

# A 'Missing' Grace

by Alan Martin

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*This sermon delves into the concept of a 'missing grace,' emphasizing that many Christians may not fully grasp the depth of God's grace beyond forgiveness of sins. It explores the distinction between being reconciled through Christ's death and being saved through His life, highlighting the transformative power of grace to reign in life. The sermon challenges believers to move beyond a victim mentality, embrace the power of grace to overcome sin and temptation, and live a godly life. It contrasts true grace, which trains believers to deny ungodliness and live righteously, with a distorted view that leads to a lack of restraint and perpetual failure.*

**Scripture:** Romans 5:9, Titus 2:11, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 4:13, Matthew 5:16, 2 Timothy 3:5, Jude 1:4, 1 John 1:9, Philippians 3:13

**Topics:** "Understanding God's Grace", "Living a Transformed Life"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I want to talk about a missing grace. Did you catch that? A missing grace. We know about amazing grace, but I want to talk about a missing grace.

Many Christians just don't fully understand the grace of God and therefore they miss out on the fullness of grace that God desires for us to experience. You know, most of us have a good grasp of the basic definition of grace, which is undeserved favor and the forgiveness of sins. And we're also aware that the grace of salvation, it is a gift.

It's not earned or obtained through our own works. Nevertheless, there is far more to the grace of God than the forgiveness of sins. And this is what I desire to share with you this morning.

In Romans chapter five, Paul wrote, since now having been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from the wrath through him? For if being enemies, we were reconciled to God through the

death of his son, much more having been reconciled, shall we be saved by his life? Many Christians miss this distinction between being reconciled through the death of Christ and being saved through the life of Christ. Do you realize there's the distinction? Paul makes a distinction and it's important for us to recognize it. Paul then goes on to explain how death entered the world through sin and it spread to all men because all sin.

And he pointed out that this sin was in the world even before God's law was given. But sin is not recognized when there's no law. Nevertheless, Paul explained, death reigned from the time of Adam all the way to the time of Moses, even over those who did not break a specific command like Adam did.

And Paul goes on to say, but the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, the one man who allowed sin to enter the world, that would have been Adam. How much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many? Again, the gift of God is not like the result of one man's sin because the judgment resulted from one sin and brought condemnation.

But the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if by the trespass of the one man, that is Adam, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace? I want you to note that phrase. There is an ability to receive an abundance of grace.

How much more will those who receive the abundance of grace reign, and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ? Now we know from this that what Paul is saying, sin is so deadly that as a result of sin entering the world through Adam, death reigned because sin spread to all men. Death reigned because all men sinned and therefore all men died. That is, until Jesus Christ came, death reigned entirely from Adam until Jesus Christ.

But in Paul's mind, as deadly as he considered sin to be, listen, in Paul's mind, grace is far more powerful than sin. This is what I want to talk about this morning. Because several verses later, Paul states where sin abounded, and how far did sin abound? To all men.

Where sin abounded, grace super abounded. Amen. Far beyond even the reach of sin.

None of us disputes, do we? None of us disputes that sin has affected the whole world. We believe all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. However, how many of us are aware that God's grace is even more powerful than sin? If we have not understood grace in this way, we have a missing grace, not amazing grace.

Okay? We sing about amazing grace, but I have a feeling that many of us are missing the grace that Paul is talking about here in Romans chapter 5. But what is it that we're missing? Well, let's consider the statement of Paul more carefully. How much more, he said, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ? So let me ask you a question. Have you and I, have we received the abundance of grace? If we receive the abundance of grace, we should be reigning in life, right? According to Paul, if you receive the abundance of Christ, you're going to reign in life through Jesus Christ.

And do you know that people who are reigning in life are not victims? You can't be a victim currently oppressed and living as a victim and reigning in Christ at the same time. In other words, those who are actively receiving the abundance of Christ are not victims of what others have done to them, but they are

overcoming whatever has been done to them through the powerful grace of Christ. How many of us explain to others that the faults they see are the result of some trauma we have had happen to us or imposed on us, something some other person or some other church or some other family member did to us.

And that explains why we have these quirks that we do. That is a victim mentality. Does this sound familiar to you? I'm sorry, pastor, but if you only knew what I've been through, you would understand why I am the way I am.

