation, and being born again, leads to the development of spiritual maturity, or Sanctifying Grace.

MC900383920[1]Sanctifying Grace is not just the power, but the dynamic power, of the Holy Spirit working in and through the heart and life of every believer. Let me repeat that: Sanctifying Grace is not just the power, but the dynamic power, of the Holy Spirit working in and through the heart and life of every believer.

Remember – MC900383920[1]God’s grace involves three specific things:

MC900383920[1]First, it manifests as God's active love toward me. It manifests as God's active love toward me.

MC900383920[1]Second, Grace is God's love in action. Grace is God's love in action. This

is directed toward others, and toward the world that God created.

MC900383920[1]Third, the response we have toward Grace involves both love and action.

The response we have toward Grace involves both love and action.

MC900383920[1]Sanctifying Grace is the process of opening ourselves, that's right, the process of opening ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit both in and through us. Again, Sanctifying Grace is the process of opening ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit both in and through us.

It is the divine energy transforming our heart and life. Through it we become ripe for glory. So, MC900383920[1]what is ripe?

MC900383920[1]R: Restoring

MC900383920[1]I: Imparting

MC900383920[1]P: Perfecting

MC900383920[1]E: Equipping

Let's talk about the components of being ripe.

MC900383920[1]**R=restoring.** Restoring our relationship with God and others.

We cannot earn God's love by changing our ways. Rather, we change our ways because God loves us and gives us the grace to make a fresh start, day by day, hour by hour.

We receive God's Spirit "bearing witness with our spirit" that we are beloved children of God.

**Romans 8:15-17** that is **Romans 8:15-17** tells us that the knowledge of our identity as children of God forms the foundation for all other relationships.

In medical terms, one could say restoration is the process of spiritual growth and the recovery of our health, since we were once sick with sin.

MC900383920[1]**I = imparting**. Represents the imparting of new life, new light, new strength, and a new heart.

Justifying grace is the moment when the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us—that is to say, attributed to us. This means that we are declared "not guilty" because of Christ, and all that he did for us on the cross.

Sanctifying Grace is the process by which the righteousness of Christ is imparted to us. Through it we experience a change of heart, in addition to it becoming a part of us.

Each day we become more like Christ in our attitudes and actions.

**Ephesians 3:14-19** that is **Ephesians 3:14-19**: Having been born again through Justifying Grace, we grow and mature spiritually through the work of Sanctifying Grace.

MC900383920[1]**P = perfecting.** This is when we take on the likeness of Jesus Christ, in addition to becoming perfected in the image of God.

It is important to remember that conversion is not instant, but rather a process. MC900383920[1]It happens only once, but not all at once. Let me repeat that. 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. Quite simply, once we start the conversion process, we have Christ with us, and in us.

Likewise, the gifts of the Spirit outlined in **1 Corinthians 12:4-7,11** that is **1 Corinthians 12:4-7,11**, are given to help us grow and assist in the up building of the body of Christ.

Now, as a Christian matures, **his/her** life will start to display these qualities, which are also mentioned in **Galatians 5:22** again, they are found in **Galatians 5:22**

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

Perfecting the use of these gifts in your life requires pruning. When you have time later, look up **John 15:2,** again, that is **John 15:2.** It talks further about this area of our Spiritual Growth. Remember what I said earlier: A life in grace is a lifelong process. What I failed to mention then is this: growing in a life of grace is, at times, painful.

You see, in some regards, MC900383920[1]Christian perfection is both instantaneous and progressive. Let me repeat that. Christian perfection is both instantaneous and progressive.

The Greek word for "perfect" can also be translated as "mature or complete." Just as a person can be mature or complete as a 5 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, and so on...

MC900383920[1]To become perfected in love is the promise of God, as well as his promise to us. Let me say that again: To become perfected in love is the promise of God, as well as his promise to us.

Remember, in Christ we can all become perfect, mature, and complete, and we can do that today. Yes, I said today. Even more, we will continue to grow in grace, resulting is us being even more Christ-like next month!

We have discussed, or rather I have discussed (because you were writing down every single word that has come out of my mouth...)

Anyway, I have presented various ways to interpret and understand the concept of Sanctifying Grace. If you can remember everything I have told you about it, well, that is great. If you are like 99% of the people in the room, you need a simple phrase to keep it at the front of your mind.

I have such a phrase... Are you ready? MC900383920[1]Sanctifying Grace is the

doctrine of “more.” If you didn't think to write that down, here it is again: Sanctifying Grace is the doctrine of “more.”

Sounds great, right? So what does it mean? It means that God has more love, more power, more peace, and more joy in store for us. I don't know about you, but I like “more.”

Remember: Sanctifying Grace is our deepest joy and our greatest good in all our relationships.

MC900383920[1]**E = equipping.** Specifically, equipping us to do the work of Christ in the world. I am going to repeat that: Equipping us to do the work of Christ in the world. This is accomplished by becoming 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. **Matthew 25:31-40** that was **Matthew 25:31-40** we learn that feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, and caring for those in need, are all essential — essential activities of a Christian.

