

# Titus 2:11–15

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Date: 03 November 2024

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[ 0 : 00 ] Today we will be in Titus 2, verses 11 through 15. Titus 2, verses 11 through 15.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify himself, a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Declare these things. Exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Good morning. I just want to add my welcome to you. So glad that you're with us today.

I want to title my sermon this morning, The Why Behind All the What's. The Why Behind All the What's.

If you're visiting us, we're in the midst of a series from Titus called A Church Worth Joining. To connect that theme to the text before us, I would say this.

[ 1 : 30 ] The Church Worth Joining is inspired to live according to God's plan because it has come to understand God's purpose.

Our salvation is going to motivate our lifestyle. You know, there are times when it's helpful to know the purpose of something if you want motivation to embrace all the plans that would bring it about. Reasons help when it comes to requests. The why that stands behind all the what's that someone wants from you sometimes are critical.

For instance, if you were to ask me to come home with you today and eat liver and onions, you're going to have to do a little more than make an appeal to the taste.

I'm going to want to know why behind that what. In fact, the weightier the request, the more essential, isn't it, our need for reasonableness.

[ 2 : 39 ] It shouldn't be lost on us that the more difficult the action is that somebody asks of us, especially if there's an increased cost that's to be borne by us, well, then the more involved their argument ought to be to convince us.

Simply saying all the time from the Bible, because the Bible says so or because I say so, well, it's just not going to cut it. Never has, never will.

I begin this way because on consecutive Sundays now, we have followed Paul's letter to Titus, particularly in chapter 2, where he's made several requests of the Christians living on the island of Crete.

You could almost say they're more than requests, they're demands. He's putting things, the what's, on the backs of the Christians living on the island, and by doing so, he's putting them on us as well. So what are the what's that we've been looking at? Elders must be appointed. Older men have been told exactly how they must behave.

[ 3 : 57 ] Older and younger women have been given a plan that he wants them to live by. Younger men have been urged with all authority on what to do.

And every employee in our midst from last week has been told how you are to conduct yourself at work. That's a lot of what's.

I imagine if you or I had been on the island of Crete when this letter was first read, someone in our midst would have raised their hand by now. Excuse me, reader.

I'd like to interrupt. Can someone give me the why behind all these what's? The reason for the requests? My guess is that these realities best explain the placement of the text that's before us today.

In these verses, you and I will see the why behind the life he wants us to live.

[ 5 : 05 ] And he does it. Take a look. Put your eyes on it. Verses 11 through 15. He does it with one long, complicated sentence.

At least that's the way it is in verses 11 through 14. Evidently, Paul did not go to the writing school of today that talked about brevity of sentences and the concreteness of nouns in order to communicate your idea.

He's giving you the why in a long, interwoven, complicated, logical train of thought.

Some observations to help us come onto it. What is the why? I think it has something to do with our salvation.

The grace of God that appears to bring salvation. I mean, the opening word there, for. We do what we do for. The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation.

[ 6 : 22 ] That salvation is kind of a headliner type of word. I mean, it is the way verse 10 shut down, isn't it?

Just before the reading today, we read this thought that they may adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior. There's a parallel between our salvation and him speaking of God as Savior.

In fact, this word Savior appears also later in our own text, verse 13, where he talks again about the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So here's this word, salvation, in verse 11. Whatever the why is, it's related to the grace of God that saves.

There's more that could be said. As we try to get our hands around the motivation to live the way he's asking us to live, I've picked up on that long sentence in terms of what they would call a temporal marker, a grammatical move, in this case, that speaks of this salvation in regard to its past, its present, and its future.

[ 7 : 59 ] I mean, take a look. For the grace of God, verse 11, has appeared, bringing salvation for all people. It already has appeared. So he wants to talk about something that's already done.

But, verse 12, it is presently training us in particular ways. But then by the time you get to 13 and 14, there's this future aspect of our salvation for which we are still waiting for that appearance to come.

If I was to just try to summarize in a simple way, for those of us who were in locker rooms and not following the grammatical nature of literature, this long, complex sentence can be put like this.

We live the way we do because God is out to save us. Let me put it to you this way.

God's purpose in saving you is the motivation you need to live according to God's plan and all the things that he has for you.

[ 9 : 10 ] I want to dwell on this today. I want to dwell on what would inspire you to all the costly things he's asked you already to do.

I want to dwell on salvation as motivation. Let me signpost it. Look at verse 11.

This salvation appeared to us in the past. Verse 12. This salvation trains us in the present.

Verse 13 and 14. This salvation will return for us in the future. And so it is this salvation in its fullness that motivates me to live out my life as Paul would have us.

First of all, the salvation that appeared to us in the past. There it is. Verse 11. For the grace of God has appeared. Bringing salvation for all people.

[ 10 : 23 ] What does this mean? The common interpretation is that the grace of God that has appeared already refers to the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Sometimes they talk about his first appearing. Which the big word is his incarnation. He came down.

He dwelt among us. You ought to live the way you live because he served you and loved you in this way. He was made flesh like you.

God loved us enough to send his only son not only to live among us but to die for us in order to save us.

