

LIVING UNDER GRACE

Romans 6:14

Good morning! We're continuing our series on "Power to Change". Today we're going to Two Sundays ago, week we looked at the Law -- what it means to live under the Law, why the Law was given, and why we're no longer under the Law. Today, we want to look at that last phrase in Romans that says "*For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.*" We're going to do a survey on what grace is all about. Grace is one of the most important words in the Bible and the most important word for your Christian live. It's the secret of Christian living.

But what does it mean to live by grace? What are the benefits of grace? What are the misunderstandings about grace?

This is very important because as we get into Romans 7, 8 we need to understand exactly what the concept of grace is all about.

Now, grace can be defined in different ways. For example, grace is God giving us what we need not what we deserve. Grace is when someone does something for you that you could never deserve or earn or repay. Grace is all that God does for us on the basis of the cross. Then, there's the acronym G-R-A-C-E -- God's Riches At Christ's Expense. Grace is the power from God that gives us both the desire and the ability to do His will.

Let's review how the word grace has been used up to this point. Paul has already used the word grace eleven times in the first six chapters. He will use it another nine times in the remaining part of the book.

What is grace?

1. It is an attribute of God. The Bible says God is gracious. **Psalm 145:8 "The Lord is gracious."** When God talks about His grace, He's giving Himself. He just

doesn't give you "something"; the gift is Himself. We can say God is Love, we can say God is Grace.

2. It comes through Jesus Christ. Grace comes through a person. It's personal.

John 1:17, *"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."* Moses gave the Law and Jesus Christ gave grace. Romans 5:15 *"...the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ..."*

3. It's eternal. God has always acted in grace. 2 Timothy 1:9 *"He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time."* A lot of people think that God acted one way in the Old

Testament and another way in the New Testament. The Old Testament is Law and the New Testament is grace. But God has always acted in grace toward people.

Genesis 6:8 (KJV) says *"Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."* Abraham was chosen by grace. God has always acted by grace. Always. From the beginning of time. Grace is eternal.

4. It's free. It's unconditional. It's a gift. You don't earn it. You don't work for it.

Romans 3:24 *"All are justified freely by his grace."* Remember justified means just as if I'd never sinned. That is great news! God makes me just as if I'd never sinned. Because I deserve it? No. Because I earn it? No. But because of grace. It is free.

5. It can be resisted. Grace can be resisted. You can resist it in your life. How?

There are **two things that will limit and hinder the grace of God in your life:**

a) **Pride** hinders the grace of God in your life. James 4:6 *"God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble."* When you or I get full of pride and think "I can do this on my own. I don't need God. I can make it by myself. I have plenty energy, plenty of time, plenty of ability" then God's grace is frustrated in our lives - - the power and the ability to do God's will.

b) Self-Reliance - Relying on our own works frustrates the grace of God. This is what the book of Galatians is all about. They had started by walking in the Spirit and then they continued by trying to earn God's pleasure by their good works.

6. It is limitless. God's grace is limitless. If you tried to measure the grace of God you'd face an impossible task. **Romans 5:20** *"Where sin increased, grace increased all the more."* Literally, in the Greek, it says "Where sin increased, God's grace super increased." You cannot out-sin the grace of God. Have you ever heard anybody say, "That guy is hopeless!" But Romans 5:20 says nobody is hopeless. Where sin increased, God's grace super increases. You cannot out-sin God's grace. It is limitless.

THE BENEFITS OF GRACE

So, those are the characteristics of God's grace according to the Bible. Now that we understand what grace is all about, let's talk about its implications in our lives. Let me share with you **the eight benefits of God's grace** in your life:

1. We're saved by grace. That's a concept that Romans 4 and 5 talk about. And it is summarized for us by Paul himself in **Ephesians 2:8-9** *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."* In short, we're not saved by our own effort. We're saved by grace. But the big problem is that many Christians think they are saved by grace and then they live the Christian life by works. It's like they enter the family of God one way and then they continue another way. They get into all kinds of problems. **Colossians 2:6** *"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him."* The way you became a Christian is the way you continue in the Christian life. How were you saved? By grace. How do you continue the Christian life? By grace, through faith.

2. We are filled with God's Spirit by grace. Galatians 3:2 Paul's talking, **"I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works**

of the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?"

Then, in v. 14 *"He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."* God gives you His Spirit not because you earn it or you deserve it or you've worked out some pattern or formula. He gives you His Spirit. By grace. He saves us by grace. He puts His spirit in our lives by grace.

3. Every miracle is by grace. Galatians 3:5 *"So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?"* Every miracle that happens, happens because of grace. Why do you think God answers your prayers? Because you deserve it? No. He answers our prayers because of His grace. Because He wants to. He loves us. God works answers in our lives, His miracles, just because He loves us.

