

I. Advent in Biblical Perspective  
*The Divine Blessings of the Incarnation*  
“The Grace of God Has Appeared”  
Titus 2:11–14  
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III  
November 26, 2017 • Morning Sermon

Let’s look at Titus 2. I am starting our Advent series a week early with an overview of this text and doing five studies from this text during this Advent season. This is God’s Word and God’s Word is the truth. Titus 2:11–15 says [11] *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

[15] *Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I’d like to start by asking, do you have a favorite Christmas carol or Christmas hymn? I love a lot of them but I have three that are top on my list. One is *Ten Thousand Joys* that says ‘Ten thousand joys, sweet Son of God, you came to save me.’ Secondly, I dearly love *O Come All Ye Faithful* particularly when as it is sung it builds as it is sung verse by verse. A third favorite hymn of mine is *Joy to the World* and this hymn illuminates and gives praise to God for both the First and Second Advent of Jesus. As we go further in our study you will see why I like this in terms of what we will be looking at which is another early confession or early Christmas hymn of the church in terms of Titus 2:11–14.

There are a number of Christmas carols in the Bible. There is Mary’s song, *The Magnificent*. There is Zacharias prophecy, Elizabeth’s short song that she sings and there is the song of the angels in Luke 2 to the shepherds. There is Simeon’s song as he would sing of praise to God for being able to see the Consolation of Israel, the Light of God to the Gentiles. The one I have chosen for this Advent season is Paul’s Christmas song in Titus 2. Some of you who have an Anglican or Episcopalian background probably recognizes this as one of the collects that is used during the liturgy in the Christmas season in these churches.

So why is Titus 2:11–14 used around the Incarnation or the Advent Season? In this study I will answer that question in a general sense but then I will look at it in a more particular way in the next four studies. This song, this Word of the Apostle Paul is very interesting so in this study I will outline how we will be looking at this passage on the Incarnation that Paul has written to Titus and then I will give its context. I would be derelict as a preacher if I didn’t set it in its context and that is because of one word. That one word is ‘for’ and that is considered connecting tissue in the Bible because whenever you see that word or the word ‘therefore’ you have to go backward to see its setting. It is connecting you backwards to what has been taking place. Here in this passage when you connect this backwards there is something extremely unique about what Paul has done that he doesn’t normally do.

I want to start by giving you context on the book of Titus. This book was probably written in 62 or 63 AD and Paul has written this book upon his release from his first Roman

imprisonment and he is on his way to his fourth missionary journey. He finished one of his missionary journeys at a place called Ephesus. At Ephesus he had gathered the elders after ministering at that church three years which was the longest he had been at one place and his closing charge to them where they would not see his face any more is found in Acts 20:17. Here he had called for the elders to meet him at Miletus. His charge to them starts in Acts 10:17 and by the time you get to verse 28 his charge gets very specific.

Acts 20:28–30 says [28] *Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. [29] I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock [30] and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.* Realize he is not just speaking to the church. He is speaking to the elders. These savage wolves will come in among them and do two things. They will teach false doctrines and lead the disciples to themselves, not to Jesus but to themselves. So there will be false teachers, false doctrines and false leaders among them.

When Paul leaves from here he goes to Jerusalem. As the Holy Spirit had revealed to him, he is arrested. He spends time in jail in Jerusalem then he is transferred to Caesarea by the Sea and spends time there. He goes before three different kings at Caesarea by the Sea and then is sent onto Rome at his own request. This is his first Roman imprisonment whereby he reaches people in Caesar's household and some in the imperial guard. When he is finally released word gets to him that Ephesus has false teachers and leaders among them. In other words, the elders didn't do their job. They didn't keep watch on themselves and on who became elders in that church so false teachers and false leaders got in.

How did Paul know that was going to happen? He knew it was going to happen because it is always happening. That is one of Satan's schemes – to infiltrate the leadership of a church because he knows Christianity is a relationship with God that leads to a true religion based upon the Book. If he can get people to twist the Book and then twist people's lives through false leadership then he is doing exactly what he intended. Why do you think he goes after those who go to seminaries? He knows that is the next generation of leaders in the pulpit. If he can get to the pulpit he can strike down the sheep and cause them to scatter. Paul knows that is one of Satan's schemes. Sometimes Satan puts wolves in sheep's clothing and sometimes sheep in wolves clothing. So there were false leaders and false doctrines. Why is that important? It is because you can't have a sound life without sound doctrine – sound doctrine leads to sound lives.

