

Experiencing Grace, Part 2 – Personal Growth

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Titus 2:12

February 23, 2020

Hey, good morning. I'm John. I'm one of the pastors here. Thanks for being here today. Grab your Bibles, please, if you haven't already and turn to Titus chapter two, Titus chapter two. If you got a Bible or if you're getting a Bible from an usher, that is page 1100, Titus chapter two. Now we are slowly making our way through the book of Titus. I promise we will finish this whole book by June. But we're going slow on purpose because if we rush through these things, there's so much that we will skip, and everything here is here for our life and for godliness. So we need these things. That's why we're going slowly. Titus chapter two, drop down to verse 11. If you are able, please stand for the reading of God's word.

This is God's word. "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, who are zealous for good works. Declare these things. Exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you." That is God's word. You may be seated. As you are, join me in prayer. Father, like I said, there is so much important truth in this passage. As I think about it, I think I should give multiple weeks to chapter two, verse 12, which is where we'll be today.

Father, I pray that you will do what only you can do, that you will take these truths. You will help us to understand them intellectually. You will help us to apply them to our lives, and that we will leave here saying that Jesus is wonderful because he paid it all for us. I don't just want that for us. I lift Christ Church up to you. I pray for Adam. I pray that you will bless him. I know his service is second service today started 15 minutes ago. So I pray that you would use him while he preaches to do the same exact thing. People will understand the text, will live the text and will leave the three campuses they have this morning saying, "Jesus is incredible. I want to live for him." Do that there, please, and do that here, please. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

So I want to take you back to when you were in school, which means for some of you I'm talking about Friday, right? But if you're in school or you were in school at one point, I want to ask you, is there a subject or was there a subject that no matter how hard you tried, you just didn't get it? For me, that was algebra two. As someone was leaving the last service, they go, "Well, algebra one." Okay. Well, thanks for that. I did fine in that. There was no problem there. But when it came to algebra two, all the Xs and parentheses and sequences and polynomials and quadratic equations and radicals and all these things, it was just too much for me. No matter, now I didn't give up, but it didn't matter how much I tried, how much I met with the teacher, how much I met with the tutor. I just didn't get. It just didn't make sense.

My description of algebra two is actually the way that many people think about the Christian life. They just don't get it. How's this whole thing supposed to work? How do I grow? How do I change? No matter how much I meet with a pastor, no matter how much I read and pray and talk with other friends, I just don't get it. How are we formed and molded into the image of Jesus? How does that happen? See, in my life, I've gone through various stages of my life where I thought I had it figured out, but realized that I didn't. So there was a time when I thought that you just kind of be passive, kind of let go, let God, and that's how I'm going to grow and change. The less active I am with it. Just be complacent, just be satisfied of being saved. Hey, you're saved, you're a child of God. You'll just kind of change and grow automatically, like fruit just automatically comes out of trees, fruit trees.

Well then I thought, well maybe the more ignorant I am of the Bible, the more I'll grow. I don't know. The more emotions, the more tingling, the more quiver in the liver, the more emotional, maybe that's how I grow and change. Well, that wasn't it. So then I thought, okay, maybe it's legalism. Maybe I wouldn't say it, but maybe add some man-made rules. Do this, do that. If I'm not dominated by guilt and shame, and if I'm not pummeling myself with do better, try harder, pick it up, you lazy loser, those kinds of self-talk, if I'm not doing that, feeling the conviction, well, then I'm not going to change. But if I do that, well, then I'll change. I actually used to preach like that. Aren't you glad I don't do that anymore?

Then it was like, okay, it's really license. God knows I'm a sinner before he saved me. Jesus died for all my sins before I even existed, so he knew I would sin. So it's really can't be much of a big deal to him. Get over your guilt. God doesn't expect me to be perfect. God knows that I can't be perfect. After all, I'm not Jesus. So sin is really no big deal. And the less of a big deal I make of it, maybe then the more I'll grow and change. Also if I look back to the earliest days of my Christian life, I thought I'd grow and change if I just got away from everybody, just went into my room or I went to some empty chapel and just prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed for God to just zap me with the Holy Spirit. Then suddenly I'd get up and I'd be godly.

