

The Grace of God

by Bob Hoekstra

The sermon explores the concept of the grace of God, emphasizing its role in justification, sanctification, and the transformation of lives.

Duration: 59:16

Scripture: Acts 20:32, Romans 1:17, Romans 5:2, Colossians 2:6, 2 Timothy 2:1, Titus 2:11-12, Hebrews 13:9, James 4:6

Topics: "Growing In Grace", "Faith And Humility"

Description

This sermon focuses on the importance of growing in the grace of God, emphasizing the need to be established in grace for daily living. It explores the concepts of humility and faith as relational realities that develop as we grow in our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The sermon highlights the access to grace through faith and the necessity of relying on the strength and power of Jesus Christ for living a life pleasing to Him.

Transcript

We are ready to continue in our series of studies and growing in the grace of God. We'll be looking at study number two of six today, carrying that title, The Grace of God. Let's pray together as we begin our study.

Lord, as we open up your word, we look to you by your Holy Spirit to open our hearts and enlighten our minds. We pray that you would build us up in the faith and work your good will in and through our lives. Lord, reveal your glorious grace and show us how to appropriate that for a daily walk of growth and service and fruitfulness.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Study number two, The Grace of God, in our Growing in the Grace of God series.

We will start by way of introduction, reconnect where we were last study in Romans 6.14. Romans 6.14. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you're not under law but under grace. This is declaration of every believer. We're not under law but under grace.

Our first study in this series was entitled, The Law of God. Oh, it is the law of God that tutors us to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We're not under law but we are under grace.

According to this verse, God's grace is God's plan to keep sin from dominating our lives. See that? Sin shall not have dominion over you. Why? Upon what basis? For or because you're not under law but under grace.

It is the grace of God that removes us out from under the domination of sin. Both in the sense of justification, we by faith believe in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are declared righteous in God's sight. We're not under law measurement with God for righteous standing before Him, but we're under grace.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ covering our sin and making us righteous in Christ. You'd think that the law would be a way, at least now for Christians, to get out from under the recurring, dominating, desiring influence of sin to take control of our lives. You just have high standards and severe consequences for violating them, and surely people will sin less and less under that arrangement.

Well, it doesn't work that way, does it? The law reveals sin, but the law is not designed to take people out from under the domination, the dominion of sin. You remember Hebrews 7, 18 and 19, we looked at last time, which says, the law made nothing perfect. Grace, that's how God gets us out from under the dominion of law, in justification, and then we'll see today, likewise also in sanctification.

The law, it's not designed to transform lives. It's designed to tell people their lives need to be transformed. Another way to think about the law in the context of our study on grace is this.

The law describes what we, believers, are now seeking Christ to do in us. Because the law is a picture of holiness. The law says, be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.

We want to live holy lives. God wants us to walk in holiness and godliness. The law describes that, but it doesn't have any enabling power to bring that to pass.

The law is describing what we are now seeking Christ himself to do in and through our lives. So, with that, by way of introduction, our first heading, Grace, Not Law, John chapter 1. Grace, Not Law. Some amazing verses here early in the Gospel of John on the grace of God.

John 1 verse 17. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Thank God for Moses, great man of God.

Thank God for the law, strategic part of his revelation. But thank God he did not stop working and revealing when he gave the law to Moses to give to the people. The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

The enabling grace of God that brings the truth of God into actuality in our own personal testimony and experience. All of that comes through the Lord Jesus Christ. And verse 16 had stated here, and of his fullness, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He came full of grace and truth, verse 14. And of his fullness, we have all received, and grace for grace or grace upon grace. It is the will of God to have people partake of the fullness of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And every believer has received out of that fullness. First there was forgiveness, and then newness of life, and then growth, and victory, and fruitfulness, and all of those things. They're grace upon grace.

It is the will of God to build one layer of his gracious work on top of another layer of his gracious work, until we have a pattern of growth, and godliness, and victory, and effectiveness. It's by grace. Grace is not just God's willingness to receive sinners unto himself.

Oh, that is a critical part of grace. That's where we start out with the grace of God. That's the door into the grace of God.

But it's not just God's long-suffering, patient kindness, provision for forgiveness, and inviting us into his family. That's just the first layer of grace. God wants to work grace upon grace, upon grace, upon grace, upon grace.

