

# Holiness: Its Necessity

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Surely, if any of these things are true, it's because God delights to magnify His grace to unworthy sinners. And seldom do I feel more the wonder of God's grace than when it's my privilege to stand and address others in His name, particularly on occasions such as this occasion, when the awesome responsibility of addressing those who for the most part will stand as the instruments of Christ to feed His sheep and to call His own to Himself. The tremendous weight of this responsibility does not lessen with the additional and increased opportunities to bear that weight for His namesake. But the sense of awe only increases. And I trust that as I look to Him for help and can say I hope in some degree that my expectation is from Him, that that too is the language of your heart.

I have been asked to address you, as you have already been apprised through the notices and the previous intimations from Mr. Aken, on the subject of holiness or sanctification. And the announced subject for this first hour is the necessity of holiness. Now it should be obvious to all of us who have any acquaintance with Biblical materials, that this is too vast a subject to handle in any comprehensive way in one message, let alone in a dozen messages. It would be impossible for me to cover the whole spectrum of Biblical materials which underscore the necessity and the importance of Gospel holiness. Furthermore, the subject is too complex in order to be exhaustive. It would be impossible to trace any single dimension of the doctrine of Gospel holiness to its many ramifications in so short a time. And so of necessity, I've been selective. And in all of the messages, that selectivity will be evidenced. And I think I owe it to you to explain what principles have regulated my selector. In seeking to zero in on certain aspects of this truth, what has pressured my own thinking? Well, basically three things.

First of all, your own immediate edification. It is my prayer as I understand the burden of the committee which corresponded with me, that God would use these days for our mutual spiritual profit in the immediate context in which we find ourselves. And so I've tried to select those aspects of this doctrine that would address themselves to our immediate circumstances.

But then a second principle is then operative in my manner of selection, and that is the realization that many of you will have the awesome responsibility of molding the thinking of entire congregations with regard to this vital subject. And perhaps there are fewer subjects in the entire spectrum of the teaching of the Word of God concerning which mistakes are more fatal and destructive to vital godliness than this subject. A man may have erroneous views concerning the second advent and not be materially influenced in the safety of his own soul. But if you propagate defective views concerning Gospel holiness, you may cooperate with the devil in the damnation of men and women who sit under your charge. And it's in something of the pressure of that realization that I've been selective in the materials, trusting that

broad Biblical concepts will be implanted in our hearts by the work of the Spirit through the Word so that when you men stand in that awesome place of being shepherds of the flock of God, you will be able to impart a balanced, vigorous Biblical view of Gospel holiness.

And then the third element that's been operative in my selection of materials is that I recognize there is a more popular audience here. We have wives of students; we have apparently visitors from the community. And I want to address myself to those aspects of truth that would be on your level; use as little technical terminology as possible so that there will be that blessing of general edification according to the mandate of 1 Corinthians 14.

Well, so much for that introduction as to why I have chosen the materials in the manner in which I have chosen them. Now consider with me in this first hour the necessity of Gospel holiness. Consider this subject with me as time permits along four lines. If I can only flesh out two of them, I'll give you the headings and you can work them out on your own.

First of all, then, consider the necessity of Gospel holiness in relationship to the human predicament. The words "regeneration," "justification," "sanctification," "glorification," "propitiation," "reconciliation"--these are not 50 cent words invented by theologians who had to have some coinage with which to carry on the commerce of systematizing and teaching others. These words are the very words which God the Holy Spirit has chosen in order to express to us something of His own answer to the multi-dimensional human predicament brought about by sin. And there is no cardinal word expressing a provision of grace that is not a dimension of God's answer to some facet of the human predicament in terms of sin. And so when we come to the term holiness or its equivalent, sanctification, we are immediately confronting a term in Scripture which is part of God's answer to the human predicament. In other words, sanctification is a remedial grace.

