

Grace - More Than Unmerited Favor

by Mose Stoltzfus

The speaker explores the concept of grace beyond unmerited favor, warning against the dangers of cheap grace and emphasizing the importance of repentance, contrition, and transformation in the Christian life.

Duration: 1:15:51

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 6:13, Ephesians 2:10, Titus 2:11-13

Topics: "Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the negative influence of social media, particularly Facebook, on the Christian life. While acknowledging its potential for good, the speaker emphasizes the danger of being consumed by the 'selfie generation' and giving in to worldly desires. The sermon highlights the importance of denying ungodliness and living soberly, righteously, and godly. The speaker also emphasizes the need to resist temptation and access the power and favor of God through cooperation with His grace. The sermon concludes with a call to present oneself to God as instruments of righteousness and to avoid engaging in sinful conversations and activities.

Transcript

Thank you for that. We meet here on a regular basis. Our group is small for this big building, and I find it just overwhelming to hear this kind of singing in this building.

So I thought I had to put that extra in there and let you all bless our hearts that gather here regularly with such good singing. And this morning, likewise, I was blessed tremendously by the singing. It's been interesting to me through the years how the singing comes up throughout the week as hearts get free and clear and we open our hearts in singing toward the end of the week.

I count it a privilege to be up here this morning and have a little bit of word with you yet before you go home. It's been a blessing this week to be in your midst. Thank you for your good behavior and your pleasant spirits and attitudes as we interacted with a number of you and had the privilege to meet many friends and young people who have been here before and others who were here for their first time that we had met at other places.

It's been a joy to see you take the time and the effort and the money you spend in order to come here and allow us to be so blessed to have this time together for a week each year. Let us turn our Bibles to Titus 2 this morning. Our main text in Titus 2 verses 11, 12, and 13.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men teaching us that denying ungodly and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Now my memory goes back to sitting in Sunday school classes and Bible studies and open discussions throughout the years of my Christian life, which is now quite a few, and remembering a teacher asking the question, well, what is grace or what is the grace of God? And invariably somebody pipes up with the answer, unmerited favor.

And I would like to testify the fact that that is true. It indeed is unmerited favor. But I would like to say that that is only the skin of the beginning of the grace of God.

And I'd like to speak on that this morning. What is grace or grace more than unmerited favor or undeserved favor? Now when I look back on my own testimony, I do rejoice in the fact that I can testify to that unmerited favor. When I think of how the grace of God reached down into that little community about ten miles from here or so, where I was born and raised in a farm setting here in south of Leola a bit, and in a very traditional background, traditional setting.

The setting I was raised in was not as traditional as the generation before. But the generation before, my grandfather and his fifteen children were of the most traditional, and may I use the word strict in the Amish faith there, or Amish persuasion, as anyone else in the county. Almost to, I would say above average and to a point of extreme.

But I grew up in a home when my father began to search and seek. And I never asked him before he died, I wished I would have, to know whether he perhaps would have prayed for me. But for some unknown reason to me, the grace of God reached down into that farmhouse and brought on that farm setting, in that traditional setting, very dry, very dry, and dead in many ways.

And only, yes, the word of God was opened and quoted some on Sunday morning. But that reached down and put his hand on me and called me by his grace in that setting. When the people to the west of me and to the east of me, north and south, practically all the young people I went to school with and chummed with and played with in the neighborhood were of that faith and persuasion.

The whole community was for the most part the same. And like I say, God reached down and put his hand on me and called me by his grace. And I have to say that indeed was unmerited, undeserved favor of God that would have done such a thing to this insignificant little boy there, a young boy.

But like I say, could it have been the fact that there were secret prayers going on and my father was looking for something better? He already had put his cigars and smoking aside when I was about ten years of age. And he was looking for a better life. And he dared do something my grandfather would have never approved of.

And that is he set foot into a few meetings in churches here and there where the gospel was preached in a clear tone by evangelists and men who laid out the gospel. And my father began to search for that and to absorb that to such a degree that he did the unthinkable to me that when I was fifteen years of age and invited me, whether I would go along with him even though my mother was not for it, to an evangelistic meeting in the area about three miles away from our house. And I at that point was under the guilt of sin in my own life.

And there was a longing and searching and hunger for something that I did not have and did not see in my peers around the community there. And whether I would go with him to that meeting and I almost immediately responded that yes, I would. I had an older brother who immediately, he was already in the youth group and I guess he was afraid it would get found out and he would be embarrassed by that, that he did such a thing.

And like I say, my grandfather would have been strictly opposed to such a thing. I'm not sure he ever set his foot in another church setting. But we did go that night and that first night I was persuaded that I needed a Savior.

The Gospel was clearly preached that night and I embraced it. Being embarrassed to respond and go forward I went home and knelt beside my bed and there gave my heart to the Lord Jesus. That changed the course of my life.

And I of course found something that was real and yes, it was totally unmerited. And I have no idea why. I had about 120 cousins on one side with those 15 children.