There's no limit to his grace. We can be drawing upon it all the days of our pilgrimage. Grace upon grace.

What is the grace of God? What is it? We typically use the phrase, unmerited favor. And it's a very good terminology to use. It's limited by its measure of words even, but it's good.

Unmerited favor. Favor, a kind inclination of God to do good toward us, and it's unmerited. It's undeserved.

It's unearned and unearnable. But that's not an exhaustive definition of grace. It's hard to put an exhaustive definition together where you've got the whole thing said.

It's too big. It's too much. But through the years, at times, I've sat down, sometimes with pen in hand and blank paper and a few verses on grace.

More consistently through the years, on a laptop with software and a blank Word document. And, in fact, I wrote right across the top, a description of grace. Grace described, not defined where you exhaustively give the scope of it.

You describe it, a description of grace. And here is one of the more recent attempts to do that. A description of grace.

The grace of God is God freely providing for us, as we humbly trust in the Lord Jesus, all that we need for growth and godliness and service, all that we need to walk in what we are commanded to do and to become, all that our hearts now yearn to enter into for His glory. Yet, all of these spiritual realities could never be deserved by us, could never be earned by us, and could never be produced by us. All of that is accurate and true about the grace of God.

That's not exhaustive. There's much more you could say. But all of that is true about the grace of God.

Sometimes people put the acrostics together on different spiritual truths. And grace is a good one to do that. You make a statement, a phrase, and the words begin with G-R-A-C-E.

And here is a common one perhaps you've heard. God's riches at Christ's expense. I think that's a very outstanding, quick way to think of the greatness, the majesty, the bigness of the grace of God.

The next one on the handout sheet there is one a dear pastor friend from Australia actually came up with when he was out with us at the Bible College campus teaching the extended Growing in the Grace of God series the Lord let us develop in conjunction with this six-part seminar. One he wrote one day while we were studying on grace and gave to me. And I told him I liked it a lot.

It blessed me and I wanted to pass it on to others. And again, G-R-A-C-E. Glorious realities as Christ empowers.

I think that just strikes at the very heart of what grace is all about. So, grace upon grace. That's what the Lord wants to work in our lives.

It's a matter of grace, not law when it comes to transforming lives. And Galatians 2.21 has a very profound input at this point. Galatians 2.21. Paul wrote as moved by the Holy Spirit.

I do not set aside the grace of God for if righteousness comes through the law then Christ died in vain. What a great insight that is from heaven. God help us not to set aside the grace of God practically by implication.

Thinking that righteousness could maybe come to our lives through the law. That is us reading the law and trying to perform up to the level of the law. If that's our thinking then we are considering that Christ's death was a vain thing.

A useless thing. An unnecessary thing. A non-essential thing.

Think of it. The Father would not have sent his dear beloved Son to come and die for us on a cruel cross if righteousness were available through the law. If you could have righteousness personally available through the law and performing up to it certainly the focus would be here's the law, try harder.

Here's the law, do more. Here's the law, be better. No.

That's not the way of righteousness. Jesus is the way of righteousness. And it necessitated his death on a cross, burial and resurrection.

Grace, not law. That's God's remedy and provision for the needs of humanity. Okay, let's take that information and just meditate on it for a second.

Grace upon grace. That's how God wants to work. Grace upon grace.

And grace is not the same as forgiveness. It's related but it's not the same. Early on as a believer, early on as a pastor, early on pastoring in the 1960s and early 70s, when I would hear people speak of forgiveness I would think, oh, the grace of God, it's so good.

And when I heard people speaking of grace, I would think, oh, forgiveness is so wonderful. In my own thinking, I use the two terms as totally interchangeable. You can do that with matters that are identical.

You hear one, you can think of the other. You think of the other, you can speak of the one. But it doesn't work that way with grace and forgiveness.

I appreciated God's grace, which I thought was His forgiveness for me. That's great. But they're not identical.

Grace and forgiveness, they're both majestic, they're both great. But here's the point. One of those two is far, far greater than the other one.

Now, which one is the greater between grace and forgiveness? Grace is the greater. That doesn't diminish forgiveness, it just acknowledges that forgiveness is our first personal taste of the grace of God applied to

our lives by faith. That's just openers, that's just where God bountifully pours out grace to start us out with Him.