I can keep going, but can you relate to any of that? Well, how do we grow? How do we change? How are we transformed? If there's sin in our lives, if there's failure in our lives, how is that immaturity pushed out of our lives? How do we grow? Most people are going to say the answer is inside of you, but I'm going to say that the answer is in our text this morning. Paul wrote to Titus. So to give the context for our verse this morning, he's pastoring a church, many churches on the island of Crete, and the churches on that island were full of fake believers, people who claimed to be Christians but really weren't. Or they were full of true believers, but incredibly immature believers who let the world influence them far more than the Bible, than the teachings of the apostles.

So starting in chapter two, verse one, Paul says, "Hey, Titus, you need to teach them that their lives need to be in line with sound doctrine, that their lives should match what they've been taught, that there shouldn't be this double life, this duplicity, this hypocrisy." If that marks their life, if that's the overall tenor of their lives, we're going to see later, then that would prove that

they're not really saved to begin with. So this sound doctrine should actually change their lives. Well, take a look at verse 11 because in verse 11, we see what motivates the life change. What is making this happen? What is causing good works to come out of the lives of Christians, so that people on that island are making Jesus look great, so that the people on the island are going, "Oh, Jesus is great" because they see the way that your life is being changed by him. "Maybe there's something to this Jesus thing."

Verse 11 begins with the word "for." When you see that word, you should say, "What is the word 'for' there for?" The word "for" speaks of motivation, reason, the fuel for the life that is described in chapter two, verses two to 10. So why should we expect our lives to be different than the world? What is it that should motivate us? How do we thrive in a world where really the culture around us is dying in rebellion against God? How do we not fall into that? Notice what it says. The self-control, the godly life that God expects us to live happens because verse 11, "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people." So first we saw this last week, if you weren't here, that we cannot live the life that God wants us to live without being saved first. And really there is no salvation without grace. If God is not gracious, there is no salvation. If God is all good but he's not gracious, then we will all receive justice.

We'd all get what we deserve for our crimes against him, who just happens to be the one who gives us life and breath and every good thing we've ever had. But because he's gracious, not only does he make salvation possible, but he goes beyond that and actually saves people from the punishment they deserve for their sins. Then Jesus, in an act of supreme grace takes our sins' punishment on himself on the cross. He is our substitute. God treats him as if he lived our sinful lives. And because he's gracious, Jesus offers to trade his perfection for all your sin. He says, "Trust me instead of your good works. Trust me instead of trying to be good enough to earn God's favor. You can't do that. Trust me, and I will save you." And in that, when that happens, we saw last week that a person is born again.

They're made alive from spiritual death. As a result of that, they believe. They're given a new heart that loves God. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in their life. What we saw last week, all of that is what happens in verse 11 when grace appears, when the unimaginable grace of God appears in a person's life and they're saved. This week, we answer the question, "So how do you respond?" How do you live your life now that you're forgiven of all of your sins? Now that you're cleansed from all unrighteousness. Now that you're adopted into the family of God. Now that God treats you as if you were Jesus. What lives look like? If we've experienced God's grace, not only are we saved, but something else has happened too. Look at verse 11. "For the grace of God has appeared." Go to verse 12. "That grace is training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age."

When grace appears in a person's life, that person is saved, verse 11, and that person starts changing, verse 12. Our good works come from the good news. Our behavior as Christians is based on, motivated by, comes from the grace that saves us. Christians grow and change. We excel in the Christian life by grace. The penalty for sin is purged from our record the moment

we're saved by grace. And then in that moment, there begins this process of breaking the power of sin in our lives. And that power is broken, the text says, also by grace. Hebrews 10:29, the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of grace. And he does in our lives what Titus 2:11 and 12 says grace does in the life of the Christian.

See, the work of the Spirit is to take his word primarily and to take other people who teach us his word or take people who live his word and to help us, show us how to change, how to grow. He does that from the inside out. He does that as he develops these, motivates us to follow his leadership in our lives. Now verse 12, "The source of our salvation and our sanctification is grace. There is no salvation and there's no transformation after salvation without grace." Notice the text, grace is personified. Grace is the savior in verse 11 and grace becomes the teacher in verse 12. Now, how does grace do this? I want you to think about this. Jesus is talking to people that are this huge crowd of people. And he tells them to love their enemies. And you know how he encourages them to love their enemies.

