

The Educating Power Of Grace And Glory

Titus 2:11-15

Pastor John Miller

Paul says to Titus in Titus 2:11-15, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared..." which is a key word in understanding this text "...to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." Then Paul tells Titus, "Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you."

We come now in our study of Titus to the heart of this letter. Every commentary will tell you that this is the heart and center of the book of Titus. In chapter 2, verses 1-10, Paul has been instructing the members of the church; he spoke of the older men, the older women, the young women, the young men, to Titus himself and of the bondservants. Now Paul begins to speak about the doctrines on which we should base our lives.

In verse 10, Paul said that these groups in the church should "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things," or they should live in a way that beautify the Scriptures. Now in verses 11-15, Paul tells us what those doctrines are.

Back in chapter 2, verse 1, he said, "Speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine." And he encouraged them to live holy lives. Now he comes to the "sound doctrine" that is the foundation and motivation for living godly, holy lives. This passage is instruction on how to live godly, holy lives. And it is all based on doctrine. So doctrine leads to duty.

But it's interesting that Paul turns it around. In most of his epistles, he first gives us the doctrine, then the duty. He first lays out the principles, then he gives us the practice. But in Titus, he turns it around; he first tells us to live holy lives that are becoming of the Word of God, then he tells us the theology, the doctrine, the Biblical truth that is the foundation of why we should live holy lives. So Paul had told us how to behave; now he'll tell us the belief it is based on. Charles R. Erdman said, "Paul bases all the exhortations of the chapter upon a summary of the Gospel truth, which for beauty and depth and significance, probably is unsurpassed." I agree.

Now what is the doctrine that Paul bases our holy living upon? The answer is the two comings of Christ, which are laid out in this text. He calls them epiphanies or appearances. Verse 11 says, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared." From "appeared," we get out word "epiphany." It's an appearance or an unveiling of Jesus Christ, which is His first coming. His second appearing is in verse 13: "...looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing..." or "epiphany" "...of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."

So Paul bases how we should live on the first appearing or epiphany of Jesus Christ and on the

second appearing or second epiphany of Jesus Christ, which is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. When Jesus came in His first coming, He came to save us from sin's penalty. In His Second Coming, Christ will come to save us from sin's presence. But now, in between the two comings, epiphanies or appearings, He saves us from sin's power. This is our present time, in which we are freed from the power of sin.

So the key to living holy lives now is to look back to His epiphany of grace, verse 11, and looking forward to His epiphany of glory, verse 13. Then verse 12 is the educating power of grace or what His grace is teaching us.

There are two sections regarding God's grace and glory: the first is in verses 11-12, the appearing of grace, and the second is in verses 13-15, the appearing of glory. So we have grace appearing and then glory appearing.

In verses 11-12, we first see the appearing of grace. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us..." or "educating us" or "instructing us" "...that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age."

This is not saying that grace came into existence when Christ came into the world. God has always been gracious. Have you ever heard someone say that they liked the God of the New Testament more than the God of the Old Testament? They try to make the God of the Old Testament the God of wrath, judgment, fire and brimstone and hell. And they say that the God of the New Testament is the God of love and grace. There is only one God. The God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. And God has always been a God of grace, mercy and loving kindness and "slow to anger" (Psalm 103:8). They aren't two different gods. All through the Old Testament God has been referred to as being gracious and merciful.

But what Paul is saying is that when Jesus Christ came in His first appearing, God's grace appeared incarnate in the Person of God the Son, Jesus Christ. When Jesus came to earth, God wrapped His grace and His mercy and His love in flesh and blood and sent Him down to man. This is what we celebrate at Christmas. It's called "the first Advent, the first Epiphany, the first appearing." God the Son became Jesus Christ on earth, taking on humanity; He was the God-man.

So Jesus' first appearing brought grace and glory. John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "The Word" is a reference to Jesus. Back in John 1:1, it says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That eternal, personal, divine Word is Jesus, and "the Word became flesh." It literally means that He "pitched His tent among us." So God became flesh or God incarnate. Never before has there been and never again will there be the God-man like Jesus Christ. He's one of a kind. And John 1:17 says, "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

Now I want to point out four truths about grace's appearing in our text. There are four truths about Christ's first Advent and how grace appeared. Number one, it was a saving grace. In verse 11, it's referred to as "the grace of God." That means it comes from and is poured out of the sovereign, eternal, self-existent heart of God. No power on earth or from hell can frustrate it. I like that.

