

God's Grace (1.8.1984)

by Nigel Lee

Nigel Lee's sermon emphasizes the transformative power of God's grace in overcoming failures and living a life of obedience and acceptance.

Duration: 1:05:54

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 14:17-21, Mark 14:23-25, Mark 14:27-31, John 21:15-19, Acts 12:12

Topics: "Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a hypothetical situation where a person is driving a two-seater car on a rainy night and comes across three people at a bus stop: a little old lady, a famous surgeon who once saved their life, and a beautiful girl they have been interested in. When asked what they would do, the person in the story says they would stop the car, give the key to the surgeon, and continue on with the Lord, rejecting the temptation. The speaker then shares a story about pigeons' ability to find their way back home, illustrating the importance of commitment and belonging. The sermon concludes with a reading from the Gospel of Mark, emphasizing Jesus' sacrifice and the promise of a future in the kingdom of God.

Transcript

Eine Arbeitsstelle umgesehen. And they went for an interview. Und dann hat ein Interview mit antrag.

And it was one of those interviews where they put a question to you just to see how you will answer it. They just want to see what you will say. And the questioner said this.

You are driving a little two-seater car. It's dark and cold and miserable. And you're driving.

And you drive past. There are three people waiting at the bus stop. There is a little old.

There is a very famous surgeon who some years ago saved your life. Said the questioner. What are you going to do? I would get out.

I would give the key to the surgeon. Him to take the old lady home. Initiative.

Standing there in the cold. They're real people. Now we're going to turn in our Bibles.

To the Gospel of Mark. The 14th chapter. And we're going to read from verse 17.

In fact, I will read verse 17. Werner will read verse 18. And then I will do 19 and so on.

Mark chapter 14. And when it was evening, Jesus cometh with the twelve. They began to be sorrowful.

And to say unto him, for the Son of Man goeth even as it is written of him, is betrayed. Good were it for that man if he had not been born. And he took a cup.

And when he'd given thanks, he gave it to them. And they all drank of it. Verily I say unto you, I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Now, I'm going to ask you all to stand up. And we're going to carry on reading together. I'm going to read one verse in English.

And then you all simultaneously are going to read the next verse in your own language. I will read verse 27. You read verse 28 and so on.

And Jesus said unto them, all ye shall be offended. For it is written, I will smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered abroad. But Peter said unto him, although all shall be offended, yet will not I. But he spake exceeding vehemently.

If I must die with thee, I will not deny thee. And in like manner also said they all. And he took with him Peter and James and John.

And began to be greatly amazed and so troubled. He went forward a little and fell on the ground. And prayed that if it were possible the hour might come.

And said unto Peter, we are weak just like Peter. So much is written about him in the New Testament because we need to learn the same lessons. I am honest with you.

Help us to hear those things that your word is living. We know that. Your word is powerful.

Without your word our hearts become dry and sick. Father there seems to be a battle very often in order that we might somehow not perceive what your word is saying. Break through by your spirit as we read and think on these words together.

Because we want our Christian lives to be biblical. And we each of us want to live in obedience to what you say to us whether we are young or old. We pray in Jesus name.

Well we have read words of Mark. As we know Mark was one of those brought up in a Christian home. You can see in Acts chapter 12 something of what went on in Mark's home.

It seems to have been a big house. It was one of the places where the early church met to pray. And Mark was growing up in that kind of an environment.

Mark certainly knew Christian leaders in the first century. Quite possibly Mark had become a Christian because of the life and the teaching of the older man Peter. In Peter's first letter he refers to Mark as my son.

Meaning that perhaps he became his spiritual son. We know too that Mark was related to Barnabas. So here was this young man growing up in a Christian home surrounded by prayer and great love.

When the apostle Paul set off to Turkey was that the beginnings of O.M.? I can find examples of O.M. much earlier than that. Genesis chapter 6. The beginnings of the O.M. ship ministry. There was Noah the earliest boat captain.

