

V. Advent in Biblical Perspective
The Divine Blessings of the Incarnation
“The Grace of God Has Appeared—To Send Us”
Titus 2:11–15
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
December 24, 2017 • Morning Sermon

Titus 2 is our text for the Advent series. This is our last study of five studies in Titus 2:11–15 which is a song/confession of Christmas written by the Apostle Paul to Titus. 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 be preached for you.

When the new heavens and the new earth come, and all of those who have put their trust in Christ will be with Him forever, there are at least two things that you do now that you will not do when you are in the new heavens and the new earth. So do you know what those two things are? When we get to the end of this study I will see if your answer and my answer matches.

Perhaps some of you today are seeking and have become aware that you’re not right with God and want to be right with God. God has solved for you what is for you an unsolvable issue, which is how a man can be right with God. When there was no way for a man to be right with God, God made a way and that is through His Son, Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. What a glorious time when we celebrate the birth of Christ, even at Christmas, you can be born again.

We will get to the two things as we work our way through for the last time Paul’s song/confession of Christmas which we have been studying this entire Advent season. This is important because Paul is answering why God sent His Son into this world. There are multiple passages of Scripture that we could look at to answer this. One passage says the Savior appeared to put to death the works of the devil (I John 3:8). The Bible says the Savior appeared to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). It says that Jesus came to put to death, death itself and all of His enemies (I Corinthians 15). He came bringing salvation to all men (I Timothy 2:4).

Paul puts it together in this glorious way which I deeply appreciate because of a reason and here is that reason. All the great acts of God invite human inquiry and evoke human curiosity. The Incarnation is no different. The Incarnation, the glorious truth that God’s Son humbled Himself not by subtracting deity but by laying aside the privileges of deity and humbling by addition by taking upon Himself humanity to take our place that He might make us a place in heaven when He takes our place in this world on that cross to pay for our sins. And this is the glorious truth of salvation of which we praise the Lord. This is beautifully summed up in Titus 2:11–15 of why He has come into this world.

Human curiosity evokes human speculation. The wise men wondered. Herod wanted to know. Joseph wanted to know. Mary, Simeon, Anna, and the shepherds wanted to know. In fact, when the angels told the shepherds they responded by saying 'let's go see these things.' This evoked human curiosity which lead to human speculation and then comes human imagination. When human imagination comes then you get human distortion but God says 'I'll tell you why' so instead of speculation we get Divine revelation. God tells us why His Son has come into the world and God gives us Divine revelation by Divine explanation. What is the Divine explanation? 'For the grace of God has appeared in Christ.' The Word has become flesh in Christ. 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.*

The grace of God has appeared for three reasons. One it is bringing us salvation. Two it trains us to deny ungodliness and worldly passions and thirdly to live sensibly, righteously and Godly in this present age as we wait for the blessed Hope. Those are the three Divine blessings that we have covered in this Advent study.

Divine blessing number one is the saving grace of Christ. Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners. When we talk about saving we are saving from, to, by and through. Jesus saves us *from* the penalty (guilt) and power of sin. He gives us a new record where He erases our sin and He puts in place His righteousness. He gives us a new heart. II Corinthians 5:17 says *[17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* Jesus has cancelled the reigning power of sin in the lives of His people. He saves us *from* our sins *to* Himself *by* His grace and *through* Himself. Only Jesus can do this.

Some have a hard time believing that the only One who can save is Jesus and that's because God has only one Son. And it took the Son of God to save sinners. 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.* John 14:6 says *[6] Jesus said to him (Thomas), "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* This is the glorious grace of salvation.

Divine blessing number two is sanctifying grace in Christ and this is the same grace that brings us to salvation. This sanctifying grace trains us. In Titus 2:12 there are multiple translations for the word train. It can be translated instruct, discipline, teach or even tutoring. Text book number one as we are enrolled in the school of sanctification is that He trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly desires. The same grace that saves us trains us and sets us apart. Text book number two tells us what we are to embrace and that is we are to live self-controlled, upright and Godly lives. God puts us in this progressive, transforming grace where He is growing us in His grace and knowledge.

If there is no interest or evidence in the latter (fruit/sanctification), then there is no hope for the former (salvation). If there is no fruit there is no root. If there is no change, not perfection, there is no such thing as the root in Christ and the fruit not coming from Christ. If one has salvation there will always be fruit. If there is a root there will be a shoot and the shoot will bear the fruit that shows the root. That is what will happen in the life of a believer. Saved people are not sinless but they do desire to sin less and the power of sin has been broken in their life. They want to grow in grace and that's why they are always fleeing to Christ, not by their efforts but by His grace through them and in them as they work out what He works in.