They had large families, most of them. And at that point none of them, and even until now, I'm not sure that any of them or very, very few of them ever found salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. But God chose me and so I want to give that testimony and not undo the fact that there is a sovereign grace of God that does reach down and I hope that every one of you who have felt that draw and that hunger and that pull after the things of God, that you treasure that with all your might and that you are thankful for it and appreciate it.

Because I don't know whether God ever drew my cousins like He did me and they just didn't respond. But I have a hunch that they would have never had the opportunity. And of course, many of them by never setting foot in another setting and being so traditional and so dry would have perhaps never heard the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the same way that I did.

So, it was that unmerited grace of God, but it was also my responding to it when the call came and the opportunity came to go and hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ preached. So, I can say this morning, for the grace of God that brings us salvation and indeed it is that in all the different ways that God has led us in this room until we heard the Gospel and found that grace, that we should all acknowledge the fact that it is the grace of God that brought salvation and that allowed us to hear and allowed us to read and allowed us to find it somehow or somebody witnessed to us or we started reading the Bible or other books that led us to that path. And we are very grateful to say with all of our heart this morning, for the grace of God that bringeth salvation.

Then I can say also, hath appeared unto all men. And I am very grateful to stand before you this morning to the fact, and I am testifying to it, that it today is not like in the old covenant where hardly ever a Canaanite or a Gergesite or a Hittite or any of thoseites would have had the privilege. A few proselytes were made into the Jewish kingdom, into the Jewish church, so to speak, in Israel like Naomi and her daughter and so on, but Ruth.

But there were very few like that, that had that privilege. For the most part, they were slated for destruction and the grace of God was not available to all men and was not even commanded to be preached unto all men in that setting. For the most part, I can say.

But now, the grace of God has appeared unto all men. And now the gospel of the kingdom is not isolated to a nationality or a nation and group, but is available to all people. And I love missions and thank God for the opportunity to have learned and been partaker myself of the blessed privilege to take that gospel message out to some far and remote areas of the world and see the effect of it, which I'll give a little more updated report on that this afternoon on some of my recent findings there.

But throughout the years and now, it's whosoever will may come, we can take this gospel message, this grace, and actually offer it to the lowest of men and to the highest of men or whatever. We can give this grace and distribute this grace and make it known and know that no one is excluded from it unless somebody has rejected it to such a degree that the grace has left them. But very few people that that has ever happened to teaching us.

And here is where I begin to see this is one of my favorite scriptures in the New Testament, this Titus 2, 11 and 12, teaching us. And here we have the reality of the fact that we find out that rather than just being an unmerited favor or the grace of God leading us to salvation, now we find out that the grace of God, according to scripture, is a teacher and it teaches us and it doesn't teach us only salvation, but it is a teacher and it begins to teach us and teaches us all throughout our lives. And I thank God for it.

I have been taught in the midnight hour with my head on the pillow of my bed. I have been taught alone outside or driving down the road when I thought about my life or something I did or something I said or something I did and shouldn't have done and all these things or the encouragement and the enablement I like to give the grace of God as a divine enablement and a power that needs to exist in the life of the believer this morning in order to move him forward, in order to pull him back at times, but in general to enable him with the power and the grace of God in order to accomplish the things you want to accomplish. You have heard all about it again this week and I know Brother John Dee had mentioned the grace and his interpretation of it and I think that's a blessing, but I'd like to just broaden that today.

Now you're going to go home and you wonder where will I get the strength and the power and the discipline in order to accomplish the things that I would like to see in my life? How will I be able to overcome temptation and be able to press on and have my life mature and not suck on a pacifier anymore like we were illustrated the other night and have our baby blanket and so on, but we can come to maturity and we can have the grace of God moving us on and moving us forward to accomplish great things for God and a satisfaction and an accomplishment in our own lives. Later on after I got married, I did get in a setting where it was rather materialistic it seemed and just not a lot of fire and my heart kind of got dim and a bit dull and there came a time when I too got that hunger again and thirst that something needed to happen. I wanted more than this.

Even though I had salvation, I wanted more than that and it is in that pursuit that God anointed me or blessed me with His grace in a greater dimension. Although I do not preach a second work of grace, it certainly was another work of grace in my life and I beg you don't stop at the second one. If you need more, go for more and that's what I experienced and believed in my life.

But then as I left myself into the service of God and became active for the cause of Christ, I found the grace and a satisfaction which was far greater than I had in that in-between area between salvation and when I experienced that greater grace and that's truly what it was for me. But I found it in usability and service and yieldedness for the kingdom of God's sake. The pleasures of this world will never bring the joy and satisfaction that that does, that grace does.

To see lives changed and people born again and delivered from the bondages of evil and sin and witchcraft and all kinds of things and set forth and set free in the liberty of Christ, it is there that the greatest joy of my life began to unfold. And I thank God for that. I thank God for that.

Well, there are many scriptures and much to be said about that grace here this morning, but I would just like to capitalize a little bit on the error of that lesser grace or the cheap grace that the evangelical church has bought into and made that basically the unmerited favor of salvation brought to them at a decision that they made and never went any further than that. Many years ago Dietrich Bonhoeffer coined a term that has come to characterize much of evangelical Christianity. Dietrich Bonhoeffer lived in Germany in the Second World War.