But there's much more grace yet to come after we've experienced the forgiving grace of God. In fact, that's what these studies are basically concentrating on. The measures of grace that are yet available after you have tasted of the grace forgiveness of God.

Now, let's take these truths and sort of think them through again as we will a number of times in our studies. First, God's justifying grace, then God's sanctifying grace. And you might wonder why we are going to repeat that pattern.

Well, a number of reasons. It's good to be reminded of justifying truth, even among the justified saints of God, those already declared not guilty and righteous in Christ. It's good to think of that, that good work God did to bring us to that point.

Another reason to think of justifying grace and sanctifying grace is that the way we are justified, biblically speaking, is also the pattern by which we are sanctified. We're not justified by grace and then sanctified by law. We're not justified by faith and then sanctified by works, though the grace of God will bring us great victory, growth, and effective works.

So it's just good to tie those two together. As Colossians 2.6 again puts it, As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him. The way you started, that's the way you must continue.

So first, God's justifying grace, Romans 3.24. We are those being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Justification is freely given by the grace of God. We are those justified freely by His grace.

We didn't earn our state of justification, that is, declared holy, righteous, not guilty before God. We didn't receive that any other way than by grace through faith. That was given to us when we trusted in a person and the work He did on our behalf.

Ephesians 1.7 on justifying grace. Ephesians 1.7 In Him, in Christ, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. Justification, it's according to the riches of God's grace.

Yes, it includes the forgiveness of sins and the redemption price paid by His shed blood. But here's the key phrase for us in this study. This was according to the riches of His grace.

According to, not exhaustive of, but just according to, that is, appropriately in line with. There are treasures untold of the grace of God to draw upon after one has drawn upon the justifying grace of forgiveness. So, God's means of justifying us, giving us a not guilty verdict when we know we were guilty on the basis of our transgression of the law of God.

But it was by the grace of God, according to the riches of His grace. And really, the study is designed to go on looking and searching out the riches of the grace of God in addition to justifying grace. Our next heading after God's justifying grace, God's sanctifying grace.

Let's look at Titus 2. Great set of verses there on God's sanctifying grace. Where do you go in the Word of God to get insight on God's sanctifying grace? Well, it's amazing how many places you can go. I didn't

even know to look for it in the Scriptures for some years as a young believer and then early on pastoring.

I just about related justification and grace as, again, identical. Two different ways to say the same thing. But they're not.

Again, justification is glorious. You can't begin with God without that. That's the starting point.

But grace is greater than that. God's sanctifying grace appears in verses like this. Titus 2, verses 11 and 12.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. Okay, that's talking about the justifying grace of God, bringing salvation. It's now appeared.

Christ has come. The message is getting out in the known world. For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

Teaching us that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. What is it that is teaching us about ungodliness and worldly lusts and we should deny them, stay away from them, renounce them, and that rather we should live in this direction, soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age? What's teaching us that? Well, the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared teaching us. It's the grace of God that's instructing us.

The grace of God is God's insight on how to grow in godliness. That's what sanctification is about. Ongoing, day by day, progressive sanctification we're speaking of.

Remember this great verse? 2 Peter 3.18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. What a great conclusion of this very meaty epistle of 2 Peter.

And the phrase that is right on target for our consideration but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are to grow in grace, that is, by means of the grace of God. We're to grow in His grace, grow by means of His grace.

We're to develop spiritually, in other words, by the impact of the ongoing grace of God in our lives. Here's another place. Some of us have looked at this recently.

Acts 20. Acts 20.32 So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Here, that would mean, that word sanctified, past tense, who are set apart to the glory of God, the will of God, the purposes of God.

So, two things the word of God's grace can do. And by the way, that is a very fascinating description of the word of God. The word of His grace.

It is in the word of God that we learn about the grace of God. And it is true that the word of God is characterized by the grace of God. And then this great phrase also, which is able.

One of the many verses in Scripture which highlights the ability of the word of God. The capacity of the word of God to make things happen. You know, in the religions of the world, their so-called holy books.

There is no enabling power in those books. There is just a lot of confusions and speculations and imaginations of man in them. Fueled by the enemy of our souls.

But the word of God, it is so different. It is from God, it is the word of God. Holy men of old were moved by the Spirit when they recorded what they did for our benefit.

And in those words, in the word of God, in the Bible, there is this spiritual capacity to impact lives. There is an ability there which is able to do things. The religions of the world, the philosophies of man, they hinge on the ability of man.