Divine blessing number three is the securing grace in Christ as we wait for the blessed Hope by worshipping, working and witness for Him. This is not on the basis on how we perform

but on the basis of what Jesus has done. We are waiting on the second appearing of our Christ in which He comes to bring to Himself all of those who are marked by Him. The wrath of God due us was satisfied on the cross when Jesus died. He took our place that He might bring us to His place. He redeemed us when He bought us and we were marked out. Then He fills us with His Spirit and we become His. He is ours and we are His, a people for His own possession.

What do these people look like? They are zealous, energetic and eager for good deeds, not to be saved but to give as worship to their Savior. So the grace that comes from God is a saving grace, sanctifying grace and a securing grace. So in this last study for the Advent Season we see that it is a sending grace as well. So let's look at this text in Titus.

Titus finds himself in Crete because Paul sent him there. Paul sent him there because the churches were in disorder through bad leaders and bad teachers. So Paul sends Titus there to give good leadership and good teaching. You can't have a sound life without sound teaching. After your commitment to Jesus Christ, the most important decision you'll make in your life is what kind of preaching and teaching you listen to. That brings fear and intimidation to me as a preacher but we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ through the primary means of preaching and teaching. This is not the only means. This is why Paul says I came to preach not to baptize but he wasn't saying that baptism wasn't important, it's just that all these means are downstream from the Word of God for the preaching of the Word of God is crucial in our life.

Titus 2:15 says [15] *Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.* He is sending Titus to do these things. He wants him to declare sound doctrine, a Christ-centered, God-glorifying, Spirit-filled, Gospel saturated, Gospel message day after day after day. Every time you open the Word of God the Father should be glorified with the Spirit preeminent and there should be a saturation in every message of the glorious Good News. Tell them how this effects their marriage, their life, their conduct and the church as it moves into the community. Keep telling them these things.

Now when you speak these things there will also be bad news. The Good News is good news because of the bad news. If you have ever bought or went to look at a diamond, the person showing you the diamond always presented it to you on black velvet so that you could see its beauty. The beauty of the Good News is amazing, astonishing, glorious, marvelous and wonderful when you see the backdrop of the bad news. I'm not sin sick, I'm sin dead. I don't need just a help up but I'm helpless. I am hopeless. I can't save myself. No other man or man-made religion can save me. I need a Savior.

A man said to me one time 'Harry, you Christians are people who just need a crutch in life, don't you?' I said 'No, you have us all wrong friend. We don't need a crutch in life but a whole life support system. I can't live without it. For to me to live is Christ. He is my life! Without Him I have nothing, I am nothing and I can do nothing but with Him I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.' So we bring the bad news and then we bring the Good News and that is that there is a Savior who is Christ the Lord who has come. He saves us, sanctifies us, secures us and He is coming again for all of His own. Now I have been sent to ask you 'Are you His own?' I have been sent to offer to you that today you can be His and He can be yours.

So he wants us to declare or speak these things, the Good News of salvation and then gives five statements about our speaking/declaring. So the first one is that we declare/speak the things of God and here are the four 'c's' on how to speak it to others. One is we are to speak with clarity. We are not to mumble or stumble but we are to be clear with the bad news and the good news of the Gospel. Two we are to be compassionate for many reasons. One is they are undone in their sins if they haven't yet come to Christ. Three is we need to be courageous and

fourthly is to speak with humble conviction because we are who we are only by the grace of God.

Number two we are to exhort people. In other words, challenge, urge, encourage people to Christ. When I share the Gospel with others I pray for me and them, plead with passion and I then I try to persuade with clarity, conviction, courage and compassion.

Thirdly, you want to rebuke that which is contrary to these things. It is very important that you leave no false religion unchallenged that people may put their trust in. You can do this in a variety of ways but I love to do it with questions. We must speak the truth but we must expose that which is leading people to error. What if someone believes something with sincerity? Sincerity doesn't save you. You can sincerely believe the wrong thing but it's still the wrong thing. If I get on an airplane and I decide to open a door once we're in the air sincerely believing I'm a bird I can tell you that I will not fly once I jump out. I can believe that the NBA will sign me up to be a 7 feet 4 inch center but once you put the measuring stick to me it won't measure that. The fact is that there is something objectively true although we live in a world that will tell you there is no objective truth but is that objectively true? And who told you there was no objective truth? There is a God in glory and He has said this is the truth, the way and the life and the biggest decision you will ever make in your life is whether Jesus is crazy, a liar or Lord.