He was a German, a Lutheran German, and he began to see the error of that grace. And of course, he opposed the Nazi regime and finally at the last in 1945, just before the end of the war, he finally was caught and judged for that and for some of his anti-Nazi propaganda or teaching that he was giving and was killed for that. But he termed this grace cheap grace.

It's the term cheap grace. Cheap grace is in reality a self-imparted grace, a pseudo-grace, and in the end the consequences of living it are very, very costly because I believe for countless millions this morning that cheap grace is not grace at all, but very, very costly in the fact that I believe it costs people their own soul. Let me quote from his book on discipleship where he lays out his burden on this.

Cheap grace is not at all a reference to God's grace. And he's good on words. It's a contemptible counterfeit.

It's a grace that is cheap in value, not cost. It's a bargain basement, damaged goods, washed out, moth eaten, second-hand grace. It is a man-made grace reminiscent of the indulgences Rome was peddling in Martin Luther's day.

And I hope you realize that most of you recognize what that was. But at the time of Luther's Reformation there, the Catholic Church was selling indulgences. You could buy the privilege to sin with money and putting it into the coffers of the Catholic Church in terrible deception.

And then you could go out and commit things that ordinarily would have been forbidden by paying for these indulgences. Cheap, the cost is actually far more than the buyer could possibly realize, though the grace is absolutely worthless. Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran pastor and Nazi resister.

He was hanged in 1945 by the SS guards, but not before his writings had left their mark. Bonhoeffer's theological perspective was neo-orthodox and evangelicalism rightly rejects much of his teaching. But Bonhoeffer spoke powerfully against the secularization of the church.

He correctly analyzed the dangers of the church's frivolous attitude toward grace. Again, we discard the neo-orthodox teachings and we do well to pay heed to his teaching here against cheap grace. The Lutheran church, for the most part, actually had supported Hitler in his diabolical work there, somehow being fueled up by German pride and so on, thinking that he was a good man, a great man to bring them superiority, German superiority and so on.

And the reason was, is because their faith and their connection to the Scriptures and to God Himself was so low that they believed the lie that he taught. Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth.

Many of you have seen the bumper sticker, not perfect, just forgiven, or something to that effect. The idea is just that God's forgiveness just covers everything and just kind of, we can live the way we want to underneath that umbrella of God's grace and there's no accountability and no judgment for it. The grace of God just covers everything.

The love of God taught us the Christian conception of God. An intellectual ascent to that idea is held to be of itself sufficient to secure the remission of sin. Just enough of grace to bring me salvation, to bring me forgiveness, to bring me remission of sin, but never go on, as Titus 2 says, for the grace of God has appeared unto all men, teaching us that denying ungodly and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

They missed that whole thing, even though it was clearly written in the Scripture that that is what the grace should extend to and include in our Christian life and experience. But they bought into the lie of the cheap grace. The church which holds the correct doctrine of grace has and is supposed a part of that grace in such a church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins.

No contrition is required. That's a real burden on my heart. So many people who teach the grace of God for salvation without repentance or the contrition of sin.

Still, lest any real desire to be delivered from sin or to have the transformation or have the sanctification, not only the salvation, but the sanctification that we need in our Christian life and experience. Cheap grace, therefore, amounts to a denial of the incarnation of the Word of God, where the Word becomes flesh in our own lives. Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner.

Amen. Grace alone does everything, they say. And so everything can remain as it was before.

All for sin could not atone. The world goes on in the name in the same old way. And we're still sinners, even in the best life.

I preached the message some months ago on sinners or saints. And I want you to consider the fact that the message to God's people is to the saints. And yet today everybody wants to say, oh, we all sin every day.

We're all just a bunch of sinners. And God have mercy on us all. And even though in 1 John very clearly we are taught that we should not say we have no sin and we should not say we have not sin, both of them are wrong.

In between there is where the Christian life is. We should never come to the point of eradication of the old man that says we will never sin again, like some would have us believe. And we should never have a man say, well, I've been a good boy all my life or a good girl and I have never sinned.

Yes, we are all sinners, but we need to be saved by grace and transformed in the sainthood to live a holy, godly life and separate from sin for the most part. And if any man sins, we have to advocate with our Father Jesus Christ the Righteous. And there is confession and repentance for our sin when we recognize that we have stumbled and fallen.

But to live in the practice of sin, in the regularity of sin, is not the will of God for his people. It's not the will of God. Cheap grace has not lost its worldly appeal since Bonhoeffer wrote those words.

If anything, the tendency to cheapen grace has eaten its way into the heart of evangelical Christianity. While verbally extolling the wonders of grace, it exchanges a real term for a facsimile. The bait and switch tactic has confounded many sincere Christians.

Many professed Christians today utterly ignore the biblical truth that grace instructs or teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires or worldly lusts and to live soberly or sensibly, righteously and godly in this present world. Not a transformation on the way to glory. Not a transformation as we go through the air at the calling of the saints or the rapture of the church.

But rather, in this present world, we have the ability to live a godly, soberly, righteously and godly life in this world. And that's why this morning I'd like to teach it as a divine enablement. It's a divine power.

