

Series: "AMAZING"

For Message: Mark 14:27-31, 71-72, 16:7; Romans 8:1; Lamentations 3:22, 5:21; Titus 3:5
Message Title: "Restoring GRACE: Part 1"

Introduction: Welcome to BMZ CHURCH! Glad you're here as we CONTINUE our WORSHIP SERIES called: "AMAZING"! So far, we've learned about Saving Grace and Sustaining Grace. TODAY, I'm going to tell you about an element of GOD'S GRACE few EVER TALK ABOUT an even FEWER UNDERSTAND - but we ALL NEED!

UP FRONT, I want to be CLEAR. This MESSAGE is for CHRISTIANS - those who are FOLLOWERS of Jesus. FAIR WARNING: this is a DEEP topic - we're going to DEBUNK some MISCONCEPTIONS and REVEAL some SECRETS of GRACE.

IF you're NOT YET a FOLLOWER of Jesus, that's OK - you're going to get a PEEK BEHIND the curtain into WHO GOD IS and HOW He TREATS His FOLLOWERS.

In THIS SERIES, we've talked about **SAVING GRACE** (STARTING a RELATIONSHIP with God through JESUS) and **SUSTAINING GRACE** (HOW to keep SERVING God throughout our LIVES?). If you've missed any, check them out on our website.

Let me START with a CONFESSION. Have you ever watched those shows about CAR RESTORATION? "**IRON RESURRECTION**" / "**WHEELER DEALERS**" / "**FANTOM WORKS**." In MY HOUSE, I'm the ONLY ONE who likes MOTOR TREND Channel. I LOVE how they TAKE CARS and put a LOT of MAN HOURS into them, and the CAR / TRUCK COMES out LOOKING like NEW! **AND it ONLY takes about an HOUR!**

BUT here's what I know ... they ONLY SHOW a TINY BIT of the TIME, EFFORT, SWEAT, and CHALLENGE it takes to RESTORE that VEHICLE. LIKE, what WE SEE is NOT even CLOSE to what THOSE WORKERS DEALT WITH to REBUILD that CAR!

Here's what ELSE I KNOW ... Those GARAGES have ALL the RIGHT TOOLS and a BUNCH of GUYS who KNOW EXACTLY what they are doing. For ME and YOU to do a REBUILD like those in our SPARE TIME might take YEARS!

AND even AFTER we got DONE with OUR REBUILD; it STILL wouldn't be LIKE when THAT CAR (1960s Muscle Car) ROLLED OFF the ASSEMBLY LINE back in the 60s! There WILL be FLAWS and PROBLEMS ... unless you practically REPLACE the CAR instead of RESTORING the CAR! No MATTER WHAT we would DO to that CAR, it would NEVER be like when it was BRAND NEW...

I tell you that, because MANY of US APPROACH our RELATIONSHIP with GOD like we would approach a CAR REBUILD...

At SOME POINT, MAYBE when you FIRST BECAME a Christian, you had an EXCITING relationship with GOD. You can REMEMBER a TIME when you were MUCH CLOSER to GOD than you ARE NOW. You USED to be EXCITED to SHARE your FAITH.

BUT for whatever reason, OVER TIME, you FELL AWAY. You STOPPED ATTENDING WORSHIP. You stopped READING the Bible. You stopped PRAYING.

MAYBE you're still TRYING, but your FAITH LIFE has gone STALE. You've LOST the ENTHUSIASM you ONCE HAD. MAYBE it's a SIN ISSUE or an UNEXPECTED CIRCUMSTANCE or just a GRADUAL DRIFT and for WHICHEVER REASON, you are NOT as CLOSE to GOD as you ONCE WERE.

If we're HONEST, EACH of US would ADMIT we've FACED those SAME STRUGGLES, ONE WAY or ANOTHER.

You're NOT where you were - RELATIONSHIP with God is BROKEN / DISTANT / STRAINED. And YOU'RE THINKING, RESTORING your RELATIONSHIP with GOD will be a LONG, tedious PROCESS. There WILL be BLOOD, SWEAT, and WORKING LONG HOURS TO EARN your way BACK into God's FAVOR ... PRAY so long / READ MANY Bible verses / ATTEND WORSHIP so many times BEFORE being RESTORED with God.

