

Series: "AMAZING"

For Message: Romans 12:2, 3:10, 3:23; Philippians 1:6, 2:13; Proverbs 4:23; Psalm 119:105
Message Title: "Transforming GRACE: Part 1"

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 God offers. 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.

Each Sunday we have looked at DIFFERENT KINDS of GRACE that God offers. Today, we're LOOKING at God's "**TRANSFORMING GRACE.**" And here's the DEAL ... IF we UNDERSTAND the NEED to GET BETTER in the things of THIS LIFE, then we're in REALITY! IF we think we have NOTHING to IMPROVE ON, then we're in LA-LA LAND!

LAST WEEK ... BREAK OUT of the PRISON of PERFECTIONISM. We do NOT NEED to BE PERFECT for GOD to LOVE US. BUT GOD LOVES us SO MUCH, He wants what is BEST for US. And He gives us the POWER of HIS GRACE to CHANGE for the BEST HE HAS for US! I'm EXCITED because TODAY is ABOUT CHANGE. MAKING CHANGES you know GOD WANTS you to make.

When I was in college, my DAD had his 8th Heart Attack. And though he had been told if he had ever been a DRINKER or a SMOKER, he would NOT have lived through previous heart attacks ... The DOCTORS FINALLY FIGURED OUT what was WRONG! My DAD'S GOOD CHOLESTEROL we PRODUCE in our bodies to COMBAT the BAD CHOLESTEROL we INGEST, was LOW. The Doctor said my DAD had to CHANGE how he ATE and how he EXERCISED. He had to keep the BAD Cholesterol he ate to a minimum and EXERCISE DAILY to help keep it under control.

My DAD DID IT! Not only did my DAD CHANGE, but we ALL CHANGED how we viewed FOOD and EXERCISE. You KNOW WHY? Because it is GENETIC! I went to the doctor and found out I have the SAME GENETICS as my DAD! CRAZY, RIGHT?

I'm in COLLEGE, watching my CHOLESTEROL INTAKE and EXERCISING MORE... And, I've had to EVER SINCE. Now, that does NOT mean I don't GOOF it UP at TIMES! There are times I don't EAT RIGHT and don't get enough EXERCISE ... and RIGHT NOW in MY LIFE is ONE of those TIMES!

SO, TODAY'S MESSAGE is for ME! BUT ... I'll talk more about MY CHANGE in a moment. Let me ask YOU a personal question: **Where do YOU need to CHANGE today?**

For SOME of you - it's changes for your **HEALTH**. EXERCISE and EAT right.

For SOME - it's a change in your **CAREER** and **FUTURE**. You need to make CHANGES to do better at WORK or in the CLASSROOM.

For SOME of you - It's a change in **RELATIONSHIPS**. You're in an UNHEALTHY relationship. Or WE NEED to CHANGE OURSELVES, BECAUSE SOMETIMES relationships are UNHEALTHY BECAUSE of US!

For SOME - It's to GET SIN or ADDICTION OUT of your life. Drink, drugs, gambling, gossip, pornography. WHATEVER PULLS you DOWN / AWAY from FAITH.

For others - it's to bring MORE FAITH in GOD into your LIFE. Changing habits so you ATTEND WORSHIP, READ the BIBLE, and PRAY ... Spiritual change.

WHAT is the MOST IMPORTANT CHANGE you NEED to MAKE in your LIFE TODAY? THINK about ONE or TWO ... NOT 100 ... JUST 1 or 2!

OKAY, so let's be honest ...CHANGE IS HARD. IF the change we need to make were EASY, we'd have DONE it ALREADY. RIGHT? So, **HOW** do we CHANGE?

CHANGE is HARD and WE DON'T LIKE to DO IT, BUT here is GOOD NEWS for ME and EVERYONE HERE TODAY who NEEDS to CHANGE: GOD SPECIALIZES IN CHANG and TRANSFORMATION. God's "*Transforming Grace*" helps us change! **ROMANS 12:2 = ² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.**¹

The GREEK word for TRANSFORM is "**METAMORPHOSIS.**" WHEN you BECOME a FOLLOWER of JESUS, GOD COMES INTO our LIVES and BEGINS METAMORPHOSIS ... TRANSFORMATION ... CHANGING you into a NEW PERSON. More like JESUS!

The PROMISE of TRANSFORMATION IS GREAT! But there is SOME MISUNDERSTANDING about HOW God's GRACE WORKS TO TRANSFORM US...

TWO MYTHS ABOUT TRANSFORMING GRACE:

#1 = I am Transformed by God INSTANTLY.

Many THINK that WHEN you START FOLLOWING JESUS, GOD SNAPS His fingers and you're IMMEDIATELY / COMPLETELY / INSTANTLY TRANSFORMED. That would be NICE, but WE KNOW it DOESN'T WORK that WAY. Our OLD BEHAVIORS / ATTITUDES / HABITS do NOT CHANGE INSTANTLY.

