

How Grace Trains Us

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[0:00] Well, let me begin by thanking you for your very warm welcome and apologizing for my insufficiently exotic accent. I am coming to you from Jackson, Mississippi, but I'm not from Jackson, Mississippi, but isn't it an encouragement? I hope it is to know that you have brothers and sisters on the other side of the world praying for you this weekend and trusting in the same Savior and rejoicing in the same good news.

Now, if you would turn with me once more to Titus chapter 2 and to the portion of Scripture that was read just a few moments ago, we're going to focus our attention on verses 11 through 14.

Paul has, in the first half of this chapter, exhorted through Titus, or taught Titus how he is to exhort, the Christians in Crete in a life of godliness, and he addresses different segments of the congregation, younger men and older men, older women, younger women, slaves, even Titus himself.

And now in this second half of the chapter, Paul points us to the grace of God by which we are enabled to live a life that is well-pleasing in his sight.

Here's the secret of living in practical Christian obedience, the secret of living God's way.

[1:32] Paul describes it in five ways, five things he says that grace does. First, he says grace appears in verse 11.

Then he says grace offers in the second part of verse 11. Thirdly, grace trains in verse 12.

Fourthly, grace expects. That's verse 13. And finally, grace redeems. In verse 14.

So these are the five things we're going to think about tonight. Five things that grace does. This is how grace works in the lives of all who receive it.

Grace appears. Grace offers. Grace trains. Grace expects. And grace redeems. Before we look at those five things, would you bow your heads with me again as we ask for God's blessing on his word.

[2:37] Let us pray. O Lord, our God, your word is now open before us. Our hearts are open before your gaze. We ask for the presence and blessing of the Holy Spirit.

As we read it, as we meditate upon it, granted we may hear a voice behind us in our ears saying, this is the way, walk in it. Indeed, may it be that some who are dead in their sin might hear tonight the voice of the Son of Man and live.

Do all this by this portion of your word for the glory of your name. Amen. Titus chapter 2 at verse 11. This is God's word.

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.

Amen. Let's look at verse 11 first of all. And the first thing that grace does. Grace, Paul says, appears. Verse 11.

[4:17] For the grace of God has appeared. That word appeared is important. We get our English word epiphany from the Greek word translated here as appeared.

An epiphany is a revelation, a disclosure, an unveiling. If you have an epiphany, you suddenly come to realize something you had not seen before.

It's used in the New Testament, especially to describe either the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in his incarnation, his virgin birth, his life and death and resurrection, or with respect to his final return at the end of the age, he will appear again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

Back in 2 Timothy 4, verse 8, Paul spoke about those who love Christ's appearing, talking about Christians characterized by a longing to see the day when the clouds will part and the trumpet will sound and the Savior will come.

These are his epiphanies, his appearings. There are two. His first appearing, his first epiphany, when he was born of the virgin and laid in a manger.

[5:37] And there is an epiphany still to come when he comes in glory. And both of those epiphanies are actually here in this passage, aren't they?

The first is the epiphany of grace in verse 11. And the second we'll come to later on in verse 13 is the epiphany of glory. The appearing, the epiphany of the grace of God in verse 11 is, of course, talking about Jesus' first coming.

His virgin birth, his earthly life, his ministry, his sufferings. And the epiphany of glory, verse 13, is our blessed hope, the final advent of our great God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ at the very end of the age.

And so right now, Paul says Christians are living between those two appearings, these two poles, between his first and his final return. In what verse 12 calls this present age.

Crucially, the first appearing, the first epiphany, the incarnation, the first coming of Christ is the epiphany of grace. That means it is grace that characterizes this present age in which we are currently living.

[6:59] Paul might have said here, the Christ of God appeared. Or he might have said the Son of God appeared. But what he actually said is the grace of God has appeared.

In his first coming, it was not the wrath of God that appeared. It was not the condemnation of heaven that appeared. It wasn't the final reckoning that appeared.

