



The Gift that Gives (Titus 2:11-15)

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Jl Packer wrote a book many years ago called 18 words, where he spent a chapter discussing 18 of the most important words for Christian to know. On that list were the usual suspects: faith, scripture, justification, mediator, election, fellowship, holiness, and the list goes on. One of those 18 words that **Jl Packer** sees as essential for the Christian to understand is 'grace.'

In the opening words of his chapter on this word, he writes,

"In the New Testament, 'grace' is a word of central importance—the keyword, in fact, of Christianity. Grace is what the New Testament is about."

Every Christian has some understanding of grace, some definition they're working with, and as Jl Packer correctly assesses, it is a keyword that we must define correctly.

In the New Testament, the word that we would define as "grace" (*charis*) is the same original word that we find in the New Testament words like 'benefit,' 'favor,' but specifically 'gift.'

A lot of times we think of grace as freedom or liberty in America, often tied to the legal declaration of righteousness when we're justified. That grace is a object kind of like a ticket that shows that Jesus paid for something and we no longer have to pay a fine, he's covering our bill and so I'll have the whole menu.

What I want to highlight is how Scripture, specifically in Paul's letters see grace as so much more than relating to our legal declaration of righteousness, but **this idea of gift language.**

John Barclay in his book Paul and the gift helps us get out of the rut by defending grace so narrowly. He helps us better understand that particularly in Paul, grace, like a gift is given unconditionally to persons that do not deserve it. And rather than using courtroom language, Paul prefers to use relational language, Language that you would use when describing someone receiving a gift.

Barclay highlights for us that grace in the New Testament is given **within the context of a relationship in hopes of fostering it and continuing it.**

Furthermore, like a gift, those that receive grace respond to it and reciprocate not out of starting a relationship or in order to prevent the relationship from crumbling, but because of their ongoing commitment to that relationship.

What we find in Titus, is that when we encounter the gift of grace there is a reaction and an evidence of that grace in the Christian life.

That evidence is not to earn salvation, it is out of the already existing safe relationship we have with the Lord, and it is a good and godly response that all Christians should have. The response of a life devoted to zealous works is the call of every Christian. Perseverance is the evidence that you have encountered grace. This morning we are going to look at God's grace and our response to God's grace which is the evidence of receiving the gift of Jesus Christ.

God's grace is centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ, who gives us salvation, a new life zealous for good works, and an incorruptible, future hope.

We will see this in 3 1/2 points:

- 1. The Gift that Gives Salvation (v.11,14ab)*
- 2. The Gift that Gives New Life (v.12,14c)*
- 3. The Gift that Gives Hope (v.13)*
- 4. Pastors and the Gift of Grace (v.15)*

We're going to first look at defining grace, the new life that this grace gives, the hope that this gift of grace gives God's people, and lastly and very quickly we're going to look at the spiritual authority of pastors, their ministry, and their calling to deliver this gift of grace to the people of God.

1. The Gift that Gives Salvation (v.11, 14ab)

Look with me at verse 11, where Paul writes, **"For the grace of God has appeared"**

The first word that should catch our attention in this short phrase is the word "For". That word indicates for us that what is being stated in these verses is grounding like the foundation of a house all that Paul has instructed to Titus and the churches in Crete.

As **Robert Yarbrough** puts it,

*"Why should Titus instruct people in these ways? Why should he think that, given the grim social setting and personal tendencies of many on Crete, pastoral presence and instruction will make any difference? Paul grounds his counsel to Titus in the manifestation of God's grace (*charis*)."*

Why bother with elders or the conflict incurred in confronting false teachers, or fighting against ungodliness and worldly desires?

Because God's grace has appeared. God has revealed himself and when God almighty speaks, we listen.

So let us be clear and plain in the first assessment of this verse and what it teaches us of God's grace: the grace of God grounds the Christian life.

And notice the second part of verse 11, “**has appeared, bringing...**” this grace that has appeared is in action. It is doing something, it has a vocation.

The grace of God is the revelation of God and the activity of God. For all the ways that we can define grace we must start there. It is the revelation of God and it is the activity of God.

WHAT IS GRACE

So this raises the question for all readers of Titus 2:11, what is the grace of God? What is the grace that has appeared?