The Holy Spirit equips us with the gifts for ministry, this is found in **1 Corinthians 12:4-5,** again, that is **1 Corinthians 12:4-5.** Every person is gifted, and every gift is needed if the whole will of God is to be accomplished. You can read more about this later in **Romans 12:6-8, Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:7-11,** that is **1 Corinthians 12:7-11.**

The Holy Spirit equips us to obey the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. You know what these are, right?

MC900383920[1]The Great Commandment = Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind... love your neighbor. That is found in **Matthew 22:37, 39**, Matthew **22:37, 39**.

Of course, the MC900383920[1]Great Commission = Go... *make disciples of all nations.* That is found in **Matthew 28:18-19, Matthew 28:18-19.**

So, how do we grow in Sanctifying Grace? To start with, growth is a natural process. In **John 15:1-12,** that is **John 15:1-12,** Jesus tells us that a life in grace is as natural as a branch connected to a vine.

We abide in Christ, through prayer. This is important because it is through prayer and worship that we truly open ourselves to God.

Through study, we come to know better just how Christ's word abides in us. In study, we give our minds to God and grow in the mind of Christ. You can read more about this in **John 15:7,10 and Philippians 2:5-8.** That was **John 15:7,10 and Philippians 2:5-8.**

We bear fruit for God's glory through our Christian action. In this, we give our hands to God and participate in the work of Christ. These works include: works of mercy, like providing food, water, and clothing). See **Matthew 25:35** that is **Matthew 25:35.** The other types of works are those of justice (release of captives, freedom to the oppressed). For this, see **Luke 4:18 that is Luke 4:18.**

MC900383920[1]All these things that I have mentioned are gifts of the Lord. Each and every one. They seem pretty good, and I think that if we thought about it, there isn't a single one that we wouldn't want to have. Guess what... all that we have to do, all that YOU have to do to receive these gifts is *open your hearts. Open your hearts to receive grace as a gift.* It is that simple.

**Romans 5:5** again that is **Romans 5:5** says: **God's *love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.***

We do not earn God's love. We do not deserve God's love. Rather, we simply open our hearts and receive it. Pretty cool, huh?

This is why when we share grace in the body of Christ—our community of active Christians, we become blessed. When we participate in the activities of the gathered community, small accountability groups, and the like, we receive strength and mercy. Another way to say this is that, we come alive in Christ, learn the mind of Christ, and help one another remain rooted and grounded in God's love. This is because when we respond , with and by, full participation in the mission of Christ in the world, we share the gift of grace that God has shared with us.

You can read more about all of this in **Ephesians 2:5 (Ephesians 2:5), Philippians 2:1-12 (Philippians 2:1-12), Ephesians 3:14-19 (Ephesians 3:14-19).**

So, if you want the cliff notes version of everything, here it is. By the way, they wouldn't tell you earlier that this was coming because you wouldn't have taken any notes, and let's face it, it's not like you have spent any time on this walk taking notes.

For three days we have prayed for the Holy Spirit to come and fill us with the fire of love. We have learned that: God wants a relationship with us, even more than we want a relationship with God.

God's role in Sanctifying Grace is to fill us with the Holy Spirit and fire. Our corresponding role is to open our hearts and walk in the Spirit with Christ day by day.

Also, small groups are an important means of sanctifying grace for disciples. From the time Jesus called the first disciples to this very day, small groups have been, and still are an essential means of grace. Because of this, group reunions are the Emmaus community's primary means of support on the journey toward spiritual maturity.

Okay, you can put your pens down.

If I remember correctly, the homeless man was holding his sign, reading "will work for food." In the past his mother and father rolled up the windows and locked the doors when this happened. They always said that "those people" would use the money for booze, drugs, or even sex. Besides, they didn't need to toss away money, they gave at the church after all.

Despite being raised in this environment, something changed in the boy. Some would call it conscience, while others would say that the Holy Spirit was convicting the boy.

Either way, he told his mother that if she wouldn't give the man some money for food, then he was getting out of the car to do it himself.

As their car drove away, the boy felt warm inside. He felt warm because they did the right thing, and because of sharing from their plenty, a man with nothing could eat.

This lesson the boy kept with him throughout his life. The more he did for others, just like Christ did for us, the more he was given the opportunity to further witness the gospel through his actions.

Before long he was praying for people, and the days in his past were finally in the past, because he had become a new person in Christ.

It wasn't until I was appointed to my current churches that I realized the blessings that God has continually bestowed upon me. Each time I showed the grace and mercy of God to another, he expanded my opportunities to do it some more. As I said earlier, Sanctifying Grace is best summed up as being the doctrine of "the more." It means that God has more love, power, peace, and joy in store for us. I can tell you that there is one thing left out of that definition. The doctrine of "the more" is not just love, power, peace, and joy, but also opportunities.

Through God's Sanctifying Grace, we are continually given more and more and more opportunities to impart people with more and more and more of the grace of God.

MC900383920[1]De Colores.