When Mary was delivered of a baby boy and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in the manger, it was the grace of God that appeared.

And from that moment on, this present age has been the age of grace. It's not yet the age of glory. It will one day be when our Savior comes.

That has not yet appeared. But this is the age of grace. The grace of God has appeared. I wonder if you're sometimes tempted to have the wrong idea about Jesus.

[8:11] Perhaps you think of him as stern and cold and aloof and distant and uncaring, standing back from you with arms folded and a frown on his face.

That's not how Paul speaks about him here, is it? He says, when Jesus came, grace appeared. Grace embodied in Jesus Christ.

Jesus is all grace. Grace for sinners. Grace for strugglers. Grace for sufferers.

Grace for you. Grace for you. Grace appears. That's the first thing that grace does. Grace appears. When Jesus stepped onto the scene, grace came.

And then notice the second thing that grace does. Grace appears. Secondly, grace offers. Look again at verse 11. The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

[9:28] When grace appeared, salvation was brought. And it is salvation, Paul says, that is for all people. The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

That means there is no class of human being excluded from the salvation Jesus came to offer.

Oh, but I'm not the kind of person that Jesus would invite to be saved. Jesus is for other people, not for me.

No, the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people. This salvation is for you.

But I'm not really all that terribly religious. I don't have a church background. I've not read the Bible.

[10:33] Salvation can't be for me. What does Paul say? The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people. There is no qualification to that statement.

This salvation is for you. But you don't know what I've done. What I've said, how I've lived. You don't see the twisted thoughts of my heart.

My past is just one long litany of wretched rebellion. I've been hateful. I've been selfish.

I've been spiteful. I've not been faithful. I've not been pure. I'm a drunk. I'm a liar. There's a long trail of wounded people and broken relationships behind me.

Jesus can't be for me. I don't fit in around here. The Word of God does not agree with you. The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

[11:46] This salvation that Jesus brings is for you. Jesus Christ is for you. You're not too old to come to Jesus.

It's never too late for him. You're not too young to come to Jesus. You don't need to wait until you reach some imagined age of discretion before he'll welcome you.

You're not too bad to come to Jesus. There is no sin, no amount of sin, that can make him rescind his unconditional offer, his free invitation to you.

Maybe this is your first time in the church for years. This text says you are welcome to have Jesus for your Savior just as you are right now here tonight.

Without any other condition or prerequisite being met, you can have him. He offers himself to you.

Maybe you've been here every time the doors have been opened for decades.

[12:59] But you know in your heart you've been living a lie this whole time. You've been a terrible hypocrite, praising his name with your lips while worshipping at the altar of self.

Even now you can come to him. This salvation is for you.

You'll find him ready and willing tonight to save you. Whoever you are, you need to know you're not a special case.

You are not a special case. You are not a unique exception to this rule. The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

You can point to nothing in your circumstances that will exempt you from Jesus' invitation. Nothing that can excuse you from the response it demands from you.

[14:07] You cannot disqualify yourself for any reason from the class of those to whom Jesus makes this offer. I like the way John Rabbi Duncan, the great free church missionary to the Jews in Budapest in the 19th century, once put it.

He said, the Christian gospel says to us all, sir, you have no right to go to hell. You cannot go there without trampling on the Son of God.

That's part of the message here, isn't it? Jesus has done everything needful. Every provision for sinners like me and you has been made in him so that anybody, anybody who wishes may come and have him and be saved.

And so there's no escaping the implications of this, is there? There's no excuse that will let you avoid the claims and the summons of the gospel.

It goes out to all people. The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people. And that means you. You must answer the summons.

[15:31] You must accept this offer. You have no right, no excuse, no justification to validate refusal.

You can point to nothing about yourself or your background or your environment that will exempt you. No, the Lord Jesus Christ himself extends this invitation to you to come to him and to be saved.

