

Grace has appeared and brings us salvation, this is **indicative**. But notice that this grace “*instructs us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires*” and to “*live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age.*” This is an **imperative**.

2 Corinthians 6:18-7:1 - 18 "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty. 7:1 **Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.** NASB

God will be a father to us, and we will receive all the benefits of having the Almighty as our Father. This is **indicative**. But Paul reasons, “*having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*” This is an **imperative**. This idea appears many places in the New Testament. Since we have been given such **great** and **precious promises**, then our **proper response** is one of conformity to God’s will, and here that is cleansing “*ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*” Our work of cleansing ourselves is rooted and grounded in the fact that God is a father to us to shepherd us, and provided for us and to protect and care for us as His very own children. The **imperatives** are **grounded** in the **indicatives** so that we won’t lose heart and that our **faith and hope** are **in God** as the primary worker, working His good purpose in us, causing us to **bear the image** in greater degree and so partake in the divine nature and both **glorify** and **enjoy Him** in a rich and full way.

It is important then to understand that a right **balance** must be navigated continually between **indicative** and **imperative**. It is important to emphasize indicatives. The indicatives are the fuel and motivation for the imperatives. Kevin DeYoung comments on this; “*We ought to positively glory in the indicatives of the gospel. The indicatives ought to fuel our following of the imperatives. Our obedience must be grounded in the gospel. Sanctification is empowered by faith in the promises of God. We need to be reminded of our justification often and throughout our Christian lives. Our pursuit of personal righteousness will not go anywhere without a conviction that we are already reckoned positionally righteous in Christ. So let’s be passionately and repetitively gripped by the gospel of free grace.*”

But equally important is to insist on the imperatives that flow out of the indicatives. The “*grace of God instructs us to deny ungodliness.*” They go together and work for our sanctification. DeYoung comments further; “*Imperatives must be rooted in indicatives. The question, however, is whether we betray the indicatives by insisting directly and explicitly for Christians to work hard at obeying the imperatives. No one denies that obedience to the imperatives is crucial. But can we demand obedience to those imperatives? Or is that falling back on law? The central question in this discussion is not just a matter of emphasis between the indicatives and imperatives, but whether emphasizing the indicatives accomplishes the goal of the imperatives without ever insisting upon them. Or to put it another way, is sanctification by faith alone in our justification by faith alone? I think not. The last thing I want is to be the guy who says “stop making the gospel so important.” I never want to encourage people to emphasize the gospel less. But it is possible to emphasize the gospel in a wrong way. The Reformed confessions understand that obedience to God’s commands—which we all want—is not accomplished merely by insisting on indicatives, but also by insisting directly and explicitly on the imperatives that flow from them.*” End quote. See then why the New Testament is loaded full of imperatives calling us to the work of faith and the heavenward call of both mortifying the “defilements of flesh and spirit” and living in or putting on the virtues in very practical ways.

Let us see then that a healthy understanding of the grace of God in all of its **promise** and fullness is important and should be constantly emphasized in our Christian life. These **indicatives fuel and motivate** our **faith**. But equally important is the desire for God's people to be holy and **conform practically** to God's will and desire for our lives. These **imperatives express** our **faith** and put the glory of God on display in our lives so that we **bear the image**. This also then addresses the issue of the role of the Law for us. The Law is holy and good and rightly used when it is given to inform us of God's will and also of His character. It helps us to understand who He is and what His purposes are for us in the world. DeYoung comments on this as well; *Let's not be afraid to land on law—never as the means of meriting justification, but as the proper expression of having received it....The Lutheran Formula of Concord is absolutely right in when it says, "We believe, teach, and confess that the preaching of the Law is to be urged with diligence, not only upon the unbelieving and impenitent, but also upon true believers, who are truly converted, regenerate, and justified by faith" (Epitome 6.2). Preachers must preach the law without embarrassment. Parents must insist on obedience without shame. The law can, and should, be urged upon true believers—not to condemn, but to correct and promote Christlikeness. Both the indicatives of Scripture and the imperatives are from God, for our good, and given in grace."*

It is NOT **legalism** for the church to preach obedience to explicit commandments from Scripture, when rightly applied. Rather it is the duty of pastors and teachers to bring imperatives consistent with the Word to bear upon our lives and our consciences. However it is **extremely important** that these **imperatives not be confused with the indicatives** of the **Gospel**. Imperatives are now the proper expression of worship and godliness as a **RESULT of our justification, and never a MEANS to it**. We are not saved by the works of the Law, or even obedience to New Testament commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ alone. He is Himself our righteousness before God (Rom 3:28, Gal 2:15-16, 1 Cor 1:30). Therefore, the **indicatives** are where we rest by faith in the sovereign work of God through Christ and the Spirit for our righteousness and assurance of salvation. And the **imperatives** are the obedience which God fully expects of those of us He has called, saved and justified as an expression of the fact that we have indeed been saved and justified, and are now longing to **bear His image** and become like Him, pleasing Him in all our ways and in the thoughts and meditations of our hearts.

Colossians 3:12 - 12 And so, **as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;** NASB

Believing the promises for future grace motivates

Now here is where it is crucial to see how faith relates to sanctification and image bearing. As we hear about the beauty and glory of God's free grace to us in the indicative promises of the Gospel, our faith is bolstered and strengthened like a great bulwark against the world, the flesh and the devil. As we **believe or exercise faith**, that is **trust in and rely upon God** who gives us the promises, our **faith is motivated** to give expression so that the imperatives are fulfilled. This literally **involves us** in the **working and power of God**, as we are powerfully **changed by the Spirit** and bear the fruit of the Spirit in the midst of a wicked culture, shining as lights in the darkness of this world putting the glory of God on display.

Philippians 2:12-16 - 12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** 14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 that **you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of**