

Working Out Your Salvation

The Wonder and Mystery of Sanctification

January 29, 2017

Part 4- Media Gratiae- the "Means" of Our Sanctification- Part 1

The Acts 2:37-44

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

38 Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;

To the Glory of God

Here in America we value something called "Rugged American Individualism". This is the concept that says that we are all individuals, and so we should make *our own way* through this life, we should walk on *our own path*, *set our own course*, and "*do our own thing*". And we see this individualism in people who refuse to be constrained by "tradition" and seem to see no reason to hold to patterns of life or behavior that is acceptable with most people.

We also see it in the business world with people who have the ability to start a business from scratch and then build it into something

very prosperous, all the while bucking conventional wisdom, even going against precedent and basically doing it "their way".

In extreme cases, we see it in people who see no reason to adhere to laws, or who feel at liberty to live and do and say anything they please, regardless of how their words and actions affect other people.

And whether this is out of envy or jealousy on our part, we, basically, admire people who "had the guts" to "beat the odds", who didn't "bow their knees" to the "status quo", people who "swam against the tide", those who "marched to the beat of a different drummer", and who went on to accomplished great things that seemingly would never have happened if they would have done what everybody else told them to do.

The entire American experiment with Liberty that we call "The United States" is founded on this individualistic concept. It is what made a group of men willing to rebel and go to war against the greatest military might the world had ever seen at that time, in order to be set free from a three cent tax on imported tea.

In the business world, this Individualism is also called "Entrepreneurialism". And it comes from a French word that has to do with people who are very energetic, and who pay no attention to the normal way of conducting business, who take great risks, that would give most people a heart attack, in the hope of reaping great reward. And many times they are successful, because our entire economic system was created to reward people like this.

So, there is much to admire about this "Rugged American Individualism", or this "Entrepreneurial Spirit", that dominates the history of our nation. Their stories are exhilarating, even inspiring, and there is an entire new generation of young people in this country, right now, who are "chomping at the bit" to be the next one who will "do it their way", and make it to the cover of Fortune Magazine.

Now this is not an endorsement, but this is *exactly* why so many people admire our current President. He has spent the past 40 years building a business empire, employing thousands of people, and recently, bucked the odds and entered his very first political campaign by running for the nomination of his Party against 16 other candidates, including 4 sitting or former Senators, and nine current or former Governors, and beat them all, *handily*. It wasn't even close.

He then went on to defeat a woman in the general election who has been in politics for over 35 years, and he won 33 out of 50 states, all the while going against the advice of seasoned political operatives! My research tells me that Mrs. Clinton spent almost \$500 million dollars more than Mr. Trump, and yet, she still lost.

So, regardless of what kind of man Mr. Trump may be, personally, and regardless of what kind of President he will make, we have to agree that what he did is quite an accomplishment. And this is a perfect example of the Rugged American Individualism or this Entrepreneurial Spirit that has made the United States the envy of the world.

But we have to understand, dear friends, that this is *not* the goal in the Church of Jesus Christ or among the people of God. The goal of those graced with the power and desire to believe isn't to flex our entrepreneurial muscles, it isn't to "do our own thing", it isn't to be different or unique or original or to operate "outside of the box". Our goal is not to worship God in "our own way" or to "create a new paradigm of *doing* Church". The goal of those chosen by God is *conformity*, not individualism. Look again what Dr. Luke wrote in verse 44:

And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common

Now this doesn't mean that we all dress alike, or live together in a commune, or that we all like the same foods, or even use the same terminology. Our goal is "unity of belief", in that we all believe the same things, and our goal is "unity of love", in that we all love one another fervently, and our goal is "unity of spirit", in that we all teach and confess and hold dear the same things. Our goal is not "*uniformity*", which is man-made and destructive, but "*unity*", which is a Work of the Spirit. Our goal is what God the Holy Spirit moved on the half-brother of Jesus to write in **Jude 3** that says:

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Look again at the phrase “**our common salvation**”. What does that mean? Well, the word that was translated here as “**common**” comes from a Greek word that means: ordinary; the same; belonging to the whole.