This word, specifically this verb, occurs twice within Titus. This exact verb is used in the next 3:4. Paul defines for us what this grace is within this very letter, giving us easy leverage to define and defend the grace of God.

⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously **through Jesus Christ our Savior,**

The grace that appeared was God himself as Savior. And that savior is the Lord Jesus Christ, made clear in 3:6.

And if it's not clear from ch.3, then all we have to do is look back at our passage and see how the Lord Jesus is described in verse 13,

“the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,”

So Paul has described God's grace as appearing and yet throughout Titus we find that what is appearing is the person of Jesus Christ. Grace is not a paradigm, it's not freedom from circumstances, it's not a substance to be mined like ore out of a mountain, it is the risen Lord Jesus Christ who is the substance and center of grace.

But note how Jesus Christ is described in v. 13.

It is **not** “our great God and Jesus Christ our Savior.”

Rather, Paul describes that Jesus Christ is both our great God and Savior.

Take note of the high Christology of this text. What I mean by that is look how Jesus Christ is described as nothing less than God himself. That Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, is the second person of our one great God.



The grace of God is **Christocentric**. *The grace of God is revealed, displayed, fully and most gloriously in the person and work of Jesus Christ.*

When Paul tells the church to heed his instruction in chapters 1 and 2 of Titus, he does so from the shadow of Calvary.

When Paul tells Titus the grace of God has appeared, he's talking about Jesus Christ and his first coming where he secured our salvation on the cross. *That's the grace of God.* To be acquainted with God's grace is to be acquainted with Jesus Christ.

THE SALVATION GRACE GIFTS US

Look at what God gifts his people in the first coming of Christ in the last phrase of v.11: **"bringing salvation for all people."**

It is important to note this isn't speaking of universalism here. Paul is talking about the newness of the New Covenant, inaugurated in the death of Christ: the gospel call is for all persons without distinction, not exception.

And Paul defines this salvation within the passage we're looking at today. Look at the first half of v.14 ***"who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness" (v.14a)***

So the salvation that grace gives us is a salvation that required Jesus to give himself and to give himself so that we might be redeemed. To be **redeemed** is a marketplace term to be released or freed at a price. And Christ Jesus redeemed us through his substitutionary work on the cross from lawlessness. In the letter of 1 John 3:4, John the beloved disciple defines what **lawlessness** is: *it is not grace, it is sin.*

A view that grace allows you to do whatever feel like doing is the antithesis of grace. Christ lived under the law and was crucified, not that you could be lawless, but that you might be freed from lawlessness.

Yet that's part one. Paul often tells us what we're saved from, and he often follows that up with what we are saved to. Look with me at the second part of verse 14:

"And to purify for himself a people for his own possession." (v.14b)

The gift we received in the gospel is this: where sin bruised and broke us, where sin corrodes us, we find that Christ purifies us, restores us. And rather than being an abused possession we become his possession.



I love how Paul put it in this verse, for his own possession. Emphasizing that we belong to the Lord. That Christ Jesus who died for our sins *he himself* owns us. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who cares for you and purifies you and owns you.

Why bother with what is being taught in your church? What does it matter what my wife and I do in how we run our marriage? What's the big deal with indulging in some of the pleasures of life as a young man or woman?

Because the grace of God has appeared in Jesus Christ, and he died to save you. To save you from false gospels (the gospel of materialism, feminism, fundamentalism, humanism and every other type of worldly "ism" out there) and to purify you as his own possession.

To say it another way: you do not belong to yourself, you belong to the risen Lord Jesus.

So, out of God's love for us he gifted us with the greatest gift and grace we could ever receive which is salvation in Jesus Christ and union with Jesus Christ. With that gift comes the response, the joyful and jubilant reaction to the grace received within the relationship we have: new life zealous for good works.

2. The Gift That Gives New Life (v.12, 14c)

Look with me at the last phrase of v.14. The work of Jesus has been defined for us as redemption and the work of purifying us.

And Paul, in this verse, defines what that purification will look like for the blood-bought people of God when he writes, "**zealous for good works.**"

The evidence of grace in the life of The Christian is their perseverance in the faith. Their zeal for good works as a response to the grace that has appeared in Jesus Christ.

This is the theological pulse of the book of Titus. This is the theological center of Paul's letter.

