

IV. Advent in Biblical Perspective
The Divine Blessings of the Incarnation
“The Grace of God Has Appeared—To Secure Us”
Titus 2:11–15
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Titus 2 is our text for the Advent series. This is our fourth study in the Divine blessings of the Incarnation wrapped up in this confessional song of the Apostle Paul that he gives to Titus in his ministry in Crete. 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, (1) bringing salvation for all people, [12] (2) training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] (3) 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 be preached for you.

I am going to make a confession. I read six books at a time. I know that sounds very weird but I started that a long time ago and I just keep doing it. Also there are three places that I beat Cindy, my wife. My wife would say those are not places but nests because of the way the books are all piled up in three different places in my house. That is where I do my reading. There are some books of some literary genre that if I like the first chapter a lot I will skip to the back and read the last chapter, then I’ll go back and read the rest of it. I know you’re not supposed to do that but I do that periodically.

This is exactly what God has done for us. He not only prophesied, promised and communicated to us all of His majestic work in saving us in chapter 1 but He skipped to the last chapter and tells us how it ends. The way it ends is, the best is yet to come. That’s what He has done in this song of Paul. I think this is very important for a number of reasons but I will give you two reasons.

One reason I think this is important is because when you get a work of God in general in the Incarnation which is the appearance of Christ in particular, the inclination is human speculation. Here in Titus 2 we have the song, the epiphany, the outshining of Christ where the grace of God has appeared. Here the word appeared is the epiphany or shone forth brightly. After He says this He then explains it to us and then tells us that it will appear again as we wait for the blessed hope. The first chapter is He comes as a Redeemer, then He writes the chapters of His redeeming work in your life and then it comes to a consummation with the last chapter when He is coming again.

That is important because when you hear the first chapter it evokes and moves us to make an inquiry and starts speculation. For instance, what is the first song, the epiphany song of Christmas, the Incarnation? It is the song of the angels from Luke 2. Luke 2:10–15 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.**”*

What did the shepherds say when they heard that song? They said ‘Let’s go see.’ When humans inquire they begin to speculate. So here is the Incarnation and the immediate response that is evoked which is human speculation and this inevitably leads to human imagination which will lead to human distortion of the Incarnation. God says He will prevent you from speculation and distortion for He is going to give you the Divine explanation through Divine revelation.

Praise God decades later another song of Christmas is written for us in Titus 2:11–14. It not only announces what the angels announce to the shepherds but it wipes out any need of speculation and imagination through Divine revelation that gives us the explanation for He appeared to bring salvation – to train us to renounce ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age and waiting for another appearance of our great God and Savior. So I’d like to connect the dots here.

Here has given us four blessings of the Incarnation, revealed them and explained them to us. The first blessing is the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation. This work of salvation saves us from something to Someone through Someone by something. He has saved us from our sins to Himself by His grace through Jesus so that we might have everlasting life. It is a salvation sufficient to be proclaimed to all the people and efficient so that none of His people are never lost. We learned that the grace of God in Christ brings salvation to us and also brings us to that Savior. John 1:14 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.* He has come to save His people from their sins.

Jesus delights to do the will of His Father and He says in John 6:39, [39] *And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.* So here is this glorious promise that He has come to bring salvation for His people from all the peoples of the world. It is also to be proclaimed to the world and then He goes to bring His people to Himself. That grace that saves us is the grace that brings us to the Savior. Ephesians 2:8–9 says [8] *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; **it is the gift of God,** [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

That faith unites you to Christ. You to Christ and Christ to you was a gift of grace from Him to you. He didn’t stop there for He has given you a new heart but He has delivered you from the power of sin. He has given you a new record for He has erased all of the penalty of sin and given you His perfect righteousness so that you are clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

That same grace then enrolls you in the school of sanctification which is Divine blessing number two. This is sanctifying grace where in Christ we now have a new life. This is where Christ trains, teaches and disciplines us but this word train that is used in Titus 2:12 means tutoring. As He tutors us in this school of sanctification there are two text books that He uses. Text book number one is to repudiate sin. Here we are renouncing ungodliness which is rebellion against God and worldly desires which is the soil it grows from. Text book number two is put off the old man and put on the new. Here is where we embrace living sensibly according to God’s Word and His Spirit, righteously, doing the next right thing for the right reason at the right time for the right purpose and Godly.