It is my opinion that the reason the church has lost its influence is because it wants influence. The church wants to have influence in the culture so it's letting the culture tell it what to say so they will be accepted and will have influence. So instead of sound doctrine being taught from the Word there are talks being given from pulpits that are around the celebrity status of a pastor instead of what the people need for sound lives with sound doctrine. Whenever you want to be a player then you get played. That's what I believe is happening in the pulpit with a breath in the body of Christ through numbers but not a depth because the gravitas of sound doctrine is not there.

Paul finds out that there is no sound doctrine so he sends Timothy to the church at Ephesus. Paul gives Timothy a handbook on how to revitalize the church at Ephesus and that book is I Timothy in the Bible. He tells Timothy to make sure certain men do not teach unsound doctrine but teach the Word of God, sound doctrine, faithfully and the first two chapters of I Timothy tells Timothy what sound doctrine is from the Word of God. Then in I Timothy 3 he

gives him the qualifications of leaders so they can get true leaders in the church to teach sound doctrine. After I and II Timothy comes Titus.

When you read Titus you feel like you have just read something similar in I Timothy and that it seems as if it is directly related to it. Why? Once Paul got out of prison and heard about what was happening at Ephesus, he found out that the same thing was happening at the churches in Crete. So he reaches for his second best disciple which is Titus who is a Gentile Christian that he had trained up on his own. He then gives Titus a handbook on what to do as he sends him on in his ministry. Titus 1:5 says *[5] This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—* In other words, they needed to get sound teachers and leaders. The church needs to get back in order, so Paul sends Titus back to revitalize the churches there. They also need sound doctrine.

Titus 2:1–10 says *[1] But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. [2] Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. [3] Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, [4] and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, [5] to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. [6] Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. [7] Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, [8] and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. [9] Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, [10] not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.*

Paul wants Titus to re-establish sound leaders and sound doctrines and then he goes through categories of how to do this using older men, younger men, older women and younger women. Then he goes to the difficult institution found in Rome of masters and slaves and how they should be and do. He teaches them sound doctrine through how they are to live which will show in a sound life. Four different times in this passage he puts a motivation of the Christian life. For instance, I obey Jesus for multiple reasons. I obey because I love Him. I love Him because He first loved me. I obey Him because I want a ministry that is effective and God likes to bless instruments that are presenting themselves to the Lord. There are all kinds of motivations in my personal life and I believe there are multiple motivations in your Christian life.

Here is one Paul uses where he says it four different time and in four different ways. Three of those ways are presented in a negative light. He wants people to have a sound life with sound doctrine so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ will **not be reviled** by the way you live. So that there **will be nothing evil** said about Jesus because of the way that we live. This one is a challenge for us because we're not perfect and we're all sinners saved by grace but despite all that we are to put a trajectory in our life that shows God's grace so that when others see your life you're not knowingly giving the enemy any ammunition to speak against Jesus because of decisions you make in life. We are also not to be argumentative.

Then he puts it in a positive way where we are to live in such a way that our life adorns the Gospel. Our life dresses up the Gospel to live in such a way in the public arena. What a motivation! I know the Gospel dresses me up to get me to heaven for the blood and righteousness of Jesus is my only dress. Those of us who are now dressed in the righteousness

of Jesus are now called out of gratefulness and commitment to Christ our Lord and Savior to dress up the Gospel with the way we live in the public arena.

Titus 2:11 then starts out ‘for the grace of God has appeared...’ and this is unique. It goes back to the illustration I have used before of know-be-do which is *know* who you are in Christ, *be* who you are in Christ and now you are ready to *do*. Paul always tells us who we are in Christ before he tells us what we do for Christ, lest you think what you do is what saves you. He makes sure that you understand that your salvation is through the work of Christ and not your work. What makes this unique in Titus 2 is that here he reverses it. In Titus 2:1–10 he tells us what sound doctrine and sound life is through imperatives and commands and then in verse 11 he circles back and says ‘now here is the foundation of that...’ Normally he would give you the foundation first and then the sound doctrine that leads to the sound life.