The message of the true and living God, the Christian faith, the biblical truth, is that the words of God, what He has to say, they have an ability to make things happen in the lives of those who embrace those words. The God who spoke when there was nothing and said, let there be light and let there be, basically, let there be a created universe. Just the ability of His words to make it happen.

In the word of God, we have that voice, we have that Lord, we have that God speaking into our lives where there was nothing but spiritual darkness and nothing good at all. And we listen and receive and believe those words. And the word of His grace is able.

Here we are told the word of His grace is able to build you up and give you an inheritance. Two things the word of God here is shown as able to do. First, give you an inheritance, then build you up.

One of these two abilities of the word of His grace here is about spiritual birth. The second one is about spiritual growth. The word of His grace, which is able to give you an inheritance.

We who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are now joint heirs with Christ. We are among those who are the meek, who are going to inherit the earth. We have an everlasting kingdom to share with the Lord God Almighty and His Son, our Lord and Savior.

We share in all that, how? By the word of His grace. Through new birth. That's how you get an inheritance.

Think on the family of man. To have an inheritance in a family, you need to be born into that family. If you're born into that family, you have an inheritance share in what belongs to that family.

Well, we've been born again into the family of God. And we have a shared inheritance with the King of kings and Lord of lords. And how do we get that? By the word of His grace.

Which included the gospel that came to us. We heard of that grace of forgiveness. We called upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

We were born again into the family of God. And we're joint heirs with Christ. All of that coming to us through the word of His grace.

What an ability that is in the word of His grace. If that's all we ever understood, what an impact that has had upon our lives for time and eternity. But the verse adds immediately another aspect.

It's also able to do another thing. Second thing, it's able to build you up. They're mentioned in reverse order.

I took them sort of in the spiritual sequence of development practically. You first get born again by the word of His grace into the family of God or a joint heir, a child of God. And then what's left is to be built up, to be maturing, to be transformed in the things of God.

Well, the wonderful thing is the same word of His grace that was able to bring us to salvation and into the everlasting inheritance of the children of God. That same word of His grace is able now to build us up, to bring us through progressive stages of spiritual development and maturity. It's not something we're making happen.

Oh, we're totally engaged in the process. But we're like the seekers and the receivers. We're the ones who are needy.

The Lord is the bountiful provider. We're listening to His word and seeking after Him. And He is building us up by the word of His grace.

That second aspect of the ability of the word of His grace is day-by-day sanctification, edification, growing, serving, maturing in spiritual victory and fruitfulness. Well, there are a few places where God's sanctifying grace is dealt with in Scripture. Here's a phenomenal one.

If you haven't spent some time meditating, considering this one. Hebrews 13, 9. Amazing verse. Great insight into God's sanctifying grace.

Hebrews 13, 9. Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines, for it is good that the heart be established by grace. Not with foods, as religious diet. Not with foods which have not profited those who've been occupied with them.

You know, those who've been keeping religious diets, even found in the law, haven't profited them in the sense of doing what the grace of God can do. Revealed here in this verse. By the way, a warning starts out the verse.

There are a lot of warnings in the Bible. Colossians 1.28 says, Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man. Every person needs to be warned and taught.

And many in the church world, many in the true born-again body of Christ, often avoid the warnings of the Scripture. Especially in this day and age, in the seeker-sensitive American church growth movement, you know, where you modify the message, adjust the message, and you try to take out all those elements that might possibly offend anyone or make them feel kind of uncomfortable, you know, and you're just going for that kind of positive religious glow, you know, where people, hey, I like going there, that was fun, you know. But the Word of God is replete with warnings.

God knows we need them. Can you imagine being a parent raising children and never giving them a warning? Well, I guess you can't imagine that these days. That's kind of a popular philosophy.

But can you imagine it making any sense, you know, that you love your kids, you want to help your kids, and guard them, and develop them, and show them the way, and you never warn them? Well, you're just setting them up for disasters waiting to happen. Well, our Heavenly Father is the perfect parent. We're His children.

And out of love for us and concern to guard and guide us, He lovingly gives us all kinds of warnings in the Scripture. We must not neglect them. They're kind of like the law.

They alert us, and they give us a do and a don't, but they tutor us toward the final, the ultimate resource and help, and that's the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The warning here? Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. And the verse is going to go on to talk about God's way to spiritually stabilize and mature and transform lives.