And because he's done all that, our lives are an offering and response that we live according to that plan. Now there was a professor in England in the middle of last century.

[ 11 : 26 ] He's become famous through his writings both to children and on philosophy more than medieval literature which he taught but his name was Clive Lewis C.S. Lewis.

He wasn't a Christian growing up. He became one as an adult but he was trying to come along to the reasonableness of why I would become a Christian.

He was agnostic probably like some of you here. This is what he wrote when trying to consider whether or not or how God would appear on the human scene and communicate to us this love of salvation.

He says and I quote there was no possibility of me being in a personal relationship with God. You ever feel like that? He goes on for I thought he projected us as a dramatist projects his characters. I could no more meet him than Hamlet could meet Shakespeare.

[12:52] My own analogy as I now first perceived suggested the opposite. If Shakespeare and Hamlet could ever meet it must be Shakespeare's doing.

Hamlet could initiate nothing but Shakespeare he's the author could in principle make himself appear as author within the play and write a dialogue between Hamlet and himself.

The Shakespeare within the play would of course be at once the Shakespeare and one of Shakespeare's creatures and then he says this would be or bear some analogy to the incarnation and that's what this line is saying that for the grace of God he appeared that God wrote himself into the script of human history.

Now you and I weren't alive at that time but the truth of it is this if you and I had lived in the first century in Palestine we very well might have laid our eyes on the living God the incarnate son the one born of a virgin Jesus the Nazarene all fleshed up fully man completely God to demonstrate God's love for you that's that's motivating if God loves you and me enough to dwell among us and die for us well then the what's of my behavior and the way I carry myself where they are small things in response to that love I'm self controlled because

Jesus was self controlled I'm willing to be submissive to authorities because Jesus was willing to be submissive to authorities I hope that's motivation to get on with how you're supposed to be living look back to the past at the incarnation but there's another way to take this verse can I just sit on it for a minute well I'm not going to ask you I'm going to sit on this for a minute it says for the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people that might refer to the incarnation but do you know that that word has appeared earlier in this letter and the reference point there was different let me show it to you you can see it way back in chapter one and verse three it appears in our word manifested it's the same as appearing what he says is that

[16:08] God who never lies at the proper time appeared manifested himself to us in his word through the preaching with which Paul had been entrusted by the command of God who is the savior so the incarnation is motivation but already in the letter we've seen the reference point of proclamation being how God shows up in your life now this is a great advantage to you and me because we didn't live when we could see him face to face but you and I have lived at a time when somebody has preached the gospel of Jesus to you and the spirit has quickened you and you actually received it as the very word of God that Jesus appears on the pages of scripture as somebody explained him to you this is to our great advantage because now this good news of salvation is available to people throughout the centuries rather than a few stragglers who happen to live in a particular topographical terrain in the midst of the first century

I can only tell you that this has been and was true for me when I heard the good news Jesus appeared to me in the word through the preaching and that has been all the motivation I've needed to get on with gospel living I'll just ask you for those of you who are believers don't you remember the day you first believed I mean I could never get Andre Crouch out of my mind on this one take me back take me back dear Lord to the place where I first believed experientially I knew this to be true as I plunged my face into the orange plush carpeting of our 1970s family room do you guys know what shag carpeting was well come along to the homes of a few of us older ones probably some in here still got some around when the message of

Christ was fully understood by me through what someone had shared with me from the Bible I believed he appeared and that is motivation for me I look back not only upon the incarnation I look back upon the proclamation and that motivates me to press on with God's plans now believe me I'm aware that not everyone believes that the proclamation of the gospel through the verbal articulation of the word coming from the Bible matters anymore it was just a little while ago I don't know a year or two or three or five or so that I was in Amsterdam and I went to the Van Gogh museum because Van Gogh is just so potent with the brush and I stood before his 1885 painting the still life with the Bible I don't know if you've ever seen it but he's got a

Bible opened big Bible opened on a table next to it is a candle and the candle is no longer lit it's gone out and next to that is is a book the joy of living by Zola and what he's trying to communicate

in 1885 is that the enlightening the manifestation light that would come forth from the word is no longer in play in the world in which he's living that light has been extinguished and we are now reading and living according to the joy of life it's a perfect illustration for the way some of you feel God has not spoken to me through his word but my prayer is that in the foolishness of attending here week by week and bringing your friends and family to come with you that you will see one day God appearing to you through the ministry of the spirit on the pages of scripture as it is proclaimed to you and that that experience in some sense let me put it this way that some of you will say it was preaching that turned the lights on for me I never saw Jesus face to face he never showed up at 2 a.m.

