

Saying of: John Bunyan

"Man's own conscience, more than a thousand witnesses, cannot help but dictate the reality of God to him"

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Transforming Grace

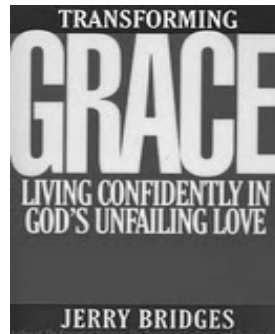
Living Confidently in God's Unfailing Love

By Jerry Bridges

Funny how the exceeding riches of God's grace seem to run out the moment we're saved. From then on, we tend to base our relationship with Him on our performance rather than on His grace.

Of course, God continues to deal with us on the basis of His grace, whether or not we understand it. It's just that when we don't, we forgo the abundant freedoms that come from not having to measure up.

The product of over 10 years of Bible study, *Transforming Grace* is a fountainhead of inspiration and renewal that will show you just how inexhaustible and generous God's grace really is—you'll never be able to ask for too much, need too much, hope for too much, or even sin too much. Like a never-ending stream of ocean waves crashing on the shore, God's grace is available for you without measure.



Reviews

"This is an honest, gentle, searching book on a great theme by a wise teacher who knows what he is talking about. I highly recommend it."- **J.I. Packer**

"In typical Bridges style, this book is a warm, encouraging, and insightful guide to godly living. It gets to the core of the biblical meaning of grace."- **R.C. Sproul**

"No truth is so needed and so misunderstood. Jerry Bridges opens our minds to the truth of grace. It is practical, biblical, and powerful—a refreshing release from guilt and legalism."- **Jerry White**

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"...in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" Romans 8:37.

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Reading from A.W. Tozer

The Church must discern between Popularity and Greatness

Jesus said: "If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12:26).

Human society generally has fallen into the error of assuming that greatness and fame are synonymous. Americans appear to take for granted that each generation provides a certain number of superior men and the democratic processes unerringly find those men and set them in a place of prominence. How wrong can people get!

We have but to become acquainted with, or even listen to, the big names of our times to discover how wretchedly inferior most of them are! Many appear to have arrived at their present eminence by pull, brass, nerve, gall and lucky accident.

If we would see life steadily and see it whole we must make a stern effort to break away from the power of that false philosophy that equates greatness with fame. The two may be and often are oceans and continents apart!

If the church were a body wholly unaffected by the world we could toss the above problem over to the secular philosophers; but the truth is that the church also suffers from this even notion!

Christians have fallen into the habit of accepting the noisiest and most notorious among them as the best and the greatest. They too have learned to equate popularity with excellence. In open defiance of the Sermon on the Mount, they have given their approval not to the meek but to the self-assertive; not to the mourner but to the self-assured; not to the pure in heart who see God but to the publicity hunter who seeks headlines!

Heidelberg Catechism

6. Q. Did God, then, create man so wicked and perverse?

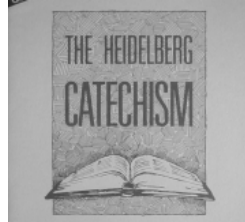
A. No, on the contrary, God created man good[1] and in His image,[2] that is, in true righteousness and holiness,[3] so that he might rightly know God His Creator,[4] heartily love Him, and live with Him in eternal blessedness to praise and glorify Him.[5]

[1] Gen. 1:31. [2] Gen. 1:26, 27. [3] Eph. 4:24. [4] Col. 3:10. [5] Ps. 8.

7. Q. From where, then, did man's depraved nature come?

A. From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise,[1] for there our nature became so corrupt[2] that we are all conceived and born in sin.[3]

[1] Gen. 3. [2] Rom. 5:12, 18, 19. [3] Ps. 51:5.



Devotion from the Puritans

More than Reformation is Needed.

Jesus said: "Unless a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Reformation may proceed from force and fear. Such a reformation is from impediments, not from inclination. Cutting a bird's wings does not take away its propensity to fly, but its ability. Cutting the claws of a lion or pulling out its teeth does not change its lionish nature. Fear restrained Herod from putting John to death when his will was inclined to the act. Fear may clip the nails of sin, only grace can hinder their growth and take away their life. Fear only stops the streams, not chokes the fountain.

Reformation may also proceed from a sense of outward interest. A man may rationally abstain from those sordid pleasures which degrade his esteem and prey upon his reputation. But in the meantime his inward lusts may triumph, while their outward appearances are halted. A splendid life may co-exist with inward vermin, contrary to the pure nature of God, and inconsistent with a man's happiness. Men may cast out one gross devil to make way for seven more and worse ones. The interest which restrains outward acts will not restrain inward lusts.

Well then, an outward reformation without an inward grace can no more rectify nature than abstinence from luxury can cure a disease that a man has contracted through intemperance. Outward applications of balms and ointments will do little good in a fever, unless the spring of the disease be altered.

Stephen Charnock, *A Homiletic Encyclopedia*, p. 4069 (H.E.)

The Fruit of the Spirit: Goodness

In the Old Testament "good" renders the Hebrew word *tob*. Its germ meaning is pleasant, with an ethical connotation. Good, in the sense of moral goodness, emerges progressively in the Bible. God is love, is the culmination of the self-disclosure of God in Jesus Christ.

A great variety of usages attend the word good in the Holy Scripture. God's work in creation is seen to be good (Gen.1). A more ethical meaning makes it equivalent to right (Deut.6:18). It has the meaning of benefits in Job 2:10.

In contrast to Greek ethics the Bible centers goodness on God. It is true that both Plato and Aristotle make "the good" central in their systems of thought. "The essential Form of the Good is the highest object of science" (Plato, *Republic*, Bk. VI). "If it is true that in the sphere of action there is an end which we wish for its own sake, and for the sake of which we wish everything else - it is clear that this will be the good or the supreme good" (Aristotle, *Ethics*, Bk. I). Noble as these ideas are of the nature of the *Summum Bonum* they do not lead to a living personal God as the ground of the good.

In the Bible, however, God is declared to be good because of his acts of redeeming love. This is not a conclusion arrived at by conceptual thinking, but by personal religious insight on the part of those who have been enlightened and uplifted by the grace of God mediated through Christ.

I. *Goodness and Values*. Beauty, truth and goodness are often referred to as the three ultimate values. Many Christian theologians consider this triad is reducible to one fundamental value: goodness. Doubts arise as to the value of some truths. They may be trivial or worthless or harmful. Not every beautiful thing ought necessarily to exist. But goodness is, in the fullest sense, an absolute value. What constitutes any of these values is precisely the goodness they share in common.

II. *God and Goodness*. Moral goodness can only exist for personal minds. The ideal of absolute goodness can only exist in a mind from which all reality is derived. Goodness cannot be explained on naturalistic or evolutionist grounds. It is distinct from the useful and the pleasant. Even though we do not always follow the good, we acknowledge its absolute claim upon us