Well, a warning first. Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. Boy, this was written in the first century.

It was needed then. You think it's needed now? Absolutely. Absolutely.

Oh, there are so many strange doctrines out in the church world. Strange doctrines. I think of the so-called Toronto Blessing, which developed ultimately into congregations worshipping so they thought with all kinds of sounds and growls and shrieks and squeals.

Someone gave me a cassette tape one day some years ago of a church actually in the area some miles from here and wanted me to hear their recorded worship service. And the leader, it was some conventional worship music that was quite biblical. And then the worship leader, one of the pastors said, Join me in prayer.

And now, Lord, we ask you for an outpouring of your special blessing for this church and the movement these churches represent. Fall upon us. Now, Lord, we pray.

I mean, it was like someone grabbed the knob on the television and switched it over to the National Geographic channel. I mean, every kind of howl and bark and shriek and squeal that you can imagine just erupted. I was actually driving in the car, and I swerved a little.

I mean, it was frightening. Don't be carried about with various and strange doctrines. There are not only strange doctrines out there.

They come in all kinds of variety packs, it seems. And I really believe that primarily in a biblical sense, the use of this word strange is not weird. Weird doctrines, it would certainly include weird doctrines, but the word strange when it's tied to doctrines biblically basically means don't get caught up with things foreign to the Word of God.

In other words, you can't find them in the Word of God. They're strange. They're strangers to the Scriptures.

They're outside. They're introduced into the church world from outside. So don't be carried about with various and strange doctrines.

Why is that so important? Because or for it is good that the heart be established by grace. There's our subject in this class, growing in grace. See, it's bad to get caught up in strange doctrines.

It doesn't glorify God. It doesn't transform a life. It's bad.

But here's what's good. It is good that the heart be established by grace. The Christian life, the Christian life is a heart issue.

The religions of the world, again, they're sort of an external religious performance image kind of issue. The Christian faith, it's a heart issue. In Proverbs, we're told to guard your heart diligently.

From it flow the issues of life. The life we live that is visibly seen, it flows out of the heart. Jesus said, from the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

The Christian life is a heart issue. It starts out of sight of everyone but God himself. And it actually gets established and develops out of sight from everyone except God himself.

Oh, eventually, what's going on in there, it's going to show up in the things we say, the things we do, the things we don't say and don't do. But it's a heart issue. And when you see a professing Christian that is unstable, you know, they're running hot and cold.

They're here one day, they're gone tomorrow. There's spiritual heart trouble there. And here's the good remedy.

It is good that the heart be established by grace. Now, how do we know that this verse is a sanctification verse, not a justification verse? How do we know that this verse is not talking about new birth and forgiveness, but it's talking about ongoing growth and development? How do we know? Other verses around it certainly will help, as someone just mentioned. But right in the verse, there's one term.

There's one term that makes it clear that it's a sanctification verse. It is good that the heart be established by grace. See, that's not a justification term.

You don't get established at justification. You get born again. In other words, you don't get a mature growing heart at justification because it's talking about the heart being established.

You get a new heart. Established has to do with maturing, stability, growth. See, when someone is born again, they get a new heart.

And Christ Jesus comes to reside in there. They're born again. The prophets of old spoke.

God said, I will give you a new heart. Take that hard, stony heart out of you and give you a soft, fleshy, not carnal, but pliable heart. That's what happens at new birth.

There's a change inside. Yeah, immediately a change inside. Anyone's in Christ, he's a new creation.

The old things have passed away. New things have come. But established, that's not that kind of word.

Established means there's ongoing growth that you can look at and see stability developing. God's blessed my dear, dear wife, four decades plus, and myself with grandchildren, 11 of them. And we just visited some of them out of state.

And I'm thinking right now of the littlest one there, three years old. It was clear that he was alive, that he had a physical, pumping human heart. He was alive.

But no one would accuse that sweet little guy of being stabilized. Go from heights of joy to depths of despair quicker than you can snap your finger. Well, we're kind of like that spiritually when we're born again.

There's the joy of the Lord and it's wonderful and all. People can tell we're born again, we love the Lord. But stability, that's not the word they're talking about.

You have to get established, stabilized, matured, grounded, anchored. And how does that happen? For it is good that the heart be established by grace. Yes, it's the grace of God that gives us a new heart in conversion and justification and new birth.

