

III. Advent in Biblical Perspective
The Divine Blessings of the Incarnation
“He Came to Sanctify Us”
Titus 2:11–15
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December 10, 2017 • Morning Sermon

This is our third of five studies this Advent Season in, what many believe in the early church was a song and confession that the Apostle Paul inspired by the Spirit wrote, focused upon the appearance of Christ in His Incarnation and the anticipation of His second coming and appearance in Titus 2:11–15. 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 this His Word by preached for you.

When I was kid around August my mother began singing this song around the house;
*School days, school days
Dear old Golden Rule days
'Reading and 'riting and 'rithmetic
Taught to the tune of the hick'ry stick.*

I remember that hickory stick being used three times on me in elementary school. This song also was sung by one of my principals as kids went into class in one of my elementary school. That ought to be a good warning.

So what does that have to do with today? In this study we’ve just found out that the grace of God has appeared and this marvelous word, epiphany, is in the text. Epiphany is the word used in the original language for the word appeared here in Titus 2:11. It is also the same word that is used for a sunrise where the shadows are dispelled and clarity comes through the light of the sunrise. That is the word picture that is used for the birth of Christ. The grace of God has appeared. It is looking back at the birth of Christ and that’s encompassed in passages like 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.*

Think of it this way. In the Old Testament there is prophecy after prophecy, precept after precept, narrative after narrative, symbol after symbol, type after type, tell us that God will save His people. Now that plan of God is fulfilled in God’s Son. So that the plan of God is achieved through the Person of Christ, the Son of God, for the purposes of God. What are the purposes of God? That is why Paul wrote this passage in Titus. The purpose of God in the Incarnation was to accomplish four things – to save us (saving grace), sanctify us (sanctifying grace), secure us (securing grace) and send us (sending grace).

He unfold this by saying in Titus 2:11–15, [11] *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people...(saving grace), [12] training us to renounce*

ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age...(sanctifying grace) [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...(securing grace) [15] Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you (sending grace).

He saves, sanctifies, secures and sends us by His grace so where are we right now? In our third study we have arrived at school days. When He saves you by His grace He enrolls you in the school of sanctifying grace. He brings salvation to all people instructing us or teaching us to deny ungodly and worldly desires and live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age. In other words, if He has brought to you the foundation of salvation He has now led you to the school of sanctification but it's not taught to the tune of a hickory stick. It is taught to the tune of amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. It is taught to the tune of the wonderful grace of Jesus that reaches the most defiled. He breaks the power of canceled sin and sets the prisoner free. It is taught with the glorious truth be of sin the double cure cleanse me from its guilt and its power.

So what are the Divine blessings of the Incarnation, the epiphany of Christ? He saves us, sanctifies us, secures us and sends us. So after He saves us He moves us into the school of education. He trains us as He sanctifies us. According to Titus 2:11 salvation has been brought to everyone and then according to the next verse He instructs us, those who have been saved. Some have a translation that says teach or train or discipline in place of instruct and all of those translations are accurate. I want to give you a couple of times this word is used in the Bible that maybe will help here.

God got Moses ready to lead His people out and one of the ways God did this was the Bible says Moses was 'trained' in the school and arts of the Egyptians by the education of the Egyptians. The same word is used here as in Titus. Another example is the Apostle Paul who we know was saved, sanctified, secured and sent. The Bible says that Paul was 'trained' in the school of Gamaliel. When God saves you He trains you up in His school of grace.

Do you remember your first day of school? You needed to get your books because you had a curriculum and that would determine the text books. God's curriculum in the school of sanctifying grace has two text books and they are given for you in this text of Scripture.

The first text book is that God's grace is instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires. It is the text book of denial. Deny is an interesting word. Here are three words that could be used in place of deny and all of them begin with an 'r'. Deny in the original can mean to reject, renounce or repudiate. This word is also used in the Gospel of Luke when Jesus tells His Disciples that they are all going to fall away from Him at the moment of trial. Peter says 'I'll not fall away.'

Then it says in Luke 22:31-34, [31] *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, [32] but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."* [33] *Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death."* [34] *Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you **deny** (reject, renounce, repudiate) three times that you know me."*

As you go on through the Gospel of Luke you will see how Peter does this with a soldier, a servant and a little girl/maidservant. Even at the end Peter announces a malediction against Christ. He says 'I don't know Him!' Peter rejects, renounces, and repudiates Christ. That is the

word that is being used here in Titus but we are learning in the school of grace that we don't repudiate Christ, but we learn to repudiate the things that repudiate Christ which are ungodliness and worldly desires.

So as we are enrolled in this school of grace God begins to teach us first to deny ungodliness. What is ungodliness? It is a lifestyle without reference to God. That doesn't mean from time to time you don't tip your hat to God but this is a settled way of life where you are glad to affirm God if and when you want to but in reality you are god in your life and you do what you want to do. You are choosing to live without reference to God, His Word, His Spirit and His glory. You live unto yourself. God has saved us from not only the penalty of sin but the power of sin and we can by the grace of God repudiate a lifestyle that repudiates God. Ungodliness is that way of life in which we affirm anything and everything before God because we are god in our life and that's exactly what sin is. It is the clinched fist before and against God.