So how as I as an older man do this or a younger man or as an older woman or younger woman or as a master or slave? How can I live this sound life in Christ? Here is how you live it...for the grace of God has appeared. That connecting word *for* says that everything I have just told you is possible and achievable because the grace of God has appeared.

Titus 2:11–15 says [11] *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

[15] *Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.* This glorious song erupts. This song of the grace of God appeared.

There is one word that is repeated two times. It is the Greek word is *epiphaneia* and we get the word epiphany from this. In the classical Greek literature it would have been used to speak of the dawning of a day. I experience this each morning at my house for right behind my house is a mountain. I can see the rays as the sun begins to rise but there is nothing but shadows everywhere. Then the dawn as the sun rises. The sunburst hits and the shadows are dispelled. The grace of God has *epiphaneia*, it has burst forth and the prophecies are fulfilled. The types, shadows, precepts of God are now fulfilled and there in glory. The grace of God has appeared.

We see this in another text of Scripture and that is John 1:14 which says [14] *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* Christ has come. All is fulfilled in this Christ and everything is yes and amen forever. The grace of God has appeared. The Son of God has become flesh and dwelt among us. God’s plan with a purpose is achieved because of one Person who comes into this world. The Son of God becomes the Son of God and Son of Man in this world.

Appearing is repeated twice in this passage and on the first one we are looking back to the birth of Jesus, the One who was born to save us. In the second appearing we are looking to the coming of Jesus. So we have two epiphanies with one initiating our salvation and the second one consummates our salvation. The second appearing is the glory of God. Was the glory of God in the first appearance of Jesus? Yes but that was not the emphasis. The emphasis was the grace of God has appeared, where veiled in flesh we saw the glory of God. So it was a veiled glory of God, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Jesus comes to bring the work of grace. In other words, aren’t you glad this verse in Titus 2:11 doesn’t read, ‘for the wrath/judgment of God

appeared...'? He didn't come to bring judgment but He came in grace to bear our judgment and bring salvation to all kinds of men. The grace of God has appeared.

Now there is another coming. In that coming He will consummate His work of grace. In that coming it will be glory in both the consummation of grace and in the initiation of judgment upon all who are apart from Him for when He comes again it will be to bring judgment. So now that He has come we now anticipate His coming again when He consummates it.

There will be four blessings and this is what we will cover more in depth over the next four studies. So what are the three things that the grace of God brings? One is the grace of God appears bringing salvation to all men. Secondly, it trains us, instructs us, disciplines us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires as it sanctifies us. Notice that we don't train ourselves to get grace for God's grace gets us and trains us. Thirdly, the grace of God secures them for the second coming of Christ, waiting for the blessed Hope and the appearing of our great Savior, Christ Jesus. So we are headed toward the Incarnation and the Divine blessings of saving grace, sanctifying grace, securing grace and sending grace.

God sets us apart with His grace to belong to Him. We are in this world but we do not belong to this world. We belong to Him. This grace secures us and He is coming again for His own people, His own possession. Then Christ sends us. Titus, by God's grace you have been saved in Jesus, sanctified, secured and by God's grace you are sent. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."(Matthew 28:18-19a) Jesus says 'I send you into this world' for this is God's sending grace that He brings upon His people.

Here is the takeaway. The takeaway has to do with the moment when the grace of God appeared. "Come, let us go and see." In Luke 2 the shepherds are the ones who say this. They say 'Let's go see, the grace of God has appeared.' Luke 2:11-15 says *[10] And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. [11] For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. [12] And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." [13] And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, [14] "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" [15] When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."*

Most birth announcements are unto the dad and mom but this birth announcement was unto you. The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men and the shepherds say 'come let's go see.' I want to invite you to this Jesus today. Come and see the Savior. It is such a great blessing for me to be able to share with you that our God by His grace has sent His Son. That is the unrelenting, unstoppable, undeserved, glorious love of God has now been displayed and sent for you. It is not a proposition but a Person, His Son. John 3:16 says *[16] For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

He has come into this world and I can invite you to Him because I know that there is nothing else that will satisfy your soul. There is no possession, no position, no power in this world, there is nothing in this world that can satisfy your soul but Jesus not only can but He will. He will save you, sanctify you, set you apart as His own and He will secure you for now and all eternity and not lose one of you. He will even send you into this world. As He brings you to Himself He will use you and me to bring others. Come and see this saving grace. Come and see

this sanctifying grace. Come and see this securing grace. Come and see this sending grace. Come and see the One who has come for you to save you, Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the reason we have joy to the world. We have joy at Christmas. We have joy of Christmas. It is because our God who did not need us wanted us and we who did not want Him yet needed Him, this God gave His Son to save us. The grace of God has appeared for us so that we can have eternal life in Him. There is also His ascending grace. God's past grace has saved you. God's present grace is sanctifying you. God's future grace will secure you but now in this present age God is sending you.