Adam, before the fall, did not need to be reconciled; he did not need to be redeemed. Nor did he need to be regenerated. And he did not need to be sanctified in the sense that this term is used in the Scriptures. God's remedy is perfectly suited to the totality of man's malady. And if we try to reduce the total witness of Scripture concerning man's malady to its irreducible minimum, what do we have? Well, we have a situation in which man's problems are basically two. He has legal problems, and he has personal or practical problems. He has problems with respect with his relationship to the court of heaven, and he has problems with respect and in relationship to his own heart and to his own life.

Let me illustrate. A man has imbibed too much liquor, an act for which he is responsible, and he gets himself smashing drunk. Then he has the audacity to get in his car and stick his key in the ignition, and he has enough coordination to get it in there after a while. And he turns on his car, puts it in gear, and he drives off. Well, in his drunken stupor, he runs the car over a curb and smacks into a telephone poll, and he severs the poll. And as he hit's the poll, he belts forward and his head hits the front of the steering wheel. Then he glances over and breaks the glass on the windshield and slumps over unconscious in his drunken stupor. Now when the police come, they begin to sort out this situation, and as they do so, they do so in terms of this man's two categories of problems. Category number one is, his head is bleeding; he's unconscious. He probably has some crushed ribs. He has a multitude of

immediate personal problems. And so they call for the rescue squad to take him to the emergency room and sort out his personal, immediate practical problems. But he's also got some other problems. And it isn't long before he'll become very conscious of those, as he is issued a summons or several summonses because he has been driving under the influence, has destroyed public property, and has committed a number of other misdemeanors. Now you see, his problems are basically in two categories: those which have to do with the local civil authorities (the municipal or the county court) and those which have to do with a laceration on his head, the possibility of broken ribs, and internal injuries. Now if the man is to be completely restored to normalcy in society, he must have both categories of problems resolved.

It's precisely that way with regard to man in his predicament of sin. Sin has caused some tragic and frightening relationships to exist between man the creature and God the Judge of the universe. And in His capacity as Judge, God is concerned with everything man the creature does. And every violation of His holy law provokes in God a just and holy anger towards the sin and the sinner. And the great judgment of the last day will be the visible monument to the entire moral universe that God is concerned with what a man does in the privacy of his bedroom, when all adulterers shall be cast into the lake of fire; that God is concerned when a man willfully and wantonly takes another human life, whether in the sterile conditions of the operating room in a clinical abortion or whether he takes a shotgun and blows a man's brains out and leaves them spattered on the wall behind him, for all murderers shall have their part in the lake of fire. And the judgment of the last day is the monument that God is indeed, as the moral Governor of the universe, concerned with man's legal relationship to Him. And in His infinite grace in the person of His own dear Son, the provisions of justification, reconciliation, and adoption are God's provision answering to these dimensions of man's sin in the legal realm.

But God's not concerned simply to get the drunk out of court and acquitted. He's concerned with the gash on the forehead and the broken ribs and the internal injuries, for sin has destroyed His image in man. And God is concerned with nothing less than the full restoration of that image in remedial grace. Now there is no basis upon which He can enter into intimate dealings with man to suture up the stitches and correct the broken ribs and operate upon the internal injuries until the legal dimensions are dealt with. And so, in that sense, justification is to this day the note of a standing or a falling church. And it is on the basis of all that He has done in Christ to rectify our relationship to Him as Judge that He then performs that internal work and that gracious work of restoring us to His image. And no view of salvation is Biblical or complete that does not view God's purposes in salvation as encompassing the entire dilemma of human sin. Now when we understand that, we see something of the tremendous importance of the doctrine of Gospel holiness, of Biblical sanctification. For that doctrine encompasses all that God does in us to restore His own image.

Let me say briefly by way of application, if you sit here today and have a view of salvation in which the legal dimensions (justification, reconciliation, and adoption) are not only central and fundamental, but a view in which they obscure and well nigh obliterate the centrality and the importance of Gospel holiness, you have a distorted and unbiblical view of God's remedial grace. And furthermore, if over the course of a ministry of two, three, four, five, ten years, you propagate a Gospel that is clear, emphatic, and articulate on the points of justification, reconciliation, and adoption but

is not equally clear, emphatic and articulate on the matter of Gospel holiness, there will be a quality of religious life emerging in your congregation that will not match the quality of religious life reflected in the Bible. Now do you see, then, the tremendous importance of this subject first of all in terms of the human predicament?