To refuse, says Rabbi Duncan, is to go to hell trampling on the Son of God. He, Jesus, as it were, puts himself between you and the gates of hell.

He's pleading with you not to go there. And so if you do go there in the end, after hearing his invitation, you go there willfully.

You go there trampling on the Son of God in order to walk through those dreadful gates. And if I can say it kindly, not only is that the epitome of wickedness, it's the height of folly when tonight, here, Jesus offers salvation that he came to bring for all people.

[16:59] Why delay? What reason? What valid excuse do you have that you will stand before God on the last day and present to him as your compelling case for your rejection of his Son who shed his blood that sinners might be saved and then offers that salvation to you?

And you said, not today, not now, no thank you. Grace appears, grace offers.

Won't you accept grace? Grace appears, grace appears, grace offers. Thirdly, grace trains. Look at verse 12, please.

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.

Now, think about that word, training. The Greek word translated in our English version as training means to instruct, to teach. our English word pedagogy comes from this Greek word.

[18:34] If you talk about pedagogy, you're talking about a classroom, aren't you? It evokes the picture of a teacher standing maybe at a blackboard, pupils in their desks with their textbooks open, scribbling down notes as the teacher imparts knowledge.

That is not at all the picture that Paul intends when he says that grace teaches, instructs, trains us. It's not just about the imparting of knowledge, information like a teacher in a classroom.

No, when grace comes into your life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the pedagogy of grace, the teaching of grace does much more than that.

No human teacher can do in us what grace does when grace teaches us. You see, God's grace actually forms us.

By his word and spirit, Jesus rewires our appetites, our desires, he reprograms our wills, he empowers our resolve so that we begin to follow an entirely new course.

[19 : 47] Earlier, we heard the excuses of someone who might argue that he's too bad, too twisted, too hopelessly locked into sin to be welcome to come to Jesus or be saved.

And I was trying to press the wide welcome of verse 11 upon such a person. Salvation, Paul says, is for all people. But here, do you notice, here's the full extent of the wonder of the offer and invitation that Jesus is making to us when the most twisted, sin-enslaved pagan comes to Christ and the grace of God that brings salvation erupts into their heart.

Grace moves in, as it were, and begins a renovation project. We had a couple in our church back in Mississippi who recently purchased a new home.

But the situation is a little unusual because of their unique circumstances of both the buyer and the seller. An accommodation had to be reached.

So that the old owner could stay in the house for, I think, maybe about a month longer. Well, the new owners actually began moving all their possessions in and started painting the walls and renovating the house.

[21 : 20] It was, I understand, an entirely chaotic experience for everybody involved, but I think it's a good description, actually, of what is happening in the heart of everyone who accepts the offer that grace makes and comes to embrace the salvation Jesus brings.

The old tenant of sin and self still resides at this address in my heart.

But a new owner has taken possession, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he's already moved in and has begun renovations right away.

You might think your sin is so bad you can't come to Jesus, but what you need to understand is that it is sinners that he wants to come to him.

It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

[22 : 35] You come to Jesus with your sin intact. You can't come any other way. Try to clean yourself up, you're just spreading the muck around. That's all you're doing.

No, you come to Jesus guilty, helpless, and vile. He wants sinners to come to him, and when they do, grace moves in.

He moves in and begins a renovation project. His grace trains us to renounce the old life and to embrace a new life.

Notice how it does that. Look again at verse 12. There's a negative turning away from certain things, and a positive turning to certain other things.

Do you see that in the text? Negatively, Paul says, grace trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly desires. Ungodliness, there is a kind of catch-all term for a life that is oriented away from God, lived in opposition to the will of God.

[23 : 46] Worldly desires, on the other hand, speak more specifically about the deep motivations of the heart. They get behind an ungodly life to the hard wiring that drives it along.

Ungodliness is the whole life. Worldly desires are the roots of ungodliness in our passions, our lusts, our longings, our appetites.