So, the “Salvation”, or the “Christian Faith”, that believers had in Ephesus was the very *same* as the believers in Pergamus. There aren’t different ways to be saved, there is one. And there aren’t different methods of how saved people are to live their lives, Holiness is “common” or the “same” among all believers. This is the very *same* word that was used by Dr. Luke in **The Acts 4:32**:

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

... and by the Apostle Paul in **1 Corinthians 10:13** to say:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

... and by Paul to describe the young Pastor in **Titus 1:4**:

To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Our “Salvation” is the very *same* Salvation that rescued believers from the Wrath of God 2,000 years ago. Our “Faith” and our “Doctrine” and our “Teaching” is the very *same* Faith, Doctrine, and Teaching that was given to the Church by God the Holy Spirit through the Apostles. Now look again at the last phrase of Jude 3:

... that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints

Believers are told here, in sacred Scripture, that we are to “**contend earnestly**”, we are to fight fervently, we are to struggle unendingly, we are to war faithfully, and we are to labor constantly for a single thing, for one commodity: Faith. But, not just *any* “faith”. Not

a "generic faith". We are *not* told to contend earnestly for our own *personal* faith, or our own *individual* faith, or our own *designer* faith that applies only to us, or one that we developed or manufactured for ourselves.

No, the Spirit of Truth tells us here through Jude that we are to struggle and war and fight and strive and labor and contend for the Faith that was:

... once for all handed down to the saints

... *that* Faith. The Faith that was handed down "**once**". The Faith that was given to the "**saints**", or the "sanctified ones", one time, a long time ago. The Faith that was revealed and articulated and written down and formalized one time, a single time, once, in the past.

And so, this "once for all handed down to the saints" Faith is not *any* faith, it isn't "a" faith, it isn't *my* faith or *your* faith. It isn't the "Reformed faith" or the "Baptist faith" or the "Anglican faith" or the "Presbyterian faith" or the "Pentecostal faith". No, this is "the" Faith, the one, single, eternal, absolute Christian Faith.

So, what we are commanded to contend earnestly *for* is the very *same* Faith that was "**once for all handed down to the saints**" by the Apostles. It is the Divine Revelation of the New Covenant that was received directly from God the Spirit to a very small group of frail, weak, and sinful men known as "Apostles", who all lived and operated and died in the First Century, that is better known to us today as "The New Testament", which is the final, full, and completed Revelation of God to Man that is superior to the Revelation of the Old Covenant.

And, by telling us that this Christian Faith was "**once for all handed down to the saints**", Jude tells us that this Faith is *complete*, it is *final*, it is closed. So, the Christian Faith that we are told to contend earnestly for has already been handed down to the saints one time, a long time ago. And that means there will never be any more information added to the Christian Faith. Ever. There will never be any more Revelation given by God to any human other than what has already been revealed about the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, or how lost people are saved, or how to organize and run the Church, or who can lead in the Church, or what the Church should believe and teach. The Christian Faith has *already* been revealed and received, it

has *already* been articulated and written down, it has *already* been explained and formalized, and established. And now, this very *same, common universal, worldwide* Christian Faith, that was once for all handed down to the saints, is being *propagated* throughout the world.

The very popular modern concept that says human beings can “throw off the shackles of the past” and we can come into God’s Presence and worship Him “in our own way” actually fights against what Jude commands here. The modern notion that we have the right to serve God “in our own way” or to “follow the dictates of our own hearts” or “do our own thing”, as it pertains to the Christian Faith, actually wars *against* everything that Jude wrote here.

So, the Individualism and Entrepreneurial Spirit that has made America the greatest nation on earth and that has distributed more wealth to more people than any other system the world has ever known actually fights *against* the Will of God. It doesn’t promote the fruit of the Spirit, it feeds the works of the flesh. It doesn’t compel people to die to self and conform to Christ’s Image, it relishes in our own individual importance. It does not rejoice in Jesus having the preeminence, it rejoices in making us preeminent.