It's a divine influence in our life. When it comes to temptation, it's just the greatest thing for us. And I experience some of that in my young Christian life that we get into.

Sore temptation. And can fall on our knees in a private place or even sometimes under our breath publicly and ask for God's grace to strengthen us and to enable us to overcome and rebuke that devil. Tell him to flee from you and be able to rise up victoriously over it.

Many professing Christians today utterly ignore the biblical truth that grace instructs us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires. Instead, they live as if grace were a supernatural get-out-of-jail-free ticket. No strings attached.

Open-ended package of amnesty, beneficence, indulgence, forbearance, charity, leniency, immunity, approval, tolerance, and self- not right. That is wrong thinking and wrong theology. But I warn you, the books are filled with it in the Christian bookstores.

The evangelical world, it's hard to find a preacher who will not bring that in somehow along the way and give you that idea that you can have that indulgence, forbearance, charity, and leniency, immunity, tolerance, and so on. Self-awarded privileges. Today we have a lot of people in the idea of conversion.

And there's not a transformation. There's not a change from light to darkness. The old things don't pass away and the old things become new.

But somehow grace just covers it all and we are able to just go on and live our lives basically like we lived before. Maybe tweak them a little bit, but go after the same pleasures and continue the same sins as we were before because there's no concept of the divine enablement given to us by God that we are able to overcome and live victoriously in Christ Jesus. Sadly, the rank and file Christian is further cemented in an unbiblical view of grace by which comes out of some seminaries, Christian places of education.

There are scholars who actually legitimize the error of a correct understanding of grace. Do you know that Martin Luther, God help him, we know we give him to the judgment of God, but he taught us to sin boldly because it would somehow use God's grace in a greater way if we sin boldly. His concept of grace was just so wrong.

And for 500 years that has permeated so much of professed Christianity in our day. They call their teaching grace theology and their move the grace movement. They advocate a grace that alters a believer's standing without affecting his state.

It is a, and they believe that it gives you a position in Christ and then of course the rest doesn't matter. Then to tag on top of it yet that you can never lose it and you have one of the greatest deception of the end times. It is a grace that calls sinners to Christ, but does not bid them surrender to him.

In fact, no Lordship theologians claim grace is deluded if the believing sinner must surrender to Christ. They don't like it. They are arguing against Lordship salvation.

They'd say you can have Christ as a Savior and don't need him as a Lord. Where many others have, thank God, have written books and preached the fact of Lordship salvation that if he's not your Lord, he's not your Savior. Which seemed to be necessary to correct the matter.

And then he says here, the more one actually surrenders, the more grace is supposedly watered down. This is clearly not the grace of Titus 2, 11 and 12. No wonder Christians are confused.

No wonder our youth are confused today. In light of all this mixture of false grace being taught in the Christian church and so many preachers have bits and parts of it in their expression and do not call for what Titus 2, 11 and 12 is calling for. Christian churches mirror the world.

Christian leaders follow the culture. Christian theologians provide their stamp of approval. The situation is nothing short of deplorable.

But he says here, here's what I propose. Let's start by laying down the biblical definition of grace with this simple question. What is grace? Grace is a terribly misunderstood word.

Probably one of the most misunderstood words in the Christian language. Defining it is notoriously difficult. Some of the most detailed theology textbooks do not offer any concise definition of the term.

Someone has proposed the acronym grace is God's riches at Christ's expense. And there's certainly some truth to that. We can't throw all that out that it is the riches of grace and Christ, like I said, that reached to me in my setting and reached you in your setting.

Blind, dark, traditional, an out and out sinner in the world or wherever. And yet God's grace reached you somehow. So it is God's riches at Christ's expense because Christ died for our sins that we don't have to perish.

And that brought a conviction of sin that somehow comes to many hearts and thank God for it. That's not a bad way to characterize grace, but it's not sufficient theological definition. There's more to it than that.

There's a great expansion of that grace that I'd like to help us to see here today. One of the best definitions of grace is only three words. They're God's unmerited favor.

Eight of your toes are expended on that. Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines him to bestow benefits to the undeserving because we did not deserve what we got. Burkhoﬀ is more to the point.

Grace is an unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, affecting through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Grace is not merely unmerited favor. It is favor bestowed on sinners who deserve wrath.

And we did deserve the wrath of God. But after that, the kindness and love of God appeared. It gave us salvation.

Showing kindness to a stranger is unmerited favor. Doing good to one's enemies is more the spirit of grace. Grace is not a dormant or an abstract quality, but a dynamic, active, working principle in our lives.

Let me say that again. It's a dynamic, active and working principle all of our Christian life. Grace we have here and grace there.

We have living grace and we have suffering grace and grace for persecution if needs be. And we even have dying grace. There's a lot of men that were able to die singing and to die triumphantly because they had dying grace.

And you don't only need grace for salvation. You need grace to live and grace to get victory in power over sin and grace to die at the end. It's a divine enablement.

Grace. Thank God for grace. Grace is not a one time event in the Christian experience.

We stand in grace, Romans 5, 2 says. We stand in grace. The entire Christian life is driven and empowered by grace.

