

"Transforming Grace"

We are saved by grace, but grace has a much larger role than mere forgiveness. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're exploring how the grace of God transforms our lives. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The word of God helps us to understand a loving, compassionate, gracious God who created us, loves us, cares for us, and gives us hope of an eternal inheritance with Him in heaven. If it were not for the word of God, we wouldn't know how great the love of God is! We have the grace of God available, and this gives us hope of salvation. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

The grace of God is certainly an amazing and undeserved gift that is far greater than we can imagine. The grace of God does far more than offer forgiveness; it's a lifelong blessing of God's loving favor and care. Those who stand in the grace of God are chosen of God, holy, and beloved. God doesn't see you the way that you used to be but He sees you as one of His children, born again into His kingdom and family. Your old man of sin has died and you have a new life ahead of you.

Colossians 1:21 to 22 says, "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach." God knows we're human and commit sin, but His love for us gives us assurance. We can become children of God who live forever. Psalm 84:11 says, "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly." You can belong to God; you can be born again to a new life in Christ.

Now we offer this study, Transforming Grace, and our booklet Amazing Grace, free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have programs and free materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from Titus 2:11 to 14, and examine what we can do to keep God alive in our hearts and enjoy His grace.

Our reading today is Paul's letter Titus chapter 2 verses 11 to 14. And there he tells of tremendous things that grace does in our lives.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

My, what a wonderful thing the Lord Jesus has done for us. Let's pray together. Father we're so grateful for the grace that You have given to us. That favor that is unmerited, that good thing that You've done for us. Help us Heavenly Father to live in such a way that we live soberly and righteously in this godly in this world. Help us to love You and to serve You all the days of our lives. In Jesus name, Amen.

The apostle Paul knew what it was like to look at his past with shame and regret. When he was Saul, he saw himself as the worst of sinners; but Saul died; and Paul is no longer that person. He was once the enemy of God's people, but now, Paul, he is God's minister. He wrote in 1 Timothy 1:12 to 14,

“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.”

Now Saul of Tarsus didn't believe in Jesus. He ignorantly thought it was his role in life to destroy the church. Paul, whenever he was looking back at his past life and describing Saul, persecutor of the church, said to King Agrippa in Acts 26:9 to 11, “So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.” But the Lord stopped him and helped Saul see something better.

The Lord appeared to Saul and said in Acts 26:16 to 18, “But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.” Soon after this, Saul of Tarsus became known as Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Now the Lord wanted to use this transformation from Saul to Paul to give people hope that God could still make a difference in their lives. Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:15 to 16 that, “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, (and then he says) among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.” Now if the Lord could save and use the foremost sinner of all, He can save and use you to bring light to this dark, sinful world.

People who have sinned faced a lot of guilt and shame. Religious people sometimes fall and their heartache is overwhelming. And though David was a man after God's own heart, remember David committed adultery with Bathsheba and caused the death of her husband Uriah so that he could cover up the sin. David didn't realize at the time what his sin would do to his heart and his soul. David felt the full weight of his guilt.

David wrote in Psalm 32:1 to 5: Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when (David says) I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand (God's hand) was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

The Lord sent Nathan to David and convicted him of his sin. And the sin David tried to hide would cause him much grief; but God forgave David and let him live. David honestly confesses his sin and he cries out to God in Psalm 51:1 to 4, “Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You

are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge.” David recognized how he had sinned against God by his immorality.

Now in this Psalm David desires to return to a right relationship with God. He said in Psalm 51:10 to 12, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit.” While he remained in unresolved sin, David couldn’t find the joy of his salvation. With forgiveness came a clean heart and a good conscience.

Sometimes people think, “What I’ve done is so evil, God will never accept me.” Well they misunderstand God’s compassion for sinners. When a heart mourns evil, with free will then desires to change, God’s heart softens. David wrote in Psalm 51:17 that, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” Again Psalm 34:18 says that, “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit.” The Lord declares in Isaiah 66:2, “But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.”

God can cleanse us, even when we think we’re too evil to save. He can see good in us, even when we think we’re evil. He not only sees us as we are; the Lord can see what we can become! When Judah had given itself over to idolatry, God was willing to make them clean again. He tells them in Ezekiel 36:25 to 27 “I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” God can cleanse us and help us to change our hearts. We can become His children.

Paul in the New Testament speaks clearly to the Ephesians about their past as Gentiles and their journey to being in Christ. They can make a total change in their hearts and in their priorities. And so he describes the worldly life in Ephesians 4:17 to 19. He says, “So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”

Instead Paul reminded them of a better way to live in Christ. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:20 to 24, “But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” He told them they could change; they can lay aside an old life of futility, and they change by following Christ into a life of righteousness, holiness, and the truth!

Paul gave them hope they could be free in Christ, no longer enslaved to their old sins. He wrote in Romans 6:8 to 13, “Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

Paul told Titus what things the grace of God teaches us. Grace does far more than merely bring forgiveness; it trains us to a better and nobler life. It lifts us out of the way of life that destroys us inside and out and opens up a life that blesses everyone around us. Titus 2:11 to 14 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Are you living an ungodly life, or are you zealous for good? Are you caught up in the sins of this world or are you zealous for what's right and good?

The Lord Jesus wants what is best for you. He is your friend; He died on the cross for your sake not only to forgive you but to open the door of discipleship and fellowship with God Himself. You can be a child of God; you can be a Christian; you can live a righteous life; and you can be an heir of a heavenly home for all eternity.

The Lord taught us whom God blesses. He said in Matthew 5:3 to 6, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." A poor in spirit person knows he desperately needs God; those who mourn their sins will find comfort. Those who are meek or gentle let God rule in their lives; and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will find God will feed them forever. God's grace has no limit and no end.

So let me encourage you to live for the Lord. Paul said in Romans 12:2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Oh, leave that old way of sin, turn to the Lord and follow Him.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that by Your grace and mercy we can leave an old sinful way of life, die to sin and live to righteousness and follow You. Help us to be faithful to that commitment to be Your children and to follow You. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Where are you in your walk with God? Are you living with a guilty conscience, ashamed of yourself; or are you walking in the light and living for the Lord? You know sometimes Christians who once loved the Lord later in life like David commit terrible sins. Paul wrote in Romans 6:1 to 2, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" Are you putting sin ahead of righteousness? Are you presuming the grace of God will still save you while you continue in sin?

Romans 8:12 to 13 says, "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if (you) by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." God's grace is marvelous and wonderful, but it works with repentance. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 13:3, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

Paul told the Athenians on Mars Hill in Acts 17:30 to 31, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him (Jesus) from the dead."

Peter in the first gospel sermon told the people guilty of crucifying Jesus in Acts 2:38, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Repenting and being baptized are necessary to receive the forgiveness of sins. Won't you obey today?

We hope our study, Transforming Grace, has caused you to let God transform you. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of the study or our booklet Amazing Grace, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now there's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. SEARCH is also on YouTube! And why not subscribe to our channel, that's "SearchTVMinistry" and when you watch a program be sure to like it and encourage others to watch. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you get a hold of us don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God. That's our goal.

Show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. And if you can attend, don't neglect worshiping with the brethren at church. There's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We want you to be a part of family of people who worship God and who love God and serve Him. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. As always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.