

Our Holiness: The Father's Purpose and the Son's Purchase

by Sinclair Ferguson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of holiness in the Christian life, and how it is planned by God in the eternal purposes of the Father and purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Duration: 1:02:30

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Titus 2:1, Titus 2:9-15

Topics: "Holiness Of God", "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his friendship with a renowned preacher and the influence he has had on his own life. He then turns to the letter of Paul to Titus and focuses on the theme of holiness. The speaker emphasizes that holiness is God's will for believers and is a result of the grace of God appearing in the person of Jesus Christ. He introduces the three divisions of the sermon: holiness as the purpose of the Father and the purchase of the Son, holiness abiding in Christ, and holiness walking in the Spirit.

Transcript

Well, probably I should say first of all that there is nobody in the room who more regrets that I am standing here rather than sitting where you are sitting than I do, and you will understand, some of you who know of my long-standing friendship with Walt Chantry, that I was much anticipating his preaching from several passages to us over the period of this conference. I did give him a final opportunity just as I came in to see whether he really wanted to give these addresses now or not, but sadly he has declined to do that. We have been friends for 30 years now, almost exactly just over 30 years.

I drove him when I was a young man and he was already a man of international fame and distinction, and he kindly since then has taken me under his wing, and I rather suspect that part of his motivation just a few minutes ago in declining just to come up and give these addresses is that he's sitting back there thinking, I wonder what the boy will make of these themes over these next two days. Well, I want to try and honor the burden that Walt Chantry has had in the way in which he's divided the theme for us, and also to honor the passages that he would have preached to us from, although I suspect I will neither rise to what he would have done nor duplicate what he would have done. So we're going to read this evening in the letter of Paul to Titus, the letter of Paul to Titus chapter 2, and we'll begin to read there in verse 1, and then we'll move on to the obviously significant verses in verse 10 through 15, Titus chapter 2, addressed of course to someone who is being exhorted in the work of the gospel as we ourselves are.

As for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine, teach what accords with sound doctrine, and there follows a series of specific exhortations about that teaching in connection with older men, verse 2, older women, verse 3, and then Paul comes later on to a word that will especially be addressed to those who are in particular need. He speaks to those who are slaves, verse 9, to be submissive to their masters, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Declare these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority, let no one disregard you. The burden of these three messages on holiness, which Mark Johnson and I are sharing together, is a burden that stretches, as you would see from the program, from the eternal purposes of God right into the way in which the Christian believer is a person who walks in the power not of the flesh, but in the power of the Holy Spirit. The division itself, I hope you find intriguing, and we owe that division to Walt Chantry.

Holiness as the purpose of the Father and the purchase of the Son this evening. Holiness abiding in Christ tomorrow. Holiness walking in the Spirit.

Perhaps I should begin with the homework. The homework is to reflect before we come to the addresses that are to follow, to reflect on the question of whether if you had three addresses on holiness, would you have divided the addresses in this fashion? Would your instinct have been to include these three themes, the purpose of the Father and the purchase of the Son, abiding in Christ, walking in the Spirit? I leave the question dangling in the air for a reason that, God willing, I will return to tomorrow. But two important things about this theme of holiness strike us, I think, immediately.

The first, as Ian Hamilton reminded us right at the beginning of the conference in the famous words of Robert Murray McChane, my people's greatest need is... Well, would you have finished the sentence the same way? My people's greatest need is the improvement of my preaching. My people's greatest need is the improvement of my pastoral skills. My people's greatest need is for the church to get larger.

Or my people's greatest need is my personal holiness. We all come, I'm sure, conscious of the fact that this is one of the areas of our greatest weakness. And yet, in many ways, we are conscious that if we're in the gospel ministry at all, as ministers or as elders or as students for the gospel ministry, an excellent level of holiness is one of the supreme qualifications for gospel ministry.

And indeed, we're all conscious as we look at the qualifications for a call to the eldership in the New Testament, that there really is only one of them that deals with excellence in spiritual gifting that we should be, in some sense and in various contexts, apt to teach. But the dominant emphasis is on this, that there is an excellence of holiness and sanctification in our lives that marks us out as an authentic Christian believer. That enables our people, as I sometimes say, to point to our ministers and elders when a stranger asks a question, what does it really mean to have been saved by his precious blood? And to be able to say, follow that man around for two or three days.