When I falter I thank God for His grace for He stays the course with me and keeps me enrolled in the school of sanctification. He sanctifying grace sets me apart. So if there is no interest in latter (sanctifying grace at work on you and in you) then there is no reason to suspect that you have the former, that you have been saved because the same grace that saves is the same grace that sanctifies you. So that leads us to the Divine blessing number three.

Titus 2:13–14 says [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.* God's grace will appear again in Christ to secure us for Himself and He assures you that He is coming back for you. So we are waiting for His return. So there is not only a first appearance, epiphany, but there will be a second appearance, epiphany. Why? Those whom He begins a good work in, He will complete (Philippians 1:6) and all whom the Father has given Him, He loses not one. That is securing grace.

Someone asked me one time if I believed 'once saved always saved' and I believe once God saves were always saved. Once God saves you He enrolls you in sanctifying grace and once enrolled He secures you. He brings you to be with Him for all of eternity to the praise and glory of His Name.

Romans 8:28–31 says [28] *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. [29] For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30] And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

[31] *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

In other words, in eternity past when He decrees His love to seek you out through the saving grace of Jesus Christ, in time He calls you and justifies you and in eternity future He comes again to secure you. Notice you have the same *Whom* at foreknowing, predestinating, calling, justifying, and glorifying. There is an unbreakable chain for the *Whom* here is the *Whom* at the end. His saving grace leads to a sanctifying grace and it is assured to be completed in a securing grace. Those whom God saves can't be lost!

I can't tell you how glad I am because if I could lose my salvation I would lose my salvation and so would you because you wouldn't have taken it to start with unless He has brought you and you wouldn't stay with Him unless He keeps you. It can't begin with you and it won't end with you. It begins with Him and ends with Him and you get the benefits and that's what God does for us in His Son Jesus Christ. That securing He gives us includes Him coming again for us.

I just love the intricate consistency of God's Word and how beautiful it is. His grace appears in the epiphany, Incarnation bringing salvation and then He brings you to Himself. He works on you and will keep working on you until He brings it to a consummation when He comes again for you. Our great God and Savior Christ Jesus will also appear the second time. He came the first time to give Himself for you, save, redeem, purify and sanctify you. All of God's wrath that was due to us for every one of our lawless deeds was sent to Him willingly and He paid for it. Then He will come again to bring us to be with Him. When He came there was no room for the Savior but He has now come and made room for you as He has gone away to prepare this room for you. When He came there was no place for Him but He came and took our place for us to ascend in victory to make a place for us.

Ladies, I know men carry coupons too but I don't have near the number of coupons that my wife has. I love when the purchase is rung up and the coupon goes down – buy it back. That's what Jesus did. He went to the cross and redeemed us – bought us back. From sin's penalty He gives us a new record, from sin's power He gives us a new heart, from sin's practice He gives us a new life and even from sin's presence He is coming again to give us a new home and that is what He has come to do in saving, sanctifying, and securing grace.

So who are those whom He saves? Who are those whom He sanctifies? They belong to Christ and Christ belongs to them and they are stamped with the marks of His ownership. They are a people for His possession. Father, I am coming again for My own. I am theirs and they are Mine. Their foundation is My salvation and their life is my transformation. These who used to be zealous for sin are now zealous for good deeds. When they falter they don't do the good they would do and they flee to Me and I forgive, cleanse and put them back on track. And I'm coming to finish the job and bring them to be with Myself for all of eternity. In the first Advent He planted His people and cultivated them. In the second Advent He will harvest His people.

So our takeaway is the grace of God that appeared in Christ to save us (past grace) to sanctify His present grace but the grace of God will inevitably appear again when Christ returns to secure us which is future grace and the best is yet to come. At the cross which is past tense He saved us. He did not make salvation possible. He came to save His people from their sins. He saved us. He didn't make us savable, He saved us. Then He brought us to Himself and now He is making us more like Him in this present age through present grace but the best is yet to come because He is coming again.

