

God's Grace Has Appeared
Titus 2:11-12
ABC 2/7/21

The story's told that one winter when El Niño's rain deluged Southern California, the potential dangers of mudslides became a nightmare for one family. While the family was in their home a wave of mud tore through the house sweeping a sleeping baby out into the night. The parents began to search through the darkness for the child. Tromping through the filth that had descended upon their neighborhood, they searched, dug, & called for their child throughout the night—without results. But when morning dawned a rescuer covered in mud, came to the parents with a mud-caked bundle in his arms: their baby, filthy but alive. You know what the mother then did? She clung to her child despite its filth, washed the mud away, & determined to keep the child out of the muck in the future.¹

That story helps us understand concepts in our text that are so opposed to our common thoughts about the nature of God's grace. His grace cancels out works as a way of securing or maintaining His acceptance. As a result, our inclination is to think that if our good works don't determine God's love, there's no reason to do them. Why be concerned about godliness since we're saved by grace? The Scriptures say when the filth of my sin was sweeping me to eternal death, God Himself came into the muck of this world to rescue me, embraced me despite my filth, & now wants me to stay out of the mud. That kind of grace should make us so in love with God that we can't stand whatever's in our lives that dirties us & offends Him. God's grace makes us intolerant of evil in our lives. God's grace, rightly perceived, compels holiness in us. **11-14**

These vss have been called:

- *One of the great summaries of Christian truth.*²
- *One of the richest passages of Holy Writ.*³
- *One of the greatest statements about salvation found in the NT.*⁴

Philip Towner writes:

*This section is a densely packed statement of theology that ... marks the rhetorical high point of the letter. Owing to the shift in grammar & the elevated language... (we) know instinctively that this section is crucial to Paul's discourse for several reasons ... the theological passage provides the foundation for the ethical teaching that has just been laid down (2:1-10). Only now what has been prescribed is to be seen clearly as an outworking of grace, linked intrinsically to the death of Christ & the new way of life associated with that event ... Christian theology is the only way to explain the power, character, & origin of this way of life.*⁵

¹ Bryan Chappell's sermon entitled, "Intolerant" Grace, www.galaxie.com/article/rar07-3-06

² Homer Kent, *Studies in 1, 2, Timothy & Titus*, p 226

³ William Hendriksen, *1 & 2 Timothy & Titus*, p 370

⁴ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Faithful*, p 107

⁵ *Pastoral Epistles*, pp 740, 744

The glorious message of the gospel in these vss can be summarized with 4 words. Four words that set Christianity apart from all other claims, cults, & religions. Four words that transformed sinners into saints on the island of Crete, those who were formerly liars, lazy gluttons, & evil beasts (1:12). Any one of these 4 words by itself we could spend weeks studying & barely scratch the surface. But as we briefly look at the 1st 2 today, may God write each of these truths more deeply on our hearts & cause us to be again reminded by & refreshed by their life-changing power. The 4 words will be our outline the next 2 weeks: *Grace & Repentance* today & then next week, *Christ & His Cross*.

1. Grace 11

God's grace permeated Paul's thinking & writing. The classic definition is that God's **grace** is His unmerited favor. **Grace** means He showered favor & blessing on those who didn't deserve or earn it. They deserved His judgment & wrath but He showed them favor. Unfortunately, God's **grace** gets polluted from 2 sides. On one, grace runs counter to the way the world works, so it's hard for us to grasp & accept it. The world works on the merit system. If you do well in school, you get good grades & win awards. If you do well in sports, you make the team & get accolades. Exceptional performance on the job earns promotions & raises. In the spiritual realm, all of the world's religions, except Christianity, work on the merit system. This merit system of salvation permeates human thinking. Ask anyone on the street their opinion of how a person gets into heaven & you'll hear something about being a good person. But God's grace also gets distorted from another side, which mistakes His grace for an excuse for loose living (Jude 4). Many wrongly think God's grace means He gives out free passes that allow us to sin with no consequences for disobedience. Their mantra is, *I'm under grace, not law*, by which they mean grace gives them a pass for sinful living. Our text corrects both of these misconceptions of God's grace. Paul's mention of **God our Savior** in vs 10 causes him to elaborate on the theological basis for our salvation & how understanding that leads to a life of godliness & good deeds. At the heart of everything is this crucial concept of God's grace. God's grace toward us is based solely on His love & our total inability to meet His standards. God's

grace is a gift we don't deserve & cannot earn. Without God's grace there can be no salvation since grace is foundational to it (Eph 2:4-9).

