

## A Worthy Reflection

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Titus: The Church Established / Titus 2:11-14

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### Introduction:

If you were with us last week, we looked closely at Paul's second charge to Titus in Titus 2:1-10. Together, we saw how this charge involved speaking, teaching, and encouraging things consistent with gospel truth to various groups within the church. Chances are, as you looked at the encouragements, you saw a need to grow in some area of your life. If we are letting the word pierce our hearts appropriately, we probably find some encouragements to groups outside of our own challenge us as well. What I want to consider today, is how do we grow. When you see an area of your life and faith that you desire to grow in, what does God, in His gracious design, encourage you to do? It's different than you might think. When you hear encouragements like those we saw in Titus 2, is your first inclination to say, "I need to try harder to live a better life"? Maybe you went home and made a list of things you can do better or set goals to monitor how you're going to grow. What I want to suggest to you today is that we need more than just trying harder for true growth to happen in our lives. I am not saying we don't work hard to grow, but, if our only plan is to try harder, we would be missing an invaluable component for growth. You see, the primary change agent for our lives is not our efforts. This is because the change that we need is not at an intellectual or philosophical level. The change we need is at the very core of our being. It is a change within our hearts. Jesus makes this clear in Mark 7:20-23, where he said, 20 ... "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person." The sin that clings so closely to us, has pierced down to the core of who we are. It has stained every part of us, so we need something completely outside of ourselves. The beautiful truth of God's word is that God has provided exactly what we need through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. This is the crux of the gospel, what you could never do in your efforts, God accomplished in Jesus Christ. When God looked down on His creation marred by sin, a creation turning its back on its creator, He knew our hopeless state. He knew we could never change our hearts. He knew we could never turn back to Him in our own power and strength. So, He sent His son, the righteous eternal God the son, to live the life we couldn't live, pay the payment we could never pay, bear the wrath we could never survive, securing forgiveness through His blood on the cross, and providing us with the power to change our sinful hearts. To receive forgiveness and this heart changing power, you must first turn and trust in Jesus Christ. Yet, the power of the gospel goes even deeper. Church, the gospel doesn't just provide the power we need to start living rightly, the glory of the gospel is the continual means by which we grow in the faith. Listen to what 2 Corinthians 3:18 reveals about how we are changed, 18 "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." We are changed through beholding the glory of the Lord. Do you see that? Just a handful of verses later, in 2 Corinthians 4:4-6, Paul calls the gospel, "the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God," and tells us that God has shone this glory into our hearts when we turned to Him. The gospel is the glory of Jesus Christ, and the bible says we were changed when we first beheld that glory and continue to be changed as we behold that glory more and more clearly. This is the invaluable component for growth. We are primarily changed through continually beholding the glory of Christ. As we think on the truths of the gospel, as we see His glory in it, our hearts are changed. And, as our hearts are changed, our lives will change. So, today, to help our growth, we are going to take time to reflect on the gospel, looking closely at verses 11-14, where Paul lays out certain truths of God's grace in the gospel. Let's reflect on these truths together. Starting with the truth that,

## **GOD'S GRACE APPEARED IN JESUS CHRIST**

Read verses 11-14 again with me, paying attention to the flow of Paul's thought, 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." Paul opens with a view towards the grace of God. What is the grace of God? Sometimes we shorten our understanding of God's grace to simply being unmerited favor, but we will see it is far more than just unmerited favor. Notice the subtle repetition in these verses that hones in on what this grace is connected to. In verse 11, Paul says, 11 "For the grace of God has appeared," and in verse 13, he says we are, "waiting for... the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." The repetition is even more clear in the original language as the word in verse 11 is ephiphaino, and the word in verse 14 is epiphaneia, from the verb ephiphaino. Throughout Paul's writings, he uses these words exclusively to point to Christ's incarnation and second coming. Look at how Paul connects these appearing's together in another pastoral letter written to Timothy. In 2 Timothy 1:10, Paul speaks of God's grace as that 10 "... which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," then at the end of the same letter, in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Paul says, 7 "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing." The repetition in our passage, and connection to 2 Timothy, shows Paul is speaking of the two major appearances of Jesus, with the appearing of God's grace, in verse 11, being Christ's first coming. This is further magnified by the link between this appearing bringing salvation in verse 11, and Christ mentioned as Savior in verse 13. By the way, notice the appearing is of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. This is one of the clearest references to the Jesus Christ as God the Son. Without missing a beat, Paul speaks of the appearing of Christ as the appearing of our God, showing that Christ was God in the flesh. The grace of God appeared through the incarnation and saving work of Christ. This does not mean God's grace didn't exist before the coming of Christ, but that the grace of God came into clear view in a way it had been previously concealed. The first truth of the gospel is that God's grace appeared in Jesus Christ. The second truth is that,

