



## God's Way Of Change

---

Mostly God doesn't just call us to do as we are told: He often gives us reasons for changing. Growing in holiness is supernatural work but the way God has chosen to make it happen, more often than not, involves an appeal to our rational mind. He gives us the privilege of taking responsibility for our actions. Sometimes we would rather have it some other way. Sometimes we want instant holiness but God it seems prefers to have us put in some work.



How else does God change people?

Can you think of any wrong teaching you may have heard about how God changes people?

So now that Paul has described the kind of behaviour that should go with sound teaching — the kind of behaviour that should be taught to various groups within the church if the church is to be set in order — beginning in 2:11 with the word “for” he says, “Now here is why they should all be taught to behave this way.” Try to follow Paul's line of reasoning here as we take it phrase by phrase.

### Begin With The Grace Of God

Paul starts us off thinking about the grace of God: he says, “The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men.” (2:11) God's common grace to all men and His special grace toward His children has appeared to us — chiefly in the Lord Jesus — bringing salvation to all classes of men and women.



What do you understand by the terms “common grace” and “special grace”?

### Grace Teaches and Chastens

God's grace, Paul says, does more than deliver us from guilt. It also instructs us (2:12 – 13). The Greek word he chose to use is PAIDEUO which has two sides to it. It means to instruct but it also means to train, chasten or correct. Training in Scripture often has these two sides to it — teaching and discipline.



What is the difference between teaching and discipline?

It is because God is gracious that we are taught His word, through preaching, reading and in fellowship with others. It is also by God's grace that we are chastened — sometimes even with painful blows.

"Whom the Lord loves, He chastens  
and scourges every son whom He receives"

Hebrews 12:6



How should knowing these things affect your attitude to teaching from God's word and to suffering?

What is it that the grace of God instructs us in? Paul says it instructs us to deny ungodliness (2:12), that is to renounce or to turn our backs on sin, to deny worldly desires, to live soberly, to live righteously and to live godly or live a life of devotion and worship — a life with a Godward attitude.

How would you describe godly living?



God is graciously at work in the life of every believer teaching these things and, lest anyone should think they are so far beyond us that they will never be evident until we get to heaven Paul adds that these things apply to this present age. (2:12) They are for here and now and it is here and now that God, in grace, teaches them.

The first reason for right behaviour then is that God's grace is instructing us in it.

### **Looking Forward**

The second reason for right behaviour is that God's grace is also teaching us to look forward (2:13). Christians are people who have their sights set high. Godly living in the present age is not easy. There are distractions, temptations and trials and we struggle at times but we cope with the struggle by raising our eyes and looking forward to heaven and to the Lord's return — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour who gave Himself to redeem us (2:13 – 14).

Paul's second incentive to good behaviour then is that we are people who look forward: this world is not where we look for our rewards.



How can looking forward to the Lord's return help, for example, a young woman to be affectionate toward her husband and children?

### **Why Did God Save You?**

This thought about the Lord's return leads Paul into another strand to his line of reasoning. The first strand in his motivating argument was to point out that the grace of God teaches us to live godly and look forward.

---

The second strand is really a continuation of the same argument, as we shall see, but for a moment Paul seems to depart and become wrapped up in His thoughts about the Lord — as he often does. Nevertheless all that he says in verse 14 is highly significant and ties in very closely with what he has already said. He reminds us there that Christ gave Himself to redeem us from lawlessness and make us pure.

What is salvation all about? Why did the Lord Jesus Christ give Himself as a sacrifice in your place? Why does God in His grace teach us to live godly lives? Was it so that our sins could be forgiven? Was it to save us from Hell? Was it that we could have peace with Him and enjoy His blessing? Yes, it was all of those things but the answer does not end there. Jesus gave Himself for much more than that. He gave Himself, Paul says, to redeem us from every lawless deed. We were slaves to sin, helpless to overcome its power over us and Jesus paid the price to free us from that.

What is more, Jesus gave Himself to purify for Himself His own special people. (2:14) Many are too self-centred in their understanding of the gospel. They think that God exists for our benefit. Yes He loves us. Yes He blesses us with all kinds of spiritual blessings but ultimately He has saved us for Himself to be His special people for His glory

"To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things, in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with His eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Ephesians 3:8-11

God in grace loved you and saved you because He wanted you for Himself to be His own special person, a trophy of His grace. He saved you so that you could be held up before the whole universe so that all the rulers, principalities and powers might fall down and cry:

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing...To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing and honour and glory and dominion forever and ever."

Revelation 5:12-13

## **And He Wants You To Be Zealous**

He gave Himself to "purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." (2:14) That is why God graciously instructs us and disciplines us: He is completing the work of Christ in us: purifying us and making us zealous and that is Paul's third reason for why we must live to such a high standard.

## **No Holiness No Salvation**

So, Christians should be taught to conduct themselves in the ways we have been learning about from verses 2 – 10 first because God's grace is instructing us to live that way and we will be cooperating with Him if we do. Second God's grace is also teaching us to look forward to heaven and to the Lord's return and we will be preparing for that is we do. Third we should behave in these ways because it is the kind of behaviour God saved us for. He saved us to make us holy.

There is a very important point to be made here: you just cannot separate salvation from holiness.



What would you say to someone who claims to be a believer but thinks that holiness is an optional extra and only for some special Christians?

## **Motivation For Change**

If we could have a clearer vision of what the grace of God is doing in us, of eternity and the glory that is to come and of the Saviour and what He suffered and why He did it what a motivation it would be to lay aside everything and live for God. The things we would have to sacrifice would fall into insignificance and service would be a joy. Those thoughts should change us.