

Because grace saves and grace trains

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[0 : 00] The reading can be found on page 1200 in the Church Bibles, and it's Titus chapter 2, verses 1 to 15.

But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.

Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to too much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching, show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. They are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior.

[1 : 41] 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 for 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. So, please do keep Titus chapter 2 open on page 1200, and you'll see on the back of the service sheet there's an outline.

Just to give you a kind of heads up, much more time is spent on number 1 than on number 2. So, when your heart sinks and you think, my goodness, we've a long time to go, fear not, we are nearly at the end.

So, Titus chapter 2, and we're looking really today at verses 11 to 14. And I want to start not 2,000 years ago in Crete, which is where this letter is written to, but 500 years ago, as a young monk, Martin Luther, nailed a piece of paper to the equivalent of the town notice board in Wittenberg on the door of the castle church.

In Shakespeare's Hamlet, Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, begs him, I pray thee, go not to Wittenberg.

[3 : 28] Because Wittenberg represented for Hamlet and his family a threat to their security and the Catholicism of his upbringing. Wittenberg represented trouble, trouble, toil, and trouble.

Probably, Luther didn't nail anything to the castle church doors, but within a few months, using the then cutting-edge technology of the printing press, he basically was sending off a series of incendiary tweets.

Why was he doing it? What was behind this? And I think one thing that's really helpful to remember is that the reformers, Luther and his pals and those who came after him, were first and foremost pastors.

And the question they were concerned with was how could people, the people who were alive then, how could they receive a lively faith and so be saved?

Or as the last thesis puts it, how could they be confident of entering heaven? Now that is exactly the same issue as in Crete 1500 years earlier that this letter to Titus is addressed to.

[4 : 48] What do the people of Crete need? So they change, so they can be saved. The whole of the Roman Empire in the first century AD was divided into lots of regions, 36 different regions.

Each region had a capital city, a capital for its region. The region that included lots of North Africa had Crete, the island of Crete, the holiday destination today, Crete, as the capital of that region. It was a major trade hub, it was a centre for commerce and it was also a centre for piracy, for making a quick buck, for immorality with no strings attached.

Crete was like Ibiza on acid, a society out of control. Imagine that you were the Roman governor of Crete. You want to advertise Roman civility, how good it is to be part of Rome and a Roman citizen. You want to advertise all the benefits of Roman civilisation, but the reputation of the city that you run is, we'll look down to chapter 1, verse 12, this is the reputation of your city, your region, Cretans, that's not Cretans by the way, Cretans, people who live in Crete, are always liars, evil beasts and lazy gluttons.

[6 : 15] And the message of the church in a city like this was, well, what can you expect in a place like this? I mean, boys will be boys. Sailors will be sailors.

Travellers will be travellers. That's just what we're like. You can't stop us being what we are. Tell you what, the church leaders in Crete were saying, just do some religious things on Sunday and let's not worry about it.

That was their message. Excusing sin and imposing man-made rules. Repentance is old-fashioned. Move with the times.

As David Cameron told the Church of England five years ago, you've got to get with the programme. Recognise the realities of contemporary life. That's just how things are. But Paul is not content with that.

He doesn't want to see churches in Crete being changed by the world around them. He wants to see the world changed by the gospel. He wants to see this centre for piracy and dodgy dealing.

[7 : 25] He wants to see it now become a centre for gospel proclamation, for gospel change. He wants this to be the place where you can hear how to be saved.

Where you can get certainty of entering heaven. And so he sent Titus to Crete. Titus is a man, he's his troubleshooter. And his mission, Titus, should you choose to accept it, is to sort this out.

If you look down to chapter 1, verse 5, he's to put things in order, bring some order to the church.

He's to establish this church, to give it some stability, to appoint a new church leadership.

And as we saw last week in chapter 2, verse 1, he's to teach certain things there. Sound doctrine.

Actually, if you look at the verse at the end of chapter 2, at the end of our reading, chapter 2, verse 15, you'll see that he is to exhort with sound doctrine and to rebuke with all authority those who oppose it.

And if you look back to chapter 1, verse 9, you'll see it's exactly what the elders are appointed to do. In other words, Titus is to do the very things that he's to appoint elders to do.

[8 : 41] He's to appoint elders who carry on doing the very thing that he's doing. And the reason why, the reason why Titus is to teach that is the theme that we've seen all the way through the last few weeks, chapter 1, verse 1, that the truth leads to godliness.

It's the knowledge of truth that leads to, that produces godliness. There's going to be, there's a kind of behavior, a godliness that will match up to the truth to sound doctrine.

Now, of course, there's always the truth, isn't it, that what we believe and how we behave match.

That's true for the guys in the second half of chapter 1, the people who were leading the church already in Crete.