You know, we live in a victim culture, don't we? You know, we're encouraged to open up about the injuries we have suffered, and sometimes it's good to open up about that. There are therapists and support groups designed to help those who've suffered abuse to deal with the life-altering effects that can happen as a result of trauma. We even have names for the effects of trauma, don't we? P.T.S. What does P.T.S. stand for? Post Traumatic Syndrome.

And we have P.T.S.D. Because if it goes on too long uncorrected, it becomes Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Doctors and therapists diagnose these syndromes as a disorder when they recognize that a person is still living as a victim of those injuries or abuse. You know, let me make something very clear.

Sympathy and therapy for the victims of abuse is often life-saving. I don't want to downplay the importance of that. They need help getting over the events that they've been traumatized by.

But the danger of sympathy and therapy is that the goal can be limited to only helping a person deal with it rather than overcome it. That's the problem. Sadly, this also describes too many Christians.

That's their understanding of grace. They see grace as helping them deal with living with the consequences of sin rather than overcoming sin and temptation by the power of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness for sin and freedom from sin are two different aspects of grace.

They're both a result of grace. But do you know both? Or just one? When we have fallen into sin, we need the comfort of forgiveness, don't we? But in order to overcome temptation and live free, not under sin's dominion, we don't need forgiveness. We need the power of Jesus Christ in us.

And this is the power, the power of grace that many are missing. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul relates his own struggle with chronic suffering. Therefore, in order, he says, to keep me from being conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, to torment me.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, you know this, my grace is sufficient for you. And what's the next statement? What follows that? For my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Whoa. Did you get that? Jesus Christ equated grace with power. Jesus Christ equated grace with power.

And the Greek word for power is *dunamis*. And the root idea of *dunamis* is ability. The ability to do.

Jesus Christ is literally telling Paul, my ability is made perfect in your weakness. Wow. And when Paul realized that Jesus wanted him fully aware of his own weakness, so that the Lord's ability would become the entire source of his strength, he declared, therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's ability may rest upon me.

This is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, and in difficulties. Did you catch that? I delight in. This is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in difficulties.

I delight in distresses. I delight in hardships. I delight in persecutions, because they make me weak.

And when I am weak, I lean upon His ability in me. That's it. In another familiar passage, Paul explained the secret to living a Christ-empowered, contented life.

He called it the secret of contentment. I have found the secret, he said, of contentment. And he said, I'm not saying this because I'm in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

I know what it is to be in need, he said. I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Here's the secret. I can do all things through Christ who gives me ability. It's not about what I can't do.

It's about I can do all things through Jesus Christ's ability working in me. A more literal translation of the very last phrase would be this. For all things I have strength through the one enabling me.

Jesus Christ is the great enabler. He's not just a comforter for the victim. He is the one who shares his own God-dynamic ability to make his own power perfect in our weakness.

When we finally begin to give thanks in everything and to count it all joy whenever we face trials of various kinds, we have begun to be more conscious of God's ability at work in us than the difficulty of the circumstances we're in. Did you catch that? When you begin to give thanks, thank you for the difficulty, thank you for the distress, thank you for the persecution, thank you for this trial, that means you are more aware that Christ's power in you is everything you need for this situation. And that comes out as giving thanks rather than murmuring and complaining.

The awareness that God is at work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure is the key to doing everything without grumbling or complaining that ye may become blameless and pure children of God amongst whom you shine like stars in the universe in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation. When we are more aware of God working in us than others working against us, listen very carefully, when we become more aware that God is working in us than we are that others working against us, we blame others less and bless God more. You see the difference? You blame people when you're focused on what they're doing to you.

You bless God when you're focusing upon the ability he's working in you. And that's what it takes to live a life without murmuring or complaining. And this is what sets Christians apart from the crooked and perverse generation we live in.

Anyone can find someone to blame, right? Anyone, any lost person can do that, but very few people never grumble or never complain. That's why they stand out like a star surrounded by darkness. Being a victim, I want you to think with me about this, being a victim is like succumbing to the gravity of evil.

You know what gravity is, right? It's that force that pulls things down. See, gravity is a force of universal attraction according to mass and distance. The question is, what are we more attracted to? What has more power over you? Things pulling you down or Christ holding you up? Which is it? Sin's gravitational force to grumble and complain, or is it God's ability working in us to bless and give thanks? Those who

begin to experience the power of God working in them are described as shining stars, not whining stars.