Use this Christmas season to invite those who don't know Him to experience all the events we have going on at Christmas because they will hear the Gospel. Then take them to coffee afterwards and ask them what they thought about what they heard. Do you love people enough to tell them about Jesus? The same Jesus who came for you sends you to them to tell them about Him. He will do the same for them that He has done and is doing for you because He came into the world to save sinners. This is a great moment in life.

If you have never come to Christ please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for there are people who would love to pray with you or you can come and see me for I would be more than privileged to pray with you. This Advent season we are walking through God's saving, sanctifying, securing and sending grace.

I had the privilege to pastor in Charlotte, North Carolina and there was a mission agency there called Jungle Aviation and Radio Service which was an arm of Wycliffe Bible Translators. Many of the missionaries involved in this ministry came to the church I pastored at there at Christ Covenant so I would get to hear all kinds of missionary stories. I'd like to close with one of them for it was an interesting thing about a lady's father.

Her father had been saved, sanctified, being sanctified, secured and sent for he was a missionary for 40 plus years in Africa serving Jesus. He helped translate the Bible into a number of languages, set up a clinic and I don't know how many churches he planted and pastored while he was there. He buried his wife there. Then he got a terminal illness and wasn't able to take care of himself so they sent him back to his daughter who took care of him. A time came to where she went to her pastor and said 'My father is not a member of this church but he has served Jesus so faithfully in his life, so would you consider visiting my dad.'

So the pastor went to the hospital to visit her father and pulled up a chair to sit beside the bed. He shared and read Scripture and then prayed with him. The pastor said it was one of the most uplifting moments in his entire life. He said it was just beyond exhilarating by the time he left visiting with him and he told the daughter "I don't know if I blessed your dad or not but he sure blessed me."

As the pastor was getting ready to leave the hospital room he pulled the chair back to the wall and he noticed the chair on the other side of the bed so he went to pull that one back as well. The father then said to him 'No, don't pull that one back.' The pastor replied 'Why not?' The father said 'Well, I'm a man that faltered many times in my life and I just need help. I have met with Jesus almost every morning of my life and sometimes Jesus seems a little bit far away from me so whenever I meet with Jesus in my quiet time I always put a chair out for Him to remind me that He's here. There has never been more of a time in my life that I need to be reminded but through the valley of the shadow of death that He is with me so just leave the chair there. I need to know.'

The pastor received a phone call from the daughter who said 'Thank you for visiting my dad but I also wanted to let you know that he died last night.' The pastor said 'Oh I pray his

death was easy and triumphant as he went into the presence of the Lord.’ She said ‘Pastor, we don’t really know. He died during the night and was found the next morning by the nurses. So he went to be with the Lord while no one was there but I do want you to know one thing that will help you. When they found him he wasn’t in his bed for he was on his knees and his face was on the chair beside his bed.’ He was fixed on Jesus.

The grace of God has appeared – saving grace, sanctifying grace, securing grace, and sending grace. Go and tell them about Jesus saying ‘the grace of God has appeared.’ Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Let the Holy Spirit speak to your hearts in these few moments. Jesus we rejoice that we are Yours and You are ours. I would ask You again, dear kind Savior, to send Your Holy Spirit upon all who are reading this and any who have not yet come to Christ, may they who are seeking find their salvation by grace from Christ through Christ and they in this Christmas season might be able to stand up and rejoice. Joy to the world! We rejoice that our King has saved us and has come to save us. May the glorious dawning of the grace of God that has appeared go throughout all the world and may the shadows of man-made religion dissipate. And may the saving, sanctifying, securing, sending grace of Jesus be our joy in this world and to the world for I pray in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Power Point

TWO EPIPHANIES

Initiates • Consummates

LIFE TAKEAWAY

"Come, let us go and see"