

“The Grace of God”  
Titus 2:11–14  
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We will start by looking at Titus 2. Titus 2:11–14 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.*

This is God’s Holy and inspired Word so let’s pay careful attention to it and it’s by His grace and mercy that it is now preached for you.

As of yesterday, we are now just five months away from Christmas. I bring that up only to point out that this year has really been flying by, it’s going fast and what a year it has already been. In early February we started hearing the rumblings of this thing called the Corona virus coming across television and the airwaves. Soon the rumblings grew into a thunderstorm of a pandemic and it wasn’t just somewhere over there but it was right in our own country, even in our own backyard. There were so many questions that came with this pandemic, like what do we do, what do we believe, how do we deal with this and all the media voice talking about Corona virus this and Covid-19 that.

The pandemic has taken front and center stage even as I see in our church those carefully spread out, and who comes to which service and the face masks that are being worn. We are honoring social distancing and keeping a careful watch for each other. It is something that we cannot ignore. The Corona virus seems to be only the beginning for it is showing other stress factors in our society and culture. We see much societal unrest and the political season that is so tumultuous at this point in time. It seems like nobody is really for each other and everyone is against each other, where ethnic diversity has become a point of contention and the tension has just risen to new heights.

It is spilling over into our families for they are feeling it as well. Parents across the nation are trying to figure out, how, if, where, when will their children go to school. Our daughter and son-in-law this week were just thrown a big curve ball. They were expecting their children to be physically in the classroom five days a week, only to find out that the school board had just told them that would not be happening. There is a lot of uncertainty that is around us today. Families are also looking for ways just to make ends meet with questions like, how will I continue to put food on the table, do I have a job, will I have a job, will my business survive.

In these times we face great uncertainty and deep unrest within our souls. Where are we supposed to turn? Where do we run to when the world around us is anything but what we have normally seen? The only thing I can personally do when I am struggling within myself with uncertainty, unrest and with the unknown, is I go to the certainty, the unchanging truth of God’s Word. That’s why I’m glad that we are going to look at this Titus 2 passage in this study today.

In this book of Titus, Paul is writing to a pastor, a young man who came to saving faith in the Lord under the ministry of the Apostle Paul. As he is being disciplined by Paul he has become a church leader, a pastor. He has become such a strong leader that Paul has left him in Crete to put things in order and that is the reason he was left behind. This task is much weightier than on

what it sounds like on the surface because Crete was synonymous with gross immorality. The churches of Crete were being threatened by the false teachers that had crept in. It has become so bad that Paul describes it this way in Titus 1.

Titus 1:10–13 says [10] *For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. [11] They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. [12] One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” [13] This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.*

Now in Titus 2 Paul continues to guide his dear brother as he encourages Titus how to leave the churches on the island of Crete. He shows him what it means to live in such a way that they are sound in the faith. Paul takes him down to a sure foundation by first giving us the foundation for Godly living in Titus 2:11a which says [11a] *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people*, and this is a statement of fact. Paul puts it out that as we should know this for this is historic reality. He is starting off with the most fundamental of all truths – God’s grace.

What kind of grace is Paul talking about here? Is it common grace or prevenient grace which is the grace leading up to our understanding of the need for saving grace? Grace is throughout all of the Scriptures. In the Old Testament the most commonly used word for grace is *hesed* – meaning the lovingkindness, the longsuffering, tender mercies of God. In the New Testament the most commonly used word for grace is *charis* which means much the same thing – God’s lovingkindness and mercies to us. So when Paul says ‘the grace of God has appeared’ perhaps it’s good to be reminded that we have heard this before but we need to know that mercy is not a synonym for grace and grace is not a synonym to mercy.

Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve which is eternal damnation and judgment, and grace is God giving us what we cannot deserve and cannot earn. We cannot earn God’s kindness and mercy, but is it just an attribute or a concept or is Paul talking about something much deeper here? I believe he is talking about something much deeper here because he is talking in the context of this passage to Titus how he is to put things in order. In Titus 2:1–10 Paul tells Titus how to first address the older men and their responsibilities, the older women and their responsibilities to the young women and how the younger men are to be self-controlled, showing themselves in all respects how to be models of good works. He even goes as far as to talk about slaves and their masters, employees and their relationships with their employers.

In that context Paul tells them to order their lives correctly because God’s grace has appeared. Order your lives in light of this reality that the grace has appeared bringing salvation to all people and Paul can only be pointing to one thing. The grace of God that Paul is pointing us to is embodied in Jesus Christ. It is personified in our Savior. Jesus Christ was the grace of God Incarnate. Jesus Christ is the tender loving mercies and the long suffering kindness of God toward sinners who deserve His wrath but need His grace. Here Paul tells us as well as Titus that God’s grace has appeared.