4. All personal growth comes by grace. The more you rely on God's grace, the more you're going to grow. 1 Cor. 15:10 Paul's speaking here. He's giving a testimony. *"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."* Paul's talking about his own growth. Was there a change in Paul's character? Yes, of course. From persecutor to apostle! I'm sure people -- early Christians -- looked at Paul and said, "That guy's hopeless! He's killing us. He's fighting us." I'm sure some people today say "That atheist, or that Satanist, or that occultist is hopeless." They're not! God's grace can reach even the person who's persecuting the church. Paul says, "I grew not because I worked real hard and pulled myself up by my own bootstraps and forced myself to change to be a nice guy!" The change in his life was made by grace. That's where the growth comes from. *"By the grace of God, I am what I am."*

But why is it that some people grow through trials and some people don't? Why is it that some people get better and some people get bitter? Why is it for some people they are a stumbling block and for others a stepping stone? It's whether they're using God's grace in their life. Trials do not automatically mature you. I know a lot of people who have gone through a lot of trials and they're still spiritual midgets! They don't rely on the grace of God.

The Benefits of God's grace: We're saved by God's grace. We're filled by God's grace. God answers our prayers by His grace. He does miracles by grace. All of the growth in our life is by grace. Then,

5. We overcome sin and temptation by grace. Grace is one of the most misunderstood terms. Some people take it to the extreme by saying that it provides a license for anyone to do what they want. If God loves me by grace, I'll live it up!

Let us look at what the Bible says. **In Titus 2:11, we read, "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people."** God gives his grace to unbelievers. The only way they become Christians is by His grace. Then, in verse 12, **"It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."** That doesn't sound like the grace I hear some people say. Some people say grace means do your own thing and God will forgive you. "I know that I shouldn't run out on my wife and marry this other lady but I'm going to do it anyway because I know God will forgive me!" That's what is called license to sin! That guy just issued his own license. Can you fool God? God sees through that. It says the grace of God teaches us to say "No".

When we get into Romans 7 we're going to find a common predicament. Paul says that all the things I want to do I end up not doing and all the things I don't want to do I end up doing. The grace of God teaches us how to say no. And it gives us the power to say no. That's what Romans 6 is all about.

Romans 6:15 *"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means!"* God has given us this power -- grace -- to overcome bad habits, temptation, to overcome those areas we habitually fall in and blow it and make mistakes. You need God's grace to change. The only way you can change is by God's grace. The Bible is saying that God gives us the power.

Philippians 2:13 *"...for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."* God tells you what to do then He gives you the desire to do it and then He gives you the power to fulfill the desire. That's grace.

Paul is saying in chapter 6, you don't have to sin any more. You hear people say, "The devil made me do it!" No, the devil didn't do it. It's such a convenient excuse. I don't think the devil has to worry about most of us, we're so caught up in our own flesh!

Romans 6 says you can never say, "But I couldn't help myself," if you're a Christian because the Bible says God gives you the grace which is the power to do what's right.

6. We can handle any trial by grace. In 2 Cor. 12:7 Paul is giving his testimony. He's had these visions and in order to keep him from getting full of pride, God put a thorn in the flesh in his life. *"...because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* God's grace is sufficient whatever you're going through. A financial problem, a marriage problem, a health problem -- God's grace is sufficient! Absolutely no circumstance can devastate your life if you're relying on the grace of God. **Hebrews 4:15** says, *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find*

grace to help us in our time of need." And in 2 Timothy 2:1 *"Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."* Friend, he will give you the grace to handle the problems that come into your life. He'll never put more on you than He puts in you to bear it up.

Now, sometimes we put more on ourselves! Let God handle your problems. Lord I give up. I surrender all my problems to you. Please handle them.

7. God uses you by grace.

In Ephesians 3:7 Paul says everything I've got, God's given me by grace. *"I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power."* Then, 1 Corinthians even says our spiritual gifts are given by grace and He chooses who's going to get what. God gives us these abilities to serve Him all by grace. *"Now there are [distinctive] varieties of spiritual gifts [special abilities given by the grace and extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit operating in believers], but it is the same Spirit [who grants them and empowers believers]."* (1 Cor. 12:4)

8. God keeps us saved by grace.

Let's turn to the book of Jude. But first, I heard about a preacher at the beginning of his message say, "Today I'm going to preach out of Jude chapter 2. How many of you have read that?" Several in the congregation raised their hand. He said, "That's right! I'm going to preach on lying today." There is only 1 chapter in Jude. Jude 24, it says, *"To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy."* Folks, God is able to keep you from falling and present you faultless in Heaven. If you've committed your life to Christ He'll make sure you get to Heaven. Who does the keeping? You? No, God does the keeping. *Philippians 1:6 "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."*

God keeps us saved by grace. What God starts, He finishes. In John 10 Jesus says, My sheep here my voice. They are in My hand and no man can pluck them out -- not even the devil. Some say, The devil can't pluck you out of God's hand but you can jump out. But how big is God's hand? Is it so big you can get to the edge and fall off? How long is eternal life? Forever! When does eternal life begin? It begins the moment you become a believer. Jesus gave us eternal life. You're already in eternal life. It's already started. Death is just going to be a transfer into the next kingdom. It's eternal!