[ 21 : 49 ] in the morning when I said if you're there and you really exist then appear by some apparition on my wall now he for went all of those things he never came to me face to face but I have seen his face and come to know his love for me as it was proclaimed to me that memory should motivate you and notice who it motivates it says there for the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people now this let's just be simple here it doesn't mean all people are going to be saved in some universalistic way I mean look at the context words have meaning in context all people are all the kinds of people that he's been talking about since he started in chapter two all people is people without distinction it's older men and younger men it's older women and younger women it's slaves and masters all people this is what happens certainly true of us here so you ask me why do

I live according to the pattern of life that Paul and Titus laid down for us it's simply this because he saved me for this Christ came to me for this my savior emulated this the word when preached made me alive for this and so I don't begrudge any of the things in the list that he's asked me to do take a look at the back side of the sentence I know I'm going to flip the order on you but it's worth it the back side of the sentence really comes in verses 13 and 14 and I want to go there next because this word appearance or appearing comes back at the end he not only wants us to look to the past to be motivated for life in the present but he wants you to look to the future as a way of motivation let me put it this way it isn't just incarnation proclamation but it's a future exaltation glorification that motivates the implementation of your life now verses 13 and 14 we're waiting for our blessed hope the appearing of the glory of our great

God and Savior Jesus Christ 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! people who are zealous for good works I take that to mean not only zealous now but we'll be zealous for them throughout all eternity look to the past live according to the plan look to the future and that too will raise your mind to do and embrace all that he wants from you in the present this little phrase here as his own possession of people for his own this is an echo of what God said of Israel back when he had them in front of a mountain having just saved them he then sat them and said to them I saved you to be a people for myself as a possession for me now what Paul is saying is that the church is the cascading fullness or completion of the promise that first started out with Israel of old he had a plan for them and you are part of the fulfillment of that if you trust in Christ I can just put it to you this way my life here is as it is because I know my final destination is there I have a future I'm motivated by the future let me see if I bring this to you in a way that might stick Chicago burned down once they called it the Chicago fire decided not to build with much wood after that there was an architect in town by the name of Daniel Burnham Burnham comes along at the turn of the 19th 20th century and is in building the city in which you and I live do you know what his purpose was he summarized it this way

[ 27 : 30 ] I want to put Paris on the prairie that's what he wanted out of Chicago he said let's get this right he said for those who don't have enough money to travel to see Paris and all of its beauty I want to bring that world to the prairie that was his purpose to put Paris on the prairie as a result they come up with the Chicago plan the plan had all the elements six in number from improving the lake front did you know that 29 miles of the lake front are for all the people only four are occupied by interlopers 29 miles have been safeguarded for the people because he wanted that beauty brought to us the plan was to improve the freight and passenger rail systems the plan was to make an outer park the plan was to arrange systematic streets if you want to know why we're on a grid thank him the plan was to have civic and cultural centers all the elements of the plan were to produce something worthy of the purpose that's what I'm trying to get to that that

Daniel Burnham who said make no little plans they have not the magic to stir men's blood actually built it out of a purpose I want Paris on the prairie so too God he envisions in the church as it were it will be his own Paris on the prairie his own community which is there in heaven actually actually in play on Crete let me get it as close as I can to Christ Church Chicago we are to be a local church family you could call it a faith haven in wood lawn that would resemble the future wonders of heaven that's why I live the way I do I'm already doing the what's of a life that resemble the beauty and the glory of the world in which we will be going that's motivating it's not burdensome to learn self control it's not belittling to be busy at home it's not beneath you to submit to authority it's a privilege to resemble the savior here before living with him there it's an honor to serve as a man in our midst all the women of this family because the women are co heirs with me there it's a pleasure for you to mentor your brother it's beautiful for you to be dignified it's right for you to have integrity how can you not be righteous and just if all the righteousness and justice will be the city in which we live we gotta bring

Paris to the prairie we have to have this church community resemble the glories of the future world into which we are going between I was saved for this I will be saved into this all of this motivates us let me just get it this way he works his eternal good in you that all the what's of good works would flow forth from you that's what he says to be zealous for good works now let me bring it to conclusion God through his incarnation of his son through the proclamation of the word motivates the way in which I live my life God through the future exaltation and the glorification that motivates my work and all of it is presently at work in your sanctification that's verse 11 this salvation that you've been given in the past with the future is training you in the present to renounce all ungodliness and worldly passions that's why these things matter in the middle in the moment in the present yes his salvation appeared to us in the past yes the salvation will return for us in the future and yes this salvation now trains us in the present that's why

I do what I do that's why ungodliness ought to be increasingly hated by me and you that's why worldly passions ought to be spurned by me and you that's why we ought to be self-controlled upright which is just another word for righteous we ought to be just and concerned with justice rooted in his righteousness we ought to be living godly lives in this present age and what Paul says to Timothy at the closes make sure you declare these things verse 15 make sure you exhort the congregation and create to these things make sure you rebuke anyone who says I don't need to live in this way make sure you do so with all authority don't let anyone disregard you let them know the why behind the what the why is God is saving you for this you need motivation to live rightly as he rolls it out in the word just look to the past at the incarnation and the proclamation just look to the future at the exaltation and the glorification just look to the present as you renounce and embrace things that are for him this is what we ought to do let me put it here a church worth joining lives according to

God's plans because it's come to understand his purpose let salvation motivate your lifestyle and for that we're going to need more strength and that's what the Lord's tables for here's the fruit of his life before you a meal to be shared by all in our midst who are trusting in the work of Christ for their salvation and asking him to strengthen you to live in accordance with that purpose may all the plans you make for your life emerge out of the purposes that are found in your salvation and forgiveness men