I'm going to have to say this time and again lest we fall into a trap. This is not a school you go to, to get saved but this is the school that the saved are enrolled in. This is for those who have a new record because they are saved and now in this school we are getting a new life for that Savior. By His grace He is teaching us how to live out what He has done for us to save us. That hymn *Rock of Ages* says;

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.*

Now He is cleansing you from sin's power and practice in your life.

There is another hymn, *O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing* that says;
He breaks the power of canceled sin,
*He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.*

He has already cancelled the guilt and shame of our sin by His shed blood on the cross and His victorious atonement. So He breaks the power of sin in our life so that we can walk away from the practice of sin in our life. So here is this glorious work where we repudiate ungodliness. Our desire is for the Savior who is teaching us and growing us by His grace.

Paul says in Ephesians 4:1, *[1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.* Put off the old man and put on the new man. Deny ungodliness but then deny worldly desires. Worldly desires is the soil from which the lifestyle of ungodliness grows. I Peter 2:11 says *[11] Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.* So we not only deny the actions of ungodliness but we are to go to where it is rooted – in worldly desires.

What are worldly desires? They are God-given appetites and activities in this world that are to be used for His glory but worldly desires/passions are when we take those things that God has given us to enjoy for His glory and put them in the place of God. It could be food, drink, work, your family or sex. I Corinthians 10:31 says *[31] So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* All those things belong to the economy of this

world that God has given us to enjoy as we live for His glory but we decide not to so instead of enjoying them for the glory of God we put them in the place of God.

So instead of eating or drinking to live for God's glory we eat or drink to live for our own glory. There is the sacred gift of sexuality which God gives to initiate a marriage between a man and a woman to recreate and procreate and we say to God 'no' and we use it for our own gratification and satisfaction. All these things that God has given are amoral and there is nothing evil about them but instead of using them for the purpose to give glory to God we use them for ourselves. Why do you think our schedules are so busy? Do you think that is a design from God or is it because we worship our work? We don't do our work heartily as unto the Lord and all of a sudden we find we don't have enough to time to get everything in because that has become our life instead of the Lord. With all that God has given us with work, resources, finances, family, Biblical sexuality, food, drink, children etc., instead of being stewards over them as we enjoy them to the glory of God, we make them our life and that's world passions.

God, help me repudiate it, not manage it. Help me deny the soil of idolatry. Help me clean it out and put the roots nourished in Jesus. We repudiate these worldly desires and ungodliness for our Savior, not for salvation but now God gives us another text book and this is text book number two. Text book number two is how we are to live after we put off and put on. So here is how you live.

Text book number two is we are to embrace and engage this new life by living self-controlled/sensible lives, upright/righteous lives and Godly lives. Many of us try to put on before we put off. For instance let's say as you got up this morning you put your clothes on over your pajamas and if you did that you would be uncomfortable because you don't put on until you put off and then you're ready to put on.

I love the New American Standard translation here that used the word sensible. I can't tell you the number of times I have met with a broken-hearted person whose spouse has walked away from the marriage and broken the marriage vows. That person in my office says to me 'Can you explain why my spouse left?' and I always respond this way, 'I will give you the contributing factors but I cannot give you the reasons because there is nothing reasonable about it. Sin is never rational.' Sin is never sensible and it always brings death, despair and disappointment.

Here is a hypothetical example for me to make a point on this. If tomorrow there was no Jesus and no salvation then I promise you that I would want to live the way I am living today. I don't want to go back to the way I lived in ungodliness and worldly passions. I just wish I was leaving more of it now because in that life everything that was promised to me from the world was despair, disappointment and nothing. If I only live for the worldly passions and a life without reference to God as if it is all about me, it will only bring me to vanity, emptiness and nothing but then I came to know Jesus and there was no condemnation. He paid for it. There were no charges for He had eradicated them. Not only had He given me a new record and a new heart He started giving me a new life.

I am still in that school of my Savior's grace and I will not get my diploma until I go to be with Him. As He is teaching me to repudiate ungodliness and worldly desires I then begin to embrace the way I ought to live for Him. When the text says for us to live self-controlled lives it doesn't mean that you have the power to control for self is not the source of control but self is the object of control. Grace is what controls. Grace is greater than our sin and because that grace through the power of the Spirit of God is at work in our life, now we come under the control of grace, surrendered to the Spirit of God.

What is sin? Sin is the want or conformity unto or transgression of the law of God. So what is the opposite of sin? Righteous is the opposite of sin. So righteousness would be embracing God's law. Again, this is not to be saved because you can't be saved by the power of the works of the law but we embrace God's law because now we love Him who first loved us. Here is how you love the Lord. You love Him with all your heart, soul and mind and this is how you love those made in His image. So we are to walk uprightly.