During the Christmas season I think a lot of my family. I think of my grandfather so much. We would go to Augusta, Georgia to be with grandmother and grandfather at Thanksgiving and they would come to our place at Christmas. Then during summers I would spend half that time with my grandparents. Whenever I left my grandparents my granddaddy would always say one thing to me and I even had it made into a pin. It was KLU which meant 'Keep Looking Up.' If you don't learn to do that you will have a wreck every time you drive because when you look down at the lines you'll eventually wreck. Whoever would teach you to drive would say 'Quit looking down and look out there. Look ahead because that is how you stay in the lines and on the road.'

That is the way you stay on the Christian life. You look up. Do you see God's wonderful gift? I need to engage in the Christian life because I'm saved and not to be saved therefore I thank God He wrote the first chapter where He told me that Jesus has saved me at the cross. So, I don't live my life to be saved, but I live it because I'm saved. My foundation is Christ in His first epiphany and that's Christmas for me but there is a second epiphany and that's the capstone. And I need to keep looking up for His coming for me to stay on mission, on message and in ministry.

I not only need to know that it doesn't depend on how well you live but it depended on Jesus and that's why you live well. To keep living well I need to keep looking up for Christ and that is absolutely crucial. I can't live the Christian life unless I understand my foundation of salvation is sure in Christ and it's not in me but in Him. I will get off course because Satan will deceive me with the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life if I don't keep looking to the finish line. There's my crown and there's my Savior. He is coming to give it to me. That keeps me on track that the best is yet to come.

When Jesus came the first time what was everybody doing before He appeared? Zachariah, Elizabeth, Wise Men, shepherds, Mary, Simeon, Anna – before Jesus came into this

world they were all waiting but it wasn't a waiting of passivity. It was a waiting of activity. I can't tell you how many times I have read through all these accounts around the birth of Christ because of having to come up with a different series every Advent season. Then it just struck me as I was going through this song of Paul's of the Incarnation of Christ and the promised return of Christ here in Titus that he says 'waiting for the blessed Hope.'

All these people were waiting, anticipating and looking for the first Hope, the Messiah when He came but they weren't waiting in passivity. Simeon and Anna had a job at the temple every single day. So it was a waiting of working, worshipping and witnessing. Go read all the accounts of these people. All of them have jobs to do for the Lord. They are all worshipping. The Wise Men had been looking for that star all over the place all these years. After worshipping they witnessed for they went back a different way. They confessed Christ. So in the account of all these narratives about these people they are waiting, working, worshipping and witnessing.

So what should you and I be doing in anticipation of the second coming? I'm waiting but not passive for I have a job to do which is the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. I'm not just waiting but I am hastening the coming of the Lord. We are to be worshipping and we are to be witnessing until He comes again.

Years ago I went to a conference and I believe someone told me it was a Bill Gothard conference but when I left I left with a pin and the pin said 'PBPWMGINFY.' It stood for 'Please Be Patient With Me God Is Not Finished Yet.' So He has come to save me (past grace), He is sanctifying me with present grace, He is coming again to secure me (future grace) and when He comes again He will finish the job on me. When is He coming? It will be when He finishes His work of grace in the lives of His people. What is He doing in their life? They are waiting for Him. They are like the virgins who are looking for the Bridegroom to come. The lamps are lit but yet they know the best is yet to come.

I love being a Christian but the best has not yet come. He who came the first time came to save you and sanctify you. He is coming again to secure you. The same Jesus who came the first time is coming again and the best is yet to come! If that is true, then why don't more preachers preach on heaven and hell to warn you of the worst yet to come? This is why I never use the phrase 'hell on earth.' Hell has only been here one time and that was at the cross. There have been a lot of consequences to sin but there hasn't been any hell on earth except on that cross when Jesus swallowed it up for His people. There is a hell to shun and a heaven to gain and it is the best of all. Oh the glory of that day when He comes because that is where the best is yet to come.

This time of year when I look around my heart breaks because we're in a world that wants to keep Christmas but we want a secular Christmas. What is that? A secular Christmas is an attempt to celebrate Christmas without Jesus. People want to celebrate the Incarnation and the epiphany but they want to leave Jesus out of it. That doesn't work. Therefore they think they are going to have the Christmas party that will make their life. When I buy this gift for someone my life will be filled up or when I get this certain gift it will make my life. It has to do with the party or the experience which is all this human mythology.