They don't know God, so they're not godly. It's true for Titus and for all Christians that we do know God, so we will be godly. If we hold firmly to the trustworthy word, then we'll live that out in the kind of lovely behavior we were looking at in chapter 2 last week, the kind of behavior that adorns the doctrine, that makes a Christian look attractive.

Knowledge of the truth and godliness go together. Knowledge of the truth produces godliness.

Belief and behavior will always match. Now, last week in the first half of chapter 1, we saw that Titus is told, he's to tell people what godliness looks like.

[10 : 06] Remember all those different groups of people in the first half of chapter 2, dressing each group in turn, this is what godliness looks like. This week, in verses 11 to 14, Titus is to tell people the truth that leads to that godliness.

the truth that will be the engine for that kind of change. First half of the chapter, the godliness that the truth will produce. Today, the truth that will produce that kind of godliness.

So, I've got two headings today, you'll see on the sheet, and here's the first thing about that truth, and that is that grace has appeared. Look down to verse 11. The grace of God has appeared. We're talking about the first coming of Jesus. What did he come to do in his extraordinary kindness by appearing, by grace appearing?

Two things, and you'll see these on the sheet there. First thing is that he came to bring salvation. Grace saves. Look again at verse 11. When grace appeared, when Jesus appeared, when the goodness and loving kindness of God, our saviour, appeared, that brought us salvation.

[11:19] It brought salvation for all people. We sometimes talk, don't we, in Christian circles about how salvation is not by good works.

It's worth being clear that there's no such thing as salvation by good works. Those who talk about salvation by good works are actually talking about asking of God to accept us on the basis of unacceptable, sinful works.

salvation is not by good works, not because good works don't matter, they do, but because our works aren't good enough. We don't do good works.

We do the kind of things that verse 12 talks about, ungodliness, worldly passions. We had to be saved from them, not rewarded because of them.

And when Jesus appeared, he brought the salvation that we desperately need. Look again at the last two words of verse 11.

[12:24] That salvation is for all. I don't think that means for every single person. As if, oh, do whatever you like, it doesn't matter, Jesus is going to forgive us all anyway.

Now, I think it means for every single kind of person. You see, look at the verses that have come just before that we were looking at last week. All these different groups in society that Paul identifies one by one.

Old men, old women, young women, young men, slaves. Can you see all those different groups that he speaks to? And then here is the point in verse 11. When Jesus appeared, his salvation wasn't limited by gender, by experience, by social class, by any other line we might choose to draw in society.

The salvation that appeared that Jesus brought is for all types, for old men, for old women, for young women, for young men, for slaves.

There's a similar idea in verse 14 of our passage as well where it talks about Jesus Christ giving himself to redeem us and when he redeems us, verse 14, he redeems us, he purifies us now to be his people, his people, for his possession, belonging to him, identified as his.

[13:53] See, if I'm a Christian, my self-identification is not so much that I'm an older or younger man or that I'm middle class or that I'm educated or not or that I'm gay or straight or any one of the other 58 Facebook designations, no, I'm his.

Grace appeared and saved me and redeemed me and made me his, one of his people. See, look down to chapter 3, verse 3, I was foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaved to passion and pleasure, passing my days in malice and envy, hating by others and hating one another.

That was my identity. If I lived in Crete, I was, chapter 1, verse 12, a liar, an evil beast and a lazy glutton. But now that God's grace has appeared, now that the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour has appeared, when he saved me, when he brought salvation for all people, he made me into something, into someone completely different.

Grace saves. On the 26th of July, 1980, I was changed. I became somebody with a new identity. I was no longer what I had been, I now belong to another. I married Mrs. Stiles and I'm now her husband. I'm no longer the selfish, lazy, evil, glutton bachelor that I was.

[15:33] If you like, when she appeared in the aisle of Holy Trinity Church Eastbourne, she saved me from all that. That's the idea here.

When Jesus appeared, he saved me from all that and gave me an entirely new identity. I now belong to him. And secondly, when grace appeared, that grace, verse 12, trains.

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.

See, in verses 1 to 10, what we were thinking about last week, Titus is to tell people what a good life looks like. Now here, can you see this in verse 12?

Titus is to tell people what God has done in his grace that trains us to live that good life. Do you see how verse 11 begins?

[16:46] For, in other words, live like this, live like we saw last week because the grace of God not only saves us, but trains us.

When Jesus appeared, when the grace of God appeared, it became our personal trainer. Not a college lecturer standing at the front of the class, dictating notes to us, but a personal coach in the gym, somebody right alongside us, urging us, cajoling us, working out our personal training program.

And not the kind of coach who sneers at the person doing the initiation ceremony, joining the gym, that the coach looks at and thinks, huh, got my work cut out here.

