

Intro: The Mouk people of Papua New Guinea had a custom that had been in practice for eons. Believing that the spirits protected them from harm and helped them harm their enemies, the men continued a practice of deception that included ancestor worship. During a religious ceremony one man would don a large mask and full body covering and appear from the darkness to dance around the firelight. Over the next few days the women of the tribe would prepare a large amount of food to feed the spirit and appease it. When I say large, I mean hundreds of pounds large, more than enough for the entire tribe. They would then bring the food to the “men’s house” for the spirit to eat. Now, all the men knew that it was not a spirit that danced before the fire, but merely one of them inside the mask. The men would eat their fill of the prepared food and then throw the rest away because they couldn’t have the women knowing that it was them in the mask and not a spirit. Since no women were allowed in the men’s house, the men thought they had deceived the women. (Now, the women knew of the deception, but because it would mean death to reveal the secret, they kept quiet and continued working slavishly in the deception).

When the gospel took root in the Mouk tribe, and the people rejoiced that there was a sacrifice for their sins, a Savior for their bondage to death and the spirits, the men quickly realized that their deception was evil in the eyes of the Lord and that they need to admit it to the women. To give the secret of the mask away to the women was considered an offense punishable by death to other tribes in the area, but these men trust the Lord and told the women of their deception. Of course, the women said that they already knew that, but that they were glad it was in the open.

Now the men’s hut lies empty, as these sons of God have endeavored to be good husbands and to love their wives. You see, when the gospel of grace arrived to set these brothers free, they immediately felt the Lord’s call to live lives of purity and godliness, even taking their lives into their hands. Now, through the power of the Spirit and the testimony of these saints, the gospel has been received by dozens of other villages in the land of Papua New Guinea and there are hundreds more people praising God, honoring His name through transformed lives, passionate for the righteousness of God.

There is a common thought today within the church that purity is not all that important. “God is my friend, and that’s what matters.” I fear that we have failed to show that the purpose of the Cross was not merely our position of safety before God, or merely our place as His friend, but the purpose of the Cross is also our purity and righteous living. Have we proclaimed a gospel of cheap grace, where God is loving but not just; kind but not holy; accepting of sin and not hating it with burning hatred? I fear that we have proclaimed a half-gospel where God is love, acceptance, and peace (which He is), but not as just, righteous, wrathful (which He also is). Do we really believe that half a gospel is better than a whole gospel? Do we really believe that God has no expectations of our purity when He graciously saves us? On the contrary, one of the purposes of our salvation is so that we would, and could, live lives of purity and righteousness in this present age.

With the reception of the gospel of grace comes a renewed desire for purity. In fact, the Lord tells us that Jesus died with the purpose of making us pure. The point of the Cross of Christ is not merely our redemption from the wrath of God, but also for our purity and freedom from sin. Paul teaches his apprentice, Titus, that Christ died so that we would live lives of purity to God and turn from our sin so that God would be glorified. John Piper says that the “proof of our pardon is our passion for purity.” Those who belong to Christ have His Spirit within them, leading us to deny ungodliness and pursue righteousness. Like these brothers of the Mouk tribe, let us lay aside our old lives of sin and pursue with passion the purity with which God is honored and His name glorified. Let us preach the whole gospel for whole transformation wholly to the glory of God.

1. Jesus Christ has appeared, bringing salvation for all the nations (11)
  - a. Jesus is the “grace of God”
  - b. He is the One who has “appeared”
    - i. Been revealed (to shine upon)
    - ii. He is the light of the nations (Is 49:6)
      1. **Isaiah 49:6** - he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."
      2. **Acts 26:23** - that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.
  - c. God’s kindness to us in sending Jesus to bear sin’s curse upon the Cross and purchasing us for Himself is what has been brought to light

If God had perceived that our greatest need was economic, he would have sent an economist. If he had perceived that our greatest need was entertainment, he would have sent us a comedian or an artist. If God had perceived that our greatest need was political stability, he would have sent us a politician. If he had perceived that our greatest need was health, he would have sent us a doctor. But he perceived that our greatest need involved our sin, our alienation from him, our profound rebellion, our death; and he sent us a Savior. ~D.A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*