And then you will come and be able to tell me what it means to be saved by his precious blood. And as we were reminded this afternoon, we inwardly tend to move back a little at the very thought that we should be exemplars of holy Christian living. And yet, says the Apostle Paul to Timothy in this instance, all men

should see your progress.

All men should see your progress. That's a text that has haunted me over the years, personally, and in my relationships with other ministers, most of my best friends are gospel ministers, and I'm sure they ask about me as I ask about them. Are all men seeing your progress in this kind of godliness? Is that what stands out about your ministry over the years? That your people are able to say, one thing I can tell you about my minister is that he has manifestly progressed in godliness since the day he came to minister among us.

And so there could be few things more important for us to consider in a conference of ministers and elders like this than the theme of holiness, especially our own holiness. The other thing, by way of encouragement to us, that we should note, as it were, in passing as we move into the heart of our thinking about holiness is this. It's the marvelous way in which the great gospel imperatives to holiness are ever rooted in indicatives of grace that are able to sustain the weight of those imperatives.

The apostles do not make the mistake that's often made in Christian ministry, where the indicatives are more powerful than the imperatives in gospel preaching. So often in our preaching, our indicatives are not strong enough, great enough, holy enough, gracious enough, to sustain the power of the imperatives. And so our teaching on holiness sometimes becomes a whip or a rod to beat our people's backs because we've looked at the New Testament and that's all we ourselves have seen.

We've seen our own failure and we've seen the imperatives to holiness and we've really lost sight of the great indicatives of the gospel that sustain those imperatives. And as we reflect on a passage like this, the grace of God appearing in Jesus Christ, our Lord, and the fulfillment of the commands of the law of God, as clearly Paul here has in view, one of the things that we constantly need to remember is the way in which these imperatives for holiness are grounded so frequently in the New Testament, in the glory of God the Trinity. And the apostles do this in different ways.

Let us remember how Simon Peter does this in the opening of 1 Peter, that we've been chosen by God the Father through the sanctification of the Spirit for the sprinkling of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Or how in his great statement to the Thessalonians in 2 Thessalonians, we give thanks to God for you because God has chosen you as the first fruits to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So that woven as it were into the very warp and woof of the New Testament's exposition of what it means for us to be holy is this great groundwork that the self-existent thrice holy triune God has in himself, by himself, and for himself committed himself in all three persons of his being to bringing about the holiness or sanctification of his own people.

That this is the Father's purpose, that this is the Son's purchase, that this is the Spirit's ministry. Indeed, in an extraordinary way, the Apostle Paul virtually says that is how he understands his own gospel ministry. Remember how he puts it in Romans chapter 15, when he says that he is a minister of Christ Jesus because of the grace given to him by God, that he might present the Gentiles as an offering that is acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

So they are tucked away in that part of Romans that even Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones never got to. Paul gives to us this exquisite statement about what it means to be a gospel minister. It means to be caught up and swept along in the purposes of God the Trinity, in the outworking of God's election, in the outworking of the Son's sacrificing, in the outworking of the Spirit's operations of grace, and all of this has in view.

This is God's will for you, says the Apostle, even your sanctification. And it is to this that we are directed when we speak in particular about the way in which our holiness has been planned in the eternal purposes of the Father. Now that isn't explicit in Paul's statement in Titus, but it's certainly evident in the way in which he speaks about the grace of God appearing, the grace of God has appeared to produce holiness in us.

It's obviously in a way a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is himself the grace of God. But behind that and in that, it's a reference to the way in which our holiness is not an accident of our present experience, but the fruit of the divine purpose and the fruit of the divine planning. He has chosen us, says Paul to the Thessalonians, that we might be holy.

Indeed, he says, you remember, to the Colossians, that is the sure evidence of divine election. Put on then, he says, Colossians 2.12, as those whom God the Father has chosen. And he gives this marvelous description of what a living Calvinist looks like.

Somebody who believes that he has been chosen by God and he's marked by compassion and kindness and humility and meekness and patience. Would God that it were true that Calvinists look like this. But if you don't look like this, you're not a Calvinist.

Because the elect of God put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience. They bear with one another. Now, what's that rooted in? It's rooted, says the apostle, in the eternal counsels of the ever blessed God.

And of course, the most marvelous expression, at least it seems to me the most marvelous expression of this. His most glorious words in Romans 8 at 28 and 29. Those whom he predestined, he also called and so on.