## **GOD'S GRACE APPEARING BROUGHT THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION FOR ALL**

Look at how Paul shares the first result of the appearing of God's grace in verse 11, 11 "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people." What does it mean that God's grace in Christ's appearing brought salvation for all people? Some have suggested this means everyone will be saved, regardless of believing in Christ, but this would deny the testimony of scripture. When the Philippian jailor asked what he must do to be saved, Paul and Silas didn't respond, "You have already been saved." They said, in Acts 16:31 31 ... "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." And Paul writes in Romans 10:9, that, 9 "... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." The Bible consistently puts forward that belief in the Lord Jesus is required to be saved. But we don't even have to go out of this passage to see this. Notice the shift in Paul's language between verse 11 and verses 12-14. In verse 11, all people are the focus, but in verses 12-14, there is a more defined people, us, culminating in Christ redeeming and purifying a people for Himself. There is a difference between God's grace bringing salvation for all people, and the application of that salvation to us. Paul is not saying the appearing of Christ provided salvation for all people but brought the message of salvation for all people. And the message of salvation, through the life and death of Christ, is in itself a grace of God. While God's grace appearing brought the message of salvation for all, the application of that message is another aspect of God's grace, which brings us to the next truth of the gospel here, that,

## **GOD'S GRACE IN CHRIST BROUGHT REDEMPTION FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE**

The flow of Paul's thought helps to start to see this. Look at the flow with me. The action in this passage is the grace of God appearing at Christ's first coming. The rest of verse 11, though 13, are the results of that action. It brings salvation to all people, trains us to live certain ways, and causes us to wait for the return of Christ. Verse 14 is the explanation of the saving work of Christ, revealing how the grace of God appeared and accomplished the results of verses 11-13. Considering that flow, we can begin to unpack verse 14. Look there with me, starting with how verse 13 ends, 13 "... our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us." Immediately following referring to Jesus Christ as our God and Savior, Paul moves into how Christ saved us. Paul first says Christ, "gave himself for us." Think about what this is saying. God's grace appearing to you is through Christ, our God, giving himself. And Paul says he, "gave himself for us." "For" here means on behalf of or instead of, speaking of an exchange. This points to the sacrifice Christ made of His very life on the cross, for us, as those who believe. Paul goes on in verse 14 to make sure we understand that exchange, saying 14 "who gave himself for us to redeem us." The word, "redeem, or redemption," is probably the most important term to understand in salvation. Charles Spurgeon calls this the gem of all Gospel gems. The term signifies the release of a captive by way of a price. When some wanted to free a slave in the Roman Empire, they would redeem them through the payment of a redemption price. Through this act, they purchased the slaves for themselves and granted their freedom after. And notice what this is from, it is, 14 "... from all lawlessness." The apostle John clearly defines lawlessness in 1 John 3:4, 4 "Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness." Lawlessness is the defiance of God's rule, which is the very root of sin. Church, sin is not just doing bad things, sin, at its root, is a denial and turning away from God's goodness, majesty, power, and rule. And Christ redeemed us from all lawlessness, not just some lawless deeds. Every stain sin made on my life, its power and grip over me, its rule and reign in my heart was paid for by the blood of Jesus, to purchase me from its bondage. Christ didn't just redeem us from the penalty of sin, but from lawlessness itself. Hallelujah What a Savior! God's grace appearing brought redemption for those who believe. Yet, the grace of God in the gospel extends even further, bringing us to the next truth to see, that

## **GOD'S SAVING GRACE WORKS TO TRANSFORM OUR LIVES**

This is the next progression in the movement of God's grace for Paul. God's grace doesn't just bring the message of salvation for all, and the application of redemption for those who believe, but continues to work in our lives. Look at verse 12, starting at the beginning of verse 11 to see the connection, 11 "For the grace of God has appeared... 12 training us." God's grace doesn't just save, it also trains. The idea behind training is that of guidance and even discipline. The term was often associated with parenting. God's grace operates like a parent in our lives, through guidance and discipline. Paul shows how grace trains us to deny and reject some things and pursue others. Paul says it is, verses 12, 12 "training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions." Ungodliness is a lack of reverence and worship of God. It signifies wickedness that denies one's responsibility toward God and others, because of a lack of holy reverence for God. Worldly passions are sin-filled cravings and lusts for forbidden things. God's grace turns our hearts away from those sinful tendencies and, verses 12, 12 "... to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age." Have you notice how often self-control is mentioned in this letter? It is mentioned for elders, or overseers, and almost every group listed in verses 2-10, while insinuated where the word isn't present. Here self-control is one of the traits grace is training us to have. It also trains us to be upright, which involves relating with others justly and honestly. Paul ending with how grace trains us to live godly lives helps us to see that this is more than just acting a certain way. Godly signifies how our faith in God, and knowledge of him, influences our walk of life. This is because of one of the purposes of Christ's redeeming work, in verse 14, is, 14 "... to purify for himself a people for his own possession." Christ gave himself to purchase us as a purified people for His own possession.