But here is another O.M. team starting out with Paul as the leader. A mixed team just Paul and Barnabas. Paul is the team leader.

And they want somebody to be in charge of the literature. And so they take Mark with them. To carry the bags.

Mark begins on his first piece of real Christian service. He sets off in Acts chapter 13. They set off in verse 4. Do you know how long Mark lasted? He lasted about 8 verses.

And then he ran away. I don't know what it was about the team situation. But Mark as a young Christian having grown up in a Christian home was a total failure on his first real attempt to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a contrast to the original disciples. He had heard all the stories. In his mind young.

The most amazing situation. If your acting is good enough you don't have to worry about the words. Paul wanted to set off on a second missionary journey.

Wet idiot. You know in Christ failure like that is never ever final. That's not the end of Mark.

Even though he didn't turn out to be just quite as good as he thought or hoped he would be. We find later in the New Testament that he is restored to friendship with Paul. He was one of the real mighty workers for God in Rome.

He was the traditional pioneer of the church in Egypt. 18% of that country at least nominally Christian. And it all begins with one young man who was an absolute failure in his first attempt to really serve the Lord.

And so Mark writes for us his gospel. And you know the chief character in Mark's gospel apart from the Lord Jesus. The one that Mark writes about more than any other.

Another man very like Mark. Peter. Peter's own story of failure in the service of the Lord.

This raises some enormous questions for us. How does God take and train a man like Peter and make him into someone useful? Peter was energetic. Peter was quick to speak.

I imagine Peter as fun to live with. It was exciting when he was around. You never quite knew what was going to happen next.

Peter is one of those early Christian disciples that my own heart has for years responded to very very much. How does God make a man like Peter useful to him? Many of us here brought up in Christian families. I look back on my own life as a teenager.

They tell me that I was born on a Wednesday and I was in church the following Sunday. Can you imagine anything worse than that? The most awful experience for years of being met by people. And people say to me, oh you're the young man who did so and so on page 44.

Oh I have hated it. I have wished sometimes that I came from non-Christian parents. I have wished that my father was not a preacher.

I have hated being expected to be good as a teenager. I think very often people who come from Christian homes have real problems. Very often our parents don't live up to our own expectations.

Why is that? Because they're sinners. They take after us you know. I wanted my own identity.

I wanted God to speak to me direct. I didn't want second hand Christianity. I wanted to be a Christian because I wanted to be.

Not because somehow it accidentally happened to me because my parents were Christian. And at the same time I was torn apart inside. By my desires to be one way and my actual experience that I was living another way.

I lived a double life when I was at school. At the weekends I was singing in the choir at the school you would never have recognized me. I have known some of the experiences that Peter has gone through that we read of in scripture.

The experience of wanting to do so much better and yet finding my life to be wretched. Three years preaching in the open air in India. It will take more than this to stop.

And if you can't hear me at the back you wave to me and I'll wave back. Peter's own. You see Jesus Christ is not just.

Jesus. You just couldn't see that one of them had. Jesus our Savior does not build like that.

This came to this earth. Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ.

Whether you have been adopted into your family. Supposed to be there for the birth. Eventually made it with blue looking slimy.

Hard to be maintained. Relationship with God. Feelings go up and down.

Your feelings are quite out of control. Feelings can be completely untrue. Do you wake up slowly? You take a long time.

My feelings are completely. Your relationship to God has been fixed at the cross. And if Jesus Christ has.

You may not always feel too much like it. You may be very much like Mark and Peter were sometimes. But if you have come into God's.

You remember the prodigal. You know when. The queen of.

That he died. She was. She was actually dressed in all.

Then you have become secure. All of Christianity. Even.

Failure is never. Peter was a man who. You've been hearing things during this week.

You really go and. Jesus Christ. Hasn't for years.