I like that word appeared in the Greek for it the word *epiphainw*. From this word we get the word epiphany and it means that it’s a dawning. It means the penetrating of darkness with light. Even in Crete there was a construct and a way of processing this very threat. It was a polytheistic culture but they believed that the gods often would intervene, showing up and coming into their darkness, their trouble and deliver them – they believed the gods would come to save the day and rescue them from their present distress. But is grace merely just rescuing.

I'm going to give you two illustrations to show you what I think and to help you understand that I don't believe grace is simply rescuing.

Years ago I was one of several men who took a group of junior high boys canoeing down Bush River. Bush River in Columbia, South Carolina is controlled by a dam. When you are going down that river, boy you can have a great day but when you hear those sirens go off you know the dam is open and the river is about to change so that it becomes a roaring torrent. We had gotten a good ways down the river and sure enough when we heard the sirens we shored the canoes and let the boys start hiking up the edge while some of us men tried to move the canoes further down the river. Another man and I who were experienced canoers found a path and decided to keep going. We hiked back up and each took another guy with us only the man with me was less experienced, in fact it was his first time to be canoeing. I could see he was quite disturbed and a bit terrified so I told him 'Brother, don't look at the water, just listen to me and whatever I tell you to do, do.'

We got to a very rapid rapids which was really flowing heavy at this time and we got between two rocks and had to shoot the sloops. We had to get between the rocks to get safely to the other side. I yelled 'hard right!' and he panicked and went hard left. If you have ever canoed you know what that means. We went into a spin and the water came into the canoe and snapped it in half. I dug in even harder to get him to safety while I went down the river without a canoe between the rocks and underneath a tree. I have never felt a force that strong in my life. I struggled with all my might underneath a tree trying to pull myself back up just for another breath. I needed rescuing. By God's grace there were some college boys that had been swimming in that area before the siren went off and the river went strong and they came out and risked their own lives to grab me and together they pulled me with all their might. Together they brought me safely to shore and that's rescuing.

Another illustration from my life happened years ago when I was a lifeguard. I had just came on duty and unseen by the other life guard there was a woman at the bottom of the pool with a baby in her arms and she was not moving. That is the one time you dive in and you do everything you can to get them to safety quickly. I dove in, pushed the baby up as someone took the baby out of my hands and I pushed against the bottom of the pool to get this woman up to the surface. With the help of others we got her to the side of the pool and I breathed life back into her.

That's a little bit more of a picture of what salvation is. It's not mere rescue but someone has to put life back in where there is none and yet this illustration is a little bit incomplete. Paul is telling us in this Titus 2:11 passage that not only did God have to dive into the ocean to save us as we were dead in our trespasses and sins, bring us up out of the ocean and breathe new life into us but that very life He breathed into us was that very life of His own. Now we understand grace and the salvation that Paul is telling us about. I couldn't help but cry when we sang; *Amazing grace, my chains fell off, my guilt is gone, I've been set free* because I know what it cost my Savior – it was His life for me. That is the foundation of how we live our Godly lives built on grace.

Grace doesn't stop at salvation, praise the Lord. Not only is it the foundation for living a Godly life but according to Titus 2:12 it is the training ground that helps us live a Godly life. Titus 2:12 says [12](Grace is what trains us) *training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.* Just as a parent equips their children and does everything to train them to know what they need to know, have the wisdom they need to make the right decisions when they are no longer under their parental

authority and out on their own, this is exactly what grace does for us. It is our discipline, our equipper, our tutor, what teaches us and trains us.

Think of this in terms of going to the gym. When we lived in Colorado Springs we could go to their Olympic training center and watch those athletes train. They would deny themselves and put themselves through the rigors of the discipline of training to develop the right muscles to be able to compete. That's what grace calls us and does for us. It is the building block, the foundation, the training ground for our Godly living.

Paul shows us this in two ways, first with the negative and then with a positive. I couldn't help but think of a quote from Charles Spurgeon when I got to this part of the passage. When Spurgeon was talking about training young men for ministry he said 'The most difficult part of training young men is not to put the right thing into them but to help them get the wrong things out of them.' This is why I believe Paul starts with the negative.

