

Series: "AMAZING"

For Message: Galatians 3:3; Ecclesiastes 7:16, 20, 11:4; Proverbs 17:9; Psalm 119:96; Romans 8:31; I Peter 5:7; Ephesians 2:8; Matthew 11:28-29

Message Title: "Liberating GRACE: Part 2"

Introduction: Welcome to BMZ CHURCH! Glad you're here as we CONTINUE our WORSHIP SERIES called: "AMAZING"! Each Sunday we have looked at DIFFERENT KINDS of GRACE that God offers. So far, we've learned about Saving Grace, Sustaining Grace, and RESTORING GRACE. If you've missed any, check them out on our website.

We NEED to UNDERSTAND the DIFFERENT ASPECTS of GRACE to understand GOD. TO KNOW GOD is to KNOW GRACE. GRACE is the ESSENCE of GOD.

TODAY will be especially FREEING for many. Your GUILT LEVEL is going to go DOWN and your FAITH level is going to go UP! We're TALKING about LIBERATING GRACE. The THEOLOGICAL OPPOSITE of "**LIBERATING GRACE**" is called "**LEGALISM.**" LEGALISM is a PROBLEM. Today we'll TALK ABOUT an OUTWARD EXPRESSION of LEGALISM that STEALS our STRENGTH, JOY, and FREEDOM from our LIVES ... it's called "**PERFECTIONISM!**"

Do you know anyone who is a PERFECTIONIST? Don't point! Be CAREFUL! WHY? The TRUTH IS, we ALL fall into this TRAP of PERFECTIONISM from time to time.

LAST WEEK = "**THE PERFECTIONISM VS. GRACE SELF-EVALUATION QUIZ**"

Let's start with a DEFINITION for PERFECTIONISM – **PERFECTIONISM: "Trying to PROVE MY WORTH by being perfect."** You say, "*If I can just be PERFECT. If I can LIVE UP to an IDEAL STANDARD, God will APPROVE of ME and OTHERS will LIKE ME more. I'll FEEL BETTER about myself, I'll be HAPPIER.*"

BUT IF THAT'S our ATTITUDE, it'll BRING some real PROBLEMS ...

How PERFECTIONISM Harms: FIRST, PERFECTIONISM is "**COUNTERFEIT SPIRITUALITY!**" It's NOT REAL. PERFECTIONISM is a HUGE HANG UP that PREVENTS people from COMING to JESUS ... and JESUS FOLLOWERS from GROWING in FAITH! HOW? You TRY to TAKE BACK CONTROL!

HOW? YOU TAKE God's COMPLETE / TOTAL ACCEPTANCE of YOU and YOU bring the "L" BACK IN and SAY ... "**GOD is DISAPPOINTED in ME. He expects MORE from ME. I need to be a BETTER CHRISTIAN ... IF I get BETTER, GOD will REALLY ACCEPT ME!**" That's PERFECTIONISM. It HAPPENS to ALL of US. PAUL = **GALATIANS 3:3 = ³How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?**¹

Today, LIBERATING GRACE. HOW to BREAK FREE FROM the PRISON of PERFECTIONISM! BECAUSE GOD WANTS US in HIS GRACE to FIND a NEW LEVEL of JOY and FREEDOM we've NEVER EXPERIENCED. LAST WEEK ... PERFECTIONISM is incredibly DESTRUCTIVE. **#1 = It Defeats my INITIATIVE**

IF I CAN'T do something PERFECTLY, I put it off INDEFINITELY. I have NO CONFIDENCE in my ABILITIES. You NEVER START, BECAUSE you KNOW it WON'T be PERFECT. LIFE SECRET: "**PERFECT**" does NOT EXIST!

#2 = It Damages my RELATIONSHIPS QUESTION: *Do you enjoy being around somebody who's always correcting what you do?* **NOBODY LIKES** being **NAGGED, CORRECTED, or MADE** to feel **STUPID ALL the TIME. NOBODY!** NO ONE wants to be AROUND a **“Holier-Than-Thou,”** CRITIC. Perfectionism **DAMAGES RELATIONSHIPS.**

IOW = You can be **RIGHT OR** be in **RELATIONSHIP.** IT'S **DIFFICULT** to do **BOTH!** The **DESIRE** to **ALWAYS CORRECT / CRITIQUE** (perfectionism), **DAMAGES** relationships.

