

# The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 13 August 2017

Preacher: Bob Akroyd

[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn for a few moments together. We're going to read again that final verse from chapter 3 of Titus in verse 8. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

These things are excellent and profitable for people. As you read through these three letters, as I mentioned, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, the author uses a device to knit them together.

Because five times he identifies trustworthy sayings. Now we know that the whole of the Bible is trustworthy, the whole of the Bible is true.

But what Paul is doing here, he doesn't have the benefit of highlighters, but just like you would use a highlighter. You're studying, you're preparing for a test, and you need to highlight certain passages in the book that you want to remember.

Certain key points that are critical to the subject or to the examination or to the essay. And that's what Paul does in these five places. And if you get a chance, you can read through 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, and you'll see the five trustworthy sayings.

[ 1 : 21 ] This is the fifth and the final of those sayings. And what Paul does, and what he underlines here, is that what we must have in our lives, and this is absolutely essential.

That's why Paul says, I want you to insist on these things. And you see, Paul addresses this great issue of faith and work.

Because over the history of the church, many confusing ideas have been put forward as to how we bring these two great themes together.

Well, Paul makes it quite clear that we must believe and we must do good works. These are absolutely essential.

You cannot have one without the other. So you cannot be a person who has faith, and that faith finds no expression. You read the letter to James.

[ 2 : 23 ] James makes it quite clear that faith without works is dead or empty or in vain. And the audience that Paul is addressing here, there are those, and you see this back in chapter 1 of Titus, there are those who profess to know God.

They say the right things concerning God, however, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

So we must have faith. We must have trust. We must believe in God. We must believe in Jesus. We must receive the gospel by faith. But by receiving the gospel, we must then produce in our lives the fruit of the gospel.

Or as Paul says here, good works. And what he's saying is quite remarkable. Because the context is striking. Paul is sending Titus to a place called Crete, and he's there to minister.

He's there to appoint leaders. He's there to preach the gospel. He's there to develop and to grow this young church. He's there to preach the truth.

[ 3 : 37 ] He's there to identify and to preach against evil or falsehood. And he's there to proclaim the message of Jesus so that men and women can hear and respond and live.

But notice the contrast because he says in verse 8, the trustworthy saying that he insists on, is that he wants there to be a people who both have faith and who are devoted to doing what is good.

Now Paul contrasts that desire with what we are by nature. Just a few verses earlier, if you look at chapter 3 and verse 3, we read this ourselves.

Paul says this is what humanity looks like apart from God and apart from the gospel. Verse 3, chapter 3. For we ourselves. Notice how Paul uses that word we.

Paul doesn't say you, nor does he say me, nor does he say they. He says we are all in this together.

[ 4 : 44 ] We all share this common nature. We all share this common problem. We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others, and hating one another.

Now remember, this is what we are by our nature. And Paul says to Titus, what I want to see in Crete is a people who have faith and a people who are devoted to doing what's good.

So how can you go from verse 3 to verse 8? How can you go from a people who are characterized by everything that is against the good, against the right, against the pure, against the loving or caring?

How can you go from verse 3 to verse 8? Now specifically, the challenge is even greater because within this particular culture, and you see every culture has its own challenges and its own opportunities.

So there is the general statement of humanity, chapter 3, verse 3, but there's the particular challenge that Titus will find in Crete because in verse 12 of chapter 1, Paul says, So it's a very sharp distinction, the before and the after.

[ 6 : 27 ] Evil, lazy, liars, gluttons, brutes, a people who are devoted to doing what is good, a people who are zealous for good works, the before and the after.

And you think, how can I go from what we are like to what Paul commends us to be? Is this something I can do? Is this something you can do? Is this something we can do?

Can we produce this change in our hearts? Can we produce this change in our lives? How can the Cretans go from being liars, evil, brutes, beasts, and lazy gluttons to being a people who are zealous for what is good, who are eager to do good works?

I was reading this. I'm not often a newspaper reader, but yesterday we got the Daily Mail. I don't know if you saw this picture, but it's quite a remarkable picture. You've got two twins.

Well, I guess they do come in pairs of two. But you've got a twin on the right. I think his name is Jacob. And you've got Joshua on my left. Now, they're identical twins.

[ 7 : 34 ] You might not be able to see it well from where your vantage point, but Jacob has a huge head of hair and Joshua has no hair. You know, what you would expect from a one-year-old.