First, he says the way grace is the training ground for Godly living is that it teaches us to renounce. We don't use that word a lot but it teaches us to say 'no,' to be done with, to turn our back on two things – ungodliness and worldly passions. Ungodliness is the broadest word summarizing categories of our sins against God, including our irreverence, our sacrilegious words or deeds – every act in which we demand be in the place that only God can have. It's easy for us to see that in the life of a pagan – who is immoral, self-serving – but can we identify it in ourselves? Can we look into the mirror of God's Word and realize I like having my own way. There is a God and I'm not Him but I want to Him so many times in so many ways. I elevate my own thinking even above His clear Word. This is the ungodliness that grace equips us to renounce as it builds the spiritual back bone up so that we can say 'no, this will not be a characteristic in my life.'

It also helps us to be done with worldly passions. John addresses this in I John 2:16–17 which says *[16] For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. [17] And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.* Yet we live as if that is in the world is all important to us. We are selfish, filled with pride, and live as if we have life figured out, better than anyone else and no one else can tell us what to think, say or do. These are just some of the ways sinful, defiance pleasures raises its sinful head as if it could actually satisfy what only God alone can do. So grace is what trains us and puts us through the paces. Grace tells us what we need to know to put off until we have the spiritual muscle we need that we might live Godly lives.

Now Paul turns to the positive as we take off the things we need to renounce but these things we are to add. It's very similar to what Paul says in Ephesians 4:22–24 which says *[22] to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [23] and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [24] and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Here in Titus 2:12 Paul says *live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.* Self-control deals with our inward, Godward focus – the inward work of grace whereby we are able to increasingly reel ourselves in and die more and more to sin and live more and more to righteousness. Self-control is that personal struggle where we take every thought captive under the Spirit's control, where we learn to live sensibly and righteously in moderation, not just in public but when we are all alone.

Then Paul tells us to live upright which is the outward work of grace where it influences the way we live with each other. We are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We are to

esteem others higher than ourselves. The time I see this the hardest is when I come up against someone who just bristles the hair on the back of my neck. It's something about this person in the way they talk, act and live and something in them that just wants to make my skin crawl. God tells me to esteem them, Jim, for they are in My image. Esteem them higher than you esteem yourself. Love your neighbor as you love yourself which means you are willing to give up something that you might rightfully have in order that they might have what they desperately need. This calls us to self-denial.

We are also called to live Godly lives and that is the upward work of grace in our relationship with God Himself. Do we live *Coram Deo* – before the face of God? Is His eternal presence the reality that overwhelms you today? I have to admit that so many times it's easy for that not to be the case because what I'm seeing out here seems so much more real. What seems to be what I see on the news or what I'm dealing with in my heart seems to be so much more important and God says 'Jim, I want you all in. Are you practicing My presence and living before Me 24/7? Do you know that I'm the only One that matters? I am Reality. Everything else, even the things you called normal before the Corona virus is not normal. It is tainted and polluted by sin. Jim, are you living a Godly life, not just in the best circumstances?'

Paul tells us to take off, renounce and put on in this present age. In other places Paul calls it this present evil age. See, God is calling us not to be pulled down by the world around us but to be lifted up by the grace that He is working through us so that we might be different, set apart, consecrated, holy, sanctified and more and more like Christ because we are on mission, on message and in ministry with Him for that is our calling. That's the work of grace. So now we have seen both the foundation of grace and the training ground of grace but Paul continues and gives us one last thing from this passage.

What's the motivation we actually have to live by grace? Titus 2:13–14 says [13] (we are) *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.* Grace has saved us and grace is sanctifying us but grace is also helping us live with hope. Hope is not some pie in the sky, wishful thinking and somehow in the sweet by and by it will all come together.

Hope is that confident expectation that we have because of the work that Christ has already done. Paul has told us here to look ahead by looking back. We wait with confident expectation, with hope, for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ but we do so while looking back because He has redeemed us. What does that tell me? Just as real as the work of redemption is in my life, that's how real is the hope of the grace to come is in my life. I am no longer bound by this temporal stuff that I see all around me. I am looking above and it's like I'm peering over the horizon just trying to get a glimpse of what is yet to come. I'm to be up and about my daily life as though that's what matters – yes I have to go to work today. Praise the Lord I get to work at Briarwood.

What about looking for Jesus as you go to work today? What about looking for Jesus when you drive to church? I know it can be hard for you get up and you're five minutes late getting out the door and you want all the traffic lights to be green and you're so distracted by so many other things as you drive to church. Did we center our hearts on Jesus Christ and His blessed appearing?