Fourthly, let know one disregard you. If He tells us this then that means we need to expect that people will disregard you and He is telling us this for a purpose. A better translation of disregard would be despise. Why will they despise you? They will despise you because they despise the message. When they despise the message, one of the ways to communicate the despising of the message is to despise/disregard the messenger. They will marginalize, mock and ridicule them. Let no one do that to you. So how do you do that? You don't do it in anger but in the confidence of the Lord keep speaking clearly, convincingly, compassionately and courageously. Why would they despise it? All the religions of this world have one thing in common and that is they tell you what you ought to do or give to maybe get heaven but Christianity says it's not what you do or give but you do and give because heaven has come down to do for you what you could not do for yourself. We give and do not to get saved but because we're saved. We're saved because of what God has done for us. Here is the Divinely revealed truth that God has come down to save you.

So, why would this glorious message be despised? Here are three reasons. One it's despised because no one wants to be told they need a Savior. Two no one wants to be told they can't save themselves or that their religion can't save them. Thirdly, no one wants to be told that there is only One who can save you, and will surely save you. Unless the Holy Spirit is working with someone, they will despise the message and disregard it and when they do that they will do the same to the messenger. Don't let them do it. Don't be angry, be gracious and keep speaking the truth in love. The amazing thing is they can't love the message without the work of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit works through you when you share the message even if they don't want to hear the message.

Fifthly, do it with all authority. You have an authoritative message and you are an authoritative messenger. You are an ambassador of Christ. Matthew 28:18-20 says [18] *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* [19] *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* Go with all authority. If someone has authority and true power they don't have to prove it. They don't trash talk, strut or taunt. They

don't have to. They are gracious and thoughtful in their authority because their strength is not in themselves and they don't have to prove themselves. So where does this lead us?

It leads us to our last takeaway for this Advent series. The takeaway is the grace of God that appeared in Christ not only saves us (past grace), sanctifies us (present grace), secures us (future grace) but also sends us as Heralds of grace until He appears again. Proclaiming the grace of God until He comes again is our new vocation. He sends us and that is our responsibility.

Here is where I'd like us to focus. This past year we looked at the matter of revival and one of the evidences of revival in the heart and life of a church and an individual is a desire to share the Gospel with other people. The Lord of the harvest is the Holy Spirit. The owner of the harvest is Jesus and there is no problem with the harvest. That is why we pray for workers to go into the harvest. The harvest is secured by the owner and the Lord of the harvest but now we ask the Spirit to send us into the harvest as workers to share the Gospel of grace until Jesus comes again. What is missing is that we're not showing up to do it.

I was doing some research in anticipation for next year's theme which is LEAD and that stands for Lifestyle of Evangelism And Discipleship. We are asking God to give us a way of life of evangelism and discipleship. We have various ways to teach people to evangelize but in this coming year we're going to do something else. We're going to talk about how to build bridges of life to people so that you can get them by God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit on the bridge to life in Christ but we're not doing it.

In 2009, 46 percent of the people in this nation said they had a personal relationship with Christ and were born again. I'm not saying that all of them were. This year, 2017, only 21 percent said they had a personal relationship with Christ and were born again. Then I saw something else in my study that I think is part of the reason for this drop. In 2009, 80 percent of the 46 percent who confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior of their life, said they had a personal responsibility to share Christ with their neighbors. Now in the church only 39 percent say they have a personal responsibility to share Christ with others.

Who are the people most likely to share the Gospel, the most prolific evangelists in the church? There are some who have the gift of evangelism and stay with it and I praise the Lord for them but by in large those who share Christ the most with other people are almost always new Christians, not the mature Christians. So why is it that the most immature Christians are the most productive in sharing the Gospel with other people? There are a number of reasons for this. One is that they are amazed at grace and those who have been saved for a while all of sudden are no longer amazed at grace. We can't even sing amazing grace and act like we were amazed. I want you to stay amazed at grace. Preach the Gospel to yourself every single day. It is no trouble for me to remind you of it.

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!

What a glorious message! New believers are effusive and unstoppable. They are effusive because they are amazed at grace and they are unstoppable because they haven't been a Christian long enough that they are more concerned about being embarrassed than about where their friends are going to spend eternity. Seems the longer we are a Christian the more concerned we are about getting embarrassed. They will marginalize and mock you but let no one disregard

you. Just keep sharing the Gospel clearly, compassionately, convincingly and courageously even if they would disregard you in their despising of the message.