As I mentioned, divine enablement again. It is good for the heart, the Bible says in Hebrews 13, 9 to be strengthened by grace, not by foods or by meats. Peter said we should grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And that would be my testimony that this grace that I experienced as a 15 year old boy as precious and life changing that it was, that was only the beginning. And this grace is now I've been able to grow in and have a much better understanding and I've been able to attain to a higher and better level of victory through the grace of God and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And I am not done yet.

I want that grace to stay with me, to continue to teach me and be my teacher. You know, Hebrews chapter 8 has the description there of the new covenant and it says that you will not have the need of any man to teach you. But the idea that the Spirit of God teaches men, and it doesn't mean that we don't need preaching and teaching, but it does mean that beyond that we have an inner voice from God that teaches us and instructs us.

And like I said before, we're able to lay our head on our pillow at night with everything quiet and nobody's reading to us and nobody's preaching to us. And the Spirit of God will bring something to remembrance in our life that has not been the way it ought to be. And we have been taught by God.

And I love that. That is a great privilege and I cherish it indeed. When that happens, I thank God and I rejoice in the fact that He has taught me and instructed me and corrected me and so on.

But we also need it by each other. We want the grace and knowledge to increase. We want it to grow in grace.

We don't want to stop with salvation grace that saved us and blessed us with a new life back there, but we want to have that grace in a greater dimension to strengthen and enable us through life. We could define grace as a free and benevolent influence of a holy God operating sovereignly in the lives of undeserving sinners. Amen.

Paul frequently contrasted that grace with the law. The law came by Moses, Jesus said, but grace in truth is come by Jesus Christ. Grace does not nullify the moral law, demands of God's law.

Rather, it fulfills the righteousness of the law in us. We're able to have grace to do that. It doesn't annul the righteous demands of God in our life.

It helps us to accomplish it. It enables us to do it. We can call upon God for His grace to give it to us.

Grace has its own law. Someone wrote here, liberating law, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. That is the good news of the gospel this morning.

God has acted to set us free from sin, not just the consequences of sin or the penalty of sin, which was hell fire and delivered from the wrath of God, but rather the consequences. We're able to live a life of good fruit that we don't have the bad consequences of sin in your life. I tell you, enable yourself, reach out to the grace of God.

If you're having struggles, temptations, sore difficulties, decisions to make, knowing not quite right what the right decision is to make, appeal in prayer for the grace of God to come down upon you and to help you through the word, through good counsel, through the inner voice as you meditate upon Him and wait for His answer and direction, that the grace of God is able then to lead you further. One day we will never know the experience of temptation, but now it's a stray thought, excuse me, a misspoken word, a false motive. Guilt will be gone, and with it shame, and so we should ever be with the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 4, 17.

In the meantime, we enjoy the liberation from sin's cruel power and defiling influence. God has enabled us through grace to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. One of the great calls of the Christian life is self-denial today, and I'm very concerned about the selfie generation that we're living in and the amount of Christian youth that are pulled into the whole selfie promotion of themselves.

They tell you their name, they tell you where they went to school and how much education they have, they tell you where they live, they tell you where they work, and they tell you, you know, maybe the other points of their graduation or profession. They put all kinds of pictures on of themselves in a whole myriad of poses. That's the selfie generation.

As soon as they have a boyfriend, they bring him on and promote that of him and her, and this is done by both sides of the house, and it's just, we are living in a selfie generation. There's such a promotion of ourselves, and every other major happening, we have to take pictures of and put that on and let everybody know that we've experienced this or that or the other thing. A selfie generation.

And it is the opposite of self-denial. It's the opposite. Don't you see that? And it has come in so gradually through the medium of Facebook and other entities, other programs that allow you to do that, and I really struggle with how that is promoted.

There are some things that it greatly benefits, and that's why I recognize it's used in a great way to communicate good things and the gospel and good admonition and good scripture and so on. But this is the freshly and worldly way of giving in and being overcome by that selfie generation. So, denying ungodliness and worldly desires or worldly lusts so that we can live soberly.

We can live soberly, righteously, and godly. I would say that those three words would describe the height of the Christian life that anyone should strive to attain to. To live soberly, righteously, and godly.

It takes it all in. And I appeal to you. Press for that.

Deny yourself of the worldly, frivolous, pleasure-seeking, getting a little thrill here and a little there in the flesh. And I think you know. I think you know what feeds the flesh and what feeds the spirit.

That we need to have our senses exercised to know the difference between the two. But I think for the most part, if you truly have been born again, the Spirit of God does whisper into your ear and into your heart concerning the difference between the two. Don't give yourself to that which just feels good and is the flesh, but rather that which builds the spirit.

And that means we cannot always just be playing around with fun and games, but rather have to separate ourselves or find ourselves acquaintance where the spirit is fed and the spirit is made better. And we are uplifted and edified and admonished in order to live a godly life. That's what it's all about.

Denying ungodly and worldly lusts, living soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. And can you imagine? This is the grace of God that has appeared in all men. And how much more that is than a forgiving grace or an overlooking grace as some would say.