Now, the story goes on to say that Jacob has a problem with insulin. So he has to take a tablet so that his body produces less insulin. And the tablet that he takes is the tablet that's given to men who wish to grow hair.

So it has this two-fold effect. It can help reduce the production of insulin and increase the production of hair. And you look at this picture, at least I look at this picture, and I say, I look like this one.

I'd like to look like him. I'd like to be the kid that has the full head of hair. It's been a long time since I've had that much hair on my head.

And if you can tell me how I can go from here to here, I would love to know how to do that. I can't do that. I don't have... The hair on my head is little.

[ 8 : 36 ] The capacity for growing hair is less. But when I see a picture like that, it makes me think, how could I be a man now with a full head of hair?

Paul gives us that same picture, that same radical transformation from not being able to do what is good to being zealous and eager, devoted to doing what is good.

And he gives us two very clear and two very compelling explanations how we can move from the evil, liar, lazy, glutton, to move from those who are led astray, slaves to passions, pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others, and hating one another.

And the answer, you might not be surprised at this, the answer is first, Jesus Christ. How we can move from the before to the after, how we can move from being a people who are opposed to God, opposed to the gospel, to a people who embrace God, embrace the gospel, and then live this new and transformed life.

As you read through Titus, there are two gems, two nuggets of gospel truth that unpack for us how we move from the before to the after.

[ 10 : 00 ] first to chapter 2 and verse 11. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

God was not willing to leave us in that state. God would not leave us in that state of rebellion, in that state of hatred, in that state of living for this life and for its passions and for its pleasures.

God has done something definitive in human history and in the history of individual people. The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

So Paul is addressing this great event, the arrival, the appearing of Jesus Christ. We call it the incarnation. The word of God became flesh.

He made his dwelling among us. God sent Jesus on a rescue mission from heaven to earth to live a perfect life of righteousness, a perfect life of obedience, so that we, who were neither righteous nor obedient, could be rescued, could be saved, could be set free.

[11:16] And notice in verse 11 of chapter 2, bringing salvation for all people. The arrival of Jesus opens the door of the gospel, opens the door of heaven to all people, all nations, all backgrounds.

The arrival of Jesus means that the gospel now goes forth, not just to one people, not just to one place, but to all peoples, all tribes, all tongues, all nations.

The arrival of Jesus transforms mission to be a worldwide event. We have hints of that worldwide mission in the Old Testament.

The Psalms, the book of Isaiah, even the great promise to Abraham himself, the mission to Nineveh. Remember when Jonah brought the gospel to the Ninevites and the Ninevites believed and their threatened judgment was overthrown.

But now it's crystal clear. The message of the gospel, the message of Jesus, is now meant for all people. So the person of Jesus, the work of Jesus, is now brought to bear on the world and its people.

[12:32] But in verse 12, you notice that going from all people, we now are told in verse 12, of training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

The gospel is for all. All people. Men, women, boys, girls, young, old, rich, poor, from the north and from the south and from the east and from the west.

Doesn't matter what your education, what your background is, what your upbringing has been like. The gospel is there for you, whoever you are, wherever you're from, whatever your story may be, but the benefits and the blessings of the gospel come to us.

Now, who's us in this story? Training us, teaching us that we are able then to say no and to say yes. Well, the benefits or the blessings of the gospel come to those who respond to the gospel, come to those who receive the gospel, come to those who accept the Lord Jesus as Savior and as Lord.

[13:44] So the invitation is to all, but the benefits and the blessings are those who respond. If you remember the parable that Jesus told of the great banquet, the table was set, everything was now ready, all that was required were guests.

Some came and some didn't. Some had excuses and others willingly accepted the invitation. Those who accepted the invitation enjoyed the banquet and those that didn't went without.

They had the opportunity, they had the invitation, but for one reason or another they chose not to attend the banquet. They did not get fed. Those who did accept and those who did respond found their places at the table, at the banquet, and all that was provided was received and enjoyed.

So the gospel comes to all, but the benefits of the gospel, particularly the ability to say yes and the ability to say no, come to those who trust and believe in the Lord Jesus.

So Paul tells us that Jesus has come and Paul tells us that Jesus trains us to say no and to say yes. And it's interesting that he trains us to say no to that which we would otherwise say yes to.

[15:04] In our nature, we would say yes to ungodliness and worldly passions, but he teaches us to say no. And by our very nature, we would naturally say no to living self-controlled, upright, and godly lives, but by the grace of Jesus Christ, by the power of the gospel, we can now say yes.

