

Redeemed From Lawlessness

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[0 : 0 0] O God, we confess you are eternal, infinite, and unchangeable in your power and perfection, goodness and glory, wisdom, justice, and truth. Nothing happens except through you and by your will. You are our creator and our sustainer. Amen.

Well, please turn in your Bible to the book of Titus. Titus chapter 2 verses 11 and 13. Titus chapter 2. The title of the sermon is Redeemed from Lawlessness. Redeemed from Lawlessness.

Without God's preserving grace, did you know that without God holding everything in place, this whole world would be in lawless chaos? Can't you feel that? Can't you feel that the world, society, the city of Denver, it's on the brink of disaster always. Isn't that so true? Well, we're not the first ones to have that strong sense. In the book of Judges chapter 21 verse 25, we're told in the time where women were abused and we hear one horror story after another, that in those days there was no king. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Can you imagine what chaos that would be if everyone were permitted to go out into this society, into our town, our community, near our children, and do what they thought was right in their own eyes all the time?

That's what the world would be if it had no king, no God preserving and looking over this world. Well, on the heels of such a horrible dark picture, we hear a song that's on the heart of one redeemed by the prince, a person, in this case, a princess, who has been redeemed by this glorious, powerful king.

We read this in Psalm 45. My heart overflows with a pleasing theme. See, she just can't wait to get these words off her lips. And here's her confession.

[2 : 3 2] You are the most handsome of the sons of men. Grace is poured upon your lips. When you speak, it's gracious. Therefore, God has blessed you forever. Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one. In your splendor and majesty. Can you picture Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation, the sword attached to the thigh of the warrior as he comes for battle to rescue. In your majesty, ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness. Let your right hand teach your awesome deeds. Well, church, you need to know that this same promised redeemer, the anointed savior and deliverer has made himself known to you, church. You can know the king. And when you know King Jesus, it changes everything. Aren't you glad we have a king? We are rescued as his church from the madness of the world. Let's read our text for today. Titus chapter 2, beginning at verse 11.

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.

This is the word of God. Well, the outline for today has three parts. First, what redemption means. Second, why you need it.

And third, how it changes everything. What redemption means, verse 11. Why you need it, verse 12. And how redemption in Christ changes everything, verse 13. So first, what redemption means. Let's read verse 11 once more. For the grace of God has appeared. The word here could be translated, it has blazed. It has shone. A spotlight from heaven has marked it out. The grace of God, bringing salvation for all people. What redemption means. We're going to highlight these two words, grace and salvation, to understand what redemption means. First of grace. The grace of God has appeared. And it has brought, we're told in verse 11, it has brought generous, far-reaching salvation.

Now, your understanding of grace depends on your understanding of merit. You see, what we understand about grace could be easily distorted if we don't understand justice and merit correctly. Justice is getting what you deserve. Isn't that true? Children understand justice very well. A child understands when someone steals something that's theirs. That is not right. Give that back. That was mine. I deserve to be able to keep what I have in my hand. If you take it away, the child feels that they know that was unjust.

[6 : 10] But our sense of what we deserve is also twisted, isn't it? Justice also means getting what you deserve. And what we deserve before a holy God is nothing good. See, there's no good news in Jesus until we accept the bad news of what we truly deserve. Another way to put this word, to deserve something, is merit, to merit. Merit means fulfilling what has been required of you. So it's implying that there is a stipulation. There is a standard that you have to meet. And if you fulfill what's been set before you, then you merit the reward. You might have heard of a student working really hard, a young scholar, and they know that if I can get A's and B's, I will make the merit roll. See, I get this piece of paper that I earned because my grades showed my hard work. That's to merit something. The condition or the standard is set ahead of time and your labor will earn you that reward. Now, there's no opportunity for someone to merit something or even to know if you're getting what you deserve unless that standard has been set. And so in that sense, the idea of merit or deserve, getting what you deserve, it has to be bound to a covenant. It has to be tied to a relationship with a standard.

So appeals to justice will neither merit nor justice. It can exist apart from a covenant. You can't understand merit or justice without covenant. So now that we have those ground rules in place, we can tackle the next question. Well, then what is grace? What is grace? And you might have heard that grace is God showing favor when it's not deserved, showing favor when it's not deserved, you know, withholding, withholding what was deserved would be mercy, but then giving something good, something positive to the one who has not done anything to earn it as grace. But in fact, that's an incomplete story. Grace is actually the favor of God given not to those who have simply not merited it. It's the grace of God, we're told in the Bible, given to those who have de-merited it.

