

# Looking Forward & Backward

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Preacher: Taylor Hollingsworth

[ 0 : 0 0 ] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at [trinitygraceathens.com](http://trinitygraceathens.com).

Well, I want to invite you to go ahead and start opening up to Titus 2. That's where we'll be this morning. And as you're doing that, I just wanted to share this little glimpse into our hearts.

Last night, Elia, my daughter, four years old, realized that we were going back to Kentucky today. And she broke out into tears saying, I want to stay at my Tennessee home.

And we had to spend some time with her last night. Not because we hate Kentucky, but I think what she's expressing is our hearts towards all of you. We love this family. And we're eager to come back, open up our lives with you, and open up this word with you, and live in light of that.

So today we get a small opportunity to do that together. So if you'd look on with me at Titus 2, we're going to be in verses 11 through 14 this morning. And it says this, 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.

[ 1 : 4 8 ] What would you do to survive if you were dropped off in a remote area in the wilderness? What supplies would you bring if you were limited to only 10 items?

What resources would you try to find, and how would you prioritize them in order of importance? What would you do to maintain physical and mental health? Well, this is the basic premise, some of you know already, of the television series *Alone*, in which survival experts are dropped in some of the toughest locations around the world.

And the goal is to outlast one another in hopes of winning \$500,000. Be nice, right? Each contestant is provided with a satellite phone so they can tap out at any moment and call for a rescue team.

Many contestants tap out because of immediate, life-threatening dangers, things like turbulent weather injuries, encounters with predators like wolves, bears, cougars.

Sounds nice. Others, however, tap out because of more subtle dangers. One man found an ideal location to set up shelter near a freshwater stream feeding into the ocean.

[ 3 : 0 1 ] He knew he couldn't drink the ocean water because of the salt content, but the freshwater could provide a consistent water supply. Instead of boiling this water, he strained the water through some moss to help rapidly purify it.

Early on in the show, he was just so happy with his water supply and his rapid filtration system. However, after a few days, something strange began to happen.

The man started to have gut-wrenching cramps, shivers, vomiting, memory loss, and even hallucinations.

Because of the symptoms, he figured something must be wrong with his water supply, so he decided to walk upstream to check out his freshwater source. It wasn't long into the trek before he discovered large, dead, rotting fish lining the banks of this shallow, slow-moving stream.

Their decaying bodies filled the air with a pungent stench. I could even smell it through the TV. And it proved that the water was indeed tainted. He had already drunk two and a half gallons of water that very day.

[ 4 : 11 ] Worsening symptoms demanded that he call the rescue team. Upon arrival, the rescue team medic reported that his water filtration system was woefully inadequate. The man had unknowingly been drinking some residual salt water flowing up from the ocean, in addition to the tainted fresh water flowing down, which carried harmful bacteria and parasites.

What he thought was sustaining him was actually leading to his sickness. Even though we may not find ourselves in a reality TV show trying to survive, we do find ourselves trying to survive day to day as we live and make decisions that truly please God.

How will you parent? How will you handle conflict with your spouse? What will you do in the face of loneliness and loss? What kind of employee will you be?

How will you spend money? How will you define goals? What kind of reputation do you long to have and why? All of these daily decisions spring from a source, and the source makes all the difference.

So there's a cultural ocean of self-indulgence. It invites us to make decisions based on the lusts of the flesh. What we think will make us the most happy and free.

[ 5 : 35 ] Look within yourself and do what makes you feel good. If anything gets in your way, deem it toxic. If anyone says something different than what you think is best, just cancel them.

Maybe this ocean of lust is the more obvious one to avoid, but maybe a subtle saltiness from this source affects our decisions. Or we may feel strongly opposed to drinking from this cultural ocean.

Maybe we draw from a freshwater stream that tastes different from the culture. Perhaps we desire to make decisions based on biblical principles, discipline, and service.

But if we hiked upstream to trace our motivations, we may find our freshwater tainted with legalism.

At its core, legalism believes that we can earn or keep God's favor by what we do or what we don't do. When our victories become a personal source of pride and our failures become a sinking bog of despair, we are in effect telling God that our sufficiency is not found in Jesus, but in what we do or don't do.

[ 6 : 50 ] Our actions are tainted by the rotting stench of self-focused effort. So the ocean of lust says, indulge in the desires of the flesh.