He says, "Love your enemies because God loves his enemies." What is that? That's grace. God is gracious to his enemies. He loves his enemies. And so you love yours too. We saw last week, if you were here, Matthew chapter 12, Jesus teaching his people, "Hey, forgive those who've sinned against you. Why? Because you've been shown grace. You've been forgiven. Therefore forgive others." Matthew chapter 20. How does Jesus encourage his disciples to be servant leaders? You want to be greatest in the kingdom, you must be a servant. You want to be first, you must be the slave. Why? He points to the gospel. "Because the son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom. I came and served by dying for your sins. Therefore you serve other people as leaders." You see, every time Jesus is motivating growth and change, and he's pointing to the grace of God.

Paul picks that up. Philippians chapter two, he's got this group of people in this church that are fighting and conflict and all this horrible stuff going on. And he says, "Hey, you need to consider others more important than yourself." Philippians chapter two. Why? He points to the gospel, because Jesus considered sinners more important than himself, and he takes on the form of a servant and dies for our sins. Again, how is humility encouraged in our lives? By pointing to grace. He says to husbands, Ephesians five, "Hey, love your wives." How? "As Christ loves the church." So he points to the gospel. He points to grace again. And he goes, "Hey, husbands, it's grace that'll motivate you to love your wife." This is a paradigm. There are lots of ways that Jesus and the writers in the New Testament encourage us to change and grow and live godly lives. That one of the primary ways that they do this is by grace.

You've experienced the grace of forgiveness, so forgive. You've experienced the grace of servant leadership in Jesus, and so serve others. You've experienced the grace of his humility, so consider others more important than yourself. On and on and on. God loves his enemies, so you love your enemies. That one of the primary ways that we grow is we're reminded of grace, knowing that the more we are exposed to grace, the more we will grow and change. Now look at verse 12 because that growth and change is characterized by this word "training." This is a

normal word used in Greek for education, but Greek education, US education were different. Greek education included teaching and encouragement, all of that, yes, but it also meant persuasion, correction, consequences and even rebuke. So this word "training" is often used for what parents do with their kids. There's instruction, there's teaching, but there's also discipline if that instruction is denied.

So the Spirit does far more than inform us, right? If you're a Christian, you know that. The Spirit's just not just giving us information constantly, right? What is he doing? He's training us. It's why I love this word. He's teaching, yes, but he's counseling and guiding and leading and comforting and encouraging. But he's also persuading and convicting and reprimanding and restraining and correcting and disciplining too. And you know this if you're a Christian, right? That you feel this, you know his work in your life. And this word "training" in verse 12 is in the present tense, meaning this never stops in the Christian life. The moment that you're saved, the training begins is what this text is saying. Which means that if you're not experiencing this training, if you're not experiencing the instruction and the discipline, then this is a moment when the text would have you say, "Am I seeing my life in this text? Am I actually saved?"

In other words, it's not possible to be saved from the penalty of sin without the power of sin beginning to be broken in your life. Many claim to be Christians, believe in Jesus. But if their lives don't change, if grace hasn't started instructing and disciplining them, if they're basically no different than they were before, then this text would say that process hasn't started in your life. That means you're not saved. So when I'm talking to somebody and I'm trying to figure out, are they saved? What's their testimony? What I'm listening for is, when did your life change? So if you're assessing your testimony, just by me saying that, you should be asking yourself, "When did my life change? When did the fundamental orientation of my heart go from being self-centered to being God centered?"

Because this text says in the moment of salvation, when grace appears to you, the training begins. Because you can't have grace appear to you, you can't have a new heart that loves God and wants to live for him, you can't have God, the Holy Spirit living inside of you and remain unchanged by that. It's impossible. Well, that change is specific, and Paul gets specific in verse 12. Notice that the training is accomplishing first in the lives of those who are saved, verse 12, "Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions." So the goal of the training that grace is doing is twofold. In the first part, notice, is summarized by this word, "renounce." That word means to deny or to abandon, means to disassociate from, to reject, to quit, to refuse. One pastor from 300 AD, so 1700 years ago said that this word means more than just avoiding something. He says this word implies hatred for something so that it's rejected.