The 1st word of vs 11, **for**, ties the words of vss 11-14 to the practical instruction of vss 1-10. It shows us that God's commands are rooted in His grace. The reason why the Cretan believers would be able to do what Titus was to command them to do is because the grace of God that saved them (11) would also sanctify them (2:12, 14). The language Paul uses here shows this grace found full expression in a particular event. What event was it? Saving **grace** made its appearance with the 1st advent of Jesus. How so? Because it was the work of Jesus during His 1st coming that made salvation by grace possible (2 Tim 1:10; Titus 1:3; 3:4). **Grace** is *a one-word summary of God's saving act in Christ*.⁶ The grace of God was revealed & personified in Jesus Christ. This appearing wasn't limited to His birth but refers to His entire life including His death, resurrection, & exaltation. The word **salvation** sums up the longing of God that is seen in His redemptive work, because it signifies deliverance, rescue, & release from sin. What vss 11 & 12 imply, vs 14 makes explicit: Jesus **gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed**.⁷ God's grace is more than just an attribute; it's a Person as well. Jesus not only was God incarnate, He was grace incarnate. He personifies & expresses the grace of God. He is the sovereign, eternal, & unmerited divine gift of God's grace. & He **has appeared**, meaning **grace** became visible⁸ & carries the image of **grace** suddenly breaking into our moral darkness. In Greek literature this word functioned as a technical term to describe a hero or a god breaking into a helpless situation to rescue someone from danger. Paul uses it to refer to the past or future coming of Christ to rescue his people (13).⁹ When Paul writes, **For the grace of God has appeared**, he's referring to the embodiment of grace in the person of Jesus Christ, who was **full of grace & truth** (Jn 1:14). It isn't that God's grace is missing from the OT. No one was saved in the OT apart from God's grace. But as Jn 1:17 states the contrast, **For the Law was given through Moses; grace & truth were realized through Jesus Christ**. God rightly could have sent His Son to condemn us & judge us. But instead, **God did not send His Son into the world**

⁶ Mounce, p 422

⁷ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Titus](#), p 108

⁸ Hiebert, p 439

⁹ Chapell, p 338

to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him (Jn 3:17). Who has this **grace** appeared to? **11**

Paul isn't teaching universal salvation, that **all men** will be saved. He could be saying that salvation is potentially available to **all men**. But most likely he's saying God saves all types of men, whether young or old, male or female, slave or free (2-10). That Paul has in mind those who actually get saved is seen by his words at the start of vs 12, **instructing us, us** including Paul, Titus, & the Cretan Christians. In His atoning death, Jesus didn't save **all men** but provided a way of **salvation to all men**. In His matchless grace, God **desires all men to be saved & to come to the knowledge of the truth** (1 Tim 2:4). Emphasizing that same truth, Peter wrote, **The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance** (2 Pt 3:9). God's **grace** saves all types of men, all classes of humanity, every race & state of life, even slaves, young & old men & women, Jew & Gentile (Gal 3:28). There's no tribe or tongue or type of person that God's grace is not for. The good news of God's grace is that no sinner is beyond the reach of God's grace, not even you. Paul was a persecutor of the church & called himself the chief of sinners (1 Tim 1:13, 15). But he experienced God's grace through Jesus & so can you. From the human side, saving grace is reserved for those who respond & repent & are trusting in Christ as God & Savior (13). They aren't relying on what they've done but only on what Christ has done for them. Vs 14 also tells us that salvation is ultimately all of God, by God, for God, through God, & for God Himself. What we do doesn't cause our salvation; rather it's God's salvation that causes the good works we do in response to the power of the life-changing gospel. Paul intertwines who Christ is with what He provides so the 2 become inseparable. **Grace** isn't some abstract doctrine. Grace comes in Jesus (Jn 1:14). **Grace** is as personal as He is. The unmerited favor of God is what Jesus is about, but it's also who He is. We should see **grace** as a personal action by a personal God who saved us from our helpless condition out of pure love.¹⁰ God's **grace** in Christ appeared to **all men** in the 1st century. Now in the 21st century it has come to all types of people, including you & me. That's a vivid picture of the life-changing power of the gospel of the