It's also the ongoing applied grace of God as taught in the scriptures and received by God's children that stabilizes our inner man, matures us. We're talking about day by day progressive sanctification. Here's another place where sanctifying grace, transforming grace you could call it, is found.

In 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 1. This is a great verse. 2 Timothy 2 verse 1. You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Okay, I ask you.

Is this a verse about justifying grace or sanctifying grace? Absolutely sanctifying. This is not about new birth, this is about growth. The Apostle Paul, led by the Spirit of God to write to Pastor Timothy and say to him, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

He's not saying, Pastor Tim, I think it's time you got a real strong case of forgiveness, salvation and new birth. He was already a fruitful pastor, a godly young man. He's talking about his day by day life in ministry.

He's urging Timothy, be strong in, that is, by means of the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And by the way, have you noticed the number of times that the grace of God is tied directly into a person? The Lord Jesus Christ. It's not just principles and concepts, though the grace of God has principles and concepts we can learn.

But they're all about realities that are found in a person. It's the grace that is in Christ Jesus. I used to be kind of, you know, hard line, dry letter of the law, now I'm a gracious person.

I'm living under the grace of God. Well, yeah, but let's go beyond that. What's behind all that? If that is happening, where did that come from and how do you grow in it? That grace that changes our lives is found in a person.

It was true with justification, right? We didn't cry out to God on the basis of some principle, really. We said, Lord Jesus, forgive me, a sinner. Lord Jesus, pour out your grace upon me, was what we were basically asking.

We know we were coming to a person, not just to a principle. It's the grace that is in Christ Jesus. In a few moments, as we conclude, we'll come back to that.

That's a huge, gigantic issue. The Christian life of service and growth. The way it's described here in 2 Timothy 2. Real reminder of why we need the grace of God.

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Verse 2, the discipling ministry. That's why we need grace.

And the things you have heard from me among many witnesses. Commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. It is great to disciple others and to be disciplined by others.

It's one of our great callings. Jesus said, go make disciples in all the world. All the nations.

Making disciples, real followers of the Lord Jesus. That is a privilege. It is also a challenge.

You pour out your heart and life with someone, into someone. There's ups and downs and disappointments. And they progress and they stumble and they veer.

It is a challenge. How do you sustain the process? Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Discipling people take spiritual strength.

You have to find it all the time. In the same place, the Lord Jesus Christ. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life. That he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. Brethren, when we turn to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we found new life in Christ. When we were brought into the family of God. We were not signing up for a religious country club.

No. We were answering God's call to enlist in an army. We are at war.

I mean this planet has always been the scene of a raging war. From the day the devil slithered into the Garden of Eden. And the war is raging.

Did you notice it yesterday? Across the nation. Local and national. People being chosen.

Propositions being voted on. And some, you look at the end result. You go, wow, how did that happen? Well there is a war going on.

And everywhere you turn. The world, the flesh and the devil. Are trying to stomp down the people of God.

You know. It is a battle out there. And it comes at us in all kinds of private little personal ways.

And then big national and international ways. It is a warfare. I tell you.

The God of this world. He is active. He is whipped.

He is defeated. There is no way he can win. But he will not stop scrapping.

Until he is thrown in the pit. And then the lake of fire. We are soldiers.

There is hardship involved in that. One of our sons is an air force pilot. Been deployed in battle a few times.

Oh my, my. He could not say too much about it. A lot of it was special forces.

But just the little hints and the big picture. You go, son, I don't want you out there in that dangerous place. That is what your Papa's heart feels like.

We didn't say anything like that. But you realize. Soldiering is hard work.

It is threatening work. It is dangerous work. It takes strength.

Where are we going to get the strength we need day by day? Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Also, we are spiritual athletes. It is verse 5. If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

We are athletes. Hebrews 12. Run with endurance the race that is set before you.

Run with endurance. Christian life is a race. It is not an indoor 60 meter sprint either.

It is an outdoor marathon throwing a little steeplechase. Where are we going to get the endurance that we need? Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. We are also spiritual farmers.

Verse 6. The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Farming is hard work. Oh, we had a cousin when I was a kid in Indiana over in Illinois.

Farm. We loved to go there. What fun it was to go to Cousin's Farm.