We can live godly, upright, righteous lives in Jesus Christ. And in verse 13, we're told that we are waiting for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Now, if anyone tells you that the Bible never describes Jesus as God, you can take them to Titus chapter 2, verse 13, and there you see in black and white, Jesus Christ is Savior and God.

It is true that there are not many verses in the New Testament that specifically say Jesus is God, and the reason for that I think is obvious, because the whole New Testament says that Jesus is God.

You read on any page of the New Testament, whether in the Gospels or the book of Acts or the letters or the book of Revelation, you don't need to be told Jesus is God, you see it.

[16:24] You see him acting like God, you see him speaking like God, you see him doing the things that only God can do. You see him with the prerogatives that only God has, the authority that only God has.

So the whole of the New Testament declares that Jesus is God. When I was preaching, I would be preaching a lot in my church down in Edinburgh, and oftentimes during the service I would say to people that I'm from America.

And after a while, somebody said, you don't need to tell us that anymore. We know you're from America. You speak like an American. You act like an American. You dress like an American. You don't need to tell us you're an American. So in the New Testament, we don't need the scriptures to tell us specifically that Jesus is God very often, because every passage, every chapter, every book highlights and emphasizes this truth again and again and again.

Jesus is God. And we now live in between two bookends. The first bookend is the arrival of Jesus, the incarnation of Jesus, and the second bookend is his return, the second appearing of Jesus.

[17:35] We see that in verse 13, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. So if you're a Christian today, you live in between these two events.

Jesus came, Christmas. Jesus will return, second coming. In between, we live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives. We say yes to what pleases God.

We say no to what displeases God. We want to live lives that honor Jesus because of who he is and because of what he has done. And what has he done? He gave himself for us.

He redeemed us. He purified us. He wanted to create a people that were his very own, his own possession.

So he came into this world. He lived. He died. He purchased for himself and he purified for himself a people. And if you're a Christian, you are a member of that people.

[18:37] You are one of those people. And you are a purified people. You are a redeemed people. And you are his personal possession. He has paid a high price for you and for me.

And we, therefore, are to live lives that are full of good work, full of grace, full of zeal, full of love, full of light.

Because we have received his grace. We have received his goodness. We have been purified by him. We have been redeemed by him.

We, therefore, live lives that reflect the reality of the gospel. We do not live these lives to be redeemed or to be purchased or to be purified.

But having been redeemed, having been purchased, having been purified, we live these lives. And this phrase, good works, it's a very general term.

[19:42] And it's general for a reason. Because you can fill in that phrase, good works, with so many different things. Kindness, compassion, thoughtfulness, care, interest, kind words, kind actions, looking after people who are old, looking after people who are young, looking after people who are sick, looking after people who are frail, looking after people who are vulnerable.

You can fill in the blank. But good works are visible demonstrations of what is happening inside. The work of grace in your heart is real, but not visible.

What God has done in your heart, what God has done in your life, is not seen apart from the life that you now live. The words that you now speak, the kind gestures that you make, the caring, compassionate actions that you now do.

So what is invisible, but real, becomes visible, tangible, and real in your lives and in my life. So the first explanation for the before and after is Jesus Christ.

The second explanation is the Holy Spirit. And that second passage that we read from chapter 3, particularly from verse 3, verse 3, the negative, what we were, but verse 4, what God has done for us in Christ through the Spirit, but when the goodness, verse 4, and loving kindness of God, our Savior, appeared.

[21:18] What we were, what we now are. And the answer, of course, how we get from what we were and what we are, Jesus Christ, God, our Savior, appeared. He saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness.

The works do not bring salvation. Jesus brings salvation. Our efforts do not save His efforts and His efforts alone do save.

His work, not ours. His effort, not ours. His righteousness, not ours. So Paul makes clear what does not save us, but according to His own mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the

Holy Spirit.

This is what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit takes the work of Jesus and applies the work of Jesus to the human heart.

What does He do? He takes, first of all, He washes. Now, if we need to be washed, that means that we are not clean. The Holy Spirit takes the work of Jesus and we who once were dirty are now clean.

[ 22 : 35 ] Sin is like dirt. It makes us unclean. And the work of Jesus cleans us up. And it's the Holy Spirit Himself who takes the work of Jesus and takes the unclean and makes them clean.

Secondly, we see that the washing is associated with regeneration. Remember the words of Jesus to Nicodemus? Nicodemus, do not be surprised at my saying you must be born again.