And EVEN THEN - like those RESTORED CARS - it will NEVER be the SAME BECAUSE of WHAT you've DONE or HOW FAR you've FALLEN!

Anyone here feel like you're working on a spiritual restore? Been TRYING to WORK your WAY BACK into a RELATIONSHIP with GOD? MAYBE you are WEIGHING the PROS and CONS of BEGINNING a FAITH RESTORATION... GOOD NEWS! God OFFERS **RESTORING GRACE**. So, when we BLOW IT / FALL AWAY / STUMBLE, we can COME BACK to God and BE RESTORED **IMMEDIATELY** (W/OUT a LONG REBUILD project) and **COMPLETELY (BETTER THAN EVER ... as if we never fell away in the first place).**

That's what I WANT to TALK ABOUT. Today (and NEXT WEEK) we CONTINUE STUDYING DIFFERENT ASPECTS of AMAZING by looking at **God's RESTORING GRACE** -- HOW you can RETURN to GOD and be RESTORED COMPLETELY ... NO matter HOW FAR you've FALLEN...

What Causes Me to FALL AWAY from God?

Let's START by IDENTIFYING THREE (3) COMMON REASONS WHY people FALL AWAY from God. MANY REASONS, but in MARK 14 we find the STORY of PETER (*Self-Proclaimed LEADER of the Disciples*) and HIS FALLING AWAY on the NIGHT JESUS was ARRESTED and PUT on TRIAL. WE can LEARN a lot about OURSELVES from PETE'S story.

So, WHAT CAUSES ME to FALL AWAY from GOD? FIRST CAUSE is...

#1 = When I Am OVERCONFIDENT

BACKGROUND: The NIGHT BEFORE JESUS was CRUCIFIED, he gets His Disciples TOGETHER – SOMBER / SERIOUS moment – He SAYS, **“ALL of YOU will DESERT me.”**

ALL their HEADS DROPPED ... but ONE - Simon PETER - was CONFIDENT JESUS was NOT talking to HIM. After all, JESUS GAVE him the NAME “PETER” (*ROCK*) and TOLD HIM HE would be a LEADER of the CHURCH. So, PETER says ... **MARK 14:29 = ²⁹ Peter said to him, “Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will.”**¹ Then, JESUS told PETER HE would DENY EVEN KNOWING JESUS 3 TIMES before MORNING. BUT Peter INSISTED he was READY to DIE with JESUS.

Peter was OVERCONFIDENT. He thought he was DIFFERENT from everyone else.

EVER THOUGHT THAT to YOURSELF? **“LOOK at THAT PERSON – they're SCREWING UP – making MISTAKES - FALLING AWAY from God. That would NEVER happen to ME.”** ARROGANCE - We THINK we could NEVER MESS up like THOSE people.

LISTEN... whenever YOU SAY, **“That couldn't happen to me!”** – PRIDE BEFORE the FALL. BECAUSE, given the right situation, ANY OF US here is CAPABLE of ANY SIN!

You might LOOK at the PERSON sitting NEXT TO YOU and THINK, **“Yeah, I think that person is capable of just about any sin.”** But FEW people EVER acknowledge it's TRUE of THEMSELVES – UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE. TURN to the PERSON NEXT to YOU and SAY, **“It could happen to you.”**

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Mk 14:29). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

The BIBLE reminds us to BE CAREFUL. **1st CORINTHIANS 10:12 = ¹² If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall.**² **OVERCONFIDENCE is the 1st STEP on the SLIPPERY SLOPE of FALLING AWAY from GOD. It was PETER'S FIRST STEP. The 2nd CAUSE of falling away is...**

#2 = When I Am LAZY

After JESUS and The Disciples left THE TABLE / UPPER ROOM, they went across the KIDRON VALLEY and into the GARDEN of GETHSEMANE. Jesus INVITED His INNER CIRCLE (Peter, James, and John) to PRAY with HIM. Jesus went a FEW STEPS away. Here's what happened: **MARK 14:37 = ³⁷ Then he returned and found the disciples asleep. He said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Couldn't you watch with me even one hour?"**³

TO BE a DISCIPLE, you MUST have DISCIPLINE be a DISCIPLE! To GROW in FAITH and CLOSER to JESUS, you MUST DISCIPLINE yourself to KEEP your DAILY TIMES of READING and PRAYER. FAITH GROWTH takes DISCIPLINE.