The tainted stream of legalism says, indulge in the pride of the flesh by pointing out what you did or did not do. Though one is more subtle, both lead to soul sickness because they both hope in the flesh for fulfillment.

And the reality is that whether we're prone to drinking from that cultural ocean of lust or the tainted stream of legalism, we need help to live lives that truly please God. The words we have in front of us this morning were written by the Apostle Paul to Titus, a new pastor of a young church plant on the island of Crete.

Culturally, the Cretans had a reputation for being liars, evil brutes, and lazy gluttons. How do you like that reputation? That's a reputation that Paul readily agreed with in chapter one.

It was in this culture of self-indulgence that Paul had helped establish a new church. But now the church was under a new threat. False teachers. These false teachers belong to the circumcision party and they taught Jewish myths.

[ 8 : 06 ] This is seen in chapter one. Chapter three says that they argued about the law and engaged in foolish controversies. You ever heard that go on before? In short, these false teachers were distracting this young church from the gospel by turning their hope away from Jesus and toward their own works.

So Paul wrote this letter in order to remind Titus of his purpose, to establish elders to refute this false teaching. So even though this was written a long time ago to a church far, far away, the message is strikingly relevant for us today.

God has provided this letter for us this morning so that we can live the Christian life, not in dependence on our works, but in dependence upon the one who has worked on our behalf, Jesus Christ.

Rather than looking to ourselves, this text invites us to live in reality that Jesus has come and he will come again. So I believe the main point for us this morning is that to live godly lives in the present, we must look back at our saving grace and forward to our glorious hope.

We'll trace this out in two points. Look back to our saving grace, look forward to our glorious hope. And by looking to pass grace from Christ in his future glory, we can turn from the flesh and live godly lives full of good works that please the Lord.

[ 9 : 31 ] So if you would take a look with me at chapter two, our first point, look back at our saving grace. Chapter two, verse 11, it begins with the word for. For is a connecting word that leads us to see the reason for whatever was just said.

So what was just said? Well, Paul just included a series of practical applications for Christian living to be carried out by different believers in this church. So essentially, he's telling Titus a list of things for the Christians to do in the church.

If you've got an older man, teach them to do this. If you've got an older woman, teach her to do this. So at the end of verse 10, we begin to see a turn from that duty list to the reason for the duties, the motivation for the duties.

All of these Christian duties are rooted in the goal to last part of verse 10, to adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior. Having just come out of Christmas, I'm sure many of you decorated your homes with trees and lights and ornaments and all sorts of sparkly things.

That is the idea of adorning right there. It's strategically placing something beautiful in order to draw the eye. So what's being adorned here in this text?

[ 10 : 50 ] The doctrine of God, our Savior. Doctrine is the teaching or set of beliefs about God, our Savior. So Paul is effectively saying, all of these good works that you're doing are meant to beautifully accentuate and draw eyes toward this set of beliefs because, and then he's going to go on.

Fill in the blank. Now Paul is going to elaborate on the doctrine that fuels the motivation for Christian living. But if you were writing this letter, what would you have filled in the blank with?

What would have been the first thing that popped up into your mind? Live godly lives because it will help things go better for your family. Live godly lives because it will help you have a better reputation in the community.

Live godly lives because God did his part. Now you need to do your part. No, that's not where Paul goes. Paul knows that the primary motivation for godly living does not start with us, our reputation, our family, our effort.

Of first importance, we must see that godly living not only starts but is sustained by the grace of God. For the grace of God has appeared.

[ 12 : 16 ] Grace is that word for gift. An undeserved favor. Notice here it's not just any kind of grace but specifically the grace of God. It's a divine gift.

And this divine gift has appeared. Appeared is in the past tense. The appearance of this divine gift is something that has happened. In verse 13, we see that word appear used again.

Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. So in verse 11, the grace of God has appeared and in verse 13, there will be an appearing.

One is past oriented and the other is future oriented. But both of the appearances have Jesus in view. So the grounding for Paul's argument for godly living here is on the basis of these two appearances of Jesus Christ.

The first appearing directs our attention to a past event. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It's a finished work. It's good news of an event that has happened.

