

Sermon 3: "Grace: The Call to Holiness"

Title: The Transformative Power of Grace

Introduction:

Good morning, dear brothers and sisters. I am grateful to be here with you today as we continue exploring the transformative power of God's grace. Last week, we learned about the incredible gift of grace that empowers us to forgive others. Today, we dive deeper into this topic and explore how grace transforms us and calls us to a life of Holiness.

The sermon's main principles will revolve around the concept of Holiness and its significance in the lives of believers.

Let's explore the definitions of holiness:

a. Definition of Holiness: Holiness refers to being set apart for God and living according to His commands.

b. Holiness as a lifestyle: Holiness is not just a one-time event but an ongoing commitment to living in obedience to God.

Philippians 1:6 says, "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." This verse reminds believers that Holiness is a lifelong process. When we choose to follow Jesus, he begins a transformative work in us, renewing our hearts and minds to be more like him. We can have confidence that God will continue this work until the day of Jesus' return, constantly shaping us into Holiness.

2 Corinthians 5:17 states, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" This verse speaks to the profound change when we surrender our lives to Jesus. Through his sacrifice on the cross, we are made new, born again in his image. This new creation is marked by Holiness, as we are no longer bound by sin and the worldly desires that once characterized our lives. In Christ, we have the power to live holy lives, guided by the Holy Spirit and free from the bondage of our old selves.

In the Old Testament, Holiness was a central theme in the Hebrew Bible. The Israelites were called to be holy people, set apart for God's purposes and reflecting His character to the surrounding nations. Leviticus 19:2 emphasizes this call to Holiness, stating, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy."

This call to Holiness in the Old Testament was primarily expressed through obedience to the Law given to Moses. The Law provided specific instructions and regulations for various aspects of life, including dietary laws, Sabbath observance, and ethical behavior. The Israelites demonstrated their commitment to living by God's Holiness by following these commandments.

However, the sacrificial system in the Old Testament also played a crucial role in addressing the people's sins and enabling them to approach God. Animal sacrifices were offered as a means of purification and atonement for sins, allowing the people to maintain a relationship with the Holy God.

In contrast, the New Testament introduces a profound shift in the understanding of Holiness due to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. His sacrificial act of love on the cross was the ultimate fulfillment of the sacrificial system, rendering it no longer necessary. Hebrews 10:10 explains this transformation: "And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all."

Through faith in Jesus, believers are justified and declared righteous before God. This justification is not based on our own efforts or obedience to the Law but solely on the grace of God. However, Holiness in the New Testament is not simply a declaration or legal status but also a transformative process.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit empowers believers to live lives that are pleasing to God and reflect His Holiness. Galatians 5:22-23 describes the fruit of the Spirit, which includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These characteristics are evidence of the Holy Spirit's work within a person, shaping them into a vessel of Holiness.

Therefore, while the Old Testament understanding of Holiness emphasized obedience to the Law and the role of sacrifices, the New Testament brings a deeper understanding of Holiness through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Believers are declared holy and empowered to live according to God's character through the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. **(Holiness OT (Temple) and NT (Community))**

Point 1: Grace Transforms us into a Desire to Honor God

When we encounter the grace of God, it changes our hearts and desires, leading us to a deep longing to honor and please Him. In **1 Peter 1:15-16**, the apostle Peter writes, "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy because I am holy.'" God's grace forgives us of our sins and empowers us to live holy lives that reflect His character.

John Wesley, one of history's greatest theologians, emphasized the transformational nature of grace. He said, "In conversion, one feels a heartfelt desire to consecrate themselves wholly to God, to renounce the world, to prefer the favor of God to the favor of men, and to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus."

Point 2: The Call to Holiness

2. The importance of Holiness:

- a. Reflecting God's character: Holiness reflects God's nature and allows believers to bear His image in the world.
- b. Drawing near to God: Holiness creates a deeper intimacy and communion with God, allowing believers to experience His presence and love.

God's grace is not given to us merely as a one-time experience but as a lifelong transformation journey. In **Philippians 1:6**, the apostle Paul writes, "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." God's grace calls us to continually grow in Holiness and become more like Christ daily.

In his book "Mere Christianity," C.S. Lewis wrote, "God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man. It is not like teaching a horse to jump better and better but like turning a horse into a winged creature."