#3 = It Destroys my HAPPINESS

PRISON of **PERFECTIONISM** = You **STRIVE** for the **IDEAL PICTURE** of **YOURSELF.** It's **WHAT** you **PUT** on **SOCIAL MEDIA** and your **JOB APPLICATION. IDEAL SELF ... NOT the REAL YOU.** For **MOST,** there's a **MAJOR GAP** between **IDEAL** and **REAL.** AND the **IDEAL PICTURE** is always **NAGGING** the **REAL YOU** in your **MIND.** Your **IDEAL STANDARD** is **SO HIGH** the **REAL YOU** can **NEVER live up to it!**

And, IF it's **NOT YOU** who **HOLDS YOURSELF** to a **STANDARD** – there's **ALWAYS** **SOMEONE ELSE** in **YOUR LIFE** trying to **HOLD YOU** to **THEIR STANDARD.**

These **STANDARDS** **DRAIN** our **JOY.** But ... **THOSE** are **NOT THE STANDARDS** **GOD PUTS ON YOUR LIFE!**

So, **WHAT'S** the **CURE?** Because **TRUTH IS,** we **ALL FIGHT** with **PERFECTIONISM** to **SOME DEGREE.** There's only **ONE CURE** for **PERFECTIONISM:** *The GRACE of GOD!* So, **HOW** do you **LEARN** to **RELAX** in the **GRACE** of **God?**

How to R-E-L-A-X in God's Grace

Let's **UNPACK** **HOW** to **RELAX** in **GOD'S GRACE!** IF we're going to **LEARN** to **RELAX** and have **LESS STRESS** in our lives, there are a **FEW THINGS** we **NEED** to **LEARN.**

#1 = REALIZE that Nobody's PERFECT

That's a **NO-BRAINER,** but we **NEED** to **START SOMEWHERE.** *Realize nobody's perfect.* We're **REMINDED** in **PSALM 119.** It claims **OUR PERFECTION** is **LIMITED** (I think it **MEANS** we're **NOT PERFECT**), but **GOD'S WORD / COMMANDS ...** are **PERFECT!**

PSALM 119:96 = ⁹⁶ Even perfection has its limits, but your commands have no limit. ²

That's **WHY** we need to **BUILD** our **LIVES** on **God's Word ...** because **NOTHING ELSE** is **PERFECT!** What **SOCIETY** tells you is **NOT PERFECT.** Popular **OPINION ...** **NOT PERFECT** What you **LEARNED** **GROWING UP** is **NOT PERFECT.** **GOD'S WORD IS PERFECT!** **GET INTO THE BIBLE.** **BUILD** your **LIFE** on **IT.** It's **PERFECT!**

LISTEN, IF you spend **ALL** your **TIME** trying to **ATTAIN PERFECTION,** you're **wasting your time.** I learned in **COLLEGE = 92%** is still an **A!** You **DON'T** have **TIME,** **ENERGY,** or **MONEY** to be **PERFECT** in **EVERYTHING.** **EVEN IF** you **DID,** you **STILL** can **NOT** be **PERFECT!** If **ANYONE** had a **SHOT** at **PERFECTION,** it was **KING SOLOMON!** He had more **MONEY, WISDOM,** and **WIVES** than **ANY MAN, EVER!** He wrote,

ECCLESIASTES 7:20 = ²⁰ Not a single person on earth is always good and never sins. ³

TRUTH = I'M NOT OK, and YOU'RE NOT OK! BUT BECAUSE of **GOD'S GRACE** that's **OK!** It's **OK** to **NOT** be **OK.** Turn to the person next to you and say ... **“You're NOT OKAY! BUT, BECAUSE of GOD'S GRACE, that's OKAY!”**