Let your heart soak in that. Grace came from the heart of God, who is eternal, self-existent and sovereign. Some people don't like the sovereignty of God. When you realize that God is gracious, merciful, "slow to anger"—and that God is gracious to you—how can you resist the sovereignty of God?! By right of the fact that God existed before anything else and everything was created by God, He can do whatever He wants! It's all His! So you can't shake your fist at God and say, "That's not fair! Who does God think He is?!" God is sovereign, yet He is revealed in Christ as being a God of grace. And a sovereign grace it is indeed. That means that He can display His grace to whomever and however He chooses.

The second fact about the grace of God in Christ is that it is a saving grace, verse 11. It "brings salvation." So the grace of God brings salvation. Grace is unmerited favor or getting something we don't deserve. As undeserving, guilty sinners, we were all saved by grace.

I want to tell you something very basic, but we stumble over it: there is nothing in us to merit, earn or deserve the grace of God. That's the essence of grace: we don't deserve it or earn it. Mercy, on the other hand, is God not giving us what we deserve. Thank God for mercy! Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve. So we are all undeserving but become recipients of the sovereign God, who chooses to save us by His marvelous grace.

We must never think that we deserve any of the blessings of God. That would be a sad thing to do. In Ephesians 2:8-10, it says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God ordained beforehand that we should walk in them."

And how are we saved by grace? By Christ's death on the Cross. Verse 14 says that He "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us." So Jesus died on the Cross for us to save us by His marvelous grace. This is why we call this sovereign, saving grace "amazing." John Newton wrote:

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found,

Was blind, but now I see."

Isn't God's grace amazing?! That's why when you read these verses, your heart just thrills!

The third thing to notice about God's grace is that it is sufficient, verse 11. It says that the grace of God that brings salvation "has appeared..." an epiphany "...to all men."

But this does not mean that all men will be saved; universal salvation is not taught in the Bible. Nowhere in the Bible does it teach that because Jesus died on the Cross for the world, that the whole world will be saved. Jesus said, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it" (Matthew 7:13). So there will be a lot of people who will reject God's grace and the provision of Christ's death on the Cross, and as a result, they will be lost for all eternity in hell.

Yet it does mean that God's death on the Cross in Christ is sufficient for the sins of the whole world. But it is sufficient only for those who believe or put their trust and faith in Christ. I believe in a "whosoever will" Gospel. I don't believe in what's called "limited atonement." That is the doctrine that teaches that the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross was limited to only those who are the elect or those who are chosen by God. I believe Jesus died for the sins of the whole world.

Let me give you some verses that back that up. The first you know well: John 3:16. "For God so loved the world..." that's the sinful world of mankind "...that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Isn't that beautiful? You don't have to jump through a bunch of hoops. It's not following rites and rituals. It's not shaving your head and putting on a robe. It's not sitting on a mountain and waiting for the rapture. It's believing in Jesus Christ. The second verse is Romans 10:13, which says, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Isn't that great?!

The fourth thing to note about God's grace is that it is a transforming grace, verse 12. First, His grace teaches us or instructs us to do something. It is "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age." The words "teaching us" in the Greek has the idea of instructing little children. So we, as the children of God, are being taught or instructed by God's grace. Someone called this "the school of grace."

What does grace teach us? First, negatively, it teaches us to say no to "ungodliness and worldly lusts." God's grace enables what the Law could never do; it instructs us to say

"No" or "denying" these things.

This is the acid test of true conversion. If you have truly been born again or saved, you will have a desire to say "No" to sin and "Yes" to righteousness. Nature determines appetite. And if you've been given a new nature, you're going to want to do what's pleasing to God. You're not going to be perfect; you're going to stumble. But you're going to have a desire to say "No" to "ungodliness and worldly lusts."

The Law can save no one. The Law can sanctify no one. But grace saves and sanctifies. Again, I like what John Newton said in Amazing Grace: "'Twas grace that taught..." there's the teaching "...my heart to fear." It taught me to fear the Lord and to say "No" to sin.