But then, secondly, consider with me the importance (and now we'll begin to grapple with some of the great texts of Scripture) of Gospel holiness in terms of the divine plan of salvation. When we open our Bibles and attempt to understand something of the mind and purpose of God with respect to the salvation of sinners, we ask the question, "Lord, how far back may we trace Your purposes and plans to save a people?" God answers us in such texts as Ephesians 1, verses 4 and 5. Paul, as the theologian, has become Paul the eulogizer. He teaches theology by eulogy in Ephesians 1. And all of these great doctrines are a part of a three-stanza hymn of praise to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for His great salvation. And as He begins that eulogy, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ," he now traces that salvation back as far as God allows him to trace it: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Here we see the importance of Gospel holiness or Biblical sanctification in the divine plan of salvation as it touches the original purpose of God.

When we were chosen in Christ, and coordinate with that choice were predestined unto sonship, what was there that was central in the mind and purpose of God? Well, the text gives us the answer in this language: "He chose us that we should be holy and without blemish before Him." As God envisioned His chosen ones in their native state. (And for you theologs, I've now committed myself on the infra-supra controversy, and I do so without shame or embarrassment.) He chose us not because He saw that we would become holy. And the first motions of holiness are the actings of repentance and faith. And so the Armenian interpretation of Election falls to the ground at the sheer language of this text. He did not choose us because He saw we would be holy. But He chose us in Him that we should be holy and without blemish before Him. And in that coordinated purpose that has to do with adoption, though adoption itself must be understood in terms of a legal and forensic transaction, it is never apart from that subsequent impartation of the Spirit of adoption and the impress of the family likeness upon the adopted. And so the same apostle can say in a parallel passage, Romans 8:29: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son...." He not only predestined us unto sonship, but he foreordained us to be conformed to the image of His Son that He (Christ) might be the firstborn among many brethren. So as God graciously allows us to peek, as it were, into His secrets of His own eternal counsel, the motions of His all-infinite and eternal love to sinners, what is central in those first motions of eternal love to sinners? Holiness stands central. He never purposed a salvation for elect sinners but a salvation that had holiness at its center.

Now then we move on to the actual purchase of that salvation. Where is holiness? Where is sanctification in all of that? Well, consider several pivotal texts with me.

First of all, Ephesians 5 (in that section in which the apostle is charging husbands with respect to their duties to their wives--the great duty, of course, is to love them--and then he gives something of the measure and quality of that love), verse 25:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." And bound up in that language is all the agony and travail of Gethsemane, that horrible, indescribable inundation of all the billows of divine wrath upon Golgotha. And what was His heart's design in all of this? "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

When our Lord travailed upon the cross in the awful pangs of that felt abandonment, He had something more in mind than merely rectifying and adjusting all of the claims of divine justice against sinners. He was concerned with more than satisfying the demands of the law against those on whose behalf He was dying. This text informs us that He gave Himself up for the church with a view to its sanctification and its ultimate perfection and presentation to Himself. How central is this matter of holiness. How fundamental is this matter of Biblical sanctification. It is as fundamental as the central doctrine of the New Testament. It is as fundamental as the heart of the Gospel. And what is the heart of the Gospel? Christ Jesus and Him crucified.