[ 13 : 21 ] It's on the basis of this divine gift, the past appearance of the grace of God that Paul can write to another church in the city of Ephesus. For by grace, you have been saved through faith.

And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one can boast. Paul is urging us to take our eyes off of ourselves and look back at the grace of God that has appeared.

But why? What did Jesus do in this first appearance? What did he accomplish? The grace of God has appeared, if you look at it, to bring salvation.

Jesus came in the world to save. For Jesus to bring salvation means that there must have been some kind of peril, right? If a man runs and sweeps an unsuspecting woman off of her feet in the grocery store, that dude's seen as a threat, right?

I hope so. But if a man is wearing a firefighter uniform and he sweeps a woman off of her feet and carries her out of a burning building, that dude is seen as a hero.

[ 14 : 35 ] So what's the difference? The difference is in the circumstance. There's something to be saved from, right? This is the claim our passage is making. Jesus has come bringing salvation.

How you understand your circumstance this morning will reveal if you see Jesus as a threat or as a hero. There's a claim in our lives from the creator of the universe.

He's utterly perfect and totally just. And this presents a problem because we are not perfect, are we? We have rejected his authority and attempted to live on the basis of what we think is good and right.

We've fallen infinitely short of the perfection he demands. We've stolen, lied, lusted, hated, coveted, and failed to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

So how can God be just and let rebels walk free, committing treason against the highest authority in the universe? Scripture makes it abundantly clear that God is just, but he is also gracious.

[ 15 : 47 ] And in order to spare us of the death that our rebellion deserved, he sent his perfect son to take our place. Jesus perfectly obeyed and surrendered his life at the cross, taking on God's just punishment against the sins that we committed so that all who might put their faith in him could be saved from the wrath of God against their sin.

For those who place their hope in Jesus, God no longer sees their sin but Christ's righteousness. But for those who reject what Christ has done and attempt to be made right before God based on their own work will fall short of God's standard and be held accountable for their sin.

That's why Jesus said in the conversation with Nicodemus in John 3, 36, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Through Jesus, God is both just and the justifier. His character is preserved. Justice is satisfied. And sinners like you and me can be set free from God's righteous judgment.

Instead of punishment this morning, he offers you forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Instead of wrath, he offers you the free gift of eternal life. John 3, 16, we're very familiar with.

[ 17 : 06 ] But look at 16 and 17 together. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. This was referenced last week, but R.C. Sproul's book, *Saved From What*, summarized the need of our salvation this way.

What do we need to be saved from? We need to be saved from God. Not from kidney stones. Not from hurricanes. Not from military defeats.

What every human being needs to be saved from is God. The last thing in the world, the impenitent sinner ever wants to meet on the other side of the grave is God.

But the glory of the gospel is the one from whom we need to be saved is the very one who saves us. God in saving us saves us from himself.

[ 18 : 10 ] So God saves us from himself, by himself, and for himself. For those who have only seen Jesus as a threat, I invite you this morning to see the dangerous circumstance of remaining under God's righteous wrath.

And I appeal to you to turn to Jesus as your Savior. You are welcome. And for those of us that are Christians, this is certainly a joyful reminder of the grace that has appeared to bring you salvation this morning.

Paul rightly fixes our hearts on what God has done for us by sending Jesus. Who can receive this divine gift of salvation? Who does it say here?

Look down with me. Who can receive the divine gift of salvation? The verse says that the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people. This is not teaching some kind of universalism.

I just want to be clear about that, that now every person is saved. Okay? This is it where God's looking and saying, ah, Muslim, that's kind of close. Or Buddhist, that's pretty good.

[ 19 : 21 ] Or how about the sincere spiritual person? That's genuine enough. I can see you're trying pretty hard. No, no, no. The standard's not earnestness. It's not religious effort.

The standard is perfection. That's what God's requiring. And all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Romans 3.23.

Every other form of spirituality, every other form of religion, at its core, is drawing from the tainted stream of self-focused effort. Our works are not sufficient.

That's why in Acts 4.12, Peter says, and there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

So we must not assume that if someone lives in McMinn County, he must certainly be a Christian. Or if a girl's family is part of a good church, then she must certainly be a Christian.

[ 20 : 25 ] Or if a guy's a pretty nice, honest business owner, he must certainly be a Christian. If people are depending on their works rather than on Christ's work, the wrath of God remains on them.