We know all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose, his divine and eternal purpose. What is it he has predestined us to be conformed to the likeness of his son? Now that's what holiness is. And it is of supreme importance that we as gospel ministers and elders understand that is what holiness is.

No more and no less than being like the Lord Jesus Christ. No more and no less than being like the Lord Jesus Christ. It may be possible to of all kinds of abilities in the Christian ministry.

It may be possible to have all kinds of acute theological understanding in the Christian ministry. It may be possible to be intellectually and affectionately thrilled by the power and glory of the gospel. But if I'm not like the Lord Jesus Christ, then I am not holy.

And Paul is saying this is what God the Father has set his heart on. This is his eternal purpose. So that negatively we can say that rather than being a problem or an obstacle to holiness, God's divine election grounds our holiness.

The interesting thing I think is that the only people who find election a problem to holiness is the people who don't believe in election. John Owen puts this I think very well. Volume three, I think it's page five, nine, eight.

And if I remember it's near the top of the page, but certainly Owen says this somewhere. He says, you know, I've met many Christian believers who have struggled with the question. Am I really among the

elect? But I've never met a Christian who is conscious that he or she is among the elect who has struggled with the question, has God destined me to be holy? Because he's chosen me.

And he's chosen me to be his. And he's chosen me to be like himself. And because I am a poor and miserable and wretched sinner in and of myself.

And because in and of myself, even when touched by God's sovereign grace, I retain these powerful elements of indwelling sin that make me slothful and lethargic. Were it not for God's eternal purpose and the way in which he's put his hand upon my life, I would fall short of that holiness to which he has called me. So rather than a problem, God's plan is a necessity.

And rather than a hindrance, God's plan is a powerful inducement. He has destined me to be like his son. If I can put it this way, God has seen his image, his portrait of himself fractured and fragmented in the fall.

He has seen that image become distorted and rebellion has set in. And he is not content any more than you would be content if you were the owner of a great and marvelously valuable portrait of somebody you loved. You would not be content when the police officer came to the door and said, we have good news for you, sir.

We have apprehended the thief. God dealing with Satan is simply a means to an end. You would say to the police officer, but have you got my portrait back? That's what the father wants.

He wants his portrait. And so his glorious purposes in eternity. I was reading in the inflight magazine on the way here today, United Airlines.

If you happen to travel United Airlines, there's an article in there that has a section on some golf course that the Australian golfer Greg Norman has created. And, and the way they are marketing it is that when you get onto this golf course, it's almost as though you feel it was, it was just there waiting to be a golf course. And Greg Norman in the blog says, Michelangelo would look into a great piece of marble and say, I saw the angel inside and I'm going to get rid of everything that isn't angel.

And he said, can you believe it? Well, if you love golf, you can believe it. It was the same with this piece of land. I saw there was a golf course inside.

And so I just got rid of everything that wasn't golf course. Well, that's trivial and humorous, but that's actually what God is about in his eternal purpose. He's getting rid of everything that isn't like his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, because in us, he wants his portrait back and he will bend all history to that destiny.

Isn't it interesting that from Romans 8, 29, where God says, this is his purpose to transform us into the likeness of his son, that he would be the first born, the preeminent one of many brothers. Then he goes on in that relentless march of his sovereign purposes that tell us at the end of the day that nobody and nothing can ever stand the way in what God purposes to do. And how telling it is, isn't it at the end of Romans 8, that the interrogatives are all personal rather than impersonal.

As though Paul were, as it were, challenging the thief of God's image, the evil one, the serpent, and saying, who can stand in the way of my blessing of my people? Who can bring any charge against them? Who can bring them down? Who can destroy them? If God is for us, and this is what he is for in his being for us, then we know that the good to which he is bending all history and providence and every circumstance in our lives, the good at which he is aiming in the midst of all the pain, in the midst of all the

chiseling, he is at the end of the day doing only one thing. He's getting rid of everything in the entire universe that will not display the honor and glory of his son. And he has set his heart on getting rid of everything in us, deconstructing us, even as he reconstructs us so that more and more we become, even in our own personalities, our own lives, our own characters, our own situations, he is crafting us to be more and more and more like the Lord Jesus.