A FEW WEEKS ago, we talked about GOD'S "**SAVING GRACE.**" When God SAVES US, it is COMPLETELY GOD'S WORK (*we just ACCEPT the FREE GIFT of eternity in heaven through Jesus*). THAT HAPPENS INSTANTLY! That is SALVATION.

But OUR "**SANCTIFICATION**" (*the PROCESS AFTER we're SAVED that TRANSFORMS US to become MORE LIKE JESUS*) ... DOES NOT happen INSTANTLY. SANCTIFICATION is a LIFE-LONG PROCESS that REQUIRES WORK and EFFORT on OUR PART!

The 2nd MYTH about God's TRANSFORMING GRACE is JUST as PREVALENT among Christians ... and JUST as WRONG.

#2 = I am Transformed by MY WILLPOWER.

The IDEA is: "**IF IT'S TO BE, IT'S UP TO ME!**" "**IF I'm going to CHANGE it's about MY WILL and MY POWER ... MY WILLPOWER. If I'M STRONG ENOUGH - I can do it!**"

IF you BUY into this MYTH, you're CONSTANTLY BEATING YOURSELF UP BECAUSE when you FAIL to CHANGE (and you will) ... YOU BLAME your LACK of WILLPOWER. "**I HAVE TO TRY HARDER!**"

The BIGGEST BARRIER to personal TRANSFORMATION in our lives is NOT LACK of WILLPOWER, but the MISTAKEN BELIEF that just having MORE WILLPOWER or just TRYING HARDER WILL CREATE the TRANSFORMATION / CHANGE you need.

There is NO HUMAN BEING just by the SHEER FORCE of their WILLPOWER who can MAKE ALL the CHANGES they NEED to MAKE. There are just TOO MANY FORCES working AGAINST you CHANGING. SATAN, the TEMPTATIONS of the WORLD, and OUR own HUMAN NATURE -- that does NOT LIKE CHANGE!

FORGET the MYTHS. Here's The TRUTH About TRANSFORMING GRACE:

- **I am transformed by COOPERATING with GOD'S WORK in me.**

2 THINGS HERE: It's NOT about MY WILLPOWER. It's about God's WILL and God's POWER. HE PUTS the DESIRE in MY HEART to CHANGE! THAT is where the WILL COMES FROM ... NOT from ME! FROM GOD! It's God's POWER.

PHILIPPIANS 2:13 = ¹³ *For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.* ² GOD gives ME the DESIRE to CHANGE and then the POWER to CHANGE! God **NEVER** GIVES the DESIRE to DO something WITHOUT GIVING the POWER to DO IT! The DESIRE HE GIVES is HIS WILL...

But here's the thing... IF I DESIRE to CHANGE (He won't FORCE me), I've got to COOPERATE with GOD for that CHANGE. I must EMBRACE GOD'S WILL. I MUST take PRACTICAL STEPS to put MYSELF IN POSITION for God's POWER to CHANGE ME.

That's our FOCUS for TODAY: **"COOPERATING with GOD for REAL CHANGE."**

BEFORE we JUMP IN ... WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND something about GOD'S GRACE. GOD WANTS US to CHANGE! God EXPECTS us to CHANGE. But God DOESN'T LOVE us MORE WHEN we CHANGE. He DOESN'T LOVE us LESS WHEN we FAIL to CHANGE. **You DON'T CHANGE to EARN God's FAVOR! WE CHANGE to BE MORE LIKE JESUS!** It's for YOUR BENEFIT ... for YOUR own HAPPINESS / JOY.

If you are a follower of Jesus, YOU ARE already ACCEPTED and LOVED ... AS IS! UNCONDITIONAL! SO, KNOWING THAT ...

HOW DO I COOPERATE WITH GOD FOR REAL CHANGE? Well, it is as EASY as **"A, B, C ... D, E"** THIS WEEK and NEXT WEEK. Letter "A" ...

A – ADMIT I NEED to Change

THIS MIGHT BE the HARDEST ONE. BUT THINK about IT ... You're NOT TELLING GOD something HE does NOT ALREADY KNOW. You're SIMPLY AGREEING with GOD about a CHANGE HE KNOWS NEEDS to HAPPEN!

NONE of US is PERFECT. BMZ is NOT a CHURCH of SAINTS! OUR CHURCHES are HOSPITALS for SINNERS. YOU do NOT GO to a HOSPITAL to STAY the SAME. You GO to GET BETTER / TO CHANGE. **Here at BMZ we're ALL TRYING to CHANGE ... to become BETTER ... MORE like JESUS ... CHRIST-LIKE!** We ALL NEED TO!

PAUL wrote to the CHURCH in ROME in the 1st Century ... **ROMANS 3:23 = ²³ For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.** ³ Paul also reminds ... **ROMANS 3:10 = ¹⁰ As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous— not even one."** ⁴

The 1st STEP in CHANGING is to **ADMIT** you NEED to CHANGE. To GET to a POINT where YOU are SO UNHAPPY with WHERE YOU ARE that you MUST CHANGE!