That's **FREEING,** isn't it? **SOME** of you **THOUGHT SOMETHING** was **WRONG** with **YOU** **BECAUSE** you're **NOT OK.** **SOME** of **YOU** **THOUGHT** you **WEREN'T GOOD ENOUGH** for **GOD** because **YOU HAVE ISSUES** in your **LIFE.** **BUT** **WHEN** you **ACCEPT** **God's GRACE,** He **SAYS,** **“It's OK. You don't have to be perfect.”**

² Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ps 119:96). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

³ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ec 7:20). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

I know, you're thinking, "*Pastor Stan, what does that mean? Does it mean God doesn't want me to GROW?*" OF COURSE, HE DOES! "*Does it mean I don't have to REPENT?*" OF COURSE NOT! "*Does it mean God doesn't want me to CHANGE and work on areas in my life?*" NO! BUT GOD SAYS YOU are OKAY because of HIS GRACE.

It just MEANS GOD does NOT WAIT for YOU to CHANGE for Him to say, "*You're OKAY!*" HE SAYS, "*Nobody's perfect. ACCEPT MY GRACE.*"

#2 = ENJOY God's UNCONDITIONAL Love

WHEN you BECOME a FOLLOWER of JESUS, GOD makes you a CHILD of THE KING. You've joined the ROYAL family. FROM 1ST JOHN ... 1ST JOHN 3:1 = *See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him.*⁴ MEANING, we ENJOY God's UNCONDITIONAL LOVE once we BECOME A PART of HIS FAMILY. HEY PARENTS, are your KIDS PERFECT? NO! Do you still LOVE THEM? YES! WE LOVE THEM despite their IMPERFECTIONS.

When your 3-year-old draws an ORANGE BLOB and says, "*Look Mom! It's a COW.*" You say, "*That's perfect!*" You're NOT saying they're PICASSO. You're saying, "*That's perfect for YOUR STAGE of MATURITY.*"

I remember our daughters learning how to WALK and RUN. They'd TAKE OFF and their little LEGS could NOT go as FAST as their HEAD ... and they'd FACE-PLANT. But I did NOT GET in her FACE and SAY, "*You dummy! Why can't you run? You'll never get into the Olympics at this rate!*" NO. I PICKED them UP and ENCOURAGED them to GO AGAIN!

BECAUSE we LOVE our CHILDREN at EVERY STAGE of GROWTH. We're NOT WAITING for them to MATURE FIRST. ONCE you MATURE ... "*NOW I LOVE YOU!*"

SOME THINK GOD is WAITING for US to GROW UP BEFORE He will LOVE US. NO! GOD LOVES YOU at EVERY STAGE of your GROWTH, BECAUSE HIS UNCONDITIONAL LOVE is ACTUALLY UNCONDITIONAL! ROMANS 8:31 =

*³¹ What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?*² GOD is NOT JUST WITH US. GOD is FOR US ... ON OUR SIDE! That's the ESSENCE of the DOCTRINE of GRACE. GRACE = **GOD IS FOR US!**

GOD IS ON YOUR SIDE! He's NOT WATCHING and WAITING for you to MESS UP. IF you've RECEIVED God's GRACE, you're part of God's FAMILY! GOD IS FOR YOU!

IF NOT YET a FOLLOWER of JESUS ... "*I don't need God. I can DO IT ON MY OWN.*" GOD'S NOT FOR YOU. WHEN YOU TURN to HIM in HONESTY, and HUMILITY, "*I ADMIT I'M IMPERFECT and NEED your GRACE.*" THEN, **God IS FOR YOU!**

IF you're a FOLLOWER of Jesus, REALIZE there is NOTHING you can DO for God to LOVE YOU MORE. There is NOTHING YOU can DO for God to LOVE YOU LESS...^{3rd}

#3 = LET God Handle EVERYTHING in My Life

THIS IS DIFFICULT, but IMPORTANT because at the ROOT of PERFECTIONISM is the DESIRE to CONTROL! Some people ACTUALLY THINK THEY can CONTROL THINGS! AND they THINK IF they can CONTROL, they've ACHIEVED PERFECTION!