But rather here is a grace that gives power and enablement in order to accomplish the things that God teaches us in His Word. And we are actually able to overcome habits and sins and we're able to separate ourselves from people who are not ministering to us in a right way. And they are pulling us down and contaminating us by frivolous things and joking and jesting and evil speaking and pleasure seeking and so on.

Let's go do this and do that in order to have fun. I hear young people actually say those words boldly today. Well, I want to have some fun in life.

And they actually pull away from the church or the youth group or the spiritual things or Bible schools like this. And they just want to enjoy life. Oh, maybe I'll think about it and be more serious later on.

But I tell you, that is not what brought me joy in my Christian life. Ephesians 2:10, For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, unto good works, that God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. That is the will of God.

Now, let us turn to another very, very favorite chapter of mine from my early conversion, Romans 6. And I don't understand why so few do not understand this chapter. It starts out so clear on this very subject. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Shall we buy into the Luther theology to sin boldly? To go ahead and sin all you want to because that will only use up the grace of God in a greater dimension? No, don't believe that lie.

Shall we continue in sin? Shall we go on sinning? You're now a Christian. You've been justified by faith in Romans. And now shall we continue in sin? God forbid, don't ever think such a thought.

It is the furthest away from the heart of God when He says, God forbid. Then He asks the question, how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? And there is the high point of the Christian life, to be so dead to sin and the desires and lusts of sin that we don't answer to it. It does not draw us anymore.

Not that we're above temptation at times, but we quickly say no and appeal to the grace of God, especially if it is a sore temptation or a severe temptation. Romans 6 tells us how to access or experience the power and favor and blessing of God, which are freely available to us because of what Jesus did on the cross. It is the most practical chapter in the Bible on walking in victory over sin.

Transformation in our life begins by knowing that we are in Christ Jesus, seeing ourselves the way God sees us in Christ. And then God has abundant grace to pour out on our lives, but He requires us to cooperate with His grace or to grow in grace and increase in that grace. He will not do our part and we cannot do His part.

There is a part of man. There is a responsibility for us. There are people today who want you to say, all you need to do is have faith in your position, that you're in Christ.

You don't have to worry about anything else. No discipline, no effort put forth on our part. Those are lies in our generation because as soon as we have any kind of an effort or any kind of a work whereby we press on and press into God in these matters, they say, well now it's worth salvation.

And they try to put you on a guilt trip that you have left the grace of God and the dependence on grace and you're now trying to do it by your own strength. I would never advocate that you try anything just to do it by your own strength. You will fail.

But if you avail yourself of that divine influence and the grace of God to be able to accomplish His will in your life, you will be able to do it. But there is man's part. There are three principles here in Romans chapter 6 that I would like to bring out briefly.

The first principle is what I call the knowing principle. Knowing. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified.

In verse 6, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not go on sinning anymore or should not serve sin because we are to be dead from it. In verse 11 it says, likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. We reckon it to be so.

I'm not a sinner anymore. I've been transformed. God has saved me.

And I reckon me to be a saint of God. I want to live like a saint and act like a saint in all of my Christian life and experience. So, know and reckon yourself to be a child of God and act like a child and reflect His grace in your life day by day.

Knowing and reckoning. We reckon to see ourselves as alive unto God, alive to the realm of God, which includes seeing that we are fully accepted and enjoyed by God, empowered to use Jesus' authority and indwelt by Spirit. The Spirit's peace resides in our spirit from every day that we are born again.

We have that access into His grace as I think Galatians talks about. The second principle I'd like to call your attention to is the resisting principle given in Romans 6, 12 and 13. Wherefore, the law is holy and the commandment holy and just and good.

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid, but sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me. By that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. We are to resist sin, Satan and the schemes of Satan or the world.

One writer gives it as, that I really appreciate it, sin provoking circumstances. The resisting principle. Can you resist sin provoking circumstances? That means there are places you cannot go.

That means there are things you cannot do. That means even things that you cannot wear because they foster pride in your own life. And it's where it'll do damage to the pursuit after God in your life if you do not

have that resisting principle, that guard in your life that says, no, I can't go there.

I'm sorry. Your colleagues at work or your people who are trying to be friendly to you and sometimes they even want to try to get you to have the fun they're having and so on. But you need to stand up to those things and simply confess and profess that I cannot.

I cannot do that. I think that's one of the greatest mistakes that many times young people make, young Christians make. They don't want to be looked down on or considered some kind of a goody goody or whatever.

And so they go along with things they shouldn't go along. And I say that sometimes is permissible when we in ignorance fall into a situation like that. But if only by the grace of God that we can understand never again.

I'm not going to do that again. I don't care who invites me. Some time ago, somebody was speeding down the road at a high rate of speed.

I forget whether it was 90, 95 mile an hour. And somebody in the backseat says, this isn't right. This isn't right.

I can't. My father would not want me to be in this car. There are times people have actually asked me, please stop.

Let me get out. And I've tried to find another ride home because they were in danger. Their life was in danger.

And they recognized that. They were doing something that they knew was wrong. But somebody was in the wheel that loved speed and broke the law and just took things in his own hand and thought, we're going to go have a thrill.