We must not make assumptions, friends. Christ's coming does not mean universal salvation. However, Christ's coming does mean salvation is universally available.

His grace is widely available exclusively through Jesus. After Jesus conquered the grave and just before he ascended, he sent out his followers to proclaim the good news of forgiveness through his sacrifice, saying, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the very ends of the earth.

In obedience to that command, the gospel traveled to the island of Crete that we're reading in front of us right now. Just consider for a moment the breadth of the offer of salvation by looking at the recipients of this letter.

The fledgling church in Crete was made up of Gentiles who had earned the stereotype of being, like I said, liars, evil brutes, and lazy gluttons. This rings with fleshly indulgence, doesn't it?

[ 21 : 45 ] Also, Paul specifically called Titus to guard against the legalism of those who followed the circumcision party. And what's more, if you glance, just glance through verses 2 through 10 of chapter 2, if you just skim through there, you'll see the list of people addressed in the church includes old women, old men, young men, young women, and even slaves.

In Paul's letter to the Galatian church, he writes, So let me ask you this, who is eligible for salvation?

The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for people with all kinds of spiritual vices, whose swing between lust and legalism.

The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to people of every season of life, from the young and ambitious to the old and reflective. The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for people of every sex, both men and women.

The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for people of different ethnicities, from every tribe, tongue, and nation. The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for people on every rung of the social ladder, from the influential to the nobodies.

[ 23 : 07 ] The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to the political elites, to the garbage collectors, to the married men, to the divorcees, to the doctors, to the chronically ill, to the Spanish speakers, to the good old boys, to the homeschool moms, to the store cashiers, to the insecure, to the drug addicted, to the tender consciences, to the thick scald, to the depressed, and to the anxious of heart.

The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation, not to those who have it all together, but to those who all together have a need of a savior. The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to you and to me.

Why would Paul draw our attention to the grace of God that has appeared in Christ's first coming? Why would he do that? How does looking back at his first appearing inform the way we live now?

Paul knows that we must regularly look back to remember the grace that saved us is the grace that trains us. Look with me at verse 12 here.

The grace that appeared is training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

[ 24 : 32 ] Grace is not a band-aid. We stick on until we feel better and don't need it anymore. Sin is not a paper cut. Sin is death.

We were dead in our sins, Ephesians 2, 1 through 3. So if you're a Christian, you've been brought to life by grace. And now grace is your oxygen.

You have been saved from death by grace in order to live by grace. We're not striving to live godly lives so that God will love us more.

God shows his love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. We're not striving to live godly lives so that God will condemn us less.

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8, 1. So if you're a Christian this morning, here's the scandalous reality for you. You are acceptable to God.

[ 25 : 33 ] You are pleasing to God. You are loved by God. God's very aware that you and I are not perfect.

He's very aware of that. If he expected instantaneous perfection, then how can we make any sense of teaching or ongoing training of any kind?

Matthew 28, 19-20. A lot of you are very familiar. The Great Commission. Jesus says, Go therefore and make disciples, make believers of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Why would there be the institution of teaching after salvation if perfect obedience was automatic? What's happening here?

Grace does not pick you up like a hitchhiker to get you a little further down the road and then drop you off and wish you good luck. No, God's grace is a committed grace that loves you too much to leave you where you are.

[ 26 : 42 ] God's grace is with us and it trains us. My daughter, Elia, has been learning to ride a bike with training wheels. Many of you have been there, remember that?

As she wobbles and leans, the training wheels help correct imbalances and error as she's still moving forward. The good news is that for us, our successes and failures do not determine our standing with God.

He is not far off standing there with his arms crossed at the finish line waiting for us to get up and go. No. Instead, we are experiencing his loving conviction and correction along the way as the training wheels of grace guide us forward.

For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and he chastises every son whom he receives. For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant.

But later, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12. So for the Christian, God's training grace is present to lovingly correct the wobble of sin in your life.

[ 28 : 02 ] When anger flashes through your heart, grace rebalances you toward kindness and forgiveness. When you're tempted to despair, grace rebalances you towards hope.

When you give in to judgmentalism and self-righteousness, grace rebalances you toward the undeserved forgiveness you've received and the righteousness you did not earn.