Second, the positive half of grace in verse 12 is that “We should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.” We say “No” to sin, because of God’s grace, and we say “Yes” to living clear-minded, living like Christ and living in a way that pleases the Lord. God’s grace saves us and also sanctifies us. So grace teaches us to live holy lives.

After you become a Christian, many people fall into the trap of trying to live by legalism or by standards, laws and rules. It will never work. It will lead to pride—“Look what I’ve done! How holy I am! And look at how bad you are, because you don’t keep the standards!” Or it leads to frustration—“I’ll never measure up! I’ll never be good enough!” But if you know you’re just an undeserving sinner saved by grace, it’s all good from there. We deserve nothing from God, yet God has given us everything in Christ.

The world we live in is this evil, “present age.” It’s the word “aiónios,” or the evil, world’s system apart from God with its lusts, its lewdness, its pride, its prejudice, its pleasures, its pastimes, its precepts, its principles, its policies, its passions and its preconceptions. Say “No” to the world and “Yes” to God.

In light of this, remember that this world is not our home. We’re just passing through; we’re strangers and pilgrims here. Peter said that “The elements will melt with fervent heat, both the earth and the works that are in it” (2 Peter 3:10). So you don’t want to be a materialist; you want to be a person who looks to heaven. That’s what the text is all about.

The second section of our text, in verses 13-15, is the appearing of glory. “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing...” or “epiphany” “...of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.”

Now I want you to see this: verse 11 is salvation, verse 12 is sanctification and verse 13 is glorification. So we live between the two; we look back at the Cross and we look forward to His Second Advent or His coming in glory, which is our “blessed hope.”

So Jesus came the first time from heaven, appearing incarnate through the womb of the Virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life and then He was crucified in a substitutionary death, was buried, then resurrected, was ascended back to heaven and is exalted at the right hand of God. But the story’s not over; He’s coming back again. It’s wonderful that He came the first time and brought His grace, and He’ll come back the second time to bring His glory. I like that.

Revelation 19 is the description of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It is “the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

I believe that this reference in verse 13 is not the rapture. The rapture is not the Lord coming back to the earth; it’s Him catching up the church, the saints, to meet Him in the clouds and then on to heaven. It’s recorded in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. And it’s also talked about in 1 Corinthians 15:51. It’s talked about by Jesus in John 14:2-3. “I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

I recently did a two-part series on the rapture and the fact that it will be before the tribulation. So our text is not the rapture but is seven years later, after the tribulation, at the Second Coming or the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. That is our “blessed hope.”

Have you ever stopped to think about how amazing it's going to be when the heavens are rent and Christ appears “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:16) in glory coming back to the earth?! And “every eye will see Him” (Revelation 1:7), and we will come back with Him riding on white horses.

I don't do horses, by the way. But I will in my new body. The last time I rode a horse, it did what it wanted, when it wanted, there was no brake and no turn signal. That thing had a mind of its own! “Get me off of here! I don't want to be a cowboy!” It was terrible.

But we'll come back on white horses, and it's going to be amazing! And for 1,000 years, Christ is going to reign as “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Satan will be bound and thrown into the pit. It's going to be heaven on earth! A marvelous time! That will then flow into “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1). Satan will then be gone for all eternity, and we're all in heaven. What a glorious future that is! So no wonder it says that we're “looking for the blessed hope”!

That word “looking” means that we're anticipating, eagerly straining our necks, looking for the Lord to come. And we will come back with Him in glory.

Notice in verse 13, there is a clear affirmation and declaration that Jesus is God. He's called “our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” In the Greek, it would read, “our Savior Jesus Christ.”

Someone put up a big sign off of highway 215 that said, “Jesus is not God.” I thought, What Bible are they reading? That's insane! Verse 13 is a very clear reference to “our great God.” In the New Testament, the only time that God is called “great” is in reference to God the Son, Jesus Christ. He is our Savior Jesus Christ.

So don't lose your hope that Jesus Christ is coming back. We should be looking and longing for heaven. Grace saves us and grace sanctifies us. And grace will bring us home to heaven. What begins in grace ends in glory. Then we will be saved from sin's presence. In the past, we've been saved or justified from sin's penalty, and in the future, we'll be saved from sin's presence altogether. But presently, we're being saved or sanctified from the power of sin in our lives.