Christmas is not a call to a man-made religion of renovation, self-promotion and self-improvement. Christmas is a proclamation that God has sent His Son and His Son has come saving, sanctifying and securing His people and this Jesus is coming again. Therefore those who say they are going to have a secular Christmas it is always empty. As soon as Christmas day comes and the box is empty then the life is empty. When the party is over then the head is

empty. It's always empty. Then they think the problem was that they started too late to celebrate or that they didn't spend enough money on the gifts. So they want more celebration and more gifts without Christ and then it will be meaningful. All it does is get emptier and emptier.

I want you to help me tell them that there is a gift that will give you hope. It's Jesus, God's gift. He gave Himself on that cross to redeem you and purify you. There is an experience and that is that you can be born again. There is a blessed Hope, an enduring Hope at Christmas where we get to play it back every year. It is not a secular Christmas but a sacred Christmas. It says because of the Advent, epiphany and Incarnation of Christ we are saved with a foundation that is unshakeable. We're being sanctified with the relentless love of God that is unstoppable and we are secured because He is coming again. He has marked His people out for He going to come and bring them to Himself. There is no emptiness there. There is nothing but an assured Hope for all eternity and you can have that gift, that Savior.

Now there's a Christmas! Not a day is empty because for us it's just Christmas again. It never stops and yet the best is yet to come. How do I know it hasn't come yet? It is because I get too many cancer patients to pray for. I get too many funerals to do. I get too many for counseling trying to help a marriage stay together instead of disintegrating. I hear too much blasphemy. I see too much discrimination. I know it is good what has come and it is unstoppable what has come but the best is yet to come and it comes when He comes. He comes with a shout of the archangel. He comes with the trumpet of God.

The trumpet of God will sound and the voice of the archangel will be heard and every eye shall see Him. He shall come. When He comes time surrenders. Heaven and earth pass away and a new heavens and a new earth comes. Eternity will envelope us forever and ever. I will get to see my granddaddy and grandmother again. I will get to see my sister, my dad and my mom again. I now have two of my mentors singing the songs of glory with the seraphim and the saints. I will get to see Dr. Boyce and Dr. Sproul again but most of all I get to see Jesus forever and ever. Shout archangel! Blow that trumpet, Gabriel! Come Lord Jesus! Let's pray.

Prayer:

He has not yet come and that is because He is still saying to you 'Come to Me and I will give you salvation full and free.' My dear friend, come to Jesus today. Perhaps today you know Jesus and you realize He saved you, is sanctifying you but you want to keep your eyes on Him all the more waiting while you work, worship and witness. If you would like to pray with someone please contact us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200. We are here to be with you but Jesus is ready to hear you. Say 'Jesus, I come for nothing in my hands I bring. I come to You who breaks the power of canceled sin. I come to You who is the double cure for my sin. You have cleansed me from its guilt and power.' Those of you who know Him keep looking up. Fix your eyes on Jesus. There's a wreath to be given. There's a crown to be conveyed so that you can use that to bring praise to Him who came for you and is coming again to bring you to be with Himself. Come quickly Lord Jesus, Amen.

Power Point

SAVING – SANCTIFYING – SECURING – SENDING

Divine Blessing #1: Saving Grace in Christ – New Record and New Heart

The Grace of God in Christ that brings salvation to us also brings us to the Savior.

Divine Blessing #2: Sanctifying Grace in Christ – New Life

The Grace of God in Christ not only brings salvation to us, but also enrolls us in the school of sanctification. If no evidence or interest in the latter, then there is no hope for the former.

Divine Blessing #3: Securing Grace in Christ – New Home

The Grace of God that appeared in Christ to save us and sanctify us will appear again in Christ to secure us who are waiting by worshipping, working and witnessing for Him.

LIFE TAKEAWAY

The Grace of God appeared in Christ...

To save us (Past Grace);

To sanctify us (Present Grace);

Will inevitably appear again when Christ returns

To secure us (Future Grace)

Waiting – Working – Worshipping – Witnessing

P B P W M G I N F Y