- d. Jesus' appearance for salvation is for all peoples
    - i. There is no racial distinction or ethnic requirement
    - ii. There is no social distinction or economic requirement
    - iii. All can come to the Lord through repentant faith in Jesus Christ
      - 1. In Jesus, all the nations are called to repent and believe in Him in order to be saved from God's wrath and brought near to God
      - 2. **2 Cor 5:18-19** - All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling<sup>1</sup> the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.
2. This grace trains us to live in purity (12)
- a. It is God's grace that instructs us to live rightly in this present age
    - i. Living obediently is not merely a "living according to the Law" as if it were to be rejected as legalism
    - ii. It is actually God's gracious kindness towards us that leads us to turn from sin and to turn toward God in faith-filled obedience to His Word
      - "The more we understand the Gospel as a doctrine of grace, the more it will lead to godliness." ~Thomas Chalmers
  - b. "training" or "instructing" is a word that has to do with the training and instruction of children through discipline
  - c. "to deny" – reject, refuse, separate from
    - i. Ungodliness – lacking reverence for God, impiety
      - 1. **Romans 1:18** – "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."
      - 2. **Jude 1:18** – they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions."
        - a. See 2 Peter 3:3 – "knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires."
    - ii. Worldly passions – "over-desires" indicate a desire for that which is out of place and inordinate, usually indicative of one's trust of something other than Christ
      - 1. Something that we trust to make us "happy" or "significant" outside of Jesus
      - 2. These passions are particularly of the world and are related to a lack of self-control
      - 3. Idols that control
  - d. "to live as..."
    - i. Self-controlled – sensibly, with sound mind (according to sound doctrine)
    - ii. Righteously – in-line with what is right, i.e. what God has revealed is in accordance to His person and glory through His Word
    - iii. Godly – that which is in accordance with God, in-line with His revealed nature and work in Scripture
      - 1. Placing all of our allegiance and trust in Him
      - 2. His revelation of grace leads us to obey Him with simple and single-minded obedience
  - e. It is God's kindness that leads us to repentance (Rom 2:4)

- f. The Gospel shows us that we obey, living lives of purity and a passionate pursuit of righteous hearts and behaviors *because* God has been gracious

It is a sad, harmful, and evil characteristic of sin not to recognize how serious it is and to excuse it by treating it lightly. Those who have come to understand the holiness of God and the nature of his grace to sinners in spite of our sin do not do this. Like the remorseful tax collector, they stand in awe of God and cry out for mercy: ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner’ (Luke 18:13). They do not treat sin as if it were inconsequential. ~James Montgomery Boice

### 3. We passionately pursue purity waiting for His 2nd appearance (13)

- a. He “has appeared” (v11), and He will appear again, physically and this time with great glory!
- b. We are being changed from glory to glory, by degrees (2 Cor 3:17-18), and we long for the day when His glory appears, for we will be like Him in our incorruption (1 John 3:2-3)
  - i. The Holy Spirit battles against our Flesh until the day when our sinful desires are completely eradicated, so we long for that day in the midst of the struggle toward holiness by the Spirit of God
  - ii. This life is a battleground for the glory of God, the Spirit producing in us holiness and purity
    - 1. Romans 8, part. v23
    - 2. Galatians 5:16-17
  - iii. His victory over our corruption is linked with His promise for our incorruption as well
- c. As the gracious Savior, we long to see Him face to face, to be near to Him for all of eternity, the Savior-God who died for me!