Now listen, in all eternity, in all eternity, apart from one another, there was only one thing that the Father and the Holy Spirit were mutually devoted to, and that was the Son. And they are determined, they are determined that you, yes, in your character and personality, will be conformed to the likeness of that Son incarnate in our flesh. And so, rather than seem a threat to us, the fact that our holiness has been planned in the eternal purposes of the Father is a cause of glory and rejoicing, a cause of praise and wonder.

It's a cause of humility and worship that his plan should be that he would take poor me and change me, that I would become more and more like his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But this holiness that is planned in the eternal purpose of the Father is a holiness that has been bought for us at the high cost of the work of the Son. Now, the role of the Son in sanctification, the role of the Lord Jesus in sanctification, extends beyond the fact that he has purchased it.

But I think it is important for us to recognize and to emphasize that holiness is actually purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not something that happens to us as a kind of additional extra to his work. It's not as though we can divide the purposed work of his reconciling and justifying death from our sanctification and regard it as incidental to Christ's work.

It is the New Testament teaches us of the very essence of Christ's work. Remember how Hebrews 2 puts it in those marvelous words, since the children share in flesh and blood, he himself partook of the same things that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death in order that he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified might be one. Now, let me spend just a little time on this theme that my sanctification, my holiness, ultimately my Christ-likeness is as much part of the purchase of the Lord Jesus Christ as any other aspect of my salvation.

I think perhaps we are sometimes so rightly focused on the fact that by the shedding of his blood, the Lord Jesus Christ has purchased my pardon, that we lose sight of the fact that he has also purchased my sanctification and my holiness. And of course, what we need to understand in that connection is this, that there are no blessings of the gospel that come to us round the back of the crucified Christ. There are no blessings in the gospel that come to us in any other way than coming to us through the conduit of his death and resurrection.

There is nothing in my Christian life that I could possibly have unless the Lord Jesus Christ had purchased it, had gained it for me by means of his obedient life and his atoning death. And the reason for that is really fairly obvious. It is, here are the things that are of first importance, that Christ died according to the scriptures for our sins.

And since in the scriptures sin is expounded as a multifaceted reality, a multivalent reality, you remember perhaps at seminary working your way through the list of Hebrew nouns for sin. The Old Testament is rich in its vocabulary for sin, and the words are not just synonyms. The words are there to help us understand the multidimensional, multivalent, sinister character, warped, twisted, rebellious, fallen, missing the mark, nature of sin.

And you see, if that, and isn't this the agonizing thing about our ongoing sanctification? It is almost as though the spirit begins to loosen up the flesh, and we begin to see that what we thought of, first of all, sin was just a kind of mass of stuff there. And then we begin to see how subtly it's woven into the very warp and woof of our being, and it's multivalent in its powers. Now it seems to be urging us to rebel against God, and now it's twisting us around so that we become less than straightforward Christian believers.

Now it's causing deceitfulness, now it's causing pride. Now you see, if we are to be saved by His precious blood, there needs to be a corresponding multivalency in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. There must be no remainder of some remnant of unatoned for aspect of sin, if I'm ever fully to be sanctified, if I'm ever to be able to be in the presence of God and secure there.

And so it's as we understand that this is what Christ is doing on the cross. How superficial our understanding of this often is. Shame on me if I expound to my people the details of their sinfulness, but I don't correspondingly expound to my people the multivalent, multiform character of the glorious work of our great Savior to show them that there really is an atonement for all their sin and a price paid that will not only bring them forgiveness, but will deal with everything that stands in the way of their final holiness and their ultimate glorification.

Now we can't deal with this exhaustively this evening, but let me mention five or six things that I think lie on the very surface of the apostolic teaching in this respect as to how it is that the redemptive work of Jesus Christ purchases for us a release from sin in all its dimensions and consequences. Now the most obvious of these is this, that the Lord Jesus has died in order to propitiate the wrath of God. Romans 3.24. He is the redemption who answers in Romans 3.21 to 24, who answers to the wrath of God that has been described and grounded in Romans 1.18 through Romans 3.20. But doesn't that just deal with justification? Well, it certainly does deal with justification.

We are freed from the wrath of God and it's a blessed condition, but you see it also deals with the whole issue of our holiness. Because so long as I am under the wrath of God, or even so long as I fear I may still be under the wrath of God, I will be enervated of all dynamic to grow in holiness. I'm not sure it's really psychologically possible for a human being who believes himself to be under the wrath of God, or even as a Christian believer to fear that he or she is still under the wrath of God, to find within his or her soul an aspiration to be like this God under whose wrath he or she feels that he or she still stands.