¹⁰ R. Kent Hughes & Bryan Chapell, [1 & 2 Timothy & Titus: To Guard the Deposit](#), pp 338-339

grace that has appeared in Jesus, bringing salvation which is available to **all men**. It's God's **grace** that saves us, instructs us, & enables us to live according to His will. What Christ did for us, what has happened as a result, all of this is God's unmerited & unmeritable love & favor. All of us who are saved should wake up every day of our lives thinking of God's **grace** & thanking Him for it. We should allow it to permeate our minds & reach into the depths of our hearts & souls. Then we'll respond in holy living & service to Him. God's grace is the only explanation for a transformed life, like described in vss 2-10, & that's Paul's point. We should live such lives before a watching world & adorn or make beautiful God our Savior & His glorious gospel. How do we do that? It's not only based on a one-time work of God's grace in the past, it also requires God's **grace** enabling our ongoing repentance. This brings us to our 2nd word:

2. Repentance 12

Paul continues his focus on God's **grace**, personifying it as an instructor that teaches the believer to be sanctified. God's grace includes not only saving grace (11), but also sanctifying grace (12) & the 2 can't be separated. **Grace** doesn't mean, since our sins are forgiven we can live any way we want. Rather, **grace** trains, disciplines, & instructs us in godly living. Part of the earliest gospel message was the call to repent (Mk 1:15). It means to change one's mind, to leave behind an old way, a godless way, & turn to follow God. Vs 12 tells us how grace works, beginning with the word **instructing, teaching, or training**. In the grammar & language, it's God's grace from vs 11 that has this role as our personal teacher. Revealed & personified in Jesus, God's sovereign & saving grace not only is a deliverer but also a teacher, guide, & counselor. When we were saved, we immediately came under the teaching of God through His Holy Spirit & through His Word. The imagery is the classroom, the school of grace, & like every school there are rules. The 1st 2 rules: No **ungodliness** or **worldly desires**. *Denying* implies great hatred & aversion. It carries the idea of a conscious, purposeful action of the will. It's to confess & turn away from that which is sinful & destructive & move toward that which is good & godly. It includes the commitment a believer makes when he 1st acknowledges his sin & receives Christ as Savior as well as the countless other decisions he makes **to deny** & forsake the **ungodliness & worldly desires** that continue to find their way back

into his life. When a person puts their faith in Jesus, there's a divinely empowered separation from sin allowing us to **deny ungodliness**. This is a general reference to all that is anti-God (3:3) & includes anything that isn't godly or God-like. Sin, in all its forms, can be characterized as ungodly. A simple definition of sin is the failure to be, think, or act like God. The ungodly person doesn't revere God & ignores Him. Obviously, it refers to the person who's openly immoral or evil, but it also includes the outwardly nice person who has no place for God in his life. His everyday life is organized, motivated, & run by self, with no place for God. The person who has tasted God's grace will say "No" to such godless living. Believers are also to **deny worldly desires**. **Worldly desires**, as John categorizes them in 1 Jn 2:16, include such things as **the lust of the flesh**, the desire for pleasure, **the lust of the eyes**, the desire for possessions & materialism, & **the boastful pride of life**, the desire for prestige, power, & popularity. These are desires that reflect the values of the present age with its anti-god mind-set. **Grace** trains you to say "No" to these things, because God & His **grace** are far sweeter than anything the world can offer. Together these 2 negatives summarize the old life, the life natural to all of us before we came to Christ. That way is now to be abandoned. A conscious choice of denial must be made. But our teacher, God's **grace**, not only tells us the rules, it helps us obey them. When a person is truly saved & given new life in Jesus, there's a transformation not only of nature but of living. A person who's divinely born again is no longer under the inescapable dominion of sin & of Satan. He has a radical new nature & is called & enabled to reflect that new nature in a radically new way of living. By the work of God the Father, we **are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, & righteousness & sanctification, & redemption** (1 Cor 1:30). The **grace & truth** that were realized through Jesus (Jn 1:17) during His earthly ministry are to be realized & evident in the lives of those who bear His name & His nature. We have **laid aside the old self with its evil practices, & have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created them** (Col 3:9-10). Our present earthly life is a time of sanctification, a two-sided process of becoming less & less like our old sinful self & more & more like our new & Christ-like self. It's been pointed out that this schoolmaster of ours:

...leads children step by step. Thus, grace, too, gently leads & guides ... Grace trains by teaching ... chastening ... counseling, comforting, encouraging, admonishing, guiding, convicting,

*rewarding, restraining, etc. ... When grace takes over, the sinner repudiates ungodliness. This repudiation is a definite act, a decision to give up that which is displeasing to God.*¹¹

That's why I've used the word *repentance*. We're commanded to continually **deny**, reject, & renounce **ungodliness & worldly desires** & turn from those ways. Instead we're to live just the opposite way. It isn't enough to say "No," we also must say, "Yes." One must work into his life the positive behavior to which Christians are called. We must perform our duties faithfully & love others intentionally & practically. We must not only deny the vice, we must embrace the virtue. A famous sermon preached by Thomas Chalmers was called *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*.¹² His point was that love for Christ & a desire to serve Him aren't only right in themselves, but they serve to drive out what's wrong in us. True Christian love expels the worldly desires & the sins of the flesh. As we put on virtue it crowds out vice & sinful desires of the heart. Turning from these ways to the ways God calls us to is summed up with the word *repentance*. The goal of God's curriculum is the living of a new life. After the old way has been abandoned, what then? If Christianity ended there, it would be a life of avoidance. We could sum it up with, *Thou shalt not*. But the focus is actually on being & living a far more appropriate life. Now we're told, *Thou shalt*. Yes, there must be a conscious, willful denial of thoughts, words, & actions that are opposed to godliness. But we now replace them with godly living. This passage, & many others, deals a death blow to any theology that separates salvation from obedience to Christ. Salvation never stops with redemption but always moves to sanctification. There is no salvation apart from denying **ungodliness & worldly desires**. Paul isn't teaching the end of grace but the full measure of grace & the purpose of God, to cleanse for Himself a *special* people who are *zealots* for good works, as we'll see next week. Any teaching that removes obedience from salvation is a false gospel.

Saving grace takes place at a moment in time & can't be added to. Repentance, though, involves our response & begins when we follow Christ & continues throughout our life. Repentance is the changing of sinful ways & thoughts, turning from & confessing our sins to follow godliness. Even our repentance, though, is a gift that God grants, not something we do on our own. God gets all

¹¹ William Hendriksen, *NT Commentary*, p 371

¹² www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/Chalmers,%20Thomas%20-%20The%20Expulsive%20Power%20of%20a%20New%20Af.pdf

the glory for all of it. Acts 5:31 says, **Jesus is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince & a Savior, to grant repentance ... & forgiveness of sins.** Acts 11:18 tells us, **When they heard this, they ... glorified God, saying, "... God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life"** (cf 2 Tim 2:25-26). 2 Cor 4:4-6 says our spiritual enemy **has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God ... The God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.** God does it this way so He gets the glory, not us. When we see God clearly in the appearance of His grace, we have an intense awareness of our unholiness & sinfulness. A true understanding of **grace** instructs us of the magnitude & revulsion of our sin. That's why Paul says the grace of God that has appeared teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness. We want to be rid of what stained us before the radiance of His glorious grace. But saying "No" isn't our only obligation.¹³ Repentance isn't just avoiding certain things. It's turning to something. God's grace in Jesus instructs & enables us to live **sensibly, righteously & godly in the present age.** Having been declared & made righteous by our justification through Jesus, we're now to practice righteousness. God has ordained our lives in Christ to be lives of ever increasing righteousness, holiness, & godliness. **In the present age** emphasizes that we aren't to isolate ourselves from this evil world in monasteries or Christian communes. Rather, in the midst of this evil age, we're to live sensible, righteous, & godly lives, so others will be drawn to our Savior. **Sensibly** is a form of the Greek adjective translated **sensible** in 1:8, 2:2, & 5. To live **sensibly** is to have a sound mind & live in a self-controlled & thoughtful manner, not yielding to various passions & impulses. The sensible Christian doesn't allow circumstances or the influence of others to distract or affect their own judgment. **Righteously** refers to a life of integrity & uprightness in your dealings with others. It means conforming to God's standards of conduct, as revealed in His Word. We're to do this without reservation. Godliness is the reverse of **ungodliness** & refers to holiness & devotion to God. It brings together faith in or knowledge of God & its visible outworking in life. If you live the way Paul describes here, denying ungodliness & worldly desires