So, the name of the game among the saved is not to “redefine Church”, it is to contend earnestly for what the Apostles received and wrote down and gave. The “name of the game” among the Redeemed *isn’t* to seek to be “relevant to the culture”, it is to believe and teach the very *same* things that God gave to the Apostles. Our goal is *not* to receive new Revelation from God, it is to learn and believe and love and obey and defend the Revelation of God that has *already* been given.

We are to love what God has *already said* in 66 inerrant Books. We are to value what God has *already said* in the only writings in the history of the world that are inspired. We are to cherish what God has *already said* in that which is Absolute and Eternal. We are to believe what God has *already said* in what was superintended by God the Holy Spirit. We are to obey what God has *already said* in infallible Truth. And we are to defend what God has *already said* through men who were moved along by God the Holy Spirit. And we are to say “Amen” to everything God has *already said*. And then we are to strive to live in obedience to what God has *already said* in Scripture. And I would suggest that that is what “**contending earnestly**” means.

Now obedience is always better than disobedience. But even when we are obedient, we must not think we have pleased the Lord. As we have already discovered in this Sermon Series, our efforts at obeying what God has said is, *at best*, only 50% of what God requires. Because I suggest to you that unless we are so radically transformed by the miracle of the New Birth and our ongoing progressive Sanctification, that we actually *enjoy* God and that we *delight* in His Ways and that we *relish* in what He has said, unless we *thrive* and *flourish*, and unless we experience the fullness of Joy under His Commands, we still have not fully obeyed.

Dead, dry, obedience out of obligation and duty or fear does *not* honor God, and it does *not* magnify the Worth and Value of Jesus Christ. And it may actually fuel our efforts at being Pharisaical and might not please the Lord at all.

And that means that our Sanctification is *not* merely us understanding Scripture better, even though that is part of it. Our Sanctification is *not* merely that we obey or that we are able to understand deep and profound Doctrines better, even though that is certainly part of it. Our Sanctification is *not* that we can preach better or teach better or sing better, even though that is part of it.

No, our Sanctification is so we may *love* better. We are being progressively made holy so that we will grow in our admiration and awe and respect for Jesus Christ, to the end that a deep and profound love begins to develop and grow within us so we may truly begin to *enjoy* God, and so we may truly begin to *delight* in His Ways, so we may begin to *treasure* Jesus Christ *above* ourselves and *above* all that has been made and all that has been given to us, and so we may truly find the *fullness of Joy* by being submitted to His Lordship Authority over our lives. And *that* is the goal of Sanctification.

And I suggest to you that only by this being true, not that it is merely believed, but only by us actually and personally *experiencing* this miraculous transformation in our lives where this is a reality in each of us is Christ fully worshipped and fully honored and fully glorified. And *that* is why we are being Sanctified.

Now there is a lot of talk today in the modern Church about what "being spiritual" looks like. Some teach that "being spiritual" means you live as a pauper and walk around in a mystical trance seeing visions. Others teach that "being spiritual" means you are flowing in

the gifts of the Spirit. Some teach that being spiritual means you have an emotional experience in the Song Service. While still others teach that “being spiritual” means that you hear directly from God.

But none of that defines what “being spiritual” is. We have to understand, dear friends, that it doesn’t take the miracle of the New Birth to want to go to Heaven. It doesn’t take Sovereign Regeneration to want to walk on streets of gold and to be re-united with loved ones. It doesn’t take a dead and risen Savior to want a better life down here. It doesn’t take a sinless Propitiation to want more money or a better house or better health. It doesn’t take a spotless Lamb to read the Bible or to sing hymns or to preach and teach. All lost people have the ability to *want* those things and to *do* those things.