To know Jesus is to be zealous for good works. Not as a pharisee, not to deserve salvation, not a condition for salvation to have been offered to us, but a response to the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ, grounded in God's divine love of you.

WHAT IS ZEAL

So, let's talk for a minute about what zeal is and what it is not.

Jeff Purswell, the theological director of Sovereign Grace Churches, helps us understand what zeal is not, from what the Puritans define as false zeal. He writes that false zeal is,

“Zeal over trivial matters, zeal that is rash, zeal that fades over time. None of those are true, sacred zeal. Zeal that is discouraged by difficulties—that’s not zeal. Zeal that stirs up controversies—definitely not zeal. Zeal that divides, zeal that resists authority, zeal that is harsh, zeal that is untreatable, zeal that is stubborn in its convictions on secondary matters.”

Jeff Purswell then defines the kind of zeal this passage describes when he says this: *“Be made to boil, to burn hot, by the Holy Spirit, for total, devoted, joyful service to the Lord Jesus.”*

To be zealous requires acquaintance with the gift of God's grace and Jesus Christ. Perseverance, which is that life characterized as zealous for good works, is the evidence that you, my friend, have found the treasure in the field.

THE GOSPEL TRAINS US

But let us look to this text for what zeal looks like. The grace that appeared Christ's first coming, the gospel of grace, it trains us. Grace in this passage is personified and vocational; it has a job to do, and its job is to train those who are saved... to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, to as the NIV translates it: to say 'no.' Grace trains us as a teacher or parent - that trains from a lack of knowledge and ability to a place of knowledge and ability. Training us to renounce what is bad and to live in what is good.

And saying 'no' to ungodliness and worldly desires is the summary of the self-control that Paul calls both men and women to in v.1-10.

John Calvin defines self-control in his sermon on this very passage, when he says,

“self-discipline means that a man restrains himself as if he were a prisoner, so that he is not prey to his pleasures but is mastered by God's hand, submitting as God wills to his rule and not to his own inclinations.”

That's what it means to say 'no.' The word that Paul uses for ungodliness here is the same word he uses in **Romans 1:18** *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against **all ungodliness** and unrighteousness of men.”*

Kingsway, the gospel trains us to say no to the very things that the wrath of God is revealed against. Ungodliness speaks to thoughts, actions, and affections that counter God's will, but if that's not clear, Paul goes on to say our worldly passions.



And when he says worldly passions, he is speaking to the desires of our heart, **dare I say the zeal we have for worldly things.**

Do your desires display a zeal for the world or a zeal for Jesus Christ?

Does the gift of God's grace show evidence in your zeal for good works, in your single focus to say 'no' to that which the risen Lord has saved you from?

And here again, in verse 12, we see Paul telling us what we are trained from doing to what we are trained to do as a people zealous for good works.

The gospel of Jesus Christ in its vocation in our lives, trains us ***"to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives."***

It does not train us because we have not received grace,

it does not train us so that we would deserve grace,

it trains us because grace has appeared.

a gift has been given, because the relationship initiated at the cross continues and there is a reciprocation because it is in fact a relationship and not a transaction.

What does a Christian look like? Self-controlled, upright, and godly.

This is how Christians are characterized. Not perfectly, but faithfully. Showing substantial, significant, and observable victory over ungodliness in the present age.

If you want to know what it looks like to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in detail, reread Titus chs.1-2.

You will find many a church and church member that hisses at all of the observations and implications of Paul's commands found in Titus 2. KingsWay, may that not be us, may we be zealous for good works.

For younger men, you need self-control.

Older men, be dignified and sober minded, the journey is not over. Persevere, be kind, don't be a curmudgeon, show self-control, don't be known for complaining about what you're owed in life, and don't become bitter.

For older women, we see that Paul is concerned with idle hands and the temptations offered by various roles and responsibilities slowing down.

For younger women, this is why we recommended Rosario Butterfield's book, there is no group more attacked by worldly influence and false ideas of what makes a biblical woman. The world would want you to talk about everything but what is in Titus 2.

Gender roles of yesteryear would say that your role in the home defines you, and feminism would say that your role outside the home defines you. Both are wrong to define what a woman is based merely on the role they occupy in life.