Don't do it. Have that resisting principle in your life and not yield to sin provoking circumstances. When I was 15 years of age, just nearly converted, I think one of the first times a neighbor boy offered me a beer.

Hey, would you want a beer? And I had already been taught enough by my father on the bad effects of alcohol that I never wanted to take a drink in my life. And God blessed me with being able to keep that for now over 50 years that I have never taken a drink of beer in my life. But I remember that first offer and I didn't want to be embarrassed.

But I was able to say, no, thank you. I don't want to and be able to back away from the situation. Incidentally, I never went to that man's house again.

Never went back again. And his brother was a friend of mine, my age. And we were trying to start up friendships for our 16 year old time, maybe perhaps.

But when I got converted, there was a power within to have that resisting principle. The same way, playing cards and gambling. One of my friends told me in those days when I was together with him, maybe just before I was converted and they were gambling, playing cards and gambling with pennies.

They didn't have a lot of money. Their older brothers who were older teenagers who had their jobs were doing it with dollar bills and five dollar bills. But he looked at me and he said, now if you're going to be

among us, you need to learn to do this.

And something smoked me again and I never went back to his house again either. Those are things we have to do. We have to withdraw ourselves.

Don't scoff at the idea of separation. It is a part of the Christian experience. If we want to preserve ourselves and to grow in grace and have the power of God in our lives, we must seek Christian friendship and Christian companionship and not those that pull us down and feed us and drag us into the world and drag us into sin and pleasures that are not acceptable by the word of God.

So keep the resisting principle. Resist sin, Satan and the sin provoking circumstances. We resist the inward prompting of sin and the schemes of Satan.

Some of you know what some real sore temptations are in private times in your life. And I likewise did. But we're here to say at those times, fall upon your knees and call upon God and ask Him to help you and give you the grace and strength to overcome and not be drugged down into sins of the flesh.

We refuse circumstances that inflame sinful desires. Therefore, we do not go to places, buy items, look at or talk about things that stir up sinful passions. This can happen by conversation.

It can happen by watching films on whatever device you might have. It was so easy when we just didn't have television years ago. But that's all past now.

We have the moving picture brought into our phones and all kinds of other devices, computers and work and all these things. And I know there are different ways that you handle that. But you have an opportunity real easy at the click of a mouse to watch things that once again will stir up sinful passions.

And you need that resisting principle in your life. When we are pursuing the fascination and pleasure of knowing God, we can say no to things more effectively. I have to say this.

When I was enjoying my Christian life and seeing people being set free, that was a power to me that was easy to say no to the other things. You didn't want the entertainment that was so cheap. You didn't want that fleshy thing because you knew what the real joy was and where the real power lay.

And you wanted to experience that. The essence of what we say no to in sinful provoking circumstances. Paul said that we should not present our bodies in those situations.

Don't present your bodies. We should present them as a living sacrifice unto God in Romans 12. Don't go to that place that stirs you up in sin.

Avoid those sin producing circumstances. You know your frame. You know what tempts you to do wrong.

Don't go there. Say no to sinful desires and to wrong circumstances. The third principle I'd like to speak about yet is pursuing the pursuing principle.

The Apostle Paul exhorted us, present yourself to God as being alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. I think it's in verse 13. Excuse me here.

Romans 6.13. Neither yielding your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead and your members as instruments of

righteousness unto God. We have so many times we go to the edge. We go to the very edge of these things rather than to have the clear line, a clear separation from it all and yielding our members, all of them, eyes, ears, feet, hands, mouth, tongue.

All of these members should be yielded as instruments of righteousness unto God. Draw yourself aside from the foolish stories or the dirty talk. Don't laugh at them when your colleague at work gives them to you.

We pursue God by presenting ourselves to Him and presenting our bodies as His instruments. It's good for all of us to pray, Lord, here I am. And this was a major thing in my life when that change came about.

I got on my knees before God and I said, if you can do anything with this vessel, I want you to do it. I don't care what it costs me. I don't care what men might say.

I don't care what men might do unto me. I want to serve God and I want to do His will and to mean it with all your heart. And that was a transforming experience in my life.

And I did it more than once. I repeated that prayer numerous times, Lord. And even now yet, I say, Lord, as I'm older now and limited more in some of the things that I once was able to do, is there anything I can still do in my older age for you, Lord? Here I am.

Use me in whatever capacity that I can still do it. These things to the glory of God, even though I not have the ability or ambition that I once did. And I find answers to prayer in that way.

Amazing answers to prayer that God opens doors that I can go through and still be a blessing and a help to people, which is the greatest joy of my life. Pursuing principle, presenting our bodies as His instruments. Our first priority is to love God with all our heart.

And we are to cultivate the presence of God in our life, intimacy with God. We need to cultivate that and cause it to grow. Pull out the weeds that hinder that and let the plants of that grow and increase in your life.

So we must know truth, resist darkness and pursue God. Kind of in a nutshell, Romans chapter 6. Yielding ourselves, reckoning, knowing who we are, what God has done for us, knowing that we cannot continue in sin, that grace may abound. Grace was never intended to cover sinful desires and sinful life and ongoing habitual sins and the practice of sins after we are a child of God.