But you *do* have to be born again to *love* Jesus. No lost person loves Jesus. And they *don’t* love Him because they *can’t*. Those who are yet in their sins have neither the ability nor the inclination to love God or the things of God. The Bible teaches that lost people only love themselves and sin. And they love whatever else will exalt themselves and sin. The Apostle John was moved by the Holy Spirit to say in **1John 4:19**:

We love, because He first loved us.

... and the context of this verse is loving God and loving the things of God and loving all other believers and even loving our enemies. And the word, “**because**” has to do with “origin” or “cause” or “source”. So, the *origin* of our love for God is God’s Love for us. The *source* of our love for God is God’s Love for us. And that means that our love *for* God is an amazing and miraculous and supernatural gift *from* God. And that is because no human being can produce or initiate or manufacture or cause or even develop this kind of love for God. Love for God must be given by God or you simply do not have it.

We must understand that wicked and fallen sinners being given the gift of being able and willing to love God is *the* single most important and best and greatest gift that God could ever give to anyone. Because *nothing* is more worthy of loving than God. We were originally made to love God more and better and to a greater extent than we love anything else. And the Fall ruined that. And, so when that gift of

loving God is restored to us in Salvation, we are then able to reach the full zenith of our own joy and satisfaction.

Sanctification does not *create* this love, it *develops* the love that Salvation gave. It *strengthens* our love for God, it *deepens* it, and *enables* us to genuinely *delight* in God. It *empowers* us to *treasure* Jesus Christ, it *facilitates* us being able to *reject* the idols of this life and *enjoy* God. Sanctification allows us to set our affections on God and no longer trust in the promises that money and sin make, but to trust in what God has said.

So, you *do* have to be sovereignly regenerated to *cherish* Jesus and to *value* Jesus and *enjoy* Jesus and to *delight* in Jesus more than anything or anyone else, including yourself. You *do* have to experience the miracle of the New Birth to forgive and love your enemies. And you *do* have to be radically transformed to see Jesus as the Treasure of your life, and to live your entire life for no other reason than to bring God Glory, regardless of what that does to you personally.

And the reality is that few, if any of us can actually say that. And that is precisely *why* God graciously and mercifully created this amazing process called "Sanctification", or "Holification". This amazing process draws us deeper into Truth, which draws us deeper into God, which draws us deeper into Love and Joy and Peace.

Now many people speak today about the Wonder of the indwelling Holy Spirit. But few make the connection between the ongoing Work of the Holy Spirit inside of us and Sanctification. So, another way of looking at the ongoing process of progressive Sanctification is that it is simply the ongoing Work of God the Holy Spirit in me, to conform me to the Image and Likeness of Jesus Christ.

God the Holy Spirit *continually and relentlessly* exalts Jesus in my mind. He *continually and relentlessly* convicts me of sin. He *continually and relentlessly* enlarges my desire and capacity to understand and know and put the pieces together and to grow in Knowledge and Grace. God the Holy Spirit *continually and relentlessly transforms and renews* my mind. And that "renewed mind" *continually and relentlessly* tames my wild heart. And that tamed heart *continually and relentlessly* governs my loves. And that makes me more like Jesus, and that makes me more holy.

You see, the more Truth I comprehend, the better and more satisfying Jesus becomes. And the more satisfying Jesus is, the less I

will trust in money or possessions or what my own hands can build or do. The more valuable Jesus becomes, my *love* for this present evil world begins to evaporate, my *propensity* to set my affections on things that are passing away begins to grow weaker, and my *inclination* to find hope and comfort in what I can do for myself begins to vanish away.

So "being spiritual" must be defined by God, and not by us. Because we are fallen creatures we are not a very reliable source of whether we are pleasing to the Lord or not. Scripture tells us that being pleasing to God is being so radically transformed by what God alone has done for us, all by Himself, and at great Cost to Himself, in the Death of His Son, that we have both the desire and the power to put ourselves and our own personal agendas aside, and we find the fullness of Joy in dying to self, and we begin to love what God loves and we hate what God hates.