Here is a Biblical illustration on this. There was a man who was totally committed to worldly passions, self-glory and ungodliness and his name was Nebuchadnezzar. In Daniel 4 God consigned him to what is known in psychology, boanthropy and it means living like an animal which is where sin brings you. So instead of living upright for seven years he was on all fours with his face to the ground looking and acting like an animal. Then he says in Daniel 4:34–37, *[34] At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and **my reason returned to me**, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; [35] all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"*

*[36] At the same time **my reason returned to me**, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me.³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.*

The Lord allows us to increasingly growing in grace to keep standing more upright. We are never going to be sinless but we can sin less. As you embrace the uprightness you begin to look up instead of down because you are looking up at the One who has come down to save you so that you live sensibly and righteously. Now we have come full circle. So by God's grace He has saved us and enrolled us in the school of grace so we repudiate the way we lived that repudiated God.

We say 'no' to ungodliness and to the soil of ungodliness that is worldly desires and now we begin to live sensibly, self-controlled by the power of the Spirit of God, righteously by God's Word which are guiding us as they light a lamp for our path and that leads us to an increasingly Godly life. Now you have gone from ungodliness to Godly, repudiating God to repudiating sin as you are embracing and growing in God's grace so that now we are more and more like the Savior who saved us. As we live Godly lives we are reflecting Him in this world. I want to stay in that school and learn from it.

To profit from the school of grace you have to stay in what our forbearers call the means of grace. You need to be in God's Word. You need to spend time in prayer every day. Before I get out of bed in the morning I say two things to the Lord. I say 'God, thank You for saving me and help me kill that old man today.' I want to repudiate that old man. I don't want it to be about me but I want it to be about Him. Then get into God's Word personally. I'm not saying this to secure my job, I'm just saying through the foolishness of the message preached we are being saved. Prioritize the preaching of God's Word, time in His Word, prayer and worship. Worship is where God incubates us and develops us from our infancy in Christ and begins to mature us in the school of grace from the elementary to the mature. The sacraments are also a part of the means of grace – the Lord's Supper. All of these things that God has granted to us embrace them.

Do you have enough time for that? Is there something else that is more important? I would really like to know what is more important than those means of grace, and absorbing all the lessons in the school of grace. The last thing I want to leave you with is the takeaway from this study.

The takeaway is the grace of God in Christ not only brings salvation to us, but also enrolls us in the school of sanctification. Do you believe that God's grace efficiently and sufficiently saves you from all of your sins? Do you believe that same grace has enrolled you in the school of sanctification? If there is no evidence or interest in the latter, then there is no hope for the former. The grace of God has appeared saving us, sanctifying us, securing us and sending us and this is not an a la carte menu. You can't say 'I'll taking saving but I'm not going to enroll in sanctifying.' Those whom He saves He enrolls and if there is no evidence or interest of sanctifying grace then there is no reason for you to hope that you have saving grace or securing grace. Again, sanctifying grace doesn't save you but the same grace that saves enrolls in the school of sanctification.

For many of us, myself included, I watch certain things on TV to some degree. One is Fixer Upper. God is not simply by His grace in you and me, doing an extreme makeover for He is doing an extreme takeover. Now He lives within us and has taken up residence. He is your King. The second show I currently watch with my wife Sunday night after church while we eat popcorn, is the show Crown. I took European history in school and the kings and queens of England have multiple palaces. The Crown lets you know they send word ahead when they are coming and for a solid week before it is thoroughly made ready for the crown.

I'm going to borrow from C.S. Lewis here. Many of us think when Jesus saves us that He is going to redo us into a nice, warm bungalow or cottage for us to live until we go to be with Him. Wrong! He is demolishing that cottage and you are becoming a palace for the King. He is cleaning you out, repudiating ungodliness and worldly desires and He is placing stone upon stone so that He makes you appear in this world as one whom He has saved by His grace. And He is growing you in that grace to His glory.

School days, school days, Dear old Golden Rule days, grace filled days, sin disappearing days, Christ exalting days, taught to the tune of amazing grace how sweet the sound. Let's pray.

Prayer:

The most important decision in your life is what do I do and Christmas demands a verdict. Jesus would not have come to save sinners if we could save ourselves. This day will you acknowledge that you are sinner, helpless and hopeless? Would you come to that Savior? He brought salvation to you. He cleanses you from sin's guilt and He eradicates sin's power. Then He sends you to the school of grace to begin to erase sin's practice as you then embrace God's glory in all of life. Instead of the emptiness of the false promises sin, come the fullness of the promises of God that are 'yes' and 'amen' in Christ. If you would like to pray with someone personally please contact us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we'd be happy to pray with you. Right now speak to your Lord, coming to Him as Savior and thanking Him that He has enrolled you in the school of sanctifying grace. He is the One who gave Himself for us to redeem us and to purify us, a people for His own possession, living in us, the King for you are His palace. O God, thank You so much for the grace of the Lord Jesus. They were waiting for it on that day and we rejoice that He has come. Now we wait while rejoicing, come again Lord Jesus, Amen!

Power Point

CURRICULUM IN GOD'S SCHOOL OF GRACE

Text Book #1:

To Deny

- Ungodliness
- Worldly Passions

Text Book #2

To Live

- Self-controlled/Sensibly
- Upright/Righteously
- Godly

LIFE TAKEAWAY

The Grace of God in Christ not only brings salvation to us, but also enrolls us in the school of sanctification...

If there is no evidence or interest in the latter, then there is no hope for the former.