God's grace is a committed grace. He is not there to condemn but to correct. For we're not peddling to earn our place but we are peddling to learn in grace.

Look at the two things that God's grace is training you to do here. It's training you to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives.

The first action is a correction to something negative. Ungodliness and worldly passion. And the second action moves towards something positive, self-controlled, upright, and godly lives.

[ 29 : 13 ] This negative and positive is closely paralleled in verse 14. If you look at that, look at verse 14. Jesus gave himself to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

So something similar is happening there in verse 14. There's a correction of something negative, lawlessness, and the move towards something positive, purified, people possessed by God, zealous for good works.

But verse 14 is carrying a little more freight that helps us fill out what's being said in verse 12. So when Paul wrote to Titus to remind the church at Crete that Christ gave himself for them in order to redeem them from all lawlessness, Titus would have immediately recalled the story of the Exodus.

Remember the story? When God's people were slaves in Egypt, they had no hope of escape. But God did not leave them. God took the initiative to save them.

He demonstrated by signs his superior power over all earthly powers and counterfeit gods. The last of the signs was the death of the firstborn child in every home.

[ 30 : 25 ] However, if God's people demonstrated their trust in God's saving power, they would apply the blood of that sacrificial lamb to their doorposts.

So the judgment of death did not affect their homes if it passed over. Then did he leave them? When the Israelites were freed from the grip of Egypt's slavery, God did not abandon them.

Rather, he redeemed them and made them his own, saying this, you yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

God redeemed the slaves with a sacrifice and brought them to himself. He gave them the perfect law rather than lawlessness so that they could reflect the goodness of their saving God.

[ 31 : 34 ] Now, when Paul wrote to teach the church at Crete, he infused the language with these glimpses of God's past action to point them to the saving work of Jesus. Though the Israelites were freed from physical slavery, they were still slaves to sin.

They could not keep the perfect law. The people on the island of Crete here in our scripture, they could not keep the perfect law. You and I in Athens, Tennessee, we could not keep the perfect law.

But there was one who did. 1 Corinthians 5, 7 says, Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

John 1, 29, Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. So all who trust in God's perfect sacrifice, whether on the island of Crete or in Athens, Tennessee, may not experience the judgment of death anymore.

If you're a Christian this morning, you have been redeemed from the death of slavery to sin and lawlessness and have been made alive in Christ. You have been chosen by God to live a life that reflects his goodness.

[ 32 : 40 ] So when we look at verses 12 and 14 together, we can see the implications of both that negative and that positive. They're really two sides of the same coin. When we came to trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sin, we turned away from death of Godlessness and to the life of God fullness.

This is at the heart of what it means to repent, to turn from death to life. We do not just stop doing the things that led to death, that led to slavery, that led to sin.



We turn from those things that bring death and toward the things that bring life. And repentance is not a one-time action. It's an ongoing thing. So that ocean of lust and that stream of legalism used to promise us satisfaction, but it was a false hope that only led to death.

Now we know where to find living water in Jesus Christ, and he is the ongoing source of true life. So we continually come to him for help to do what we are unable to do.

Our saving grace is our training grace that continues what began at the moment we were brought to life in Christ. Spurgeon describes it this way.

[ 33 : 54 ] What the law could not do, grace is doing. The free favor of God instills, listen to this, new principles, suggests new thoughts, and by inspiring us with condemnation, guilt, no, inspiring us with gratitude, creates in us love to God and hatred of that which is opposed to God.

Happy are they who go to school to the grace of God. Christianity is not about keeping a list of do's and don'ts so that God will accept you.

Christianity is about learning to think and act out of gratitude for the God who already accepts you in Christ.

That's a big difference. In Christ there is an abundance of life so he is calling us away from dead things in order to truly live.

Look at Paul's call to believers in the Ephesian church. He says this, let the thief no longer steal death, dead things, but rather let him labor doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

[ 35 : 15 ] You see that? Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths. It's not just a stop, but only such as good for building up as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear.

One leads to death, one leads to life. He's calling us. This is wonderful news for us this morning. Your life no longer needs to be motivated by striving. Rather, new opportunities are provided for you every single day as you're being trained by the grace of God to adorn the doctrine of God your Savior.

So here's just a thought for application. You might be like, what are you talking about? Here's a thought. When you begin the new Bible reading plan 2021, start with this simple prayer.