So, "being spiritual" and "pleasing God" and "bearing godly fruit" and "serving God" and "striving to obey" is all the *same* thing. And that means that I am being "spiritual", I am pleasing God, I am bearing godly fruit, *only* when I am first in agreement with what God has said, and then as I so value what God has said that I am striving to obey it, and then finally that I begin to truly delight in my submission. And my growth in this area is what is called "Sanctification".

You see, no one can honor God, and we do not magnify the Worth and Value of Jesus Christ, when we either don't know or when we don't understand or when we disagree or don't care with what God has revealed infallibly in Scripture. And no one can honor God, and we do not magnify the Worth and Value of Jesus Christ, when we live our lives in direct opposition or rebellion to what God has said infallibly in Scripture.

So, a good working definition of what "being spiritual" looks like is:

Struggling against the lusts of my flesh by the Power of the Holy Spirit to be found
humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture-
all to the Glory of God

... and Sanctification is the process that enables me to do that.

So, the goal in the Christian Church is *not* to promote or lift up or empower the "self" of Man. It is to promote and lift up and treasure and

value Jesus Christ. It is *dying* to self, not promoting self. It is *killing* the deeds of the flesh, not feeding them. It is *losing* our own individualism and contending earnestly for the Faith that was once for all handed down to the saints so we may enjoy God and glorify Jesus Christ. Progressive Sanctification, or the ongoing Work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, is what enables us to do that.

So, that is what Sanctification *is* and what it *does*. And what I want to talk about today is just *how* God works Sanctification in our lives. What are the “tools” that God uses to *effect* Holiness in our lives? What does God use, and what is the process or the way that God the Holy Spirit continually and relentlessly brings Sanctification to the believer?

And in exploring this issue we need to understand that God *could* have simply decided to “decree” Holiness. In His Omnipotence, God *could* have simply “spoken” Holiness into our lives and sovereignly given it to us. God *could* have said, “*You will be holy*”, and we would have been holy.

But manifestly, God didn’t do that. In His great Wisdom and Mercy, God designed Sanctification as a “cooperative effort” between the believer and God the Spirit. “Regeneration” or being “Born Again” or the “Giving of New Spiritual Life” is a *sovereign* Act of God. God opens our blind eyes and unstops our deaf ears and takes out of us a heart of stone and gives us a heart of flesh, all by Himself, sovereignly. God does this *before* we ask for it and *before* we even *want* it.

But Sanctification is *not* merely a sovereign Act of God alone. Sanctification is a cooperative effort between God and the believer. So, *part* of Sanctification is what God does *sovereignly*, all by Himself, and *part* of Sanctification are things that we do for ourselves. And this is why we have seemingly contradictory Passages like:

Jude 20-21

20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

Here we are told to “do” four things:

- 1. Build(ing) yourselves up on your most holy Faith**
- 2. Pray(ing) in the Spirit**
- 3. Keep yourselves in the Love of God**
- 4. Wait(ing) anxiously for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus**

... so we are to build, pray, keep, and wait anxiously. And these are things that we are to "do" as believers. And the way this is written is a Divine Command. So, this is not optional. We are to obey these four things.

But then, just three verses later, the very *same* writer says this:

Jude 24-25

24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,

25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Here Jude says that God is going to sovereignly keep us saved by what He alone does for us. So, which one is it? Are we to put forth the effort to struggle to obey the four things in verses 20-21, or are we to rest in Jesus and trust in verses 24-25 that God is going to sovereignly keep us from stumbling?

And the answer is, "Yes!" God is absolutely going to *sovereignly* keep us saved, all the way to Glory as verses 24-25 says. But the *way* that God keeps us is by us being empowered and enabled by God to *engage* in the four "means" of verses 20-21. And that tells us that God *uses* these "means" to sovereignly Keep us.

But that also tells us that if we rebel against God and His Word, and we do *not* engage in the four "means" of verses 20-21, that God will *not* sovereignly keep us from stumbling. So, we may rest comfortably that even as Jesus saved us, He will keep us saved, all the way to Heaven. Absolutely. But, He does that *only* as we strive to obey what He has commanded us to do.