And when grace comes, it enables us to turn from that. Not ever yet this side of eternity, perfectly, and yet really and truly, and more and more grace helping us.

We turn from those things. We renounce them. That word renounce, by the way, is important for at least two reasons. First of all, it tells us this turning away from sin is a conscious, purposeful act. He's not talking about some sort of passive, automatic change. When grace breaks into your life, you will change. But that change takes place by God's grace renewing your will in such a way that you actively, deliberately, turn, purposefully, intentionally, from your sin.

[25 : 12] It's not a matter of letting go and letting God. It is a determined resolve, a decision you make every day and again and again, day by day, to say no to all of that as the temptation comes, as the old habits entice, as the muscle memory that led you down into paths of disobedience kicks

back in.

You say no purposefully, decisively, and you turn your back on the old life. And this word renounce is important for another reason. The original has a connotation of a public, open decision, an action we take with public consequences.

Not just a private, internal, known-only-to-myself decision, but one that people can see. One lexicon translates it as to make manifest not to know.

So to decide not to know that stuff anymore in my life, but not just to decide not to know it, not to live in it, not to embrace it, but to make it manifest, to make it clear to other people that I have made this decisive change.

Jesus uses this word in Luke 12 at verse 9. He says, whoever denies me before men, that's our word, whoever denies me, whoever renounces me, whoever makes manifest that he does not know me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

[26:54] There's a before men-ness, a public open, obvious component to turning from sin to Christ and to new life in obedience to him.

How often have you made private resolutions in the quiet of your own conscience? I'm just, I'm never, I'm never going to do that again.

And those resolutions haven't lasted much longer than the end of the day, have they? But grace, when it erupts into our lives, brings a change of conviction, a new trajectory that can't be hidden. It doesn't just make us want to do the right thing, it empowers us so that we more and more do the right thing for the glory and praise of God.

God. And then notice the positive things that grace produces. So the negative things are ungodliness and worldly desires and we renounce them, but there are positive things.

[28:03] Instead, we begin, Paul says, to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age. Self-control is a key word if you read through the letter to Titus, it comes up again and again, especially in the first part of this chapter actually.

It's a characteristic mark of a child of God, born again by grace, growing self-control. Martin Lloyd Jones once famously said that so much of our trouble comes from listening to ourselves instead of talking to ourselves.

That's involved in self-control. Taking yourself in hand and saying, stop thinking about that, stop saying that that way, embrace these things, whatever is good, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is praiseworthy.

Think on these things. Why are you downcast, O my soul? You're talking to yourself. You're taking yourself in hand. Self-control. You're not simply saying that's just the way I am.

I can't help it. No, self-control is a mark of a child of God. And grace produces uprightness.

[29:13] It shares the same root as the word for righteousness. It means a life of growing conformity, alignment with God's revealed will in his holy word.

You begin to look more like Jesus in gentleness! In kindness! In purity!

In sacrificial service and love. And then there's godliness. Godliness is sometimes translated piety. You love his word.

You love his praise. You love his people. You hate what he hates and you love what he loves and you want to be more like your savior and you want to be with his people and you delight to take his name on your lips.

It's what grace does in our hearts. And here's the thing. This is what Jesus is offering. This isn't a high bar and he says okay here's my standard.

[30:13] If you jump it I'll meet you on the other side with grace. No he says this is my gift to you sinner. Broken down wretched guilty ashamed.

You just come to me and I'll begin to do this in your heart. Who wouldn't want it to have the king of kings move in and make the broken down hovel of my heart into his royal palace renovating me and making me new.

When grace trains us it's not like a royal marine drill sergeant when you can't climb the wall and you can't finish the race and he gets in your face and screams no no no no no fail but grace doesn't do that.

Grace comes instead and puts strength in your weak knees and feeble arms and helps you put one foot in front of the other in the long hard road of obedience to your savior.

