

LIVING TRANSFORMED

Formation After Transformation
This Changes Everything

Grace transforms us in a moment — and then forms us over time.

Christmas reminds us that grace has come near and hope has been born. Romans reminds us that grace doesn't stop at transformation; it continues through formation. Paul shows us what grace looks like once it begins shaping everyday life — how we live awake, love well, handle differences, and build one another up as the year comes to a close.

FROM TRANSFORMATION TO FORMATION

Transformation meets us; formation shapes us.

Transformation is what God does in a moment when grace meets us. Formation is what God does over time as that grace reshapes how we live, love, and respond. Romans doesn't call us to move on from Christmas — it teaches us how to live because of it.

LIVING AWAKE — GRACE CHANGES OUR POSTURE

Grace wakes us up to live intentionally.

Paul reminds us that grace doesn't make us passive; it makes us present. After Christmas, routines return and pressures resume, but formation happens right there — as we choose love, awareness, and daily alignment with Christ.

Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law. For the commandments say, "You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet." These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God's law.

This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living. Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and

jealousy. Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.

—Romans 13:8–14 (NLT)

LOVING WELL — GRACE SHAPES OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Maturity is revealed by love, not volume.

Formation shows up in how we handle differences. Paul acknowledges that sincere believers don't see everything the same way, but grace teaches humility, patience, and restraint. Transformation is not proven by how right we are, but by how loving we remain.

Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. For instance, one person believes it's all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don't. And those who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them.

Who are you to condemn someone else's servants? Their own master will judge whether they stand or fall. And with the Lord's help, they will stand and receive his approval.

In the same way, some think one day is holier than another day, while others think every day is alike. You should each

be fully convinced that whichever day you choose is acceptable. Those who worship the Lord on a special day do it to honor him. Those who eat any kind of food do so to honor the Lord, since they give thanks to God before eating. And those who refuse to eat certain foods also want to please the Lord and give thanks to God.

For we don't live for ourselves or die for ourselves. If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. Christ died and rose again for this very purpose—to be Lord both of the living and of the dead.

So why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For the Scriptures say,

“As surely as I live,” says the Lord, “every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will declare allegiance to God.” Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God. So let's stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall.

—Romans 14:1–13 (NLT)

BUILDING, NOT DIVIDING — GRACE REFOCUSSES US

Grace asks what builds the body.

The kingdom of God is bigger than personal preference. Grace re-centers our focus on righteousness, peace, and joy, calling us to pursue harmony and mutual upbuilding rather than winning arguments.

For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God, and others will approve of you, too. So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.

—Romans 14:17–19 (NLT)

FORMATION THAT MOVES OUTWARD

Grace that forms us becomes a witness.

Romans never leaves grace contained. A people who live awake, love generously, and pursue peace carry something into their city. We don't just carry beliefs into Alvin — we carry an atmosphere shaped by the presence of Jesus.

Grace has met us — now grace is forming us.

As this year closes, we are invited not to strive harder, but to trust the ongoing work of grace. Formation continues

as we live awake, love well, and build one another up together.

Because grace has transformed us, We will trust the process of formation.

Because grace is forming us, We will live awake and love generously.

Because grace is at work among us, We will build one another up.