So look at the text. God's grace is in the constant process of training Christians to renounce, abandon and reject, disassociate from and hate ungodliness and worldly passions. As you can guess, that's not like, "Well, I did that once and I'm good now." And that's not, "Well, I kind of went through the motions, but I really didn't mean it." This is an action that has ongoing ramifications for the entirety of the Christian life, and that's because the training is part of the

ongoing Christian life. The Spirit is daily, constantly exposing our sins so that we will hate it and quit doing it. So how do we grow and change? point #1) ***How do we grow and change? Be willing to rid yourself of all known sin.*** And you're like, "That's it? There's no lightning bolt from heaven, and that's how I change?" No. This is what the Spirit is leading every Christian to do, to rid themselves of all known sin.

Recognize that if grace is in your life, it is fighting against our sin. If it's teaching us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, then Christians, we should be teachable. We should not only recognize that training happening in our lives, but we should respond to that training by giving into it, by following the direction of that training. This is a very common way Christians are counseled in the New Testament. Ephesians 4:22, "Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life." Colossians 3:5, "Put to death what is earthly in you." And look at Titus 2:12, "Grace is training us to renounce two things, ungodliness and worldly passions."

Ungodliness, picture that as the root, and worldly passions are the fruit. So ungodliness, we hear that word and we're like, "Oh, that's the worst of the worst. Those are terrorists, those are mafia people, lawyers, whatever." Right?

But listen, ungodliness isn't so much being anti-God as being not God. Ungodliness, the idea there being, living your life with no regard for God. Living your life like God doesn't exist, like he's not even there. So ungodliness is a life of God forgetfulness, shutting God out and just leaving him, his desires, his word, his ways, his existence just never comes to mind. It doesn't really control anything. There's little to no thought of God, care for God, honoring of God, gratitude for God, which means you can live a pretty moral life and still be ungodly. I thought those two things were separate. No, you can be a very moral, ungodly person. You can be kind, honest, peaceful, moral. You can be faithful to your wife and not cheat on your taxes and still be ungodly, if you live your life with little to no reference for God. And I say little to no reference, because if I said no reference for God, you'd say, "Well, I reference God sometimes." Right? Little inner lawyer would be like, "Oh no, I do. I mean, I'm here right now, right? So I must have some reference for God."

No. That's why I said little to no. It is a life of practical atheism. It's a "I make my own rules. I kind of do what I want. I follow my heart with really no thought that God is there. Don't really consider that he's watching. Don't really consider that I'll stand before him and give an account for my life." It's approaching your life, whether it's your trials or your victories without God, what he thinks, what he wants. And when our lives are not God, when our lives are ungodly, what they become dominated by are what the text says in verse 12, worldly passions. These are desires for what the world says we should live for. See, because the world doesn't say just, "Hey, forget that God thing." It says, "Forget that God thing. I've got something better. It's power. It's pleasure. It's possessions. Just give your life to that. Don't worry about that God stuff. Be dominated by those things, the things that, the worldly passions."

They're not heavenly. They're from the world. 1 John 5:19 says the world is under the control of Satan, who is called the god of this world in 2 Corinthians 4:4. So you think about this term, "the

world." Often what this means is humanity separated from and in rebellion against God with Satan as their master, the arch rebel. Notice the text. It doesn't say worldly actions. What does it say? Worldly passions. So we're not even talking about sins that are actually committed. We're talking about what? Things that people want to commit. They're worldly. 1 John 2:16 says, "These are passions of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life." These are what I said earlier. These are the craving for the four Ps, praise, pleasure, power and possessions. It's craving for those things. That's the god of a person's life. It's not God of the Bible. All of this, the ungodliness and the worldly passions it spawns is what God, by his grace, by his Spirit is training you to hate and to rid your life of. And Christian, you know that, right? You feel that, you experience that.

The question is for us, is there a portion where we're not willing to rid ourselves of ungodliness and worldly passions? Is there a pocket, is there a place, is there a section of our lives where we're just like, "Yeah, yeah, no, no, not there"? It's one thing for grace to be teaching you these things. But the question is, are you teachable? Are you prideful? "There's nothing wrong with me. What's wrong is with you. I'm fine. I'm good. There's nothing wrong with ignoring God, wanting to be like the world and those who give no thought to God. I mean, what's the big deal? I mean, I'm a good person. I'm nice. It doesn't matter." That's not being willing to rid yourself of all known sin. Or maybe you're unwilling because you're fatalistic. It's your spirituality. "Woe, woe is me. I'm just so bad. I could never be perfect, so why bother? It's just who I am." Listen, that's not who you are if you're saved. If you're saved, God's Spirit lives inside of you, God's grace is training you. So respond to the training, respond to his leadership, respond to his direction in your life.

