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Export date: Fri Oct 30 5:07:46 2026 / +0000 GMT

Crossroads Community Church: Spiritual Checks

Pastor Don opened in prayer this morning thanking God for the Honour, Glory and Grace He has given us.

He prayed for God's forgiveness of our sins and asked for the glory of His Grace as we grow closer in our relationship to Him.

I am sure many of you have bought a product or service from a TV Commercial: the ones promising this unbelievable offer; bonuses for ordering immediately; and so on. But, as we all know the product or service is never how it is portrayed and we end up feeling frustrated, disappointed and doubting some of our decisions.

These doubts can sometimes invade our Christian lives and walks as well.

As Christians we need to be unwaveringly convinced in the truth of God's word. Matthew 21:211

The classic Christian Hymn ?Amazing Grace? was written by John Newton in 1779, as a testimony of the Grace of God in his life.

Before converting to Christianity and becoming an Anglican Pastor, John Newton was a slave trader and lived a wickedly sinful life.

The Bible has recorded numerous conversions such as this. Luke 5:27-282 A tax collector named Levi, who we know as Matthew, became one of the 12 Apostles. Tax collecting during this time was lucrative but also a dishonest business.

After receiving God's Grace, Levi left everything.

Although his name is not mentioned in the Bible, we read in Luke 23:473, a Roman officer overseeing the crucifixion of our Lord and Saviour, began worshipping God after being blessed by His Grace. Even Peter who denied Jesus three times received God's Grace along with many others.

The first foundational truth the Apostle Paul shares with us is the Certainty of God's Grace.

This truth is critical because to progress in our Christian lives we need a firm understanding of God's Grace, but for this to happen we must understand human behaviour, before the birth of Christ.

Titas 3:34 Paul does not mince his words with respect to our condition before receiving God's Grace. Regarding our inner attitude, we were foolish, lacked spiritual understanding and discernment.

We were disobedient, refusing to obey God's laws and desires. We were misled by false teachers and actively strayed from the true course.

We become enslaved to our desires when we give in to every pleasure. Enjoying life is not the problem; it's letting your desires control you. 2 Peter 2:195

A common belief suggests freedom means doing anything you want. Submitting our lives to Christ, frees us from slavery to sin and gives us the opportunity to serve Him resulting in our ultimate good. Paul is direct here because he understands our tendency to minimize our own sinfulness when comparing to others around us.

When we begin to build ourselves up and over others thinking our sins are not nearly as bad, we lessen our need for God's Grace. And yet we believe we are entitled to His undeserved favour. Paul is saying that before accepting Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, our inner attitude and nature were no different than anyone else. Ephesians 2:1-36

The fact that all people, without exception, commit sin proves that without Christ we have a sinful nature. Romans 3:237

This doesn't mean Christians, followers of Jesus, are the only ones who are moral; many people have a moral compass. What it does say is based on God's absolute scale no one deserves salvation and it is only through unity with Christ can we become good in God's sight.

The saying ?Except for the Grace of God ?? leads into understanding what God did for us. In the scriptures, Titus 3:4-58 and 1 Timothy 1:14-159 we read how generous and gracious Jesus is with us.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. On the other side, however, we can be so guilt-ridden by our past, we believe God could never accept and forgive us.

But consider the Apostle Paul. He scoffed at the teachings of Jesus; hunted and murdered Christians before coming to Faith in Christ. And yet he is accredited with writing over half the New Testament. Again we are shown how God's Grace is a certainty, once we turn and accept Him.

I am a reasonably intelligent individual, and having read books on how to diet, become a millionaire or a better Pastor I know none of these books changed who I am. I am different today because of God's Grace; His undeserved favour to do, accept and cope with things as He would have me do it, and not by my old sinful habits.

Once God has been accepted as your Lord and Saviour it is of utmost importance for the foundation of our Faith to be convinced that God did for us what we could not do for ourselves. God gave us His Grace, so we could enjoy a relationship with Him now and for eternity, because He loves us that much.

The truth, however, is this: through Jesus Christ, God offers us forgiveness and pardon for our sins, but the pardon is only effective if we accept it and experience His Grace personally in our lives.

Next we need to exercise God's Grace through Godly living. Titus 2:11-1411

Paul refers to two aspects of Christian living: both living and looking forward are essential to our Christian sanity in this age of evil. God makes living bearable with the gifts He has given us to build His Kingdom. The next step is to live in obedience to what God desires for us. Philippians 4:1312

Once Paul had received God's Grace, he immediately saw the importance of extending that Grace to others.

?So that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of His great patience.?

Some ways to become Grace-givers are to openly speak on how God has forgiven and changed us; live in accordance with God's will and desires; treat others with grace and mercy without judgement and hostility.

This doesn't mean we approve of wrong behaviour. However, like God, we need to extend grace; seeing that person as God would see them; remembering and appreciating what God has done for us and passing that Grace on to others. 1 Timothy 1:1713

We have all had moments of doubt causing us to question our faith; or disillusionment over how we could ever be forgiven. It is during times of uncertainty we need to hold onto something firm and unchanging; the Certainty of God's Grace.

May the Holy Spirit anoint these, His words this morning.