To purify involves both the idea of fully cleansing and making something fit for use. The end of verse 14 further clarifies this use, to be people, 14 "... who are zealous for good works." Church, Jesus Christ redeemed you to claim you as His own, and purified you to birth in your heart a strong desire for good works. Our God and Savior Jesus Christ longs for you to be zealous in living to magnify the gospel and His saving grace works to transform our lives. There is one more truth to see, as Paul builds again in his progression through how God's grace has worked in the gospel, showing us that,

### **GOD'S SAVING GRACE LEADS TO THE FULLNESS OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST**

Notice the final thing God's grace produces in our lives in verse 13, 13 "waiting for our blessed hope." This isn't a passive waiting. God's grace in the gospel produces a continuous expectant waiting for something of infinite value. Paul calls it our blessed hope. The term for blessed is hard to fully describe. I have heard one pastor call it the happiest of happiness. It is more than just happiness, though, it is full utter satisfaction. Have you ever made plans to go to your favorite restaurant? You know, the one that causes you to barely eat all day in anticipation of the food to come. It's the kind of place where you know exactly what you want, and your glands almost salivate all day long as you wait for the time to go by. Then the moment comes. You arrive at the restaurant, your meal comes out, and you take that first bite, and just go, "oh yeah! That's what I'm talking about!" Maybe it is just me because I love food so much, but, if you can relate to that, magnify that experience 100 times over, then magnify it again, and again. Then realize that doesn't even begin to scratch the surface of the blessed hope we are waiting for, because this hope, look at verse 13 again, is 13 "... the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." If I could somehow come up with words to describe the appearing of the glory of Christ I would try, but I can't. I can only hope you have experienced tastes of His glory before. Moments where your mind's eye envisions the beauty of Christ that causes you to stand in awe. Moments when your thoughts of Him overwhelm you. By God's grace those moments happen in this life. Yet, there is a day coming, when according to His abundant grace, it will happen in its fullness, and we will see beauty and majesty like we have never come close to seeing before. This is the blessed hope we are waiting for, and the culmination of what God's grace is producing.

### **Conclusion:**

All of these truths, centered around the two appearing's of Christ, bring our attention to one reality, that we who follow Jesus Christ learn to live in a unique way. We look back at the work of Christ and appearing of God's grace, while simultaneously looking forward to the full revelation of that glory at his return. Church, as we learn to behold the glory of Christ in the gospel behind us, keeping our trust fully in Him, and long to behold the full glory of Christ, as our blessed hope, we will find the grace of God transforming us and providing the power to live lives that magnify the gospel. This leads us perfectly into our time celebrating communion today. In 1 Corinthians 11:26, 26 "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." This means when we partake of communion, we are both proclaiming to our hearts, and others, the glory of Christ in His redeeming work on the cross and reminding ourselves of how it secures our blessed hope of the fullness of that glory when he comes again. While Pastor David is coming up to lead us in a song of remembrance before we take communion together, I encourage you to reflect on 3 questions during this time in response to these truths. First,

### **1) HAS THE WORK OF CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED REDEMPTION FOR YOU?**

This is the most important question you can ask. Communion is for all who are placing their trust in the finished work of Jesus on the cross for the forgiveness of their sin and redemption of their lives. It is for those who hear of the gospel and believe Christ died on the cross to pay for their sin. If that is not you, I consider the message of the gospel proclaimed to you today and turn to trust in Jesus.

If God is stirring in your heart to respond and trust in Jesus Christ, I would love to invite you to come speak with me during the song so I can share with you how to move forward. The second question our passage invites us to consider is,

## **2) ARE YOU LEANING INTO GOD'S GRACE TO TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE?**

We have seen how God's grace is at work to transform our lives. Are you leaning into it for the ways you need to grow, or striving in your own power? If you are striving in your own power, confess your need of His grace and ask God to show you more of His glory to change you. If you are leaning into His grace, press in more and more to the transforming power of God's grace by thinking on the glory of Christ during this time. Finally,

## **3) DOES YOUR HEART LONG TO SEE THE FULL GLORY OF CHRIST?**

Church., expectant waiting for the full glory is part of the results of God's grace. In fact, it is the promise of our blessed hope that often provides us with what we need to live for the gospel in this life. If you don't find yourself longing to see the full glory of Christ, remember His glory shown through the gospel during this time and ask for Him to give you a greater longing for His appearing. If you do find your heart longing for that full glory, ask for Him to satisfy you today with another glimpse of that glory in communion. Let's remember together during this song and then we will take the bread and cup together at the end.