### 4. The purpose of the cross is our purity (14)

- a. He gave Himself for us
  - i. Relates to His death upon the cross
  - ii. “for us” – on our behalf, taking our place of the curse
    - 1. **Gal 3:13** – Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law
    - 2. **Rom 5:8-10** – by His blood we have been saved from the wrath of God and reconciled to God by His death
    - 3. **Eph 5:2** – Christ loved us and gave Himself for us as a sacrifice to God
- b. To redeem us from all lawlessness
  - i. We have been loosed from every contempt of the law
    - 1. God’s purpose in the death of Jesus Christ is that we would no longer be lawless, or held in bondage to lawlessness
    - 2. He freed us *from* sin, not freed us *to remain in* sin
  - ii. We have died to sin
    - 1. 1 Pet 2:24 – “and he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”
      - a. see also Rom 6:1-18
    - 2. We have been freed to live for the righteousness of God and set free from the bondage of sin as our master
- c. To purify His people
  - i. For Himself
    - 1. God’s purpose is our purity before Him
    - 2. To work for impurity, or to pursue and consistently willfully choose to walk in impurity is to choose against Jesus Christ
    - 3. The author of Hebrews calls it “trampling on the Son of God” and considered “the blood of Christ as common” (Hebrews 10:26-31)
      - a. This person, willfully choosing sin, has only to expect the fiery judgment of God
      - b. “The proof of our pardon is in our passion for purity” (John Piper)
        - i. We cannot cut Christ in two

- ii. We cannot accept the Christ who pardons, but reject the Christ who purifies
- ii. Zealous for good works

Conclusion:

Are we proclaiming the whole gospel or only a half-gospel? Are we proclaiming that Jesus died so that we might live righteously in this present age and deny all that is against God, passionately pursuing purity for our God is pure? When we proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, are we preaching God as holy and loving, just and merciful, righteous and gracious, and wrathful against sin so that Jesus had to die? Or, have been proclaiming a pop-psychology version of God who is *only* love, mercy, and grace? To preach that God is only love, mercy, and grace is to deny half of whom God has revealed Himself to be and makes the gospel man-centered instead of God-centered. When we proclaim that we have been called to a HOLY God, with a purpose for our purity and righteousness in this present life, as well as into the eternal, we proclaim a God-centered gospel with a view to God's glory now. It is to this God that Jesus died to reconcile us! Don't you see that we NEED Jesus when God is holy and we are not. We NEED a Savior when our sins have destroyed our lives and our corruption has enslaved us under God's righteous wrath. Do we really believe that a half-gospel is better than a whole gospel? That a partial view of God is more transforming than the full revelation of God?

Let us take deeply into our heart that God has called us into righteousness, and His purpose in the death and resurrection of Christ is for our cleansing from sin, our freedom from its bondage, and our purity in this life! God not only has expectations for our obedience, but He has given us His Spirit to battle against our flesh in such things. So, take heart, Christian! The holy God, the Righteous One, has called you to draw near through the blood of Jesus Christ. By His grace, yes! His grace trains us up to deny ungodliness and to pursue purity as His purpose because we have been set free from unrighteousness and His loving pursuit of us produces in our hearts a passion for His glory and a passion for purity in our lives, so that He would be honored in all the earth

His grace leads us to humble repentance, to turn from sin with great confidence because He has saved us solely by His kindness through the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ and the gift of His Holy Spirit within us to hold us secure and to produce the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Because we are made holy by His grace, let us live in-line with His holiness! Take great hope for your own soul in this, letting His kindness humble us all into the purity of obedience to His Word, for His glory. And have great boldness as you proclaim the gospel, that God is holy and righteous and pure. Proclaim the costs that are involved when you choose Him along with the hope that He has given to your attainment of such things. In the words of Walter Marshall from an amazing and glorious work, *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*:

He makes us first to be in Christ by faith, as branches in the vine, that we may bring forth much fruit (John 15:4-5). He first purges our consciences from dead works by justification, that we may serve the living God (Heb. 9:14). He makes us to first live in the Spirit, then walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:25)...Now, mark well the great advantages you have for the attainment of holiness, by seeking it in a right gospel order. You will have the advantage of the love God manifested toward you, in forgiving your sins, receiving you into favor, and giving you the spirit of adoption, and the hope of His glory, freely, through Christ, to persuade and constrain you, by sweet allurements, to love God again, who has so dearly loved you, and to love others for His sake, and to give up yourselves to the obedience of all His commands out of hearty love to Him. ~Walter Marshall