Okay? God, I know that reading does not make me more or less accepted by you. Period. Jesus is my Savior.

Period. But I want to worship you because you love me and you gave yourself for me. Help me live today out of thankfulness for your grace.

[ 36 : 33 ] Amen. This is the same kind of prayer that can be laced throughout your day for different areas. Whether you're tempted to drink from the ocean of lust or that stream of legalism.

Maybe you're tempted to find your worth in the eyes of God or others through your parenting. You could pray this, God, I know that being the perfect parent does not make me more or less accepted by you.

Period. Jesus is my Savior. Period. But I want to worship you because you love me and you gave yourself for me.

Help me parent today out of thankfulness for your grace. Maybe you're tempted to find your worth in the eyes of God or others through your work. God, I know that my work does not make me more or less accepted by you.

Jesus is my Savior. But I want to worship you because you love me and you gave yourself for me. So help me work today out of thankfulness for your grace.

[ 37 : 44 ] Amen. Amen. Trained by grace. Trained by grace. In the famous hymn, Amazing Grace, former slave trader turned pastor John Newton begins the second verse with these words.

You're really familiar with them. T'was grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved. Have you thought about that? When the grace of God appeared in the life of the slave trader, he was awakened to the realities of the condition of his soul before a holy God.

Grace taught him to fear God and at the same time that grace relieved all of his fear. The verse continues with this reflection.

How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed. Newton did not behold the precious grace of God only to move on to bigger and better things.

His motivation for godly living was not I need to do more and I need to try harder. No, he looked back at the saving grace of God in his life.

[ 38 : 53 ] He reflected on the death that he deserved. Then he marveled at the grace of God that had appeared to save sinners like him. The same grace that saved him was continuing to train him so that his motivation for godly living was not his work but the work of Jesus Christ.

That's why in the overflow of his joy he wrote this. Tis grace had brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me where? Home. Isn't it interesting that Newton doesn't just sing about a moment of conversion?

He sings of the ongoing effect of grace that has brought him into the present and the same grace will lead him somewhere into the future. Home. To live godly lives in the present we need not only to look back at our saving grace but we need to look forward to our glorious hope.

Point two, look forward to our glorious hope. Look down with me at verse 13. There's a shift in emphasis to the future. While looking back at the grace that saves and experiencing the ongoing grace that trains we are waiting for our blessed hope.

So what's the difference between waiting and sitting? Waiting implies more than simply remaining in place or just the passing of time. Waiting has purpose.

[ 40 : 15 ] It means to stay in a place in expectation. The Christian life is a waiting life. That doesn't mean a life of inactivity at all.

It's not a life of boredom. Quite the opposite. As we've already seen the Christian life is filled with circumstances through which God's training grace is present. But as God's grace trains us we actively wait for an expected outcome.

Verse 13 says we are waiting for our blessed hope. You and I are always putting our hope into something. Alright? We communicate with the language of hope all the time.

I hope it doesn't rain today. I hope he's not mad at me. I hope there's something good to eat. A lot of you are thinking that now. I hope you have a good trip. Alright? What is the hope that animates your days?

What is the blessed hope that you are waiting for for this new year? Are you waiting for the blessed hope of college football? Are you waiting for the blessed hope marriage, good grades, recognition, vaccines, jobs, financial stability, political party?

[ 41 : 26 ] Or maybe you're just hoping that 2021 will not stink as much as 2020. Paul knows that where we're fixing our hope has massive implications for how we live.

Proverbs 13, 12 says, Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life. When our hopes are left unmet, we can become filled with anger, judgmentalism, apathy, regret.

Listen in as Paul Tripp helps us understand the nature of hope. It says this, I'm persuaded that the language of hope is on our lips so much because we live in a world where hope seems temporary or is often dashed.

In our work, in our families, as citizens, and in our own personal lives, we all deal with so much broken hope. It's not unusual for the thing in which we willingly placed our hope will fail us.

In fact, we get to the place where we're afraid to hope anymore because we're sure we'll be disappointed once again. and he meant our capacity but we can't stop hoping because God created our lives to be propelled and directed by hope and he meant our capacity for hope to drive us to him.