One of the FIRST INDICATORS a person is FALLING AWAY from God is LAZINESS. When you say, **"I just don't have time for it right now. Other things are more important."** That's a WARNING LIGHT on YOUR FAITH DASHBOARD!

Here's the principle...when you CUT OUT the SMALL THINGS (like **PRAYER, WORSHIP, Growth Group, reading your BIBLE**), you MAY NOT NOTICE at FIRST, but it SNOWBALLS your FALL AWAY! SOON you're DRY and DISTANT from GOD.

So, JESUS WARNS PETER ... And US ... STAY ALERT! PAY ATTENTION to the LITTLE THINGS in your FAITH LIFE. Do NOT get LAZY. KEEP your GUARD UP by KEEPING your DISCIPLINE UP. Otherwise, you START DOWN the SLOPE of FALLING AWAY. It HAPPENED to PETER! OVERCONFIDENT and LAZY – the 3rd CAUSE of FALLING AWAY from Jesus is ...

#3 = When I Am AFRAID of what OTHERS THINK

Because WE'RE AFRAID of WHAT OTHERS will THINK IF they FIND OUT we FOLLOW JESUS ... Are SERIOUS about our faith. We're AFRAID they will reject us or THINK we're WEIRD. So, WE PULL AWAY from God and NEVER fully COMMIT to Him out of our FEAR of OTHER PEOPLE.

PETER faced this FEAR. Remember how PETER was OVERCONFIDENT he'd NEVER DESERT Jesus? Well, AFTER JESUS was ARRESTED – PETER did something VERY BRAVE. **MARK 14:54a = ⁵⁴ Meanwhile, Peter followed him at a distance...** PETER WANTED to SEE what would HAPPEN but did NOT want to be IDENTIFIED as a FRIEND of JESUS. THEREFORE, he KEPT his DISTANCE ... AFRAID of what OTHERS would THINK.

When JESUS is ON TRIAL that NIGHT, PETER is STANDING by the BLEACHERS when PEOPLE began to RECOGNIZE HIM as a JESUS FOLLOWER. PETER was ASKED DIRECTLY, and when they ask – PETER LIES and DENIES JESUS. **MARK 14:71 = ⁷¹ Peter swore, "A curse on me if I'm lying—I don't know this man you're talking about!"**⁴

Let me ASK you a SERIOUS / PERSONAL QUESTION: Do YOU ever FOLLOW JESUS from a DISTANCE? You say things like, **"Oh, I'm a Christian...but I'm not fanatical or serious about it or anything." "I go to church – but it's just a personal thing between me and God. It doesn't affect anything else I do."**

² Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). Holy Bible: New Living Translation (1 Co 10:12). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
³ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). Holy Bible: New Living Translation (Mk 14:37). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
⁴ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). Holy Bible: New Living Translation (Mk 14:71). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

MANY who CLAIM CHRISTIANITY are LIKE THIS. They WANT to FOLLOW Jesus, BUT NOT CLOSELY enough that ANYONE would NOTICE. We DENY our RELATIONSHIP with Jesus BECAUSE of what OTHERS might THINK.

King SOLOMON ADDRESSES this ... **PROVERBS 29:25 = ²⁵ Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the Lord means safety.** ⁵ LISTEN ... GOD does NOT need any more SECRET AGENTS in HIS SERVICE. Do NOT be ASHAMED of JESUS. Do NOT be a CLOSET Christian.

I am PLANNING to do a BELIEVER'S BAPTISM EVENT in the NEXT FEW WEEKS. IF you are INTERESTED in "**GOING PUBLIC**" with your FAITH ... IF you have SURRENDERED to JESUS and INVITED HIM to be LORD in your LIFE ... Let's be OBEDIENT to HIS WORD and MAKE it PUBLIC through BAPTISM. If you're INTERESTED ... please WRITE "BAPTISM" in the PRAYER SPACE on the BACK of your CC. (FILL OUT the FRONT!) WE'LL GET you the INFORMATION!