We treated it like, well, this was before Disneyland, but to us it was like Disneyland, you know. Of course, it took my farmer cousin probably a month to clean up the barnyard after we kids visited for a month. Oh, the hard work, the plowing, the planting, the watering, the wading, the harvesting.

Well, that is analogous to us too. We are planting the seeds of the gospel. We are plowing fallow ground with the truths of the word.

We are watering with prayer. We are to be instruments of bringing in a harvest in this age. That is hard labor.

Where are we going to get the strength we need? Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. That is what this section is all about. The sanctifying grace of God.

A concluding section. Just a few minutes. How do you do this? I remember the young man that said to me one day in a class, How do you, and he couldn't finish it, How do you, and he couldn't get the words, How do you, and then he just blurted it out, How do you do grace? And the moment he said it, he went like this, he goes, That can't be the question.

How do you do grace? I said, you're trying to ask, How do you live day by day by grace? He said, that's it. That's it. Let's give an introduction to that section right now, with two verses, and the next time we resume our studies, the whole study will be on living daily by the grace of God.

Living by grace. Quickly, two relational realities that God wants to develop in our lives. That is, spiritual realities he wants to develop in us, but they're relational realities.

They develop as we grow in relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. What would they be? They are humility and faith. Neither one created by us, but must develop in us, and only as we grow in relationship with the Lord.

Humility, James 4, 6. God is opposed to the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. That's how you live by grace. Be willing to walk humbly with God.

God is opposed to the proud. The grace of God does not flow into and through self-sufficient, self-reliant lives. God opposes that.

He knows that's not the path of grace, and he wants us to grow in grace. So, if we're willing to walk humbly with our God, how do you do that? Just believe everything God said in his word about us. Amen.

Our righteousness is filthy rags. Amen. You're willing to walk in humility.

Apart from him you can do nothing. Amen. You're willing to walk in humility.

And then, not only humility, but sort of the other side of that, which is faith. Romans 5, 2 says, Through whom, that is through Jesus, we also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand. Access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

Faith accesses grace. Humility makes us the object of God's gracious heart in wanting to pour out grace upon us. He gives grace to the humble.

Give is the language of grace. But also by faith we can reach in and receive grace. Faith accesses grace.

Every time we trust the Lord in any issue of life, it's like we're reaching into the ocean of God's grace to find what we need for that moment. God's justified ones, we're told, in Romans 1, 17, are to live by faith. The just shall live by faith.

Those declared righteous in the sight of God, faith is the way they live. What is faith access? Grace. Faith accesses grace.

Initially for salvation, continuously for growth, increasingly for maturity and fruitfulness and victory. Humility and faith, we'll talk more about these things. We can't produce either one.

Can you imagine me telling you one week I'm going to work on humility this week and then we come back together and I announce to you I am now a humble man. Well, it's ludicrous. The moment I make that confession, you know I'm not walking in humility.

You can't produce it. It grows in relationship. Come learn of me, Jesus said.

I'm meek and lowly. Faith. You can't develop faith.

Where does faith come from? Faith comes from hearing, hearing from the Word of God. Jesus is the author and perfecter of faith. Humility and faith develop as we grow in the knowing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It humbles us and it builds our faith in Him. So, does this mean that man does nothing? A conclusive thought. In conclusion, does this mean that man does nothing in his growing and serving by the grace of God? Do we not have any human responsibility? Oh, we have huge human responsibility.

It's not at all that we do nothing. It's just that in our full engagement and involvement in the Christian life, it's about matters related to knowing the Lord, trusting in the Lord, getting acquainted with the Lord, seeking and pursuing after the Lord. It's about relationship.

It's not about religion, not about performance. It's not, we do nothing, He does everything. It's that everything we need, what we do, we seek Him in His Word.

He works graciously in and through our lives. Much more about these things in the studies ahead. Closing word from Pastor Chuck Smith's book on Why Grace Changes Everything.

Page 160, quote, Pastor Chuck said, I have found that I must rely daily upon the strength and power of Jesus Christ to live the life He wants me to live. That's growing in the grace of God. Let's pray together.

Lord, thank you for your grace. Thank you for your justifying, saving grace. Thank you for your transforming, sanctifying grace.

May we be recipients of it and proclaimers of it. We pray, Lord, for your glory and the needs all around us. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/jT5HaZiL604.mp4>
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