If you're not saved, if grace hasn't appeared to you, if the Spirit isn't living inside of you, then what I'm saying right now doesn't make sense, because you're not experiencing the work of grace in your heart. And if that's not happening, then this is a moment of God's grace where he says to you, "Hey, now's a good time to cry out to me for grace. Now is a good time to, if you haven't done it already, tune that preacher out and just pray. 'God be merciful to me, the sinner. Because this text says this is what happens in the life of the Christian, those who are saved, and I don't see this happening in my life. I don't see the renouncing, I don't see the ridding my life of God forgetfulness. Most of my life is God forgetfulness. And worldly passions, yeah, that's what I desire. That's what I want.'"

If that's you please understand, this is a moment where God's saying, "I put you in this room so you'd hear the truth. You cry out to me and be saved." In other parts of the country, people tell me that leaves die on trees and then fall to the ground. Is that true? They turn from nice and green to dead and brown. However, though dead, those leaves can sit on the trees for a while, right? If wind and snow and rain doesn't knock them off, you know what does? After a while, new life starts to bud from those branches, and as that new life begins to form, the dead leaves fall to the ground. Has a new life in Christ, has the grace of God, has the Spirit of God started his

training in your life, so that ungodliness and worldly passions are falling out of your life? Are you trainable? Are you ridding yourself of ungodliness, of God forgetfulness?

Are you looking at your life going, "Okay, this was a day or this was a time in my day or this was a week where I just did not think about God at all"? Then this is the moment when God goes, "Okay. Here's an opportunity to confess that and to ask for forgiveness and to pray, 'Father, help me, help me to see all of life the way that it actually is, as revolving around you.'" Respond to the work of the Spirit, who he's called the Holy Spirit because his job is to make us holy by ridding ourselves of sin. No more excuses, no more justification. If grace is training you, if the Spirit is at work in you, then the power of sin is being broken in your life. So instead of God forgetfulness, let's pause and go, "God, I hate that. I have times when I forget about you."

Instead of worldly passions, are we becoming more countercultural? The thought patterns and the value systems and the cravings of this world are having less and less of an influence on our hearts. That's the goal. That's how you know God's Spirit is at work and God's grace is training you. Notice that training continues in verse 12. Christian life is not just a bunch of negatives. I was listening to a podcast this week, and the two guys were on there and it suddenly got spiritual. And the guy's like, "Last thing I would want is to spend time with a Christian. It's just a bunch of dos and don'ts and a whole bunch of don'ts." Clearly, look at the text. Christian life is not a bunch of negatives, all about what not to do. God's grace is actually training us in a direction that we grow and change.

Look at verse 12. "We're being trained to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age." The second goal of the training that grace is doing in a Christian's life, notice the word, is to live. That refers to the entirety of our lives after we're saved. Grace is constantly training every aspect of our lives to bring us, notice what it says there, "To live self-controlled, upright and godly lives." It's doing that as our lives are renouncing ungodliness and worldly passions. So this is what's happening in our lives. Our lives are being motivated by grace in order to live lives that show, "Jesus is at work in my life."

So in other words, the way that this happens or how we grow and change, point #2) ***is to be willing to live your life to please God. Be willing to live your life to please God.*** If I try to summarize self-control, upright and godly with one phrase, the best I can do is that all three are what it means to please God with our lives. So recognize that if grace is in your life, that's not only fighting against your sin, but it is fighting for your holiness. If grace is teaching us to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives, then we should be teachable. We shouldn't push against that. We should welcome that as a gift of God's grace, that he's making us more like Jesus.

This is the way that change happens in the Christian's life. If Ephesians 4:22 says, "Christians put off, rid yourself from sin," Ephesians 4:24 says, "That we should put on, that we should live the new life that pleases God." If Colossians 3:5 says to Christians say, "Put to death what is earthly in you?" then Colossians 3:10 says, "Put on the new self, live the new life that seeks to please the Lord." Now, when I talk about pleasing God, I always have to give this disclaimer. It's important that we all understand that what I'm going to say has nothing to do with how you are saved,

right? Can we all say that this has nothing to do with how you are saved. You are not saved by living a good life. You are saved, as we saw last week, verse 11, by grace and grace alone. But when grace has come into our lives, verse 12, it begins to train us to live godly lives. So pleasing God has everything to do with how you live your life after you've been saved.