But oh, you see, when in the gospel we are assured that we are free from the wrath of God, that it's been poured out upon our Lord Jesus Christ and exhausted in Him, and we know that we are justified before God, then we understand that we can stand before Him with the same confidence. I mean identically the same confidence as the Lord Jesus Christ, whoever wants to please His heavenly Father, because the righteousness with which we stand before Him is actually the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Now that's easier to sing about with Zinzendorf than it is to think about when you're going through difficulties in your Christian life.

Bold, you approach the throne, clothed in the righteousness of Christ. But that's a truth of the gospel, that the propitiation of the wrath of God so delivers me into the assurance of the righteousness that is mine in Jesus Christ, that I need no longer despair and I need no longer be crushed by Satan when he drives me to despair. So the propitiation of the wrath of God is significant for the holiness of the Christian believer.

But Christ died not only as a propitiation of wrath, Christ died as an expiation of our defilement. Remember how Paul puts this in Ephesians chapter 1, when he speaks about the glorious work of Jesus Christ in

whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins, and that's the theme that's taken up in Hebrews, isn't it? The way in which our consciences are cleansed from dead works through the expiatory work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's a great thing to know, that your sins have been washed away and your heart has been washed clean.

Now isn't it interesting, you see there is a kind of, there's an anatomy in the New Testament I think we often miss. Our sins are washed away, but yes, our consciences are also cleansed. There is an objective washing away of my sin in the atoning blood and expiation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but there's an answering reality to that in my conscience, says the New Testament, so that my conscience is cleansed from dead works and I'm set free from that awful, gnawing condemnation that paralyzes holiness.

And so both propitiation and expiation are divine answers to all that hinders the holiness of the Christian believer. But there's a third aspect to the death of Christ, and I want to express it this way, even if certainly for some it would seem a little controversial. It is this, that our holiness is effected at the purchase price of the blood of Jesus Christ, because in shedding that blood, our Lord Jesus Christ died to sin.

Now nothing controversial about that I hope, because I'm just quoting Paul in Romans 6.10, he died to sin. But it seems to me that's a different thing from Paul saying he died for sin. Not least because the context in which he's saying it is the context of him appealing to these Roman Christians and to their understanding what it means to be a baptized Christian.

Don't you know that all of you who are baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? How can we who died to sin go on living in it? And it's in that context of stating in Romans 6.2 that the believer has died to sin, that that's who the believer is. The believer is somebody who has died to sin. That is, I take it, died to the reign of sin that he's been speaking about in Romans 5.12-21. That we're no longer under the dominion of sin that we once were under.

We've died to that dominion and we are set free from it, and the reign of sin is no claim on us any longer. That's why we yield ourselves not to sin as though it were our king and employer and master and general, but we yield ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now it's in that context that Paul grounds our having died to sin in the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ died to sin.

And I take it, since he can't conceivably mean in Romans 6 earlier on that we died for sin, that there was anything propitiatory or expiatory about it, that he means the same thing when he says we died to sin. And the reality that makes it possible for us to have died to sin is that in his death the Lord Jesus Christ died to sin. Now what does that mean? It means at the very least that since sin reigns in death, in his death, the Lord Jesus as to his humanity came under the reign of sin in the very process of destroying the reign of sin.

Which means that in his blessed death upon the cross, our Lord Jesus Christ not only purchased that pardon and forgiveness and justification and reconciliation that sets us free in reality from condemnation and sets us free experientially from condemnation of the conscience, but the Lord Jesus Christ also purchased in his death that freedom from the dominion of sin that now makes it possible for the believer once freed from sin to live endlessly to the glory of God. In that he died, he died to sin once for all. In that he lives in his resurrection power, he lives to God.

And so in some miniaturized, not yet fully realized, but decisive way, Jesus Christ purchased death to sin for all who belong to him. Many of you know the words of John Owen in that respect. There are only two

pastoral problems.

One is persuading those who are under the reign of sin that they are under the reign of sin. That's the problem of evangelism. And the other is persuading those who are no longer under the dominion of sin that they are no longer under the dominion of sin.