Okay? A shining star is different than a shining planet. Do you realize that? A shining star is different than a shining planet. How is that? A star shines because of the internal dynamic nuclear combustion that is exploding internally and radiating light and energy and heat from the star.

But you know what a planet is? A planet is merely reflecting the light of the closest star. There's no dynamic power going on in it. And sadly, there are believers who are not stars.

They're not shining like stars. They're just reflecting the light of some other believer in their life. They have no power of their own.

It's a sad state to live in. One way we can know whether we have the power of God at work in us or whether we're just reflecting the distant light from some other believer in our life is this. Listen to your own words.

Listen to yourself, especially whenever you get your feelings hurt or you find yourself in painful circumstances. The language of victims is filled with finding fault and laying blame. The language of the overcomer is filled with giving thanks and praise to God.

Actually, you know what the overcomer with the Christ power in them, what they do, what so sets them apart? Sam, when others curse them, they bless. When others hate them, they love, they do good. And even when others spitefully use them, they pray for them.

And you know what that makes them? Jesus said, these people are the true sons of his Father in heaven because only the power of God can enable a person to respond that way. Do you know that not all grace is the same? Have you figured that out? Jude warned that certain destructive heresies would slip into the church undetected through men who bring teachings changing the real meaning of God's grace into something that was never intended. Have you figured that out? What would men change the original meaning of grace into? This is what Jude indicated.

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people. For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among us. They are ungodly men, men who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only sovereign and Lord.

Now what did Jude mean by changing the grace of God into a license for immorality? I want you to follow me very closely. A more literal translation of that phrase would be this. I get this from translating to Greek.

The word translated license comes from the Greek word aselgia. And aselgia means a lack of restraint. So Jude is warning that ungodly men have slipped into churches without being detected and they're changing the meaning of grace into a remedy for those who claim they can't stop sinning.

That's what the person who's constantly failing needs. They just need grace to be more forgiveness, more forgiveness, more forgiveness, more forgiveness. And they limit it to that.

That's not what it was originally intended. There's far more to grace than forgiveness. Jesus said my grace is power.

Power. What happens when men do that is they make grace to be the mercy of God that covers every single fault, every time, all the times that you never can help yourself. So you never have to feel too bad about it.

I mean, we all sin every single day, don't we? We're all nothing but failures. And aren't we grateful that the grace of God covers it all? Is that really the whole grace of God? That we're all just a bunch of failures? And the grace of God is like the heavenly band-aid that just fixes it all every single time? There's a lot of teaching out there just like that. The idea of grace does wonders.

And I'm going to affirm this. The idea of grace as mercy and forgiveness does wonders for soothing a guilty conscience. And that's necessary at times.

But it does very little to help a person overcome temptation and change. This is the primary reason that this teaching of grace being just covers every time you fail. It covers every time you fail.

It covers every time you fail. The reason that has become so predominant in today's church, it's a pretty comforting message, isn't it? The person who keeps cheating on his wife, God's grace is there to forgive you, brother. The person who keeps beating his wife and abusing his wife and losing it and blowing up like a volcano, God's grace is there for you, brother.

The person who keeps getting fired because he's irresponsible at work, God's grace is there for you, brother. That's pretty popular, isn't it? You can see why you would actually want to hear that kind of teaching about grace. And you may not want to hear the other aspect of grace being God's power to help dynamically change your life.

So you just heap to yourselves teachers that focus on that one thing. God forgives you, brother. God forgives you, brother.

It's happening. Just like the scripture said, it would happen. It is this incorrect meaning of grace that leads to an ungodly lack of restraint.

And this idea of the lack of restraint should indicate something to us about the true meaning of grace. If the wrong meaning of grace is something that leads to a lack of restraint, what would the true meaning of grace actually lead to? A proper godly restraint. And let's see if that's what the scripture says.

In Paul's letter to Titus, chapter 2, verse 11, For the grace of God that saves men, or that saves all men, has appeared, and it trains us. The Greek word is paidouo. It trains us like a father trains a child.