They have actually brought on the wrath that the sanction of the covenant requires. And on top of not being punished, they also receive the favor of God. So the doctrines of grace are all bound up in God's covenant revelation, how God has revealed himself to all mankind. And that's why the coming or the appearing, the first blazing of Jesus Christ is so important. In the book of Hebrews, we're told that this promise has been there all along, but finally in these latter days, finally, Jesus Christ has been the one to bring it to fruition. He is the final and full revelation of God.

And what is the salvation that Christ brings to all the nations, to all people? Well, literally, this word salvation, it could be translated as really the effect of salvation, and it's used in the singular. So it's one singular saving act with a far-reaching effect. And it's something that has been fully accomplished, because all you can do is be in the wake of it. So he has blazed the way of salvation by grace. He has the light from heaven has shown down on Christ. He has fully accomplished all that the covenant required. That standard, that high standard for holiness has been fully satisfied in the life of Jesus Christ. And now what salvation means for you, if you hide yourself under him, you jump behind this trailblazer, and you benefit from his trailblazing path, you can now know that you have a safe and sound salvation. If you're following Christ, you are alive, and you are well. You are protected from the blizzard. He is your snowplow. You get behind him, and the way before you is smooth. In Christ, you can be whole. You can be intact. And our verb here describes the act of preserving the condition of grace. You are saved fully and finally because of the work of Jesus Christ. He has repaired what was broken, and he has found what was lost. You see,

Jesus Christ came to save you. And when God came in the form of a man, and he lived the life for you that you could never live, and he died the death and shed his blood for you on that cross, he took on the crown of thorns, becoming the very picture of sin of one who is under the curse for you because he came to actually save you, not hypothetically create the possibility that you could now earn your salvation. He came because he redeemed you. You have been set free from the bondage of sin. You belong to Christ. He didn't just create that possibility of salvation.

[11 : 40] He accomplished your salvation. And that's true for every single person who will believe from any nation, tribe, and tongue. It doesn't matter your age, your education, your money.

It doesn't matter your background or what type of a life you've lived. What matters is that you believe in the work of Jesus Christ for you. That's what redemption means.

You have been purchased by the high price of Christ's own blood. Well, number two, why do you need this redemption? Let's look at verse 12. Training us. He's training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives. So first, Paul writes here to Titus that what we need to renounce is ungodliness and worldly passions. You need to renounce it because you were born under those things. See, you were born with the curse of death on you. You were totally depraved, totally twisted in your thinking, in your heart, in your every intention. Ephesians 2 says, you were dead. You were spiritually dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked.

Following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. That's who you were. And if you are not in Christ, that's who you still are. See, you have to renounce those ungodly and worldly passions because they indwell you. They are on the inside. That's what you will lust after unless you're in Christ.

But here's the good news. That same spirit of God who spoke the world into being and brought order out of chaos, that spirit of God trains those who Christ saved. Remember, the importance of the work of Christ to actually save and redeem you. Here's the promise for you. He doesn't just do that and tease you with it. No, he makes it yours now. Ephesians 2 says, but God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. By grace, you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him. This blows my mind. We're seated, present tense, with Christ in the heavenly places.

[14 : 36] Verse 7 of Ephesians 2, so that in the coming ages, we're always looking to the age to come, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Jesus Christ.

And here it is. For by grace, you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. Isn't that good news? It is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast.

You receive the gift of salvation by faith, not because you earned it, but because Christ earned it for you. That's good news. And that's why you need it. You now are no longer in bondage to Satan.