Now, does that mean that saved people can miss Heaven? No. What it means is that saved people will obey God and engage in the "means" by which they are kept. But what if we never obey? Then you are proving that your Salvation was not real and you were only deceived about your relationship with Jesus.

You see, it is true that saved people don't always obey. Sadly, that is true. But it is also true that truly regenerate people do not remain in disobedience. They can't- because the seed of Jesus Christ remains in them- which is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit- and they can't remain in rebellion- precisely because they have been supernaturally born from above. Look what the Apostle John taught about this in **1John 3:7-10**

7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

But what if we fail to do everything God told us to do? Do we then lose our Salvation? No. When we fail to obey, God graciously brings conviction into our lives and empowers us to not only obey Him, but to obey Him with Joy.

So how does God bring conviction to us? Well, God is certainly able to sovereignly grip your heart while you're riding down the road or while you're brushing your teeth or when you're mowing the yard, and reveal your rebellion and unfaithfulness to you in no uncertain terms. God the Holy Spirit dwells in you for that very Purpose. And the Spirit of Truth will bring conviction to you, all by Himself, *sovereignly*, and He will guide you into all Truth.

But another way that God uses is what I just did. I just heralded the Truth about the "Means of Grace" to you, in accord with God's Will and Word, and as I was anointed with the Holy Spirit. And as a faithful minister, I reminded all of us, that we are never told anywhere in the Bible to simply sit back and relax after we are saved.

The nonchalant;, lackadaisical, lazy, unconcerned, laid back, frivolous attitude of many in the modern Church about serious and eternal matters, like "obedience" and "pursuing Holiness on purpose", is

not an example of trusting God. This is merely another manifestation of rebellion and disobedience.

Being saved doesn't *end* our activity, it *begins* it. Being born again doesn't "free" us so we can do whatever it is our minds can think of. No, being "set free in Christ" is being delivered from rebellion and sin so we can humbly and joyfully follow Jesus Christ.

And as I have told you many, many times, nobody trips and falls into Holiness. Nobody stumbles into Holiness by accident. We share in God's Holiness *on purpose*, first because it is God's sovereign Will, and secondly, we cooperate in that Will, by consciously determining, by the Grace of God, that Jesus is the single most valuable Person in the Universe, and lovingly and humbly following Him with delight is the only way to truly worship Him.

And so we consciously *engage* in certain things and activities and actions, and we consciously *refrain* from other things and activities and actions. And this is what the Bible means when it says:

Romans 12:9

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

So "hypocritical love" is when we do not hate what is Evil and embrace what is Good. And I would suggest to you that if you're actually doing this, you can talk about it, and you can talk about in great detail.

In His Mercy, God gave various "gifts" or "tools" or "methods" or "means" that He uses whereby already saved people are brought under conviction, where we are reminded of things we have allowed to let slip, where we are stirred about things we have allowed to grow dormant, and we are troubled by our rebellion and disobedience. And these "gifts" *reveal* to us, very clearly, *how* we have strayed, *where* we have failed, *what* we did wrong, and *what* to do about it.

And that "Sovereign Illumination" is followed by a sorrow that is according to the Will of God, and God granting to us the "Gift of Repentance" so we may have a "change of mind", and alter the way we live our lives and correct that which is lacking so we may do what we have not been doing, so we may continue on to be made progressively more like Jesus.

And Dr. Luke lists some of these “gifts” or “means” for us in the Passage that Brother Andy read to us. So, look again at **The Acts 2:42**:

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

So here are four of the “Means” by which we are brought into Holiness:

1. The Apostle's Teaching
2. Godly Fellowship
3. Breaking of Bread
4. Prayer

Now 500 years ago, during the Protestant Reformation, when God was using the Reformers to bring the Christian Church back to her biblical roots, they developed a Latin phrase that illustrated these “Means”. And that phrase was:

Media Gratiae

... or the “Means of Grace”. So, these are the “methods” or the “tools” or the “gifts” or the “means” that God uses to cause already saved people to become more like the Savior. And there is no record anywhere in the Bible where God has allowed individuals to devise their own means or develop their own methods or create their own tools with which to be sanctified.