The true grace of God that saves all men has appeared, and it trains us to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age. So the true grace of God doesn't lead to a lack of restraint. The true grace of God trains a person to live a godly life, restraining worldly lust, denying them, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly.

Isn't that what Jesus said? If anyone would follow me, let him do what? Deny himself. How do you think we're going to be able to deny ourselves? By the power of His grace. True grace.

And it goes on. Listen to me finish it. The true grace teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing and the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem

us out of all wickedness, and to purify to Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what's good.

That's what real grace does. It completely retrains a person how to live a godly life. And if you make it all about forgiveness, it just leads people to living without restraint.

True grace teaches, which is the word for child training, the believer to live in a godly restraint by denying ungodly and worldly lust. Okay? Merely confessing. I want you to listen very carefully.

Merely confessing I couldn't help myself is not being honest. You're just deceiving yourself if you think that's being honest. Oh, I'm just being real.

I just can't help it. I'm not trying to pretend. I'm not trying to be somebody I'm not.

I just give in. That's just me. Really.

That's not full honesty if you don't go ahead and include the whole story. You know, the whole story is this. Despite the fact that God never allows me to be tempted when I'm able to bear.

Despite the fact that every single time I'm tempted, God provides a way of escape that I can bear up under it. Despite the fact that God himself lives inside of me through the Holy Spirit, and his power is made perfect in my weakness. Despite that he is always there with me, I couldn't help myself.

Is that how you put it? You want to say it? That's being honest. Despite everything God has done to provide everything I need for life and godliness, I still can't help myself. I don't hear people saying that.

I hear a lot of empty confessions about I couldn't help it. And that's not true humility. And that's not true honesty.

That's just excusing yourself. We've already proven that our great, great, great ancestor was like Adam, right? How many of us were like Adam? All right, you got it. We're all there, right? When are we going to start proving that Jesus Christ lives inside of us, and that his power is made perfect even in our weakness? You know what happens to this? Some churches spend so many time on the corrupt nature or the fallen nature or total depravity that they're more conscious of how the corruption that came from them through Adam than the grace that comes to them through Christ.

And that's just, that's imbalanced. And that doesn't lead to an overcoming life. Grace is the power of Jesus Christ, his dynamic ability at work in our lives.

This is what he told his disciples to wait for, didn't he? You remember this? Right before he left, his disciples were more curious about, he had told them he was leaving, and they were more curious about when he was coming back. Remember? When are you going to come back? You remember what he told them? It's not for you to know the times and dates that are set by my Father, but you will receive power, ability. That's the key.

You will receive my ability when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you know what receiving the ability of Christ does for us? That's what makes us witnesses. Witnesses that we have been born of Jesus.

We've already witnessed long enough that we came from Adam, right? It's time that we start witnessing that we've been born of Jesus Christ. Born from above. And that we have the Spirit of God in us.

And that we have this power in an earthen vessel to show that the excellency of the power is of God and not of us. Because only Jesus Christ living inside a person can make that person so different that he stands out like a star. You can pick him out of a crowd of a hundred people.

This person lives a godly life, an honorable life, a trustworthy life. He's a man of noble character. He walks in integrity and honesty and uprightness.

He knows Jesus. It so sets you apart when you live that way. And others take notice of your faith.

You know when Christians accept failure, or let me put it this way, when Christians accept constant failure, we're all going to slip up. But continual failure is another thing. When Christians accept that constant failure is simply a part of living in this sinful world, we remind each other with this wonderful phrase, we're not perfect, just forgiven.

You know what the people of the world call that? Hypocrites. That's what it looks like to them. You say Christ is in you, and you have no different than I am.

That's not the testimony we want. And sadly, so many Christians have lived that way that the world says, it doesn't even make a difference in you, why should I want it? Now, you know what draws them at first? Guilt. When they realize how bad they've been and they need that ministry, they're drawn.

But you know the wonderful comfort that initial forgiveness and mercy can do to someone? That wears off. And if they're not brought into learning how to tap into and live in the power of the Holy Spirit and Christ's ability in them, a lot of people just get worn out and give it up. And they just say, I can't do it.

It didn't work for me. I tried that, and it didn't work. There's a lot of people out there who've stopped going to church.

They don't read their Bible. They don't claim to be a Christian. They may still hold the idea that there's a God up there, but in their minds, it didn't help them when they needed it the most.