Sin should be cut off and it doesn't always leave immediately. I acknowledge that as a young Christian. But all the conviction, all the guilt that came with falling here and there and stumbling around as a young baby trying to walk in my Christian life.

But those muscles strengthen and we're able to know the truth and resist that darkness and pursue after God. Resist sin, Satan and sin provoking circumstances and grow in the knowledge of who we are in Christ. Well, I'll say again, grace is more than unmerited favor, is it not? You need it all your life.

It'll give you that divine power and enablement to do all that you need to do. If you're called to go to the far reaches of the earth. And like I say, I'll give a little more report of that of individuals that are doing that in various parts of the earth.

But I marvel at the self-denial that some people are giving their own lives in order to take the gospel to the far ends of the earth where it is not convenient, where it is not pleasurable to live there, where it is much hardship and suffering and difficulty. But they do it because of their love for God. And many of those who do do it have a joy and a fire burning in their soul.

That is a totally amazing thing. An amazing thing. I'm just reading a few scriptures here yet.

You know, as far as grace being more than unmerited favor, listen to this one in Luke 2.40. Talking of Jesus. And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. Well, surely it wasn't unmerited favor with him.

He was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. He didn't need unmerited favor. What was upon him? The power, the grace of God, divine enablement.

He didn't have to, didn't have a yield to the flesh in any way in his 33 years here on earth. He lived a perfect and godly life as an example to us in every way. Surely it was more than unmerited favor that the grace of God was upon him.

2 Timothy 2.1, Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, showing the strength that is in that grace, the divine ability and enablement there. 2 Timothy 1.9, Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. Here's another one for you.

2 Corinthians 12.9, And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. This is speaking when he had a thorn in the flesh and he asked for it to be removed and thrice he asked for it to be removed and God said, My grace is sufficient for you.

That is something you need to take along home with you. The grace of God is sufficient for you. It's enough.

It's enough of power in it to accomplish what needs to be accomplished in your life, to get you out of your youth and your childhood and cause you to be mature and to be adult and to have victory over sin and over the power of this world and to be able to say no to those things and yield your body as an instrument of service unto God. My grace, God says, is sufficient for you. And I testified to that, that the power of Christ may rest upon you.

Well, like I said, you need saving grace. We need that unmerited favor because who are we? Who was I? That God should put his hand upon me. But we need living grace and a growing grace and at the end, dying grace.

I did not take the time and will not take the time to talk about some of the men who had dying grace, but I love those stories and I'm sure you've all read them. Men who lay on their deathbed just before their final breath and were able to say, Well, this isn't bad. This isn't bad at all.

I'm just being transported into the new life, you know. And they had dying grace. But think of those that were burned at the stake or those who are dying under the sharp knife of ISIS at their throat or burned in a cage in this last year or two.

All of those things, God is able to give us dying grace. Now, I believe that we're in the beginning of sorrows and there is tribulation and troubles coming upon us and upon this world. And for the immediate future, it doesn't look so bright for many of us.

But on the other side, it's so bright and so good. So we just need the grace of God to go through the valleys that God may bring us very, I'm sure, among us all. But to go through the valley that God may ask us to go through.

Let me tell you, there's grace to do it. I depend on it. I can't imagine being burned alive in a cage.

I can't imagine being burned at the stake. I can't imagine being hung by a thumb or by a finger or hot irons poking through your flesh and those kind of things. But I do depend that if that day should come, that somehow I will have the grace of God to be able to endure and to be faithful on to the end.

May God add His blessing. Thank you so much for being such a blessing to us and being good students here this week. And we treasure to have gotten to know you as many as we were able to.

Thank you for being here. And may God richly bless you in the future. Amen.

Thank you, Brother Mose, for sharing about grace. Probably you Bible school students remember one of the brothers up here, he mentioned grace and he said it was God's riches at Christ's expense. God's riches.

I like to think of grace as power. Jesus said, Brother Mose mentioned it, that my grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness, was when Paul was needing power. He needed some strength.

He needed help. So I'd like you Bible school students, all of us to remember and to realize that when I trust the grace of God, I believe in His power. He gives me power to overcome, to walk through, to handle those things that are that the devil means for destruction.

You know, that's another thing I'd like to say to you. Every temptation, every temptation you encounter, everything that's designed to draw you away from God is designed by the devil to lead you to hell. So you might think this is just a little one.

It's not a little one. It's designed to draw you to hell. Every little thing.

But God has the power. He does. Hallelujah.

Amen. God has the power that you can walk through those things and be victorious. Thank you for listening to this message.

We trust that it has been a blessing to you. If you would like additional sermons or a catalog, please visit our website at www.effortofministries.org. Call us toll free at 855-557-7902 or write to us at Effort of Ministries, 400 West Main Street, Suite 1, Effort of Pennsylvania, 17522. You are welcome to copy this message for free distribution.

This ministry is supported by your donations. May the Lord Jesus bless you.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/28/SID28568.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/mose-stoltzfus/grace-more-than-unmerited-favor/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net