The same emphasis comes through very clearly in the language of the apostle when he writes to Titus. And having had to prepare some lectures and messages on Titus for a recent ministry in Australia, I was struck as never before with the fact that two of the greatest soterological statements in all of the epistles come in this very practical epistle full of guidelines for practical godliness. And it's in that very context that we have the statement of chapter 3 concerning the work of the Spirit in our salvation, resulting in our washing and our cleansing. And right on the heels of enjoining slaves to be obedient and honest to their masters in chapter 2, he says here's the rationale behind all the detailed instruction concerning practical godliness. He's been telling old women how to behave. And he tells Titus, "You're to tell the old women to behave this way, and the young women this way, and the old men this way, and the young men this way. And by the way, you're to tell the slaves to behave this way." Why? Verses 11-13:

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Well, why does the grace of God come instructing us negatively, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should positively live righteously, Godly, holy all our lives? Why does the grace of God come teaching the importance and necessity of practical Godliness? Well, the rationale behind it is verse 14. It is because Christ gave Himself for us in order that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, boiling with zeal to perform good works. You see the theological rationale. He starts in chapter 2 with something that seems so mundane: "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: that the aged men be...."

There are those in our day who call it moralistic preaching when you give detailed instruction concerning Christian conduct--moralism! On that charge, Paul stands guilty. He says, "Titus, get the old men aside and sit them down and tell them this is how you're to serve God. And get the old women and sit them down and give them instructions. And then take the young men and sit them down and give them

instructions. And then get the servants aside and instruct them." And he says, "Titus, in so doing, this is what lifts it above the realm of mere moralism. Titus, impress upon them that in this kind of instruction, you're seeking to encourage them to dress themselves up in the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (v. 10). It's only as they live consistent lives of practical Godliness in the particulars of their own sphere of existence that they're dressed up in the Gospel. What Gospel? The Gospel that comes saying, "Deny ungodliness; live a sober, righteous, and Godly life." Well, why in the world does the Gospel come telling us to dress up that way? Because it's for that purpose that Christ died. "Who gave Himself for us," not that we might run around irresponsibly happy that all the demands of the court of heaven have been satisfied. "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Now, do you see how central and vital and important is the subject of holiness? Not only important as we observed in God's answer to the basic needs of man in a state of sin (the human predicament), but in relationship to God's plan of salvation. It was central in the first motions of His sovereign, electing love. It was central when our Lord died upon the cross. And as we shall see subsequently, Romans 6 is the watershed text of all of this teaching that grows out of our union with Christ both federally and vitally. But then, when that salvation actually impinges upon elect sinners in time and space, what place does this whole matter of holiness have when God stretches forth His hand in time to arrest the sinner in his downward course to destruction and effectually unites him to Jesus Christ? Well, let's look again at several key texts, and we shall see that once more this matter of holiness is central, fundamental.

We take 2 Thessalonians 2. It's a wonderful thing when a Christian worker, having labored amongst the people, can write letters and say, "Whenever I think of you, I give thanks to God for you. No explanation for what I saw but that God did something, and that God is continuing to do something." And that's precisely what Paul does. He says,

"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation [now notice] through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vv. 13-14).

You want a text that has all the doctrines of grace in a nutshell, here it is. It's all there. He gives praise to God, that God had marked them out from the beginning to a salvation that was indefectible, a salvation that would not stop short of all of those who were marked out to receive it, actually obtaining to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. None will be lost along the way. But now notice the realm in which they first partake of that salvation: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." And how did they come to that belief of the truth and that initial radical sanctifying work of the Spirit when through the Gospel as God's instrument, they were effectually called into vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ? But now let me ask a question or two based upon the text.

How central is the hearing of the Gospel to a man's salvation? Is there anyone sitting here today who believes there is any revealed way of a sinner's coming to salvation apart from the Gospel in the case of rational, responsible people? I trust you're all

convinced of the truth of Romans 10. It is wonderfully true that all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. But they cannot call upon an unknown Lord. And the means of knowing Him is proclamation through the sent ones. And I doubt there is anyone here who believes that we come to salvation apart from the proclamation of the Gospel. But I wonder, are there men, women, fellows, and girls sitting here today who believe that there can be a belief of the Gospel and an effectual call of God that bypasses the powerful, radical, sanctifying work of the Spirit? I can produce books written to defend that very position, that it is not only possible, but it is an actual experience that many believe the Gospel, but because they have not yet yielded to Christ as Lord, because they have not yet had the baptism of the Spirit, because they have not yet learned the secrets of the deeper life or the higher life or some other terminology, they have not yet known in reality any deep, inward sanctifying work of the Spirit. God never called a person in that situation. This text says the God who chooses to salvation always calls into that salvation by belief of the truth and in the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