Paul uses the same word here in verse 13 as he did in verse 11. *Appearing* – epiphany – He is coming again to penetrate the darkness, only this time He is coming in glory and not grace. That's important because when we understand what grace is – when Jesus Christ came the first

time He veiled His glory in flesh because we could not look on His glory before salvation and survive. So He veiled the glory of God in Himself by His flesh. He then died, rose again and ascended into heaven seated at the right hand of the Father. When He comes back that work is complete but when He comes back this time we will see His glory full on.

The closest any human has ever gotten to His glory was Peter, James and John at the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus was face to face with the Father before them. His face shone like the sun and His clothes were as white as snow and they didn't know what to do. This is when Jesus is coming again and what a joyous moment that is going to be for us, who by grace has received His salvation, the work He has done for us – what a joyful thing that will be for we will revel in His glory! But what a fearful thing this will be for all who have refused faith in Him. When He comes in glory for all who have refused Jesus Christ it will be the time of their judgment and the wrath of God poured out on them.

Yet this appearing of the glory of God is our blessed hope and while we wait we remember who we are. We are His possession. We are His people. There is a phrase my kids like to use – just talking with my peeps. They are talking with their friends. We are His people and His unique possession. Do you know that you are God's treasure? If you have faith in Jesus Christ, if you have received the work that Jesus Christ has done for you, do you know that you are His special, high prized treasure? Now, wouldn't that change how we go about our ordinary day? Doesn't that help us as we look at the reality of this struggle, uncertainty and unrest of our soul, spirit and society around us?

I matter to Him. He chose me. I wasn't choose-able. He redeemed me. I didn't deserve it. He is sanctifying me. His grace is making me more and more like Jesus Christ His Son. He is preparing me so that I can be with Him and He wants me with Him for all eternity. That's why He sent His Son. Now this motivates me to be zealous for good works. Do you have zeal for the right things? Some of us are really hoping to see football start up again soon. We get amped up about the team of our choice but are we amped up about doing the good works God has given us to do?

Ephesians 2:8–10 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. [10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* We were redeemed so that we might be His workmanship so that we are able to the good works He has prepared for us to do in Christ Jesus. This is our purpose. Grace is not just the foundation for Godly living, and not just the training ground for Godly living and not even just the motivation for Godly living.

Grace is the totality of what my Godly living is to be about. Now I know how I'm to live. I am to live for His glory, for His message, for His purpose and for His ministry, reaching beyond. Lately, I have enjoyed getting to know a young African American barber. Three times this young man has actually cut my hair and every time we have had great conversations, candid conversations about ethnic struggles, strains and then trying to keep his job going so he can take care of his family. We have talked about faith, about Jesus Christ, about seminary training and how God redirected my life at age 50, put me on a new path as He took me away from the business world and put me into ministry and what that was like. See I get to be on message, on mission and in ministry because I'm motivate by grace.

So today, when everything around you seems to be overwhelming and you seem to be caving into the unknown, the uncertainties and the unrest in your life? Where do you turn when you realize you have lost your bearings and you need to re-anchor your soul? I liked the way

this one author made this pretty concise statement – she said ‘worry is a thief, fear is a liar, and anxiety is there trembling, furrowed browed baby.’ What do we do when these seem to be more real in our lives and they threaten to rob us of our joy and to take away the joy of salvation that is ours?

We run to amazing grace. We go back to the rock solid, never changing truths of Scripture and we look at them anew. We let them wash over us afresh and anew so that we understand the reality is Jesus Christ. He is our Amazing Grace and that brings me to the takeaway for this study – God’s grace not only saves me and gives me eternal life, but it enables me to live with purpose as I look for His return.

In times of unrest we can find rest in His finished work. In times of uncertainty our lives can be re-centered and anchored in the certainty of God’s Word and in times of stress we can look beyond this horizon and know that this light and momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, help us. Words that are so common to us, so normal for us that they just roll off of our lips tend to become trivial and trite but Lord overwhelm us and renew us with an awe for Your incredible saving grace. Your grace is the foundation for Godly living. Your grace is the training ground by which we learn how to live in Godly lives, living like our Savior and Your grace, Lord, is the motivation that gives me focus and purpose when I get up each morning as I want to live for You. Continue Holy Spirit to teach us truths from this passage and to deepen the Word of Your amazing grace and we’ll praise You, in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

### Power Point

- I. The Foundation of Godly Living (v. 11)
- II. The Training Ground for Godly Living (v. 12)
- III. The Motivation for Godly Living (vv. 13–14)

Life Takeaway

Grace not only saves me and gives me eternal life, it enables me to live with purpose as I look for His return.