In Genesis 3.15, we have the first promise of the gospel. And listen, God goes on the offensive. Satan now has Adam and Eve under his spell and under the curse of God. And if God were to do nothing else, Adam and Eve and all those who would come after that, that includes you and me, we would always love Satan and hate God. But listen to this. God says to Satan, I will put enmity between you and the woman. See, the promise is that Eve would have this gift from God that Paul wrote about in Ephesians. Eve would hate Satan, not because she is super good and moral. No, because God would put enmity in her heart. And the promise then is that the seed of Eve, the seed of the woman would crush Satan's head and that the serpent would crush the heel. So from the very beginning, we have this hint of the mighty work that Christ will do in this battle against Satan. And from every generation, everyone who will believe in the promise, God will put in their hearts the need, the means to then walk with him. Because that natural desire to hate Satan is impossible. You will never hate Satan on your own unless God puts it in your heart. So those regenerated by the Spirit of God will now persevere in the faith. They will put off the things of the world and they will press on in Christ because the

Spirit of God perseveres and he preserves them. And that's why the life of the Christian is self-controlled. It's more upright. And you look at the people of God as a whole, they ought to be recognizably godly. They're in this present age. Yes, they're surrounded by the world on the brink of chaos, but they are preserved and they're made a little bit more each day, each month, each year in the likeness of Jesus Christ, the one who redeemed them. That's why you need this redemption. You're born under the curse. You need to be set free. You need to renounce ungodly and worldly passions.

[17 : 44] And you need the Spirit to carry you along. Otherwise, you'll never be self-controlled, upright, and godly. And that's what he has for you. He's preparing you for the age to come. Well, our final point is how does redemption change everything? How does redemption change everything? Verse 13, we're told, you are waiting for our hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. You're waiting for that blessed hope. I want to anchor in on those two words, waiting and hope. You're waiting. And this word could also be translated as looking.

You are accepting with foresight. I love that definition because it captures both aspects. You're waiting, because you've accepted what's to come. But you're also looking. You have that foresight of the future.

It's interesting that this verb, waiting, is given in the plural. It's a call for those that are in this age to together accept the struggles of this life, but also together keep an eye, keep that foresight, keep that looking to the second coming of Christ. He will come in glory with his Father and the angels of heaven. And you need to be ready for him that day. Now, what do we do as a church if we are to wait and look for Christ in this present age? Is our waiting more passive or is our waiting more active?

It's a big question, isn't it? Well, some can distort this either direction. I hope we, by God's grace, can learn and can follow closely what he has in mind for his people.

If we get too passive, we will not be about making disciples. We will not be fulfilling all that Christ has commanded. We will not be taking the gospel to the unreached people of the world. But if we are overly excited and active in that sense, maybe we won't even trust the means of grace in the church and we'll feel the need to get opinionated and involved in politics, although there's a place for that as citizens. But the role of the church is not political activity. That's not our role.

[20 : 05] The role of the church is to proclaim the true King of Kings, the one whose kingdom will last forever, for all eternity. Now it's passive. Passive because only God can usher in Christ's kingdom.

Only Christ can bring about the new creation. So in that sense, we simply receive the new creation. We become the new creation. He put a new heart in our lives. He's given us the spirit of the age to come, the Holy Spirit now dwelling in us, making his church a new creation. So we receive his work.

But the action that we perform is this. We are the ones that he causes to behold Christ. See, his spirit is the one that opens our eyes, that enlivens our imagination and our longing for the future. It's the spirit that's training us. And the verb is in the continuous sense. He's constantly training us. So we're active and responding and following the lead of the spirit.

Now, he causes us to believe and he works his hope in us in the plural, together. Because these are the ordinary means of grace. We come together as God's people. And we wait together every Lord's day. We rest. That's our passive receiving him. We rest knowing that his work is finished. And his new creation has been inaugurated. And his kingdom will come fully with the new creation of the age to come.

We rest in him together. And we also spur one another on. We also enliven our imagination by proclaiming the gospel, by celebrating another baptism in the church, by celebrating the Lord's supper week after week together. So that's our action. We behold Christ together every time we gather. Isn't that a beautiful truth? And that's how we wait. And then the last word I want to draw your attention to is the word hope. The appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior. That's our blessed hope. When Christ returns, he will set all things right. Now, hope is not something wished for.

[22 : 20] You could say hope is something that is worked out. Here's what I mean. We live in a time where people think that if you wear a t-shirt that has a message on it, you know, just have faith, be a good person, do your best, you know, or maybe just the vague word hope. Okay, hope in what? Is it just a hope in something better? Hope in a vague future? Or is hope something that you can actually work out?