I love Christmas for so many reasons. I love it because of the memories that it gives to me. I love it because it reminds me that I am called to give the glorious story of Jesus Christ to this world and there is nothing else that this world offers me. For those of you who don't know Him what do you think is going to fill that big hole in your life? Do you think it is power? I want to invite you to Jesus because when you come to Jesus you are joint heir with Christ forever. Do you think it's money? I want to invite you to Jesus. What is the most important thing monetarily you can put your hands on? Gold? We throw it out and walk on it in heaven. Do you think it's acclaim? What more glorious thing can you hear than 'Enter in, my son, well done good and faithful servant. You are Mine and I am yours.'

It was on a Christmas Day when I got this phone call. There was an emptiness in my life. There was the vanity of searching everything from sports, to the world, to applause with everything offering and I had arrived at nothingness and dissipation. I met a young lady that said she only would date Christians so the first thing I did was lie and tell her I was one. The next thing I did was try to prove the lie by taking her to church but I couldn't take her to my church because that would blow my cover. I was scared to go to her church because they were Baptists. So I found a small Presbyterian church and thought they didn't believe much and I could just slip in and slip out. I didn't know there were different kinds of Presbyterians.

This Presbyterian Church believed everything and then there was a guy who played ball with my dad who decided he was the bloodhound from heaven to track me down. Then I got this phone call on Christmas day; 'Harry I know this is an unusual request. One of our elder's wives had a cerebral hemorrhage at the Christmas dinner table and she died at the hospital. They have four little girls and they asked if you and Cindy could come over and stay with them.' I went. I helped with the funeral, washed the car, did other things and after the funeral I asked Mr. Elliot who had just lost his wife, 'I can't believe all this happening at Christmas. I'm kind of new at this stuff. If there is anything I can do just call on me.' He was only 39 years old and had four little girls.

I thank God for this man who knew saving, sanctifying, securing grace obeyed the call to sending grace and said to me with the sense of knowledge 'Harry, I think there is something I think you need to hear today. Did you know if I could bring my wife back I wouldn't?' I didn't have a category for that. My category for that was assuming they were having marital troubles. He said 'No, I knew her since I was 14 and we got married when we were 18 and I can't tell you how much we loved each other. I don't know what I'm going to do without her raising these four girls but I wouldn't have her back because of three reasons. One is that what she loved by faith she now beholds by sight. Two I serve a God who doesn't make any mistakes. He never told me all things are good but that all things work together for good so I don't know what He has in this but I know it's something good. I'm going to trust Him. Thirdly, it won't be that much longer and I'll be there anyway.' Because of sending grace upon him I was brought to saving grace.

I went to another room and knelt down. I said "God, I'm not much but you have me. I'm yours. If you can do that in their lives I know you can do something in this empty life. I turn from my sins and put my trust in You alone. I know You died for me and rose again. I have been knowing that but now I give you everything." I was amazed at what I did next. I walked out and turned around and walked back into the room and said 'By the way, God, now that I have

committed myself, if there is anything you want me to do with the rest of my life just let me know.' I had no idea where that was going to lead me.

It has led me here today to offer the same thing here to you. I shared that story in much greater detail with about 50 people when I was sent to plant a church in Charlotte, North Carolina on the first Sunday night in a modular unit as their new pastor. What an amazing thing that happened that night! Our hearts were knit together and in the back was a young lady who wouldn't let me see her face but when it was over I found her afterwards. She was one of the four daughters. She said to me 'I have been angry at God for taking my mother but I told Him if He could ever show me one good thing that He promised out of this, I'd give me life to Him.' She heard it that night and she and her three sisters all committed their life to Christ. Oh the amazing grace of God!

He will save you just as you are without one plea but He won't leave you like you are. He will enroll you in His school of sanctification and start changing you. Then He will secure you because the blood of Jesus is not shed in vain and then He will send you for Him until He comes again. Go and make disciples of all the nations. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You we could be together this Lord's Day. Thank You for the great privilege of worship and praise to our God. O God our God on this Christmas we celebrate that the grace of God in Christ has appeared bringing salvation to save us, sanctifying us to change us, securing us by the seal of the Holy Spirit and the blood of Jesus who is coming again for us and now sending us as ambassadors for Christ to announce Good News – Jesus is a Friend to sinners! I pray this in Jesus' Name, 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.

Divine Blessing #4: Sending Grace in Christ – New Vocation

LIFE TAKEAWAY

The Grace of God that appeared in Christ not only saves us (Past Grace), Sanctifies us (Present Grace), Secures us (Future Grace), but also Sends us as Heralds of Grace until He appears again.

Our New Vocation