[ 42 : 37 ] Hope will never be found if you look for it horizontally. True hope is found only when you look for it vertically. Brothers and sisters, our passage this morning is aiming to help us fix our heart and our hope on the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

What does that mean? Didn't he already appear? Let me just talk about that. Didn't he come? Didn't he already save us from sin? Yes, Jesus did appear but this hope is hope of a future appearing.

Hebrews 9.28 says, so Christ having been offered once to bear the sins of many will appear a second time not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

So Christ's first coming was as a baby gentle and lowly relatively unnoticed by the world. Christ's first coming provided the way for sinners to be justified to be saved from the penalty of sin but Christ's second coming will not be quiet.

Christ will come again in full glory. the weight of his majesty will be resplendent. His presence will be explicit and globally captivating.

[ 43 : 56 ] Christ will come again as a warrior bringing the final judgment and final restoration of all things. Christ's second coming will provide complete deliverance not only from the penalty of our sin but from the very presence of sin.

On that day his just wrath against all rebellion will be poured out. On that day every trace of hatefulness lying murder theft abuse neglect addiction perversion oppression and injustice will be met by the holy and perfect justice of Christ.

On that day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. And on that day all will shudder at the revelation of our great God. Those who have trusted in their own flesh will prove to be tainted and will be rejected according to God's perfect standard.

But those of us who have been trusted to Jesus and his perfect work we will be invited not on the basis of what we've done but on what he's done and will be in the very presence of God for all eternity.

We'll be transformed in order to dwell in community with God and his people unobscured by the presence of sin. 1 John 3.2 says beloved we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared.

[ 45 : 14 ] 1 John 3.2 But we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

Everything everything that sin has broken will be mended. Every pain will be replaced by joy. Every disappointment that you faced will be replaced with lasting satisfaction.

Every moment of rejection and shame and isolation will be replaced with acceptance and honor and communion with the living God. Confusion will be replaced by perfect clarity.

Mystery will be replaced with full revelation. Disunity will be replaced by perfect harmony and every famished heart will be perpetually filled by an eternal feast with Christ our Savior.

There will be a second appearing and all wrongs will be made forever right. So where do you place your confidence right now? Where is your hope today? Our blessed hope can be fixed with unshakable confidence right now not because we've checked off 90% of the boxes on our Bible reading plan or prayed before every meal but because of the proven character and the past action of the one who promised to return.

[ 46 : 34 ] Jesus said in John 14 and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and I'll take you to myself that where I am you may be also.

I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you yet a little while and the world will see me no more but you will see me because I live you also will live. We can have confidence because of the one who made the promise has already given us proof by giving us his life.

He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people who are zealous for good works. So we are waiting for our blessed hope the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Spurgeon said it wonderfully like this we are living in the age which lies between the two blazing beacons of the divine appearances and we are called to hasten from one to the other.

We have everything to hope for in the last appearing as we have everything to trust to in the first appearing and we have now to wait with patient hope throughout that weary interval which intervenes.

[ 47 : 43 ] Perhaps the most vivid picture of this life between the two appearances of Christ comes from a period in World War II. As you know history records two very important dates towards the end of the war D-Day and V-E Day.

D-Day took place June 6, 1944 when the allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy, France. This was the turning point of the war.

Once this landing was successfully completed Hitler's fate was sealed. The war was essentially over yet total victory in Europe Day V-E Day did not occur until May 7, 1945 when German forces surrendered in Berlin.

This 11 month period is remembered as one of the bloodiest periods of the entire war. Pitch battles were fought throughout France Belgium and Germany although the enemy had been mortally wounded he did not immediately succumb.

D-Day and V-E Day served to demonstrate what's been called by theologians as the already and not yet of God's kingdom. At the first coming of Christ our freedom from the penalty of sin has already been secured and the kingly reign of God is already present wherever his people are.

[ 49 : 09 ] However the presence of sin in the world has not yet been eradicated and the kingdom has not yet come in its entirety. This will not happen until Christ's second coming.

If we applied that D-Day and V-E Day analogy to the biblical storyline we'd have to adjust our thinking a little bit because if you're like me you probably automatically envision yourself as a character on the good side.

That's where I just automatically go. But what if I told you the appropriate starting place to imagine yourself is actually as the enemy? We were all born as enemies of the king of kings.