And the biblical meaning of the word hope is the latter. It's something that is to be worked out. So you could even say that hope, and this is to emphasize how different I think we view this in the West in an age of instant gratification. Hope is really more in the biblical sense, a calm and unceremonious or maybe unemotional even comprehension of something that is known to exist at the end of a process or path. See, in the biblical sense, this hope is to be received as something you can know for certain without seeing it, but you believe it's going to come at the end of a process because you've worked it out and come to that conclusion. Now, because of the curse of sin, no man without the work of the Spirit in their heart can come to that conclusion on their own.

But for the Christian, we ought to open up our Bibles. We ought to dig through, pour through all of God's revealed word. And by doing so, we're working out our hope.

We're understanding that the promise that we have throughout all the Bible and this hope, this longing for the future coming of Christ, it's something we can expect. And it's really what's necessary as the end of everything, as the end of the church, as the end of creation, the whole process of redemptive history, the path that we see before us, it all points to Christ and his ultimate kingdom, the new creation. In that sense, the author of Hebrews said, biblical hope or even the word certainty, that type of hope is two things. It's the confirmation of things not seen and the knowledge of things hoped for. You can know what you hope for because Christ has already given a sufficient confirmation now. Well, what was the pouring out of the Holy Spirit? When we have the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that's caused us to believe, that's opened our eyes, that's a confirmation to us of the hope we long for in the future. We have a knowledge now. Our experience and our understanding and our view of Christ in the Bible now, by beholding him together, it confirms all that we can't see. And it confirms to us, look, the end of this process, the end of this path for the church will be satisfied in Christ. It will. So let me ask you today, what is your hope?

You can only have one true hope in life. Did you know that? And that's why the Heidelberg Catechism has ministered and been a blessing to Christians from every generation for the last five, 600 years. Here's what the first question says to that answer. What is your only hope?

[25 : 48] That I am not my own, but I belong to Christ. Do you know that you belong to Christ today? Here's how you know that. Here's how you hold on to a biblical certainty, a biblical hope.

Because Jesus Christ has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood. See, my sin deserves death. And God created a picture of forgiveness with the Day of Atonement in Israel.

And the blood of the sacrifice would substitute for the death deserved by the sinner. And Jesus Christ came as the Lamb of God. And when He shed His blood, it was in substitution.

The wrath of God must be poured out. This world cannot go on in chaos and the King remove His hands from it. No, God rules from the highest heaven and He punishes evil.

And your evil, your sin, has been punished on the cross of Jesus Christ. Your atonement is definite. Jesus has set me free from the tyranny of the devil, the Catechism says.

[27 : 07] And His Spirit makes me willing. I never was before, but now because of His Spirit working in me, I am willing and ready from now on to live for Him.

That's why we look to Jesus Christ as our great Redeemer. And His redemption changes everything. He is our only hope in life and in death.

I want you to see one last time together as God's people. The glorious King Jesus as He is beheld once again in Psalm 45. The same psalm we started off with.

And I want you to know that the book of Hebrews, chapter 1, verse 8, tells us that this psalm is to be interpreted in reference to Jesus Christ. He is the one that's described as glorious.

Psalm 45, verse 6. And when you behold King Jesus, church, here's what is preached to you.

[28 : 27] Behold Him. Hear, O daughter. That's you, the bride, the church. And consider and incline your ear. Forget your people in your father's house. In other words, don't love and live for this world.

And the King will desire your beauty. And here, the promise to you, church, the King will share His glory with you, His bride. All glorious is the princess.

That's the church. The ones sought after by the King. Redeemed and salvaged out of the chaotic world. With robes entered, woven with gold and many colored robes.

She is led to the King. With her virgin companions following behind her. There's a picture of the church kept pure for God. With joy and gladness, they are led along.

And they enter the palace of the King. Well, picture the church marching foot in front of foot. Spiritually being adorned.

[29 : 28] Being preserved. Being preserved. Even through martyrdom. Even through attacks. Through slander. Even through lost jobs and sickness and cancer.

The church marches on with gladness. As they enter the palace of the King. You are redeemed, church.

You are redeemed from lawlessness. Longingly wait for King Jesus as you march toward Him. Let the Spirit draw you.

And this is our prayer, Father. That you will be glorified by the purity of the church. That we would keep our eyes on Jesus Christ. And that your Spirit would transform.

And change everything in our lives. So that you will be glorified. And that you will prepare us for eternity. In your courts. The palace of King Jesus. Forever. Amen.