It's very important that you understand that you live by grace. If you were saved by works then obviously you could lose your salvation because if you stopped working you'd lose your salvation. If I'm saved by grace then I have to be unsaved by God withholding his grace. But his grace is eternal and permanent. If you're born into a family, are you ever unborn? There is a difference between relationship and fellowship. My children were born into my family. They may disobey me and I may be mad at them and discipline them. The harmony may be broken, the fellowship may be strained. But they will always be my children, no matter what. Because they were born into my family. Once you're born into the family of God, you're born! You cannot be unborn.

But does this give you a license to go out and do whatever you want? This is what Romans 6 is all about! Because we've got grace and we know we cannot lose our salvation do we go out and live it up, now? No! Of course not! The problem with people who think they're saved by works is, How big a sin do you have to commit to lose your salvation? A tiny one? All sin is sin isn't it? The Bible says that when you're saved your name is written in the book of life in Heaven. If you could lose your salvation Gabriel must have an awfully big eraser -- just for me! Back and forth! Some of you, he'd wear out an awfully lot of erasers!

In Romans 8 you're going to see that the Bible says that God has given us the spirit of adoption. He says it again in Ephesians. It's God's grace that adopts you

into the Spirit of God. In Jewish culture a Jew could legally disown his own son but he could never disown an adopted child in Jewish law. God says in Timothy that even though we're faithless He cannot deny Himself. God keeps us saved by His grace. Fortunately I didn't have to earn my salvation. I put my trust in Christ. Fortunately I don't have to keep it. If I had to keep it, I'd be in a lot of trouble. Don't you figure that if it was any sin that could cause you to lose your salvation, don't you think it would be adultery? Yet, David committed adultery. And in Psalm 51:12 he didn't pray for his salvation back; he prayed, restore the joy of your salvation. It's not my salvation; it's His.

What happens when a Christian sins? God stops using you. Your prayers are hindered. God puts you under divine discipline. You lose the joy of his salvation. It's serious. But you don't lose the relationship. One of the things that happens is that you're miserable here on earth. The most miserable people in the world are not unbelievers. They are believers who are living outside of the will of God because they know better. They are the most miserable people in the world. So, folk, keep in mind, God keeps us saved by His grace.

Now, let's look at what seems to be a problem verse in Hebrews 6. Some people think this verse means you could lose your salvation. Not if it's by grace. *"It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened who have tasted of the heavenly gift who have shared in the Holy Spirit who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age [This is talking about somebody who has been saved!] and who have fallen away to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace."* Now, note that phrase *who have fallen away*. Some versions of the Bible say the same thing while other versions say "*if they fall away*". In the original Greek, it's either one or the other. But I would say it should be "if" because otherwise it will contradict the many verses in the Bible about not losing our salvation which we looked at already earlier. So, the writer of Hebrews is not

saying you can lose your salvation. He's saying IF you could lose your salvation -- if it were possible -- then you could never be saved again. He says it would be impossible. It would be impossible because Jesus Christ would have to come back again and die again because the cross had not paid for the sins that got you lost again. If you could lose your salvation you could never get it back because Christ would have to come back to earth and die again.

Hebrews 7:24-25 tells us what Jesus Christ is doing for you right now. **"But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."** God is able to keep you saved because He is continually praying for you. Because He always lives to intercede for us. Christ, right now in Heaven, is praying for believers. He always lives to intercede for them. That's the duty of a priest, to intercede for the people. Jesus is the High Priest and in heaven He is interceding. For you to lose your salvation, Jesus would have to stop praying for you. For you to lose your salvation it would mean that Jesus' prayer was not answered. How can God the Father not answer the prayer of his own Son?

That is grace! God saves us by grace, He fills us with His Spirit by grace, He answers our prayers by grace, He works in our lives by grace, He uses us by grace, He gives us spiritual gifts by grace, He helps us through trials by grace, He gives us strength over our weakness by grace, He helps us overcome sin by grace, He saves us completely and keeps us saved by grace. That's good news!

Now, let's look at one significant implication of grace that's really important for us to know.

Grace does not remove the natural consequences of my own actions here on earth.

Many people think because they live by grace they could go get stoned and maybe nothing will happen, or go break one other of God's laws and nothing will happen because God will forgive me. "I know this is wrong, but I'm going to do it

anyway because God will forgive me!" He will forgive you if you ask Him, but He will not remove the consequences here on earth. **Galatians 6:7 "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."**

There's a lot of people who were all strung out on drugs who came to Christ and asked God for forgiveness and God did forgive them and their penalty eternally is wiped out. But their mind is still messed up. They are still carrying the scars from it. I know many people who've had lives messed up by their parents and they've later gone back and gotten forgiveness and offered forgiveness to their parents but the scars are still there. Many marriages have been torn apart but the scars are still there. Like the little boy who, every time he disobeyed his dad, his dad made him drive a nail into the door of his bedroom. Then whenever he confessed what he had done wrong he could pull the nail out. After a while he began to realize there were bad marks in his door, it was all scared. Don't think that just because you live by grace you can sin and get away with it. You can't. You can confess it and God will forgive you of the eternal penalty. It will not keep you out of heaven. You will not lose your salvation. But it does not keep you from experiencing the discipline of God right here on earth.

Folks, there are consequences to disobedience. So, let us not take lightly the grace of God. It is powerful and beneficial, but we have to be obedient and faithful to him always.