And that is sad. You know, never let anyone take away from you. Now, I don't want to be unbalanced.

You never let anyone take away from you that if you do stumble, I don't want it to be a habit, but if you do fall, the grace of Christ is there to cover your sin and to show you mercy. If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Don't ever let anyone take that away from you.

But never let anyone limit the grace of God to only that. Especially don't let him turn it into some blanket forgiveness that ends up leading to lack of restraint. Well, God's just going to forgive me.

I know I should be faithful to my wife, but that secretary shows me more attention than she does, and I just can't help it. I give in to her, but I'm still going to heaven because God's for merciful. Oh, yeah.

What a wonderful testimony that is. It happens, y'all. We're laughing, but it happens.

There are people who are just, they're in church Sunday morning even though they were drunk beyond their gourd on Saturday night, and they're sitting here grateful that the grace of God is there to forgive them one more time, even though when they've lived that way for about a dozen years. It's just so sad. True grace is like the remedy for sin in the old hymn, Rock of Ages.

You remember that hymn? You remember the remedy? There's a remedy for sin in the Rock of Ages. Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee. Let the water and the blood from thy wounded side which flowed be of sin the double cure.

The double cure, save from wrath and make me pure. True grace saves from wrath, but it also makes a person pure. Okay.

Only those receiving the abundance of grace will reign in life. And those who reign in life, let me put it this way, make sure you understand this. Those who are reigning in life through receiving the abundance of grace, they've been victimized too.

They're not reigning because they haven't been victimized. No one reigns in life that hasn't been victimized. They've been victimized just like everyone else.

But rather than choosing to live the rest of their life as a victim, they've turned to Christ and they've received His grace, and His grace has made them overcomers rather than victims still. So they can relate to others. They remember what it's like to have been abused and to have been hurt.

I mean, our Lord knows what it's like to be abused. Does the Apostle Paul know what it's like to be abused? The man who was beaten, five times he took 40 lashes minus one. That means with the Roman whip, with the leather throngs and the pieces of glass or bone or metal on the ends, five times he had 39 lashes.

Three times he was beaten with rods. Once he was stoned. And this is the person who said in everything, I give thanks.

Not coming just from me. This is coming from a man who said, I will endure all things for the sake of Christ's church. Wow, what a wonderful example.

Paul knew what it meant to suffer. So let me encourage you. Don't miss grace.

If you're not experiencing the ability of Christ, training you to say no to worldly lust and ungodliness, you're in danger of what Paul warned Timothy to stay away from. You realize that Paul, even then, told Timothy that there are certain people that he should avoid? That doesn't sound very Christian, does it? You should avoid certain people? If you read very carefully 2 Timothy 3, you will see that there were people that Paul said loved pleasure more than they loved God. While they had a form of godliness.

But they denied something. Do you remember what they denied? The power. They denied the power of godliness.

You know how you can deny the power of godliness? With this false, humble, supposedly confession, I couldn't help it. I'm just weak. Can't help myself.

That's denying the power of the Holy Spirit in us to produce a godly life. I feel like a coach this morning. Do you think that? I feel like telling you, all right, come on, we're just beginning to work out here.

No, we're not quitting. It's time to run laps. No.

It's... This is not about always feeling good. A coach that never wants to push his players always is concerned that they just feel good and had a good time. You think they're going to have a very good

winning record? It's that coach that is willing to push you to the limits, you know? And don't we have someone to follow as an example? Didn't Paul say, follow my example as I follow Christ? And didn't Paul say, I forget everything that lies behind.

And I actually strain. I strain toward what lies ahead of me. I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection.

That's what I want to encourage you to do. I want you to discover the powerful ability of Christ to say no to temptation and to live in this world a holy, righteous, and godly life. That'll prove that even though your earthly vessel is just as weak as mine, because let me tell you that, there's not a single person here whose body just makes you a better Christian than the other guy.

It has nothing to do with the differences between our body. It's the differences between our faith. All things are possible to him who believes.

And if you believe, Christ Jesus lives in you. And His ability can be made perfect in your weakness. And you can begin to demonstrate that even though you have just as weak a body as everybody else in the world, the all-surpassing power that keeps you and makes you so different is Christ Jesus in you.

That's genuine grace. Right there. Okay?

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