Grace appears in person as it were in the Lord Jesus Christ when he first came and so grace brings salvation for all people. Grace offers all of this to you and when you embrace the offer grace renovates changes trains us to live a new life.

[31:42] And fourthly grace expects look at verse 13 please. Grace appears in Christ it trains everyone it saves and those it trains Paul says are found waiting for our blessed hope the appearing of the glory of our great God and savior Jesus Christ.

Here's the second epiphany we talked about at the beginning do you remember the first epiphany was his first coming the first appearing here's the second appearing the second epiphany the first was the epiphany of grace this is the epiphany of glory we wait Paul says with eager expectation for the appearing of glory because we live in the grip of grace Paul calls it our blessed hope he doesn't mean a feeling in the heart of hopefulness the blessed hope of a Christian is an objective thing it is the coming of Christ in majesty and glory to bring his work to final completion and all the ransomed church of God will be saved to sing forever and to sin no more!

sick anymore won't it be wonderful to have the great reunion with those who have gone ahead of me the saints in glory who are waiting won't it be wonderful when the grime and filth and pollution and brokenness and rebellion of a lost creation will be made new and there will be a new heavens and a new earth that's what I often think about those are promised to Christians as part of our blessed hope but they're not the center of it not the focus of it what is it we're waiting for not the great reunion as glorious as it will be not the final end of sin in my life as wonderful as that will be not the new heavens and the new earth the home of righteousness as breathtaking as they will be what is our great hope it is the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ whose glory will shine with dazzling majesty and fuel our songs forever don't you find it easy as a Christian sometimes to drop your horizons down and down and down until they're focused actually not on his glorious appearing but almost entirely on yourself so if you're like me from time to time you do some personal inventory you're in the trenches!

battling with your sin and frustrated with your lack of progress you measure your Christian life sometimes people ask you tell me about your soul and you respond by talking about your quiet time am I reading my bible every day am I praying am I seeking God every day those are good and right and proper things of course they are but Jesus is nowhere in my inventory list I'm only thinking about the things that I am doing the boxes that I am taking the disciplines that I've cultivated where is Jesus my eyes are not fixed on him I'm engaged in navel gazing have you been navel gazing!

[35:40] lately this text is their eyes to the hills where does my help come from my safety comes from the Lord the maker of heaven and earth look up and away from yourself to your savior look with longing expectation for the great day when you will see him face to face what is it that cousins made in her hymn that the sands of time are sinking putting together little phrases from Rutherford's letters the bride eyes not her garment but at her bridegroom's face I will not gaze at glory but at my savior's face not at the crown he giveth but at his pierced hands the lamb is all the glory of

Emmanuel's land our eyes will never leave his lovely face and it is a mark of a child of God even here in this veil of tears that they are longing to see him waiting for the appearing the epiphany of the glory of our great God and savior Jesus Christ if you're navel gazing you're looking in the wrong direction and you know as well as I do I'm sure that's the best way to crash I did some internet digging when I was writing this sermon and found that the United States National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says driving at 55 miles an hour while texting for five seconds is like driving the length of an American football field with your eyes closed as a consequence in 2024 more than 3,000 people lost their lives because of distracted driving they were looking in the wrong direction this text is saying if you're looking at yourself more than you're looking up and away from yourself to Jesus who's coming in glory is our great and blessed hope you're looking in the wrong direction do not be surprised if you crash grace appears grace offers grace trains grace expects and finally grace redeems look at verse 14 this great God and Savior who's coming we're waiting for is the one who gave himself for us Paul says he's talking about the cross isn't he there at the cross the son of God loved us and gave himself for us he's inviting us back to Calvary to trace with him the blessings that flow to us from Jesus blood shed for us having told us Jesus brings salvation now he takes us to its very source the spring from which salvation flows look at the text first