The first is a misunderstanding of biblical anthropology and feminism is a false teaching that we ought to correct as Paul tells Titus in Titus 1.

As **Butterfield** stated, "Feminism teaches that the church and the gospel need a feminist rescue."

The Gospel needs no aid in salvation.

Why bother with any number of the commands found in Titus 2? Can't we *just* be about Jesus here? Kingsway it is because we love Jesus that we zealously obey all of God's word, even uncomfortable commands found in Titus 2. We can persevere in renouncing ungodliness and worldly pleasures in pursuit of self-controlled, upright, and godly lives because of the future hope secured for us in the gift of grace.

3. The Gift that Gives Hope (v.13)

Look at v.13, "¹³ *waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,*"

When Christ comes again, our journey will be over, the waiting will be done away with, and eternal blessedness will be all we will ever know.

- (a) The second 'appearance' of Christ represents the testimony of God's faithfulness and the enormity of God's kindness. For us it means the round is over with the fight against ungodliness.
- (b) When Christ comes it will be the end of the age of calling sinners to salvation and will begin a glorious age of enjoying God forever.

This text teaches us that Christians long for heaven, the gospel trains us to wait for heaven with great anticipation. Our hope of heaven fosters and nourishes our faith in the present

period when we grow tired of fighting ungodliness in our life we have to remind ourselves of our eternal hope.

We look back at what Christ did to purchase us, and we look forward to the glorious day when he holds us as his dear possession. That's what grounds our mission in the present.

Robert Yarbrough aids us in what we have to look forward to, when he says,

“The glory that believers await is not merely the appearance of the invisible transcendent deity...Nor is it simply Jesus resurrected showing up again like he did in the weeks following his death (see Acts 1:3)...It is rather the denouement of the Trinitarian mystery which in the historical and material sphere has never been fully seen or comprehensively conceptualized. Evil and its proponents will be judged; God’s kingdom and its subjects will be vindicated and exalted (2 Thess 2:5–12). Believers will see the Lord in whom they have trusted as he is and be made like him (1 John 3:2). All that Titus may have endured by way of hardship and deprivation will be forgotten in the magnificence of what the last day will reveal and the age to come will showcase. There could hardly be a greater motivation for ministry.”

Why are we zealous for good works in the present? Because this is what our future holds, God’s grace, a gift given to his people.

John Calvin pastors us in this point when he writes,

“The first rule of a well-ordered life is to understand that God has not arranged for us to lodge here forever; he wants us to reach out to him in the certainty of the blessed coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus to the word ‘hope’ Paul adds ‘the appearance of the glory of the great God and of our Savior Jesus Christ’. Paul appears to say: “My friends, we are not meant to aim as if by chance at the kingdom of heaven, in the vague hope that we may reach it. We know who has made this promise to us. God is trustworthy, so let us rely on his faithfulness.”

The gospel of Jesus Christ thoroughly saves us from sin, it empowers us for the present, and it is trustworthy for the whole of our journey to heaven.

If you are weary in faith this morning, this text would urge you to look back at what Christ did for you and to look forward to what he will do.

Renouncing ungodliness and worldly desires will be a losing fight if you do not have a divine perspective of what God has done for you in the past and where you are heading in eternity.

Temptation will look like a neutral multiple-choice option if you are not informed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Zeal will burn out if you do not look at Calvary and the blessed hope of heaven.

3.5 Pastors and the Grace of God (v.15)

As we close, I want you to look at verse 15. Paul writes, “**¹⁵ Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.**”

Here Paul speaks specifically to Titus and he calls him to ‘declare these things’ which includes two actions: exhorting and rebuking. Pastors are called to encourage the people of God to the gospel and to call the people of God away from false hopes.

Do you have the category of your pastors exhorting, and correcting you in matters of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

When pastors, who are men that have evidences of encountering grace through their godly lives, when they rightly handle the Word of God, they speak with the authority of God.

Such men should be heeded and not disregarded. Not because of fragile egos, but because they represent the risen Lord Jesus Christ. The reason why we don't disregard, is because the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is not a subjective relative truth. It has been revealed and it must be heeded.

Conclusion

The grace of God falls equally upon every head. Every church, every church member, and every pastor is called to heed the words of this passage. In light of the grace that has appeared may we be zealous for good works.