Fat chance you'll ever be fit. And when I say fat, no, this is a trainer who is up for the task. task. In other words, you see, Paul doesn't just send Titus, the preacher, to Crete, he sends the gospel to Crete.

And the gospel is a trainer who takes on anybody. And yes, that even includes the people of Crete. grace will take on the old man, the grumpy old man, the mean old man, and train him, chapter 2, verse 2, to be sober-minded and dignified and self-control and loving and steadfast.

[18:25] Or verse 3, it'll train, grace will train the older woman who's a bit too keen on the gin and free her from her addiction. turn her from bad mouthing people to teaching people.

So that younger women who are perhaps strong-willed women, perhaps, are now going to change to submit to their husbands, verse 5.

Yeah, grace can train them too. And perhaps most surprising of all, verse 4, it can take the out-of-control young men of Crete, the drunken and the promiscuous, and bring them under control, to be self-controlled, Holy Spirit controlled, and so on.

Training the least likely, the ungodly of Crete, the cheating Cretans, training them, verse 12, to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, training us to say no to the first half of the verse, and yes to the second half of the verse.

No to this world and its passions, and yes to live for him as his possession. And even slaves, verses 9 and 10, right if you like at the bottom of the social scale, they are so changed that they are now people of the king, trained to live for him.

[20:15] There's a story told of the late queen mother when her children, the princes Elizabeth, now our queen of course, and princess Margaret, when they were young and they were going out on a visit somewhere, the queen mother would remind them beforehand, remember, royal children have royal manners.

In other words, a reminder that their behavior should match their status. Status first, behavior next. Who we are?

Members of the royal family of the universe. others. We are now, end of verse 14, his. And who we are trains us to behave in a way that matches.

Remember, royal children have royal manners. Grace trains. And that is why in chapter 3, verse 8, Titus is to teach these things, to insist on these things, these gospel truths, this truth, so that, end of chapter 3, verse 8, those who believed in God will devote themselves to good works.

Teach the gospel, Titus, and the gospel will change people. Those believing it will live a godly life. love. This is the way to turn the useless layabout of Crete into somebody useful.

[21:56] Do you see how he puts it at the end of chapter 3, verse 8? To make somebody profitable. Previously, chapter 3, verse 9, people might have been unprofitable, but now they've been changed.

The gospel will make me useful. It will train me. Now, let's be clear. Paul is saying more than just being a Christian must affect the way we live.

He's saying more than that. These Christians needed radical change, something that would stop them being like everybody else who lived in Crete, something that would change them from the infamous national Cretan character raised.

And Paul is saying the power for that change is in the gospel. Grace trains. How does that work? Well, exactly how the gospel produces godliness, we've got to wait till verse 5 of chapter 3, where we get to the word regeneration or rebirth.

[23 : 08] I'm guessing part of how that works is something that's true in our own experience if we're Christians. Isn't it the case for those of us who are Christians that we think God has been changing us, is changing us?

We probably don't think we're anything much more than a work in progress, if we're honest. That's why we still need to be taught chapter 2, verse 1, isn't it? We still need teaching.

That's why we need chapter 2, verse 15, somebody who's still going to declare and exhort and rebuke us. We still need lots of training. In fact, if anything, we probably think we're worse than we used to think we were, if we're Christians, don't we?

The gospel's made us see we're more of a sinner than we imagined. But there is a work going on. Training is going on. That is our experience, isn't it?

that grace is training us. But I still want to ask how that happens. So let me try this as an idea on you.

[24 : 18] That as we think about any part of the gospel, God works change in us. So for example, look at the beginning of verse 14.

We hear about Jesus giving himself for us. His self-giving. And that trains us to be self-giving too. It shames us about our selfishness. It holds in front of us another way to be. It says, look at Jesus who gave himself. You give yourself.

That's grace training us. Or we read verse 13. And we read about waiting for our blessed hope, waiting for the return of Jesus.

Can you feel the pull of that even as I say it? Can you feel him motivating you to wait for him, to be ready for his return even as we talk about it?

[25 : 18] So we've been thinking in our service today, saying words and singing songs, helping us to think about, hasn't that been God's grace at work, training us to be thinking about and living for the return of Jesus?

Or we see in verse 14 what his purpose is, that he's made me his new Israel, his new people that belong to him, that are zealous of good works.

And just reading that, seeing that here in verse 14, shouldn't that be making us as one of his people decide to be more zealous to do the good work he intends.

We hear it and it trains us, not just to think that's interesting, but to want to do that, to be that. Now of course there are times when we have to tell people what a good life looks like as well, and that's what verses 1 to 10 are doing.

But do you get the point of our verses today? That if we want to grow in godliness, if we want to be trained, verse 12, to renounce ungodliness and to live self-controlled, upright, godly lives, to live as chapter 2 verses 1 to 10 describes, if we want to do that, then what do you need?