So, just like we don't have the authority to “chart our own course” or “do our own thing” as it pertains to serving God or doing Church or being saved in the first place, we also don't have the authority to monkey around with the “means” by which God has chosen to progressively make us holy. The Bible teaches that God uses these means, and therefore, we should avail ourselves of them.

Now the list in **The Acts 2:42** is true, but it isn't complete. As we have already seen previously in this Series, God also uses other “gifts” or “means” like Suffering, Persecutions, Trials, Tests, Afflictions, and Troubles, along with Service and various Acts of Mercy, so we may share in God's Holiness.

As God's people, as we humbly and joyfully yield to the Will of God and *engage* ourselves *ongoingly* in these wondrous "gifts", as we *avail* ourselves of these marvelous "means" that God has so graciously provided for us, *on a continual basis*, we will see the Promises of God come to pass in our lives, and we will grow strong in the Lord and in the Power of His Might, God will keep us from stumbling, and we will be *changed* into the Image of Christ, from one realm of glory to the next!

Now I'm not going to finish this today, but let's begin to look closely at the "Means of Grace" that God has given to the Church that God uses to make us Holy.

1. The Apostle's Teaching

The Acts 2:42a

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching...

The "Apostle's Teaching" is the Doctrine of the Apostles. It is what the Apostle's believed and taught. The Apostle's Teaching is that body of Divine Truth that was received directly from God and written down and taught by the Apostles in the 1st Century.

Another way of understanding this is that the Apostle's Teaching is what makes up the New Covenant. In other words, nobody can rightly or fully understand what the New Covenant *is* and what it *does* and *why* it is infinitely *superior* to the Old or the First Covenant without the Apostle's Teaching.

Another way of understanding this is that the Apostle's Teaching is the Gospel. And so, by preaching and teaching the Gospel, or the Apostle's Teaching, lost sinners are forgiven and saved. So, the Apostle's Teaching is the one single "way" or the sole "means" or the only "gift" or the exclusive "tool" by which lost sinners are saved.

Now God *could* have chosen to save people through their observation of the created Universe. God *could* have chosen to save people through signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit. God *could* have chosen to save people through the Ministry of Angels. God *could* have chosen to simply issue a Sovereign Decree and simply *command* all humans to be saved. He *could* have, but He didn't.

In His Wisdom, God designed that Salvation would occur in a lost sinner's life through one single "way", or by one single "Means of

Grace", the preaching of the Gospel. Look what the Apostle Paul said about this in **1 Corinthians 1:21**:

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

And "**the Message preached**" here is the Gospel, or the Apostle's Teaching. So, everyone who is justified is justified the very same way. They hear the Gospel preached, they believe the Gospel, They repent, and they trust in Jesus Christ and in His finished Work.

And then *after* they are saved, God creates in these redeemed souls a hunger for Truth and a craving for what God has said. The Apostle Peter said this in **1 Peter 2:1-3**:

1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

So, in the very same way and to the very same extent that a newborn baby automatically desires its mother's milk, so, too, all born again souls desire to feed on the Word of God so they may "**grow in respect to Salvation**", which is Sanctification. And just as it is true that something is horribly wrong with a baby who has no desire to feed on its mother's milk, so, too, something is terribly wrong with the person who has no desire to feed on the Word of God.

So, reading and studying the Word of God is as natural and normal to a believer as eating. It is what sustains life. And so, God has designed the Scriptures, in such a way, that they are used as one of the "Means of Grace" to equip and edify and strengthen and sanctify believers.