IF I can CONTROL my SPOUSE, then ... PERFECT MARRIAGE. IF I can CONTROL my KIDS, they'll NEVER get in TROUBLE and ALWAYS be SAFE. IF I can CONTROL my CAREER, then my FUTURE will be SECURE. If I can CONTROL the PEOPLE around me, the WORLD will be a BETTER PLACE.

⁴ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Jn 3:1). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

³ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ro 8:31). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

But, if you're HONEST, YOU KNOW your LIFE is OUT of YOUR CONTROL. You CAN'T CONTROL IT! QUIT TRYING to PLAY GOD. INSTEAD ... **1st PETER 5:7 = ⁷ Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.** ⁶ Some versions say "CAST" your WORRIES onto God... If you've EVER GONE FISHING ... When you CAST, you're HOLDING the LINE, BUT to CAST, you TAKE your FINGER OFF the LINE and LET IT GO. IF you DON'T LET GO = NO CASTING ... Still STRESSED!

To OVERCOME PERFECTIONISM, you must LET GO! You LET GOD MANAGE the THINGS of YOUR LIFE. **Let me ASK:** WHAT are you TRYING to CONTROL? Have you LEARNED YET that things DON'T have to be PERFECT for you to be HAPPY ... for you to ENJOY THEM?

Your SPOUSE ISN'T PERFECT! There's NO such thing as a PERFECT MARRIAGE or RELATIONSHIP! NO PERFECT KIDS. NO perfect BODY. NO PERFECT CHURCH. NO PERFECT JOB. NOTHING is PERFECT EXCEPT GOD'S WORD!

IF you're WAITING for the PERFECT ENVIRONMENT to ENJOY LIFE, NOT going to HAPPEN! LEARN to ENJOY LIFE AMID IMPERFECTION ... Have you LEARNED to LOVE the MOMENT amid IMPERFECTION? Everything does NOT need to be PERFECT for you to ENJOY the MOMENT. LEARN to RELAX in God's LIBERATING GRACE!

Next way to RELAX ... WHEN you come to a DIFFICULTY, *WILL you ACT in FAITH and TRUST GOD - or will you ACT in FEAR and TRY to REGAIN CONTROL?* #4 ...

#4 = ACT in FAITH, Not FEAR

UNFORTUNATELY, MANY who are SAVED BY FAITH, LIVE their LIVES in FEAR! WE'RE AFRAID of TRUSTING God with our FAILURES and IMPERFECTIONS. We FEAR IF God SEES we're IMPERFECT, He'll be DISAPPOINTED IN US / REJECT US.

Maybe SOMEONE has REJECTED YOU or been DISAPPOINTED in YOU when you could NOT LIVE UP to THEIR STANDARDS– BUT THAT'S NOT GOD! I think THE most FREEING STATEMENT we've shared during this ENTIRE SERIES is this: **GOD'S NOT MAD AT YOU!** (REPEAT) *He loves you. He accepts you. He's not walking out on you.*

BUT some of YOU are in the PRISON of PERFECTIONISM. You THINK YOU MUST be PERFECT. Your LIFE / Your LOOKS / Your FAMILY must be PERFECT, BEFORE you can be CONSIDERED ACCEPTABLE. BUT NONE of those will EVER be PERFECT. So ... the PRISON of PERFECTIONISM ... And YOU ... ARE ... MISERABLE!

BUT you have a GET OUT of JAIL FREE CARD! **FAITH is the KEY to UNLOCK the DOOR of GRACE in your life.** The way we GOT INTO the Christian life is the way we CONTINUE the Christian life. The WAY we BECAME CHRISTIANS is the way we LIVE. You DIDN'T EARN your SALVATION and you DON'T HAVE to EARN God's CONTINUED APPROVAL. We're SAVED by GRACE through FAITH. And that's HOW we LIVE!