So, NOW WHAT? WHAT HAPPENS when I FALL AWAY from God? HOW does GOD RESPOND when I'm OVERCONFIDENT, LAZY, or ASHAMED? WHAT STEPS must I GO THROUGH to RESTORE my RELATIONSHIP with GOD? HOW do I EARN my WAY BACK into GOD'S GRACES? Oh ... THAT'S IT!

NO rebuilding PROCESS. NO LONG, TEDIOUS work. NOTHING! **God is DIFFERENT than what WE EXPECT! That's WHY we're DOING this SERIES!** GOD RESPONDS to US with GRACE!

God's Response to Me = GRACE

God RESPONDS to OUR FALLING AWAY from HIM (like the Prodigal Son) with GRACE. JUST LIKE the SAVING GRACE we talked about two weeks ago and the SUSTAINING GRACE we talked about last week, He also offers us RESTORING GRACE WHEN we FALL! CHECK OUT this PROMISE from **ROMANS 8:1 = So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.** ⁶

God says, ONCE you BELONG to Jesus and SURRENDER your LIFE to Him – there is NO CONDEMNATION. Once you BELONG to Jesus (In Christ) ... this is HARD for US to UNDERSTAND, BUT ... God will NEVER REJECT YOU.

THAT'S WHAT GRACE IS! That's WHO GOD IS! You can ALWAYS RETURN to God. YOU'LL ALWAYS be ACCEPTED by God, NO MATTER WHAT you've DONE or HOW FAR you've FALLEN! So, YOU ASK, "**WHY would GOD be WILLING to DO THAT? I do NOT DESERVE His GRACE. And, HOW? HOW does HE RESTORE ME if/ WHEN I'm SO MESSED UP? WHAT do I NEED to DO?**" Great Questions! Next Week: WHY WOULD HE?! HOW DOES HE?!

Let's PRAY!

Next Steps: *I will memorize Romans 8:1*
I will read Mark 14 and Romans 8
I will Return to God and recommit my life to Him so He can use me.

⁵ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Pr 29:25). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁶ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ro 8:1). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Hosting (Closing)

HEY, it has been a GREAT DAY here at BMZ... Glad you've been here with us!
In a moment, we are going to RECEIVE the OFFERING so please take this time to finish COMPLETING any information.

- Or NEXT STEPS on your CONNECTION CARD (**FULLY FILLED OUT!!**)
- AND when our ushers come around to RECEIVE our OFFERING
- You can drop that card in the offering basket.

IF you are a First-Time Guest with us today

• We are so glad you joined us ... And we have a GIFT for you.
It's this book "**UNSHAKABLE**" and it's at the BACK TABLE / By the DOORS...

- all you need to do is **HIT "SEND"** your COMPLETED Connection Card

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- I just want to remind you ... STEWARDSHIP is DISCIPLESHIP ... we RECEIVE an OFFERING EVERY Sunday BECAUSE it's BIBLICAL ... AND it HELPS us GROW in our FAITH!
- STEWARDSHIP VERSE ... **PROVERBS 29:25 = ²⁵ Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the Lord means safety.**⁷
- FIRST of our EARNINGS go back to the ONE who Blessed us in the first place! That's why WE/I do Automated Giving! I get paid ... the TITHE comes OUT FIRST!
- God's plan for BUILDING His Church was through TITHING and GIVING of the FOLLOWERS ... Share the GOOD NEWS! To REFRESH OTHERS!
- As Developing Followers of Jesus Christ, WE need to KNOW what the BIBLE says about GIVING ... NOT just what we THINK it should say.
- **MONEY is a HEART ISSUE.** And GOD wants what is BEST for your HEART! Listen, if GOD LOVES US so much that HE is willing to GIVE UP His OWN SON FOR US, WHY would GOD LEAD us ASTRAY in FINANCES?! USHERS ...
- NEXT WEEK: **WHY would GOD be WILLING to RESTORE ME when I've REJECTED HIM? HOW do I ACCEPT His RESTORING GRACE?**

"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."

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