What is the doctrinal foundation for this “blessed hope”? It is the Cross of Christ. The minute Paul mentions “Jesus Christ,” at the end of verse 13, in verse 14, he says, “...who gave Himself for us...” why? “...that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.” Those are the good works he was talking about

earlier in chapter 2.

I want you to notice some facts about the Cross. Jesus gave Himself voluntarily. Jesus said, "No one takes [my life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." So He voluntarily gave up His life.

Notice also that He "gave Himself for us." He gave Himself on the Cross as our substitution. So the death of Jesus Christ was voluntary and substitutionary. Jesus took our place. This is the central, core doctrine of the Cross; that Jesus actually took our place and paid the penalty of our sin on the Cross.

There's a lot of liberal teaching going on in the church today that wants to deny penal, substitutionary atonement. It's so dangerous and so unbiblical! Yet so many Christians are being drawn into that. "How could a God of love punish His own Son on the Cross?!" It's called grace. It's called "grace that is greater than all my sin."

Jesus actually took our sin. But He did not become a sinner; He was sinless. But He bore our sins. It was pictured in the Old Testament when a lamb, a turtledove or a bullock was brought as a sacrifice for our sin. It was substitutionary. When Isaac was taken off the altar and the ram was put in his place, that was substitutionary. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities....And by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). The Bible says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). So I believe in penal, substitutionary atonement.

When Jesus hung on the Cross, He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?!" (Psalm 22:1). I remember preaching on that single statement of Christ's from the Cross. I never was so blown away by the thought that in some way we cannot fathom or comprehend, God the Father placed the sins of the whole world on the Son and turned His back for a moment. Then the Son of God cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?!" But it was only a few minutes later that He said, "Father..." or "Abba" "...into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46).

But during that time that He was forsaken, the earth grew dark, which I believe was universal. The rocks shook and broke, and graves were opened in Jerusalem and men were seen walking around after His Resurrection (Matthew 27:51-53). So to fathom and understand what took place, is beyond our comprehension. Maybe we'll understand it fully in heaven.

I like verse 14; that "He gave Himself for us." And notice why He gave Himself. It says, "That He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people." So His death was voluntary, substitutionary and was a redemption. He did that to purify us, to make us His possession and to perfect us, that we might give ourselves to be zealous of good works. Ephesians 2:8-10 says that He saves us by His grace. And now, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God ordained beforehand that we should walk in them." So His grace leads to godly living.

“Redeem” means “to buy or to purchase.” Jesus bought us and purchased us with His own blood on the Cross to redeem us to Himself. How marvelous!

The text shuts down from verse 14 onward and just wraps up with a closing charge to Titus, in verse 15. “Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.” So these were specific instructions to Pastor Titus. So pastors need to do these three things. They need to speak God’s grace, they need to exhort—we get our word “paraklétos” from that, which is a reference to the Holy Spirit, meaning “to come alongside and encourage”—and they need to rebuke. And I believe we all need to do the same, three things.

Everyone who reads this text now has a greater understanding of the grace of God. So speak about it to others. The word “speak” in this verse is not “kerusso” or preaching and proclaiming; it’s just talking. When you go to lunch after church, just talk about the grace of God. Encourage each other. That’s what it means to “exhort.” And if need be, “rebuke” others, blaming them for their sin, which means to “correct and reprove for sin.”

And how do you “rebuke” others? You do it with the authority of Scripture. In this epistle, the authority was Paul’s book of Titus, or the apostolic authority that Paul bore. In our reading this epistle, it is apostolic authority and it is Scripture, which “is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16).

The authority does not lie in the preacher. A pastor really has no authority at all. It’s only the authority that lies in Scripture. And Jesus is the chief Shepherd of the church. Pastors are only undershepherds.

But we are to be doing the same three things: speaking, exhorting and rebuking, if need be. And we are to do it without being despised.

In conclusion, grace for salvation appeared at the first Advent, verse 11. Grace for sanctification is in verse 12; teaching us that we should deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts.” So right now, between the two comings of Christ, “we should live soberly, righteously, and godly” in this wicked world. And what begins with grace will end in glory, verse 13; “looking...” or “motivated by heaven” “...for the blessed hope and glorious appearing...” or “epiphany” “...of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

They like the third stanza of John Newton’s Amazing Grace:

“Through many dangers, toils, and snares,

I have already come;

‘Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,

And grace will lead me home.”