And almost every single pastoral problem that you and I encounter will have an element of that in it, won't it? But at the price of his precious blood in a way that surely beyond the greatest of theologians to plumb to the depths, part of the significance of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ is that in that death, the sinless one died to sin. That in the process of destroying the reign of sin over those who would belong to him and be united to him, he actually had, as it were, to enter into the enemy occupied territory of sin and death to break it open. And for two long days, the victory was in from a human point of view, complete down until he rose again, conqueror on the third day.

Now that leads to a fourth aspect. Christ died to propitiate the wrath of God, to expiate the defilement of sin, to deliver us from the dominion of sin, and fourthly, to free us from the bondage of Satan. He entered into, you remember, as some of our great Easter hymns seem to have captured this, perhaps because some of them were written by the early fathers.

Whatever else you make of the way in which they handled the theme of the victory of Jesus Christ, they got this right, that Jesus Christ entered enemy occupied territory and broke the power of the one who has the power to hold us in lifelong bondage to the fear of death. Isn't that what Hebrews chapter two so marvelously says? In order that he might destroy the one who has the power of death through death and deliver those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. Now, I think I find that a most illuminating statement.

Pastorally, I mean, personally, that apart from the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, men and women, however much they disguise it or divert it, are actually lifelong slaves to the fear of death. You see it in every variety of non-Christian funeral, don't you? You see it in the funerals that feel as though you're in a room where there are no windows and the atmosphere is bleak and you see it in the non-Christian funerals where there is this stretched, this stretched, every nerve effort to be jolly and happy and to celebrate. And you see they're actually just two forms of the same thing, that there's nobody in the room who has conquered the fear of death.

And you go to the funeral of a true Christian believer where there may be the deepest loss and the deepest mourning, but the room still has windows and doors and there's a future and there's sense of hope. And in the midst of all the loss, we grieve for ourselves as we rejoice for the one who has been taken from this world into the glory of the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. The fear of death is the mother of all fears and all other fears seek to disguise it, don't they? I suppose many of the Puritans understood this well.

We get it nowadays, often surrounded in all kinds of psychobabble about the fears people have and you need to deal with these fears and these insecurities and we're awash with them and there's nobody who holds the alchemy except the person who understands that Jesus Christ died, entered the domain of Satan in death in order to deliver those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. That's why I think the resurrection was such a glorious thing to the early church. I don't know if we've managed to capture this because increasingly the evangelical church and its evangelical preaching has been best in talking about man and worst in talking about God and about Christ and about the real ministry of the Holy

Spirit.

And you know, amassing arguments to prove the resurrection is not the same thing as being overcome by the sheer power of the reality of the resurrection, that it delivers you from the fear of death because you know that Christ has crashed through the wall of death and is bringing with him all who belong to him. And you see, if that does anything to our sanctification, let me put it this way, I've always, all my life long when I've expounded Romans 6, my focus has been on what does it mean to have died to sin. And the reason for that is because I find it far more difficult to speak about what it means to have been raised into newness of life.

Now that may not be your experience, but I suspect if it's not your experience, you're probably in the minority here. But the glorious good news of the gospel, the power of the resurrection, the sheer power of the resurrection, I guess we could put it this way. Has it really made all that much difference to my life? That Christ is risen.

Would anybody think looking at my life, somebody must have been raised from the dead here. Fifthly, just in case you're losing the plot, that's been a long day and many of you have traveled far. We're speaking about Christ purchasing our sanctification.

He does this by his multivalent death. He propitiates the wrath of God. He expiates the defilement of sin.

He delivers us from the dominion of sin. He frees us from the bondage of Satan. Fifthly, he purchases for us the gift of the Holy Spirit.

He purchases for us the gift of the Holy Spirit. You understand that? That it is as a direct result of what Christ has done on the cross that the Holy Spirit comes. Isn't this what Jesus weaves into his teaching and John's gospel? It's to your advantage that I'm going away, going to the cross, because unless I go away, go to the cross, the Holy Spirit will not come to you.

But if I go, I'll be able to send him to you. And certainly I am of the view that one of the reasons why John is so struck by the pierced side of Jesus, flowing forth both blood and water, is because of the way in which he has listened to and understood the teaching of Jesus about the Holy Spirit as rivers of living water. Let him who is thirsty come to me and drink as the scripture said, at least as I understand what Jesus is saying, as the scriptures have said, out of him, out of him, that is Jesus, out of him will flow rivers of living water.