We were anarchists refusing to live under his authority. We participated in the rebellion of sin against the king. we were lawless.

And in our lawlessness we trampled others to take whatever we wanted. Lust, envy, anger, self-pity, deception, thanklessness, jealousy, infidelity, pride, arrogance, self-indulgence, apathy, theft, lying and loving created things rather than the creator.

[ 50 : 18 ] As citizens of this world we did nothing but commit war crimes against the one true and good king. But our D-Day occurred when the king, Jesus, landed on our shores.

When he appeared he did not come to execute justice on his enemies. Instead he accepted the punishment for the war crimes committed by the enemies of his kingdom as if they were his own.

By his death the king satisfied the justice required against rebels. And on that day a new document was formed and extended to all all the enemies of the king that would receive it.

That document invited us to be forgiven of our war crimes and to exchange our death warrant! for a new citizenship in the kingdom of God. So getting this new citizenship we received a passport soaked in the blood of Jesus.

This was the price of citizenship for us. It's the only legitimate proof of forgiveness and it has nothing to do with what we've done and everything to do with what that king has done for us.

[ 51 : 34 ] We are citizens of his kingdom which has come in part but our VE day is still to come. Full judgment full restoration are on the horizon.

We're now living in a window of time between D-Day and VE day as citizens of the new kingdom. The exchange for our death warrant for the new citizenship has been secured by the sacrifice of our king but we're still living in enemy territory.

What are we doing now? We are being trained to live according to our new citizenship. Our temptation is to spend our days trying to earn our citizenship by making up for all of our war crimes.

But the king has already secured our citizenship. citizenship. We're reminded of his loving sacrifice every time we look at our blood-soaked passports he gave himself for us.

This is a new motivation. Every good work we do now is an opportunity to point other rebels to this good king. Every failure is an opportunity to turn from our old lifestyle the enemy lifestyle and thankfulness that we've been forgiven.

[ 52 : 42 ] In order to live godly lives in the present we look back at our past grace and we look forward to our glorious hope. If you're a Christian this morning you no longer need to drink from the tainted waters of lust and legalism because you have a savior who drank the cup of God's wrath on your behalf.

You are set free from condemnation and comparison. In your place condemned he stood and none can compare to him. You belong to Christ now.

You are his possession now. You are a citizen of his kingdom now. You have been redeemed not by your striving but by the sacrificial blood of Jesus. Your pardon is sealed and you are in right standing with God.

When you fail you can humble yourself and look to his victory. Failure is an opportunity to experience the convicting kindness of the Lord's discipline so that you'll experience fruit fruitfulness in the future.

And when you succeed you can humble yourself and boast in your savior. good works are no longer vain attempts to make yourself more loved by God or by others.

[ 53 : 51 ] Rather your good works spring from his past grace and the sure hope of future glory. John Stott described it this way. The best way to live now in this present age is to learn to do spiritually what is impossible to do physically.

Namely to look in opposite directions at the same time. This looking back and looking forward this determination to live in the light of Christ's two comings to live today in the light of yesterday and tomorrow this should be an essential part of our daily discipline.

We need to say to ourselves regularly the great acclamation Christ has died Christ is risen and Christ will come again for then our present duties in the home will be inspired by the past and future appearances of Christ.

Christ. So as you increasingly love him and long for him you will work in such a way that showcases his love before watching world. Your life will adorn the doctrine of our great God and Savior.

So if you are looking to make a worthy resolution for 2021 and for the rest of your life resolve to cherish the saving grace and the glorious hope of Jesus Christ more and more this is the source from which godly lives can be lived and as you drink from his grace the ocean of lust and the stream of legalism will begin to dry up until at last you come into the fullness of the blessed hope of Jesus a purified people for his own possession united with him forever.

[ 55 : 30 ] Let's pray. Father we are your people and we are grateful for our saving grace at your first appearing and we are looking forward to the glorious hope at your future coming.

Thank you for loving us so much not to leave us where we are and abandon us but to train us to discipline us to take us to the school of grace. Thank you that you are our righteousness and that every work that we do now whether in failing or in succeeding we have the opportunity to point other rebels to the goodness of our loving savior in whose name we pray.

Amen. You've been listening to a message at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens. For more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at Trinity Grace Athens dot com.