Now, the reason that the Bible has this ability as one of the "Means of Grace" to sanctify us is because it is "inspired". The Apostle Paul said:

2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Now, the word “**Inspired**” comes from a Greek word that means: “God breathed”. And so, the Scriptures were *exhaled* by God Himself. And by definition, that makes Scripture unique and different than any other writing by any other author. Because even though God moved upon 40 men over a 1,450 year time frame to pen down these 66 Books by way of inspiration, God the Holy Spirit is the Author of every Word of every Chapter of every Book. And because they are inspired, by extension, Scripture is also:

- ✓ **Inerrant**- *does not* contain any errors
- ✓ **Infallible**- *cannot* contain any errors
- ✓ **Authoritative**- able to “bind the conscience”
- ✓ **Eternal**- always relevant
- ✓ **Sufficient**- all we need for both life and godliness

Now please turn with me to **Psalm 19**. One thousand years before Jesus was born, King David said this about the Word of God:

Psalm 19:7-11

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

8 The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.

10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

11 Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.

So, here the Word of God, the Scriptures. equate themselves to be:

- ✓ **The law of the Lord**
- ✓ **The testimony of the Lord**

- ✓ **The precepts of the Lord**
- ✓ **The commandment of the Lord**
- ✓ **The fear of the Lord**
- ✓ **The judgments of the Lord**

And then, David said that the Word of God:

- **is perfect, restoring the soul**
- **is sure, making wise the simple**
- **are right, rejoicing the heart**
- **is pure, enlightening the eyes**
- **is clean, enduring forever**
- **are true; they are righteous altogether**

.. and then in verse 10, David describes the “preciousness” of the Scriptures:

They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

... and then he gets into how God uses the Scriptures to sanctify us:

Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.

... nothing else in all the world has this ability, only Scripture.

Now from the time that God revealed His Word to Moses (approx. BC 1450) until Jesus came, the first five Books of the Bible (**Genesis-Deuteronomy**) were called the “didactic books”, or the “teaching books” of the Old Testament Scriptures. These are the Books that taught God’s people how to live as the chosen, unique, separated, and holy people of God. So, what “holiness” looked like and what it meant to be “holy” under the Old, or the First, Covenant was derived from these five *didactic* or *teaching* Books.

But as God took on flesh in the Incarnation, God began to reveal to Man the infinitely superior *New* Covenant. And God the Holy Spirit began once again to move upon holy men to write down inspired, inerrant, infallible and authoritative Words, which were then compiled

into 27 additional "God-breathed" Books that were then added to the already received 39 Books of the Old Covenant.

These 27 new Books were also termed to be "Scripture" by the Apostles, and among them were four different Gospel Records, which recorded the Life and Ministry and Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Then over the next 50 years, 23 additional Books were received by way of this mysterious process called "inspiration", which included a diary of the first 30 years of the Church (The Acts of the Apostles) and a final "Revelation" of Jesus Christ.

That left 21 "Letters" from the Apostles or their designees, which became known as "Epistles". And these Epistles containing Divine Revelation about what all the Life and Ministry and Death and Resurrection of Jesus meant, then *took the place* of the five Old Testament *didactic* Books, and the Epistles became the "teaching Books" of the Christian Church.

So today, the 21 NT Epistles, the Apostle's Teaching, which contain the final, full, and completed Revelation of God to Man, and which explain in great detail what the Life, Ministry, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus meant, are the Books that we use today to describe what holiness looks like under the superior New Covenant and what it means for us to be holy.

So as the believer sits underneath the ongoing preaching and teaching of the Word of God, and as he begins to read and study the Bible on his own, God uses this marvelous "Means of Grace" to:

- ✓ Restore the soul
- ✓ Make wise the simple
- ✓ Rejoice the heart
- ✓ Enlighten the eyes

... and the believer is able then to endure faithful with God forever, and the Word of God is then able to produce "comprehensive Righteousness" in him.

So, the very first "Means of Grace" that God uses to sanctify us is the Apostle's Teaching, and, Lord willing, we will explore the others next week.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.