Unless you are born again, you cannot even see the kingdom, Nicodemus, let alone enter the kingdom. So regeneration speaks of new life.

Washing speaks of being made clean. Regeneration speaks of the dead now alive. The Holy Spirit takes that work of Jesus and applies the work of Jesus to the human life which spiritually speaking is dead in sins and transgressions.

The Holy Spirit makes us alive in Christ. He takes that which belongs to Jesus, applies it to the human heart, the human life, and no longer are we dirty, we're clean.

[ 23 : 47 ] No longer are we dead, we are alive. And then, we're told, and renewal of the Holy Spirit. We're no longer the old people that we once were.

We're no longer the way that we used to be. We're no longer living the way we used to live, thinking the way we used to think, speaking the way we used to speak.

That's the old. The renewal of the Holy Spirit means that he takes that which is old and makes it new. The dirty now clean, the dead now alive, the old now new.

He does a new work in our lives. So you see, this transformation from before to after, it requires the Son, the Savior, Jesus, to live and to die, to purchase for us redemption, to purify us as a people of his own possession, and it requires the Holy Spirit himself to take all that pertains to Jesus and apply that work to our hearts and lives.

You cannot do this. I cannot do this. But God can. And God has. So how do we respond? What do we do? Can we do anything?

[ 25 : 06 ] We've just been told that there's work that only belongs to God, that only God can clean, only God can make new, only God can bring alive. So how do we respond? What are we to do?

Well, the message of the Gospel is simply this, that we call on the name of the Lord, that we respond to him in faith. We cry out to him for help.

We turn to him, the one who alone can save. We turn to Jesus in faith. We have nothing to offer. We have nothing to bring. We have nothing that we can do, nothing that we have done.

We simply throw ourselves on his mercy, on his grace, on his promises, because whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

That when we turn to him in faith, we're told that God, he will in no wise cast us out. So that's why faith is absolutely essential.

[ 26 : 02 ] You must believe in God. You must believe in Jesus. You must trust. You must take. You must receive by faith all that is presented to you in the gospel.

The finished work of Jesus Christ. The ongoing work of Jesus Christ that he's not dead but alive. That he's not buried but he's ascended. He's at the right hand of God.

He is there interceding for us. We have one who is there for us. One who is present. One who is powerful.

One who is able. And one who is willing. So the message of the gospel comes today. Not to the pure but the impure. Not to the good but to the bad.

Not to the wise but to the foolish. It comes to people just like you and just like me. But the message of the gospel demands a response. It demands a reply on your behalf.

[ 26 : 58 ] All that Jesus has done. All that Jesus has purchased. All that he has accomplished is provided to you and all that you must do is respond in faith.

But by responding in faith your lives will never ever be the same again. The work of Jesus the work of the Holy Spirit means that the words that you now speak will be different.

The lives that you now live will be different. The goals the motivations the desires that you have will be transformed. That's what Jesus does. That's what the gospel does.

At one point we were unfit for any good work but now by the grace and by the power of the gospel we are zealous for good works. We are devoted to good works.

We want to do things in our lives that demonstrate the reality of Jesus. And you might think these works are insignificant. You might think the kind words spoken.

[ 27 : 58 ] You might think the visit to that neighbor who needs your help or support isn't worthy of mentioning but Jesus knows and he sees. He sees everything that is done in his name.

He sees everything that is said in his name and he will honor that work. We are told in another portion of Paul's letters that your labor in the Lord will never be in vain.

Will never be empty. So how can you experience the work of Jesus? How can you experience the power or the blessing of the gospel?

How can you experience this washing this regeneration this renewal? Well the answer is Jesus Christ and him crucified. Who he is what he has done and he is presented to you to all of you today but I can only give to you the assurance that those who respond only you receive the blessings and only you receive the benefits.

The offer is made but the provision can only be given for those who respond. The banquet is set the table is ready the places are there all you must do is respond in faith and you will receive all blessing you must respond to Jesus and your lives will be transformed and you will be a people who are his very own his own possession a people who are devoted to him devoted to good works and eager to do what is right.

[ 29 : 31 ] Doesn't matter what the past has been doesn't matter what you used to be like the power of Jesus the grace of Jesus changes human hearts changes human lives and the lives that we now live testify to the reality of Jesus to the reality of the Holy Spirit in our hearts in our lives what he has done and to him be the glory to him be the credit and to him be all the honor and praise may God bless his word to each of our hearts Amen