This is a very common teaching in the New Testament that Christians live to please God. So it says about Jesus, God the father says about him that he says that of the son that "I am well pleased with him." And Jesus said he always did what was pleasing to God. John 8:29. Romans 8:8 says that unsaved people, people who aren't Christians, it says they're not able to please God because without faith, without trusting in Christ, Hebrews 11:6 says, "It is impossible to please God." But Christians are to make it our goal in life not to please people, but to please Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:9, to try to discern as we go through the various decisions and incidences in our lives, we're to discern what it is that would please God in those situations, Ephesians 5:10 so that our lives, in the words of Colossians 1:10, quote, "are fully pleasing to him."

Pleasing God is how we ought to live as God is, quote, "working in us that which is pleasing in his sight," Hebrews 13:21. That's a dozen verses that show that when it comes to the Christian's life, "Hey, this was Jesus' goal in life. We're followers of Jesus, therefore our goal in life should be to please him." And then there's teaching throughout the New Testament that says that should be our purpose in life, to please him. Well, how do we live to please God? Well, take a look at the text. "Grace trains us to please God first inwardly by training us to be self-controlled." This is the opposite of fickle or impulsive. Grace is training us to bring our desires and bring all of our actions, all of our thoughts, all of it under the lordship of Jesus. Worldly passions, as we see in verse 11 are increasingly in check.

The sway of people or power, pleasure or possessions, it's loosening the grip on our hearts. God's will, his ways, his words are growing as being the controlling factor of the Christian's life. This is self-control. This is pleasing God inwardly. We've already seen this in chapter one, verse eight, chapter two, verse two, chapter two, verse five, chapter two, verse six, that this is the virtue, it seems, for a church that is being dominated by the world. Paul's response is, "Hey, be self-controlled." We probably need that too. It's not just pleasing God inwardly. Look at the next word. The word "upright" is pleasing God outwardly. It's how we treat people. We're to treat them with honesty and integrity and fairly. It's not taking advantage of people, not using them. It's doing what's right by them. It's treating them as another person made in the image of God.

It's treating them the way we'd want to be treated. It's treating them the way that Jesus treated people. It's justice, honesty, integrity with all people. And then third, it's not just pleasing God inwardly and pleasing God outwardly, but notice the last word is pleasing God upwardly, godly, which is the opposite of being ungodly. You're like, "Wow, that's quite an observation there, Pastor." But it is. It's the exact opposite. If ungodliness is God forgetfulness, then godliness is God obsession. It's as I've said before, it's Jesus is the center of the wheel of your life, and everything that you think, say, do, involved in, all of your time, all of it jets out from him. Being godly is seeing every area of your life, every experience in life, every day of your life is related

to, connected to and consumed with God. This is the direction that God's grace is training us to go in.

And that yes, that training's going to last for our entire lives and we're never going to do it perfectly. But that's the goal. His existence, his word, his will, his ways as what matters most to us. He is what life is devoted to. He is what life is all about. That's why Paul can say to live is Christ. It's a life that is just dominated by him. Everything seen in light of him. It's 1 Corinthians 10:31, "whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God" means do everything so that when you do it, Jesus looks great. It's Romans 14:8, "If we live, we live to the Lord. He's the goal." It's 2 Corinthians 5:15, "We no longer live for ourselves, but we live for Christ." We follow him. We do what he wants. We think what he thinks.

So as I'm describing that, the Christian knows, "Yes, that's what I want to do. And I hate the stuff that keeps me from that. I want to go in that direction more and more with my life." The person who's not saved is hearing that and going, "Ah, Jesus freak. That's weird. That sounds horrible." Or they're going, "I have no experience of that." See, when you're saved, the Spirit puts you on a grace treadmill. I hate treadmills, but the illustration works. The Spirit puts you on a grace treadmill, and grace starts to train you with two goals, rid yourself of all known sin and live your life to please God. If you're saved, you know what I'm talking about. Because inside of you, you're going, "That is the Christian life. Get sin out of my life and get more of God in my life."

Now here's the problem. The biggest obstacle to living your life to please God is living your life to please yourself. "But Pastor, doesn't God want me to be happy?" No. He wants you to be holy. Ridding yourself of sin and living your life devoted to pleasing him. And you please him, notice the text, by controlling yourself, bringing your life into submission to God's word, no longer controlled by sin, no longer controlled by your feeling, no longer controlled by what other people think about you, unless those other people are encouraging you to live under the lordship of Christ.