Paul says he gave himself to set us free he died to redeem us from lawlessness to redeem means to buy back and to set at liberty a slave held in bondage it's a striking phrase though isn't it redeem us from lawlessness there were false teachers on the island of Crete Judaizers legalists and they

were worried that Paul's gospel of free grace led to lawlessness they thought they were the obedience guys and Paul was the one all this grace talk is dangerous it's going to undermine obedience but Paul says here when grace really comes when salvation erupts into your heart flowing from the cross of your dear savior comes freedom from lawlessness sometimes we think actually lawlessness is freedom don't we to live however we please unconstrained! by God's law but maybe you're here tonight and you've learned by bitter experience that living life on your own terms a lawless life is actually a life of slavery and bondage empty and hollow and now perhaps at last you're ready for freedom free indeed having been redeemed set free by the Lord Jesus Christ he gave himself to set us free Paul says secondly he gave himself to purify us again think about these Jewish legalists they thought the way to get pure was by external observance of the ceremonial law of Moses but Paul says back in chapter one of this letter at verse 15 whatever ritual purity they were claiming for themselves their hearts still remain defiled but [41:17] Jesus blood can do what nothing else can do he can make you clean really clean ritual purity external religion all it can do is make you look the part it can never touch your heart but Jesus blood Jesus blood will make you truly clean at last a clean conscience a clean heart clean hands that you might ascend the hill of the Lord and have fellowship with your saviour his blood can make the foulest clean that's what's on offer in the salvation Jesus grace brings to all people freedom purity thirdly he makes us treasure verse 14

Jesus gave himself to redeem us and purify us for himself a people for his own possession we become his prized possession his cherished inheritance His treasure! treasure! How deep the Father's love for us how vast beyond all measure that he should give his only son to make a wretch his treasure! Treasure! When you come to know the Lord Jesus he does not simply tolerate you he doesn't allow you in the back door sit in the corner you're not really welcome but you're in you become his precious beloved child you're his inheritance! His possession that he cherishes he loves you! He loves you! You are unspeakably precious to Jesus Christ!

[43:37] Freedom purity treasure obedience Jesus death makes us obedient we've already talked about this verse 14 he died to make you zealous for good works do you see that phrase at the cross Jesus purchased holiness new obedience zeal to please him a desire to live for him!

is all in the gift of his nail pierced hands you don't stay away from him you don't hold him at a distance you don't look at him askance wondering if he could ever care for you listen to his invitation come to me you who are weary and heavy laden I will give you rest I will make you clean the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people and it will make you new it will renovate your heart it will change you forever and it will make you zealous for good works the Lord Jesus Christ promises to stand in the midst of his people that means he's here with us tonight by his Holy Spirit and he has been pleading with you to do business with him to come to him in repentance maybe for the first time maybe anew to come back to him because he has grace for you may

God give you grace to accept his invitation let us pray Lord Jesus we bow before you now and we bless your great name that when you came it was grace that came not wrath not judgment not yet but grace that came grace with a wide welcome for the least and the worst grace for us may

may may glory. Psalm 136 in the Scottish Psalter, the second version of the Psalm, Psalm 136, stanzas 1 through 6.

Praise God, for he is kind, his mercy lasts foray. Give thanks with heart and mind to God of God all way, for certainly his mercies doer, most firm and sure, eternally. Psalm 136, stanzas 1 through 6, and let's stand to sing.

[47:15] The Lord, O Lord, praise ye. For certainly his mercies doer, most firm and sure, eternally.

The Lord, O Lord, praise ye, whose mercy shall endure.

In what is only he, done born by his great power.

For certainly his mercies doer, most firm and sure, eternally.

Which God omnipotent, by might and wisdom high, the heaven and firmament, take him, as we may see.

[48:41] For certainly his mercies doer, most firm and sure, eternally.

To him who did a stage, this earth so great and wide, above the waters reached, making it to a height.

For certainly his mercies doer, most firm and sure, eternally.

And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God our Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.