And they're not improving. Millionaire can buy. The engines break down.
They're millionaires. It doesn't matter. He has paid a tremendous price for you.
That's the playthings of some. Millionaire. You matter.
The way you live. The way you grow up. The way you think.
The way you treat each other. We are. You are sitting next to.
39 to 30. Peter promising great things. Even though.
Everyone else denies you. Yet I will never deny. The cock even squawks in the morning.
You will have denied me not once. Rubbish says Peter. Lord how can you say such fateful things.
You don't know me. Judas. Yes.
I mean everybody. I mean. Of course.
And Simon Lee. The political twig. Yes.
And Matthew. The tax debt. You can't trust him.
And I never did. Have much time. But me.
I prayed for you. Already. Specifically.
By name. That your faith do not fail. If you read on a few verses.
And you read Peter. Using all the swear words. That he knew.
To deny. Everything about. You watch Peter.
With that little prayer. Peter was a great one. For standing up for Christ.
If you put Peter. Completely alone. To face.
Antagonistic questions. Oriental. Tyrant.
Straight in the eye. Very bit here and there. Because.
Everything that Christ. Prays for. Comes.
Peter's faith was something. A little bit deeper down. Than what was happening.
On the surface of his life. Christ sees your heart. Christ is there.
See's I am. He knows. The kind of temptations.
That you have a weakness. To fall. He knows.
The particular problems. That get you down. And Jesus Christ.

Is praying. Now. At the right.
And he's not praying. The same things. For the first.
Peter. Found after. This that he.
He collapsed. His. His.
His heart was. Despite. Of the clear.
Warnings of Christ. Peter eventually. Went out.
He knows. Your psychological. Problems.
He warns you. And then supposing you. Disobey his warnings.
He doesn't dismiss you. And let you go. He is.
Still your savior. Go and tell the disciples. That I am risen.
Don't let. Peter go on. Christ is a big savior.
And you don't begin. To understand. The depth.
To which he wants to work. In your life. He's going to be patient with you.
He's putting some of you. On to teams. That are designed to.
Peter would perhaps. Have realized. The rottenness.
Of his own heart. In no other way. Except this road.
He's going to get it now. Dear O.M. Dear. Do you love.
Him. Peter came through his failure. He came through his denial.
He realized that. He had a savior. That could even cope with that.
You care for my lambs. You know. Repentance is a hard road.
I used to think that O.M. I used to have such a high view. Of O.M. Being leaders. And through that process.
Of being real with one another. And going on with God. And the price of that has been.
Repentance towards God. And faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. But again and again and again.
That it seems to me. Is perhaps what kept. C.S. Lewis said this.
Repentance is not something. God demands of you. Before he will take you back.
And which he could let you off. If he chose. It is simply a description.
Of what going back is like. I want to urge you people tonight. To be real with one another.

And to go on. And some of you perhaps. It is not so easy.
When you commit yourself. To going on with the Lord. And rejecting.
To be real. Pigeons. When you took them away.
From their nest. Their pigeon lot. Why they always managed.
To set them free. And then he. Blindfolded all the pigeons.
In slow. Human beings. The mistakes that I made.
The God who can take a man like Peter. A church in Africa. But they don't sort of.
I mean in England. We pass a little. Because our left hand.
Even eggs and chickens. Bare feet. Ragged clothes.
Lettuce. Puts his spirit within us. Leading you home to glory.
And so you may make a few mistakes this summer. Don't get bogged down in Keith. Walking in the
footsteps of Peter.
You are not your own. You take people like us. And whatever our background.
You are making us. Into sons and daughters. Oh God help us to listen.
To what you are saying to us. Help us to accept one another. As you have accepted us.
May our lives. Be filled with the joy of the cross. May we not be afraid of repentance.
Thank you that in the New Testament. We read of men like Mark. And men like Peter.
Thank you that you. By your power. And your grace.
Did tremendous. Lord be pleased. To work through us.
We can. Failing though we be. Be the number one reality in our lives.
Day by day. As we seek your face.

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