And second, you please him by treating other people fairly. We think, "How do I please God? It's so complicated, and what do you want? Blah, blah." No. It's very simple. Control yourself. Treat other people with dignity and respect. Be honest, be fair. Do what's right by people, not what's right by yourself. "Well, if I did that, Pastor, I'd never get ahead in business. You got to be cutthroat, and clearly you couldn't do that." Yeah, I guess you got to care more about when you stand before God than your bottom line, at the end of the day. And third, you please God by being godly, by thinking about God, seeking his kingdom first instead of your own, putting God into all of your plans, the events of your day, making God's will the ambition of your life, making God's word the guide for your life.

And here's what happens in this moment, because I know, because I know how I would respond in this moment. If I hadn't spent all this time in this text, my response would be, "Okay, Pastor. Then this is what I'll do. I'll kind of wait for God to do this in me. You said this is what grace is training me to do. So I'll just sit back and I'll just let the training happen. And if it happens, then great. But if it doesn't happen, I mean, that's his fault because he's doing the training, and if I'm

not responding to the training, that's his problem because he's supposed to be doing that in me. So I'll just sit back and see if it happens. And if it doesn't happen, it's his fault. If it does happen, well, great.

Godliness is not only what grace is training us to be. 1 Timothy 4:7 says to train yourself for godliness. So what that means is doing a mental assessment of your life and going, "Okay, were there times yesterday when I had no thought of God, times this week, no thought of God? Do I live my life, do I have this relationship, do I have these moments where it's just like, I don't even think about God at all. Okay, God, I confess that to you as sin and teach me how to live godly in that situation." That's what it is. 1 Timothy 6:11 says to pursue godliness, to chase after it, to want more and more of it in your life. It's not that the Spirit is doing that work in your heart, but that you're to pursue that, you're to chase after that, you're to follow his direction.

2 Timothy 3:12 says, "Christians, desire to live godly lives." So there's something inside of you that says, "Yes, that's what I want." And you're pushing, you're pursuing that. It's something grace produces in our lives and it's something we strive to produce in our lives because what we do is we go, "It's either/or. Well, it's either he's going to do that or I'm going to do it. I don't want to do it because that's legalism. So I better just wait till he does it." It's not either/or, it's both/and. We work out our salvation because God is at work in us, both to do and to want to do what pleases him.

Well, when should we start doing all this? When should we be willing to rid ourselves from all known sin and to live our lives to please God? Because here's what happens. "That's great, Preacher. I'm never going to be perfect, but I will in heaven. So I'll just wait till I get there." Take a look at 2:12. "Live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the next age." Is that what your Bible ... does your Bible say that? In the next age, it doesn't say ... Why are you laughing? It doesn't say next age in your Bible? Oh, it says present age. Because we don't wait for heaven for all of this. This is supposed to happen now. Grace is training us for all of this, even though we live in a world that is hostile to God and hostile to us for not being hostile to God. The Spirit of God uses the grace of God not only to rescue us from the penalty we deserve for our sins, but to transform us, even though we live in a world that is dominated by sin.

Well, here's what people think. "I'm never going to be godly because I'm in this world and it's always full of temptation and all that. So what I got to do is I got to go into the middle of the forest or in the middle of, well, desert," well, that's kind of us right now but, "I got to get away from everybody and then I'll be godly." People did that. Christians did that in the 200s. And you know what they found? That ungodliness followed them because it's right here. But you know what else is right here? The Spirit of God. And this is what he does. Galatians 5. He leads, he guides, he gives us the direction. He puts pressure in our heart so that we seek to do that direction.

All I'm saying today is don't resist his work in your life. Don't resist the work of grace. Don't resist the training that grace is seeking to do in your life. Why? I think the entire book of Titus is, it says on the cover of all of your programs is that you and I will live godly lives, so that an

ungodly world will go, "If that's what Jesus does in a life, then I want to know more about him." That as the light shines from our lives, it attracts the moths of the world. As a result of that, they go, "Tell me more about this Jesus." So that's why Paul wants to see these things in their lives. And I think that's why God wants to see these things in our lives too. You should call and tell a friend about it. Let's pray. Let's pray.