ONE of the KEY VERSES for this SERIES ... **EPHESIANS 2:8 = ⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.** ⁷

Listen, ONE of the SYMPTOMS of PERFECTIONISM is CONSTANT FATIGUE. **DO YOU KNOW WHY?** BECAUSE it's EXHAUSTING TRYING to be PERFECT. It's EXHAUSTING CONSTANTLY trying EARN God's APPROVAL and PLEASE OTHERS!

It's EXHAUSTING trying to HOLD IT all TOGETHER. It's IMPOSSIBLE. Fortunately, it's NOT YOUR JOB! YOUR JOB is to LET GOD BE GOD! LET HIM RUN the UNIVERSE. "CAST" it ALL on HIM. And have FAITH, TRUST Him and RELAX and LET GO ... **CAST! God wants you LIVE by FAITH - TRUST in Him – NOT in FEAR.**

⁶ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Pe 5:7). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁷ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Eph 2:8). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

That leads us to the ULTIMATE “EXCHANGE” ... almost BEGINS with X. I HAD to LET GO of my own PERFECTIONISM on this one. BUT IT IS CLOSE ... LAST ONE...

#5 = EXCHANGE My PERFECTIONISM for God's PEACE

Perfectionism DESTROYS PEACE! YOU WILL LIVE with ONE or the OTHER - in the PRISON of PERFECTIONISM or in the FREEDOM of God's PEACE.

Here's the OFFER... THE OFFER JESUS MADE 2000 Years Ago ... STILL VALID TODAY. It's an OFFER YOU CAN'T AFFORD to REFUSE ... **“LIBERATING GRACE.”** JESUS ASKS ... **MATTHEW 11:28-30 (The Message) = “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.”⁸ What a great deal!**

Listen ... THEOLOGICALLY SPEAKING, IF you want to GET to GOD, YOU MUST BE PERFECT! To EARN your WAY to HEAVEN, YOU MUST BE PERFECT. I HOPE YOU REALIZE God's PERFECT and YOU'RE NOT! You can NOT EARN your way to Him through PERFECTIONISM.

See God KNOWS PERFECTION for YOU is IMPOSSIBLE ... SO, HERE is GOD'S OFFER ... He OFFERS GRACE. That's why GOD SENT JESUS because He was PERFECT. And we are ACCEPTED by God and get into HIS HEAVEN on **HIS PERFECTION**.

You can WORK all you want OR you can just ACCEPT the PERFECTION of JESUS and say, **“I'm with Him.”** I'm TRADING MY PERFECTIONISM for HIS PEACE.

LIBERATING GRACE says you can RELAX! Let's be HONEST with OURSELVES ... We're going to MESS UP ... We'll LET OTHER people DOWN ... We'll let OURSELVES DOWN ... WE'LL FAIL to measure up to GOD'S standard of PERFECTION. But we DON'T have to WORRY IF we've RECEIVED GOD'S GRACE.

BECAUSE, IF you've received GOD'S GRACE, there's NOTHING you can DO to make God LOVE you MORE ... NOTHING you can DO to make God LOVE you LESS. It's NOT about BEING PERFECT. It's about HIS PROMISE. **And HE PROMISES HE LOVES YOU, NO MATTER HOW IMPERFECT YOU or your LIFE SEEM RIGHT NOW.**

In fact, there's only ONE FAILURE you EVER NEED WORRY about ... **HEBREWS 12:15a = ¹⁵Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God.⁹**

MY TURN to LOOK AFTER YOU! I invite you to receive the FREE GIFT of God's GRACE right now.

Let's PRAY Together!

Next Steps: *I will memorize 1st Peter 5:7*
 I will read John 3 and/or Romans 8
 I will invite someone to worship with me this summer.

⁸ Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language* (Mt 11:28–30). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

⁹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Heb 12:15). 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 ... **MATTHEW 6:20 = Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal.**
- 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: **I CAN'T WAIT to tell you 5 TRUE STATEMENTS about YOU ... ACCORDING to GOD! Get ready to FEEL GOOD!**

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

Special thanks to Andy Stanley, Warren Wiersbe, Nelson Searcy, and R.A. Pegrum for outlines and ideas for this worship series