

## **Grace Upon Grace (Sanctifying Grace) – Romans 12:1-8**

As we continue our series on the abundance of God's grace, we are going to look at one of the other ways God pours **Grace upon Grace** out onto His children. Remember, whether we speak of saving grace, sustaining grace, or of our topic today, that of sanctifying grace; God does not charge us for these things. All aspects of His grace fulfill our understanding that we are receiving a wonderful gift from God that cannot be earned and is freely given to us even though we do not deserve such favor. The grace of God is not just this "thing" he gives. It is part of who He is. It is part of His nature. He is naturally gracious towards His people. How important is the doctrine of grace in Christianity? Extremely Important! Without grace from a loving and generous God, no one could be saved and as we'll see today, no one could live a life pleasing to Him. Sounds extremely important to me.

If you have been in church or around a Christian church for any amount of time, you have heard the term sanctification. Some of you can recite a basic definition for sanctification which would sound something like this: sanctification is the process God uses to identify true believers and help them become more holy. Take note of "who" is doing the work. Not us, but Him. Theologians consider sanctification in two regards. First, it is our salvation that allows us to stand justified before God. Remember too, it is our belief in Jesus' sacrificial work on the cross along with our repentance from sin that allows us to receive the saving grace of God. Without authentic repentance and genuine belief, the fullness of God's grace cannot be extended to us. Paul clarifies this in his letter to the Corinthians when he says this about God; *"And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption."* (1 Corinthians 1:30) God's saving grace provides the believer with a place in His Kingdom. This is what is often referred to as "positional sanctification." Our position with God is secured for eternity because of His justifying grace. We are made holy only because His Son is holy.

In addition to positional sanctification, which is the result of God's saving grace, we also get the benefit of experiencing God's sanctifying grace. This is what most of us are more familiar with because sanctifying grace is necessary for our process of becoming more like Christ. Sanctifying grace is the divine work by which a person is inwardly renewed, transformed, and set apart for a holy purpose. It is how God uses His Spirit to affect our hearts, change our minds, and direct our paths toward living each day in the same manner that Christ lives each day. This grace builds upon saving grace and relies on sustaining grace to work in our lives and to transform our daily behaviors and characteristics. To understand this better, let's look at a familiar passage from Romans. **Read Romans 12:1-2.**

In the opening verses of this chapter Paul is urging us to consider some things. Some translations use the word "beg" instead of "appeal." If someone begs you for something, or begs you to do something, then they are usually serious about the request. Paul begs us to submit our entire body over to God. The body is how we express ourselves to the world around us. It is here we learn

about how God's sanctifying grace works in our life. Paul is informing us that after salvation, the Spirit of God begins to work in such a way that the entire person begins changing. He says to "*present your bodies,*" which is the mind, the personality, the emotions, the affections, and most importantly the will. When we submit to God in this way, the Holy Spirit can begin to use us, and what comes from that interaction is how we worship the Father daily. He goes on to say that we can only do this when we forget the world and focus on the will of God.

**Read Romans 12:2 again.** Kenneth S. Wuest translates verse 2 this way... "And stop assuming an outward expression that does not come from within you and is not representative of what you are in your inner being, but is patterned after this age; but change your outward expression to one that comes from within and is representative of your inner being, by the renewing of your mind, resulting in your putting to the test what is the will of God, the good and well-pleasing, and complete will, and having found that it meets specifications, placing your approval upon it." Jesus said it even better when He said, "*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*" (**Matthew 16:24**) You see; to receive God's sanctifying grace, you must yield every ounce of who you are to the Holy Spirit. You must study the Word and yield every ounce of who you are to the commands found within its pages. And then, as the Word becomes truth and as the Holy Spirit transforms, you will put God's commands into practice. I want to read a few more verses from Romans 12 with you and then share a few verses from Philippians 2. These passages help us understand how important the work of God's sanctifying grace is for our lives. Read **Romans 12:3-8** and **Philippians 2:12-13**.

These passages solidify a few things for us. Sanctifying grace is ultimately the work of God. There's no denying that, but it is consistent with what the Bible teaches us about how our salvation plays out in our day-to-day walk. So, the believers sanctification process is not something that we solely strive for or are waiting for. It is a continual process of cooperation between the Holy Spirit and a sold-out, all-in, follower of Jesus. In short, the sanctifying grace of God works to transform and renew the character within, and its work shows up through outward expressions of Holy living. It is empowered through faith in the resurrected Jesus Christ and through the manifestation of God's Spirit in the heart of the believer. It is sustained and remains consistent when we study the Word, pray, fellowship, repent and obey. It is the final portion of God's plan to redeem us and restore us. What comes next is eternity.

The completion of God's plan begins with the completion of sanctification, which is the moment of glorification. That is the day when a believer is fully conformed to Christ. This should be our goal. I want to close with these encouraging words from 1 John 3. **Read 1 John 3:1-3.**