Now that will be one of the hardest things for you come to grips in terms of that first charge you take as a preacher. There's going to be all these lovely people who are trussed up morally in terms of cultural influence. Do you know what I mean by trussed up morally? They're held up. They don't fall in a moral heap. Nor do they fall in what we would call a general psychological heap. They have some sense of identity in terms of cultural continuity. They have some sense of worth and dignity in terms of their jobs. But, my friends, in many of them, there isn't an ounce of true, genuine mourning for sin, of a sense of their undoneness. Sin is just a word. There is nothing of felt love to Jesus Christ. There is nothing of conscious panting after conformity to His image. There is nothing of that agony and struggle that our brother spoke about in the previous hour. It's business as usual year after year, decade after decade (lovely dinners in the church). But, my friend, you will have to face the fact that, without playing God, in the judgment of the most overwhelming charity, it will be your duty to say to many of them that they have no Biblical grounds to claim they are the children of God.

You won't offend them if you say, "You're going to make it, but you won't have as big a bag of yo yos as some others; your heart may be 20 strings less than someone else's." As long as you make sanctification of the Spirit optional, you won't offend them. But when you begin to tell them, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord," then suddenly your preaching's too long, it's too loud, it's too this, it's too that, it's too much of this, it's not enough of this. My friend, don't believe them if you're preaching out of compassion given by the Spirit of God on your face in the closet and out of fidelity to such texts such as these we are considering. The issue is that perhaps for the first time in their lives, they've been told that holiness is not optional. It is not some advanced dimension which only a few attain to. It is the very rudimentary, the very foundational element in a saving work of the Spirit.

So in its application, I bring other texts to bear upon it. 1 Corinthians 6:11: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." God doesn't separate them. All who are justified are washed and experience that radical sanctifying work of the Spirit. And then what about its place in the prolonged process? What place does holiness and sanctification have? Well, I give you the texts quickly.

We're told by Peter in 1 Peter 1: "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." But then a text to which I direct your attention briefly. What place does holiness have in that long process from the time we are effectually called in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth? Listen now to the language of Paul in Romans 6:22: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God [he's describing their conversion], ye have [present tense: 'ye are having'] your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." In the case of every person who has known that radical change of masters in a genuine work of grace, that change of masters from sin to this willing servitude to God, there is fruit unto holiness. And the end of that, eternal life. So Paul capsulizes the entire experience of the Christian in that phrase, "fruit unto holiness." That's pretty central isn't it? What awaits my conversion and my glorification? Paul says, "fruit unto holiness."

What about all the people who say they're in Christ, and they're waiting to be glorified with Christ, but there's no fruit unto holiness? Whose salvation do they have? Not this one. He doesn't say, "some of you, a few of you, some elite group of you." He writes to the Roman church and says of everyone who is truly in Christ and has known something of the virtue of union with Him, which is the great theme of this chapter, there is that change of masters; there is the fruit unto holiness, the change of practice, and then everlasting life, the change of destiny.

Well, what about the consummation? What makes heaven heaven? I love the language of Robert Murray M'Cheyne. He captured it when he said,

When I see Thee as Thou art  
Love Thee with unsinning heart

That was heaven to M'Cheyne: to be able to love his Savior with an unsinning heart. That was heaven to the Apostle John, was it not? Listen to his language in 1 John 3: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

Do you see now from eternity to eternity the place of holiness in the plan of salvation? It's central, my friends. It's not secondary. It's not peripheral. It's central. Tracing that salvation from the first motions of sovereign, electing love to its consummation when body and spirit are perfectly conformed to His own glorious likeness. Holiness is central. Well, in the few minutes that remain, let me give you the other two heads quickly.