WHEN I went to the DOCTOR, HE TOLD ME my GOOD CHOLESTEROL was LOW. I initially WASN'T WORRIED. I was NOT OVERWEIGHT. I was ACTIVE. **I was 20!** It could NOT be THAT SERIOUS. So, I was NOT MOTIVATED! THEN, I REMEMBERED my DAD! I did NOT want to END UP like HE WAS... EIGHT HEART ATTACKS? No thanks!

Those THOUGHTS took me on a TRIP to my DEFAULT FUTURE ... What my FUTURE would LOOK LIKE IF I did NOT MAKE any CHANGES in my HABITS. I IMAGINED my FUTURE IF I did NOT CHANGE. A HEART ATTACK in my thirties ... LIKE my DAD? It seemed a long way off ... BUT SUDDENLY I was MOTIVATED to CHANGE. WHEN I UNDERSTOOD that IF I did NOT CHANGE, I MIGHT NOT be around very LONG, I ADMITTED I NEEDED to CHANGE. I COMMITTED TO CHANGE.

My HEART was NOW IN IT, so to speak.

² Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Php 2:13). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
³ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ro 3:23). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
⁴ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ro 3:10). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Let me ASK: *Where do you need to make a change today?* In WHAT AREA of your LIFE do YOU need God's TRANSFORMING GRACE ... RIGHT NOW?

IF you've been THINKING you NEED to CHANGE something, but you're NOT MOTIVATED to DO IT ... DO what I DID. TAKE a LITTLE TRIP to your DEFAULT FUTURE. IF I do NOT CHANGE, WHAT will my LIFE LOOK LIKE in 5 YEARS? 10 YEARS? WILL you be HEALTHY or UNHEALTHY? WILL you be FINANCIALLY SECURE or DROWNING in DEBT? WILL you be in a BAD RELATIONSHIP, or DOING YOUR PART to MAKE it BETTER? WILL you be STUCK with the WRONG PERSON, or WILL YOU maybe be ALONE? LONELY?

LISTEN, there are TWO possible TIMES you can ADMIT you NEED to CHANGE. **NOW** = BEFORE too MUCH DAMAGE is DONE. **Or LATER** = AFTER you've IRREPARABLY HURT YOURSELF and THOSE YOU CARE ABOUT the MOST.

You know, WHEN the DOCTOR TOLD ME I NEEDED to CHANGE who I THOUGHT about FOOD and EXERCISE, I had a CHOICE. I can CHANGE NOW ... OR I can CHANGE AFTER my FIRST HEART ATTACK ... MAYBE. It was/is MY CHOICE.

So, the QUESTION IS NOT ... WILL you ADMIT you NEED to CHANGE. It's WHEN! DO you CHANGE your SPENDING HABITS NOW, or WAIT until you are DROWNING? Do you DEAL with your DRINKING PROBLEM NOW, or WAIT until the PEOPLE you LOVE have LEFT YOU? Do you DEAL with your ANGER ISSUES NOW, or WAIT until YOU'VE HURT SOMEONE you LOVE?

MAYBE it's ALCOHOL / DRUGS. MAYBE it's WHAT you're EATING. MAYBE it's HOW you TREAT your SPOUSE or KIDS. MAYBE it's your ATTITUDE at WORK or you're your CHOICE of JOB. WHAT is IT that you KNOW you NEED to CHANGE, but have NOT been WILLING to ADMIT IT?

GRAB YOUR CC (Next Steps)! In WHAT AREA of your LIFE do you NEED the POWER of GOD'S TRANSFORMING GRACE to MAKE the CHANGES you KNOW you NEED to MAKE? WRITE IT DOWN. ADMIT IT TODAY. Please UNDERSTAND, Jesus CAME that your JOY might be FULL / COMPLETE ... GOD wants YOU to have the BEST LIFE POSSIBLE ... AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

ADMIT you NEED to CHANGE ... NOW. DON'T WAIT until you've lost SOMETHING or SOMEONE important. CHANGE YOUR DEFAULT FUTURE BEFORE that FUTURE BECOMES REALITY in your JOB / FINANCES / RELATIONSHIPS.

That's a GOOD START. Let's NOT FALL for the MYTHS around the CHANGES we NEED to MAKE ... Let's ADMIT we NEED to CHANGE ...

TRANSITION into NEXT WEEK ...

NEXT WEEK ... ONCE we ADMIT we NEED to CHANGE, HOW do we GET THERE? HOW do we CHANGE for the BETTER LIFE GOD wants FOR US ... HOW do we become MORE CHRIST-LIKE. It's as EASY as A, B, C, ... D, E. BUT without "A" / ADMITTING we NEED to CHANGE; the REST does NOT MATTER. You have ONE WEEK!

PRAY for ME. I'm PRAYING for YOU.

Let's PRAY Together!

Next Steps: *I will memorize Romans 12:2*

I will read Romans 3 and 12

I will pray and ask for God's grace to transform this area of my life: _____

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 ... PHILIPPIANS 2:13 = *For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.*
- 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: **PART 2 ... TRANSFORMING GRACE ... Real Change – B to E.**

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

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