Point 3: The Grace to Persevere

3. Pursuing Holiness:

a. Surrendering to God's transforming power: Believers must surrender their desires and submit to God's sanctifying work.

b. Cultivating spiritual disciplines: Prayer, Bible study, worship, and fellowship are essential in nurturing Holiness and growing Christlikeness.

c. Guarding against sin and temptation: Believers must be vigilant in avoiding sinful behaviors and influences that hinder their pursuit of Holiness.

Living a life of Holiness is not always easy. We may stumble and fall along the way. Yet, the grace of God gives us the strength to persevere. In **2 Corinthians 5:17**, Paul reminds us, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" Through God's grace, we are made new, and we have the power to overcome sin and temptation.

N.T. Wright, a contemporary theologian, explains, "The very thought of being 'in Christ,' of being mysteriously and wonderfully united with Jesus, the Messiah, looks to the future word of resurrection and new creation, and from that future celebrates a present reality: all that Christ accomplished in his messianic work has made a difference here and now."

I Alvarez's Testimony: From Darkness to Light: The Transformative Power of God's Grace

Introduction:

In my search for fulfillment and purpose, I was tangled in a web of partying, drinking, and constantly seeking validation in relationships. However, my story took a turn when I became involved with witchcraft and alcohol, becoming the life of every party. But it was at my lowest point that Jesus showed up and completely transformed my life, revealing the true power of His grace.

1. Lost in the pursuit of worldly pleasures: Prevenient G.

I was captivated by the allure of parties, dancing, and drinking. I believed that indulging in these activities could fill the void within me. Yet, the emptiness persisted no matter how much I embraced this lifestyle. I moved from one relationship to another, hoping to find fulfillment, only to find temporary satisfaction that quickly faded away.

2. Delving into darkness: Prevenient Grace

Desperate to find answers, I stumbled upon witchcraft. Intrigued by its promises of supernatural power and control over my life, I fell into its grasp. The occult became my refuge but only

deepened the darkness I was already immersed in. I became more lost, confused, and broken than ever before.

3. A divine encounter: Justifying Grace

In the midst of my despair, Jesus made His presence known in my life. It was as though a light broke through the darkest clouds. His love and grace penetrated the depths of my soul, calling me towards a different path. It was a transformative encounter that shook me to my core, compelling me to leave behind my sinful habits and turn toward His redeeming love.

4. The power of grace: Sanctifying Grace

Through Jesus, I experienced the immense power of His grace to heal and restore. His forgiveness washed over me, freeing me from the chains of my past and giving me a fresh start. This undeserved and overwhelming grace reached deep into my heart, transforming me from the inside out.

5. Embracing a life of Holiness: Sanctifying Grace

As I surrendered my life to Jesus, I realized that Holiness was not a set of rules meant to restrict me but rather a path to true freedom and joy. The more I pursued a holy life in Jesus, the more I discovered the beauty and transformation it brought to my soul. I learned that walking in Holiness was not about perfection but allowing Jesus to guide and mold me into the person He created me to be.

Bible (1 Peter 1:15-16): "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy because I am holy.'"

Conclusion: Through my journey, I have understood that the transformative power of God's grace knows no bounds. Jesus' presence in my life saved me from darkness, giving me a renewed purpose and a desire to pursue Holiness. The pursuit of Holiness is not about adhering to a list of rules but rather about allowing God's grace to sanctify our souls, transforming us from the inside out. In Jesus, I have found true fulfillment, joy, and a life that glorifies Him.

Grace transforms us and calls us to a life of Holiness. It is not merely about avoiding sin or doing good works but about aligning our hearts and desires with God's will. Let us embrace this call and continually pursue righteousness, love, and justice with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Call to Action: Today, I urge you to seek God's grace to help you live a life of Holiness in your daily lives. Ask Him to transform your desires and empower you to become more like Christ daily. Commit to pursuing righteousness, love, and justice in all your relationships and actions.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the transforming power of your grace. We ask for your help and guidance as we strive to live a life of Holiness. May your grace empower us to honor and please you in all we do. Forgive us for the times we have fallen short and strengthen us to persevere. Cleanse us from every unrighteousness and transform our hearts and desires to align with your will.

We confess our weaknesses and ask for your strength to live a life of Holiness. Help us to pursue righteousness, love, and justice in all our actions and relationships. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.