He is the new temple. He is the one from whom the river flows. He is the true Jerusalem.

He is the one to whom the thirsty may go and have their thirst slaked by the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is why it's within the very context and fabric of John's gospel that the Lord Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit upon his disciples. But even if that were not true, isn't this one of Peter's extraordinary insights in his great sermon on the day of Pentecost? I read that sermon in Acts chapter two, and I wonder what teaching he must have been given in the previous six weeks between the resurrection and the ascension of our Lord, those weeks when Jesus taught them and taught them so much about how to understand the Old Testament scriptures and what it was he was doing. And do you remember how he explains the meaning of Pentecost? He says in his words in Acts chapter two that the meaning of this, verse 33, is that having been exalted at the right hand of the Father, he has received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, and he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

Now, what's this about? It's about Jesus fulfilling his promise to the disciples in the upper room discourse. I will ask the Father, and he will send. And so behind the closed doors of heaven's glory, the Lord Jesus has ascended on high in the clouds and disappeared from our view.

And we don't know what's been happening behind the curtain. And then, says Peter, as the Holy Spirit has been poured out, he says this is an explanation of what's happened behind the curtain. He's fulfilled his promise.

He's gone to his Father, and he said, Father, you promised that if I atone for their sins, you would give me the nations for my inheritance. And in order that that might be effected, the Holy Spirit who has borne me through my ministry will need to be poured out upon them to bear them through their ministry. Father, I've done everything.

Father, I've paid the price for their salvation, including the gift of the Holy Spirit. Father, keep your promise that you would send the Holy Spirit and bring multitudes to know my salvation. I love to think that our own relationships with our sons might be modeled upon the relationship between the heavenly Father and his son.

And, you know, your son can use all kinds of arguments and be shown the door. But when he says, but Father, you promised, then your son will have. And here is a far from reluctant father who has loved his son with joy, hearing his son say, Father, I've done everything now.

The time has come. Fulfill your promise. And so the same Holy Spirit who was poured out upon the Lord Jesus Christ and enabled him throughout the whole course of his ministry is now poured out upon the people of Lord Jesus Christ in order to provide the energy and divine power more and more to change them into the likeness of the Lord Jesus himself.

When he comes as Jesus in John 16, 14, he will take from what is mine and he will show it to you. I wonder if the apostle Paul knew that statement when he said that we are being changed from one degree of glory to another, even as we gaze upon the Lord and are being conformed to his likeness. He has purchased everything that we need.

Now, one final thing, that means that we are purchased, doesn't it? It means that we are purchased. And this, the New Testament stresses in different places, you've been bought with a price, glorify God in your body. You've been bought, says Peter, not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to have been purchased? Well, you think about it like this. You go into the store and you see something, probably in the sale, knowing most of us, and it's just what you need, just what you need. And you call over one of the people you can never find when you actually want to buy something.

And you say, I'd like to buy that. And they're just about to take your credit card and say, just come over here when they notice there's a little sign on it that says, that says reserved for Walt Chantry. And they say, you can't have that, sir.

Mr. Chantry has already paid for it. It's his and nobody else's. Brothers, that's who we are.

We're his and nobody else's. And when we understand that, we begin to take more than baby steps. Towards that progress in holiness that will be apparent to all who know us.

I say, this is a question that haunts me. Really? Does anybody out there, whoever watches me, does anybody who knows me as a minister, has it ever crossed the mind of anybody who has ever heard me preach? There's something here that reminds me of Jesus. Dear brothers, that's the most important thing in your ministry.

That's what Murray M'Cheyne was talking about. It's not great gifts that he uses, but great likeness to Jesus. Because that's the only thing that's going to last in you for all eternity.

And that's what he's reserved you and me for. Isn't that wonderful? Well, let's go and live in its wonder. Heavenly Father, we thank you that we are saved by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, that every part of our salvation is the fruit of his death and resurrection and ascension and his heavenly intercession and his coming again.

We want to be men who have a reserved sign on them. When we are tempted by Satan, when we struggle with our own sin, when there are others who seek to bring us down and to lead us into sin, we want to be reserved men who know that we've been purchased with a great price. Help us, we pray.

Humbly, we pray, but earnestly, we pray for ourselves and for one another to make such progress in holiness that it may make a difference to our ministries. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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