[26 : 45] You need to know the gospel better. You need to fill your minds with Jesus. You need to focus on grace. So, for example, this week, I'm going to learn chapter 2 11 to 14 off by heart.

You might like to join me in trying to do that this week. As a way to help me focus my attention on the appearing of God's grace and his glory, as we're going to see in a minute, to think about what it means to be God's purified people.

And I'm thinking, learning it off by heart, making those words go round in my brain this week, that grace will train me. I guess we'd all much rather read a Bible passage that tells us how to live.

So much easier to understand, isn't it? The application is obvious, but this passage says if you want to grow, if you want your heart and your will to develop, if we want a godly character and not just rules, then we need the grace of God more.

saving us and training us. Why do we say no to ungodliness? Because Jesus has redeemed us from ungodliness.

[28 : 03] Why, in the second half of verse 12, do we say yes to godliness? Because Jesus has purified us to be a people zealous for good works. In other words, the truth leads to godliness.

Thinking about the grace of God, the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior, Jesus Christ giving himself, that will train us like the personal trainer alongside us with our personal training regime.

Renounce that, control that, be zealous for that, because the grace of God has appeared. So grace doesn't mean that what we do doesn't matter.

It does. Works do matter. God purified us so we be a people zealous to do them. He's training us by his gospel of grace to be like that, zealous to do good works.

But there's one other thing to say too. We've seen that verse 11 says that the grace of God has appeared, grace that saves, grace that trains, grace that will appear.

[29 : 17] But look at verse 11 because there's another appearing in these verses as well. The appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

So not only grace has appeared but glory will appear. We're waiting for the glory of God that will appear. And this is talking about the return of the Lord Jesus in all his magnificence and brightness and undeniable authority and rule.

Glory will appear. Now what this means is that we live between these two appearings doesn't it? Between the double appearings of Jesus.

Between the appearing when Jesus gave himself as Redeemer and when he'll return as Saviour. That's what verse 12 calls the present age.

The present age is after the appearing of the grace of God and before the appearing of the glory of God. Those are the two red letter days in God's war calendar.

[30 : 28] The first and second comings of Jesus. The first and second appearings of Jesus. So looking back to the cross and looking forward to the second coming.

Those are the crucial marker posts for my Christian life. We like to think we're very important in the middle don't we? This is the moment when we live.

That's the terribly significant moment in the history of the world. Us here and now. That's what really is noteworthy. But God's diary planning is taken up with Jesus and our diaries should be too.

We look back to when the grace of God appeared and we wait for the moment when the glory of God will appear. And just as grace should motivate us so glory should motivate us too to live a godly life.

We're moving house in four weeks. Let me tell you that future date the 24th of November and the glory of 30 Oswyth Road that controls all our days.

[31 : 39] All the lists of things to be done that lie on our kitchen table at the moment. Decorate this, plan that, let so and so know. That's the event that motivates everything.

The appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour Jesus Christ, waiting for that event, that should dominate everything else. It's interesting going back to that.

quotation that John began with, you know, what is certain in life? Death and taxes. Well, taxes are certain, but death isn't. There are going to be millions of people who won't die, who will still be alive when Jesus returns.

The appearing of Jesus, the glory of God, that's certain, more certain than our death. I don't know whether you saw this weekend Justin Welby writing in the evening standard.

in celebration of the Reformation and looking back to the theses banging moment of Martin Luther and referring to the achievement of the Reformation.

[32 : 48] The great achievements of the Reformation, according to the Archbishop of Canterbury, were we now enjoy personal choice. There's been the development of the concept of the nation-state. There's been a flourishing of arts and sciences literature.

There's been economic development in terms of finance and banking. No, no, no, no, no, he's missed it completely. Wittenberg became the centre for gospel proclamation.

That's what happened. The grace of God that brings salvation. Not the church that controls it, but the grace of God that brings salvation and that trains us to live a godly life.

The grace of God that is the engine for change, for training us in this present age. And Paul writes to Titus to say establish that in Crete.

Proclaim the grace of God that brings salvation and that trains us. Proclaim the appearing of God's grace, and the appearing of God's glory.

[34 : 03] Let's pray as we end and ask that that would, that truth that we've considered today would produce godliness in us. We thank you so much, Heavenly Father, for your grace appearing in the person of the Lord Jesus and for the moment of your glory appearing in the return of the Lord Jesus.

And we thank you for grace that saves us and that trains us. And we pray for one another today that the knowledge of this truth that we love and we want to proclaim Godliness in us.

Godliness in us. Please train us. Please change us. Please may that gospel truth that Martin Luther proclaimed, stood for, may that be the engine for change in our own lives for the glory of Jesus.

We ask it in his name. Amen.