¹³ R. Kent Hughes & Bryan Chapell, [1 & 2 Timothy & Titus: To Guard the Deposit](#), p 340

& living sensibly, righteously, & godly in the midst of this corrupt age, some will call you a legalist. Many will think you're strange because you don't live for the same things they do. But you'll experience the joy of fellowship with the God who rescued you from sin & judgment. His grace motivates you to live differently than the world & differently than those who profess to know God but by their deeds they deny Him (Titus 1:16). As we do this it gives evidence **in the present age** of our spiritual rebirth. It's a powerful testimony of the saving & transforming power of Jesus Christ. The Christian life is one of dependence on God & His ongoing grace. It isn't a consequence of our resolve or willpower. It's a relationship with God that results in a God-honoring life. William Mounce writes: *Not only has God's grace saved believers, but it has the ongoing task of teaching them to live righteously ... This vs, which emphasizes present-day obligations, contrasts with the next vs, which looks forward to the Lord's return.*¹⁴

When we were saved, God took away all our sin & placed all of Christ's righteousness on us (2 Cor 2:21; Jn 8:36). When He looks at us, He doesn't see our sin, but Jesus' righteousness instead. Therefore, God will never love us any more or any less than He does right now. We don't have to perform in order to be pleasing to God. But along with that great truth sometimes comes a great misunderstanding. When some discover this truth, they think since they don't have to perform to be pleasing to God, they don't have to do anything at all. That's the wrong attitude. We're to live differently **in this present age**. We don't serve in order to please God (that's guilt), we serve because we belong to & love God (that's grace). An understanding of God's grace should cause us to serve Him more, not less. We're saved in order that God might demonstrate His glorious grace, which produces in us the desire to do what is right & good, thereby giving glory to Him & impacting the lives of the unsaved in His name. The reference **in this present age** focuses our attention on the now. Salvation may not be complete until the return of Christ; but it has made possible a new quality of life **in this present age**. No amount of good works can produce a right relationship with God. Only a right relationship with God, secured through personal trust in His Son, Jesus Christ, can produce truly good works. **For by grace you have been saved through faith**, Paul explains in his

¹⁴ *Pastoral Epistles*, p 423

letter to the Ephesians, & that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *for* good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Eph 2:8–10). The transformed living that Paul describes in Titus 2:1–10 can only become reality through the divine & gracious work of salvation described in **vss 11–14**. PRAY

Communion

Usually when we refer to God's grace we mean the favor He gives to undeserving sinners. While that's true, His grace comes in & through the person & work of Jesus. He is the grace of God incarnate. The most glorious display of grace, love, & goodness that's ever been, happened in & through Jesus on the cross. It was there that God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so what we, sinners who deserve hell, receive Christ's righteousness & get heaven. If that's not grace, if that's not God bestowing favor on undeserving sinners, I don't know what is. That's God's grace that appeared in Jesus. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Grace isn't a philosophy or force; it's a Person. The grace of God is Jesus Himself. One reason that we partake of the Lord's Supper is that it reminds us of the precious truths. As we remember the great sacrifice that our God & Savior made by giving Himself for us, it draws our hearts toward Him in love & devotion & it will make us long for the day of His appearing in glory, when we will be caught up to be with Him forever.

Bread – I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread; & when He had given thanks, He broke it & said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor 11:23-24).

The grace of God appeared in Jesus who brought to us salvation by His death & resurrection. Let's remember Him as we eat of the bread.

Cup – In the same way He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread & drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor 11:25-26).

The grace of God appeared in Jesus who brought to us salvation by His death & resurrection & He's coming again in glory. Let's remember Him as we drink of the cup.

O God, Our Help in Ages Past