

Teach Me, O Lord, the Perfect Way*The Scottish Psalter, 1880*

Teach me, O LORD, the perfect way
of Thy precepts divine,
and to observe it to the end
I shall my heart incline.

Give understanding unto me,
that I Thy law obey;
with my whole heart shall I observe
Thy statutes night and day.

In Thy law's path make me to go;
delight therein I find.
Unto Thy truth, and not to greed,
let my heart be inclined.

Turn Thou away my sight and eyes
from viewing vanity;
and in Thy good and holy way
be pleased to quicken me.

Confirm to me Thy gracious Word,
which I did gladly hear,
to me Thy servant, LORD, who am
devoted to Thy fear.

Turn Thou away my feared reproach;
for good Thy judgments be.
Lo, for Thy precepts I have longed;
in Thy truth quicken me.



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ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

*In the Nick of Time***Issues in Sanctification Eleven Months Later***Jon Pratt*

Here at Central Seminary we are fast approaching our annual MacDonald Lecture Series. Readers of the *Nick of Time* will be greatly encouraged by joining us on February 11 for this year's set of talks on the writings of Andrew Fuller, the pre-eminent British Baptist pastor of the late eighteenth century. My good friend and warm-hearted scholar, Dr. David Saxon, will deliver these lectures. David serves as professor of church history at Maranatha Baptist University. I can assure you, both from personal experience and from the testimony of hundreds of Dr. Saxon's students, that you will not be disappointed or bored by a dull, monotone discourse but rather you will be challenged to know God more deeply and to love God more fervently.

As we anticipate this upcoming event, I would like to look back to our 2019 MacDonald series during which I had the privilege of speaking about sanctification. (These lectures are available on our seminary website at <https://vimeo.com/channels/macdonaldlectures2019>.) First, I want to provide further information about another group of antinomian writers which could easily have comprised a fifth lecture in last year's meeting. Second, I want to give an update regarding some recent occurrences among one of the groups I discussed.

Before giving updates and additions, I need to give a short overview of the four lectures on sanctification given last February. Lecture #1 sought to answer the question, "How do we grow in our Christian walk?" I considered five models proposed by sanctification teachers in evangelicalism—Wesleyan, Pentecostal, Keswick, Chaferian, and Reformed—and suggested that the Reformed view best fits the teaching of the Bible.

Lecture #2, "The Meaning and Means of Perseverance," showed how the Scriptures teach the necessity of perseverance in the believer's life, i.e. believers will continue in faith, love, and holiness because God freely saves them once for all. I provided an overwhelming number of biblical texts demonstrating this truth. Following this, I listed four means God uses to help His children to persevere in faith and good works: suffering, commands, conditional promises and warnings, and fellowship in the local church.

In the third and fourth lectures I discussed two groups in evangelicalism who have tended to downplay the importance of good works and holy ef-

fort in the believer's sanctification. Lecture #3 talked about the Free Grace movement which stemmed from dispensational theology, and Lecture #4 focused on the antinomian tendency flowing out of some elements of Reformed theology.

Following these lectures, I learned of a third stream of antinomian theology in evangelicalism, the hyper-grace movement. Amazingly, while Free Grace teaching came from dispensational circles, and the source of what I called "antinomianism" in Lecture #4 came from Reformed circles, hyper-grace teaching comes from Pentecostal/Charismatic circles.

Allow me to share a short history of the hyper-grace movement which will include the names of its major proponents. Then I will provide a delineation of the basic teachings of this group.

Hyper-grace teachers have undoubtedly expressed their beliefs for many years through preaching and teaching in their local churches and their church-based training institutions. However, it appears that they did not begin to articulate their ideas through the writing media until about 2005. Around that time and continuing steadily since, many books (the majority of which are self-published) and many blogs have been published.

The most prolific writer among hyper-grace teachers is Singapore pastor Joseph Prince. A few of his books on this subject include *Destined to Reign* (2007), *Unmerited Favor* (2009), and *Grace Revolution* (2015). Pastor Clark Whitten, who pastored three mega-churches before founding Grace Church of Longwood, Florida, in 2005, wrote *Pure Grace: The Life Changing Power of Uncontaminated Grace* (2012). Other writers include D. R. Silva, *Hyper-Grace: The Dangerous Doctrine of a Happy God*; Paul Ellis, *The Hyper Grace Gospel*; Eddie Snipes, *Abounding Grace*; Andre Van der Merwe, *GRACE, the Forbidden Gospel*; Rob Rufus, *Living in the Grace of God*; Chuck Crisco, *Extraordinary Gospel*; and Andrew Farley, *The Naked Gospel*. Simon Yap and Ryan Rufus are two hyper-grace bloggers among many others.

Several Pentecostals have stepped forward to blow the whistle on these hyper-grace teachers. Chief among them are Michael Brown, *Hyper-Grace: Exposing the Dangers of the Modern Grace Message* (Charisma House, 2014), and a book edited by charismatic historian Vinson Synan, *The Truth about Grace: Spirit-Empowered Perspectives* (Charisma House, 2018), which includes contributions from eighteen writers.

Brown lays out the main tenets of hyper-grace theology, and I am drawing from his book in this listing. First, God has already forgiven all our sins—past, present, and future. Hyper-grace teachers believe that this truth has several effects that are consistent themes in their writing: God never sees the sins we commit as Christians; there is no need to confess our sins to God; the Holy Spirit does not convict believers of sin since He has already forgiven and forgotten them; and repentance is only a change of mind. A second major aspect of hyper-grace theology is a denial or severe downplay-

ing of progressive sanctification and the responsibility of the believer to participate in the pursuit of holiness. A third feature flows out of the second: God always sees us as perfect in His sight so there is nothing that believers can or should do to try to please God. Fourth, spirituality is an effortless experience in the life of the believer. Such things as witnessing, praying, and being obedient take place without any labor; all believers must do is rest in the finished work of Christ. Fifth, there is a tendency to ignore and devalue the Old Testament which also includes an undermining of the moral value of the law for believers today.

Space does not allow a refutation of each of these areas of incorrect teaching, but the reader can see many ideas similar to those propounded by the other two groups I discussed in last year's lectures.

I would like to shift gears now and talk about what is happening in the antinomian Reformed world. In September 2019, Tullian Tchividjian, grandson of Billy Graham, former pastor, author of two important books (*One Way Love* and *Jesus + Nothing = Everything*), and leader of the Liberate conference from 2012-2015, stepped back into pastoral ministry following several adulterous affairs, a divorce, and a defrocking from the PCA. The 47-year-old has now remarried and is pastor of a nondenominational church, The Sanctuary, in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. Many questions arise from this development, and perhaps another essay can address them.

Some changes have also taken place with The Boys, a group of four Reformed pastors from the Nashville area. The leader of the group, Byron Yawn, has had to step away from ministry, and two others (Jeremy Litts and Ryan Haskins) are concentrating on pastoral ministry. The website started by the Boys, Theocast, is currently overseen by the last member of the group (Jon Moffitt), who still pastors in the Nashville area. He has now been joined by Pastor Justin Perdue from Ashville, North Carolina, and Pastor Jimmy Buehler from Willmar, Minnesota. These three have published another book on finding rest in God, entitled *Faith vs Faithfulness: A Primer on Rest* (2019). Sadly, I have much to say about these developments, but too little space to do so.

In regard to sanctification generally I encourage each one to rely upon the Spirit, who helps us to obey the imperatives while resting in the indicatives of our salvation.



This essay is by Jon Pratt, Vice President of Academics and Professor of New Testament at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