How important is holiness, not only in terms of the human predicament, in terms of the divine plan, but in terms of the personal concern of every individual? Hebrews 12:14 answers the question. Here the writer to the Hebrews commands all believers to track down as a persecutor tracks down his prey. It's the same word used in the New Testament for "persecution." It's the same verb ("follow after," "track down with earnestness and great intensity"). "[Track down] peace with all men, and holiness [or sanctification], without which no man shall see the Lord." Here, the writer to the Hebrews makes holiness and the conscious, deliberate, and constant pursuit of it a condition of seeing the Lord in what the old writers would call the beatific vision: to see Him with joy; to behold Him in terms of the verse previously quoted in 1 John 3;

to behold Him with something other than dread and horror in the language of Revelation 6; to behold Him with something other than that cringing fear that will cause men to cry for the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them and hide them from the face of Him who sits upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. If you would behold Him with joy, the writer to the Hebrews says you must be following after that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

Now who are we to believe? Those who tell us that holiness is optional, holiness is desirable, but holiness is ultimately just a matter of lesser or greater degrees of usefulness now and rewards in the world to come? I say, brethren, that is damnable and destructive heresy. It's not merely error; it's heretical. It is to give men hopes where they have no grounds of hopes. This text tells us that as far as our own individual concerns are touched by this subject, it is a matter of life and death. You're not safe unless you're justified; you're not safe unless you're sanctified. For God never justifies a soul whom He does not sanctify.

And I would say again to you men who will have the awesome task of proclaiming to the Word to others, God help you if under your ministry, people receive any other notion than that their only hope for acceptance before the court of heaven is to be found in the doing and the dying of another, even the Lord Jesus. And God help you if they have any other notion that they can legitimately lay claim to true belief in Him who lived and died for them if they cannot demonstrate the validity of their professed faith by a holy life.

And then the final point, and again I just give it to you in a suggestive manner. We see the importance of holiness with respect to the primary requisite for those who would be office bearers in Christ's church. When we turn to 1 Timothy 3, we are told: "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless" And if we read down to 1 Timothy 3, what do we have in that passage? Nothing more or less than a description of a life of balanced, vital, demonstrable Gospel holiness. And God says it is the indispensable requirement for that holy office. O yes, there is a word in there about being an apt teacher. A man who is to be an instrument of edification must have gifts for public ministry. Yes, but the great weight of emphasis falls upon the context out of which that gift is exercised. And it must be a life of balanced, vital, demonstrable Godliness, both before the church and before the world.

Brethren, the Lord has not come and scrubbed out of His Word the frightening words of Matthew 7: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." They had ministering gifts; they had manifest success. And Jesus does not debate their claim to gift or success. But He puts His finger on the sore spot: they were devoid of sanctifying grace. They were workers of iniquity while mighty preachers with impressive credentials.

My dear young friends sitting here with hopes for the work of the ministry, if you are not pursuing a life of holiness, do one of two things: leave this room and have dealings with God until there is implanted in your heart a hungering and a thirst after holiness, or for the time, give up all thought of the work of the ministry. What is all your assiduity in your pursuit of Greek and Hebrew and systematic and Biblical theology? What is all of that but furnishing you to damn yourself with ministerial

success until you so rationalize away your absence of Godliness and balance against it your obvious success. "Well, surely God must be pleased or He wouldn't bless." "Many will say Lord, Lord...." If God can open the mouth of a dumb ass to be His mouth piece that doesn't even have a rational soul, God can use the mouth of any rational human being to call out His elect and even to build up His sheep. Don't you ever rest content that all his well because of the measure of your gifts or the measure of your success. God will take you to heaven only if you're a justified, sanctified, and holy man.

How important is this theme? I trust, if nothing else, our brief overview of this subject has implanted in your heart by the Spirit a conviction that will never be uprooted or shaken, that this great Biblical theme is central as God addresses Himself to the predicament of man in sin; as He unfolds His plan of salvation; as He actually comes in graces and applies that salvation with power, and as He Himself sets forth the standard for the work of the ministry. O, my brothers and sisters, let us not shift to a secondary, tertiary, or some other place that which God has made central to His Gospel.

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