

The Grace of God

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[0 : 00] Please, if you would turn with me to Titus. So all the T's are together.

Thessalonians, Timothy, and then Titus. And while you're... While you're making your way there, we'll remind ourselves where we were last week in 1 Peter and how the Christian life is guarded by God through faith.

So the way God... One of the ways in which God protects you as a Christian in this world is by giving you faith and that faith guards you then through the various trials that you go through.

That's 1 Peter chapter 1. So here, this morning, we're in Titus 2, and I'm going to pick it up in verse 11 through to verse 14. And this is in relationship to the grace of God.

So now hear 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 a self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearance 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 the people for his own possession, who are zealous for good works.

[1 : 47] So there we have it. Titus 2, verse 11 through to 14. Let's pray.

Gracious God and Father, we would ask of you this morning that you would enlighten our mind with a view of forever changing our heart so that we would understand that you are purifying us this morning, that we are your possession, and that you are purifying us for yourself, and that we, in turn, would be zealous for the good things, the good works that you have given us to do.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Well, it goes without saying, but it has to be said, that the Christian life is a gift from God.

And like all gifts, you have a responsibility of how you handle the gift itself. You have been given something by God, and now that gift comes with responsibility.

In fact, I can't think of a single gift that God gives us that doesn't involve some form of responsibility that actually comes with it. We've been praying for the children this morning.

[3 : 03] One of the greatest gifts that God gives his children. However God gives you the child, he's given the child to you. And then, of course, that comes with huge amounts of responsibility.

And this, of course, where we need to know the difference between nurture and nature and wisdom, and most importantly, the promises of God. Because one thing that the Christian knows is that their life is not defined by their nature, but rather by God's promise.

And the Christian also knows that their life is not shaped by their old nature, but actually by the grace of God that God has given to them.

So in 1 Peter, we saw that God puts you through trials so that you would see the value of the faith that God has given you. When you go through a trial and you come out of the other end, and you do so recognizing that you still have faith in God, your faith has got you through it.

It is your faith because God has given it to you. But it is a gift from God to you that guards you through the various trials that you go through. And one thing that you need to understand more than anything else is the value of what God gives you.

[4 : 23] And how do you appreciate the value of anything that God has given you? Well, it has to go through periods where you recognize its worth.

Now, most of you have probably been in the situation where you have bought a pair of shoes and they've not been worth the money that you have spent on them. They fall apart within a couple of weeks.

And you think, well, what a waste of money that was. In other words, you've bought something that you thought, well, this seems like a good value exchange.

I am paying this amount of money for those pair of shoes. And you expect them to be able to hold up in respect to how much you've paid for them. But then there are some occasions where you know that you're buying rubbish, essentially, and you're not expecting them to last very long.

And then all of a sudden, they last a lot longer and you've got a bargain. You've got a good deal. So how do we learn to appreciate value?

[5 : 24] We don't appreciate value that well because we are poor judges of what is valuable and what is not valuable. We just don't know it.

Hence why God guards us through faith, through various trials, so that we would appreciate through the various trial, because we cannot do it any other way, the value of what God has actually given to us.

Well, in the same way, God gives you grace. And the grace that God gives you not only protects you like faith does, but it saves you and then it teaches you.

And this is one of the areas of grace that most people never seem to focus on as much as they should. That one of the key characteristics of a person having the grace of God in their life is that they're able to live a self-controlled life.

Self-control is the defining mark, it would seem, at least here in Titus 2, of what it is to be a recipient of God's grace.

[6 : 35] That you're able to live a self-controlled life. Now, too often, the grace of God is only ever seen by Christians as that which turns up in periods of failure.

But the grace of God here is not, in the context of failure, the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff, when everything has gone wrong and you have fallen, most of you understand grace is the ambulance that turns up to pick you up when you're down, to take care of you when you're broken.

That that is how most Christians would interpret and understand the grace of God to be. But here in Titus 2, the grace of God is not the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff, it is the fence at the top to stop you from falling in the first place.

So the grace of God that saves, the grace of God that picks us up, is also, and most importantly, the grace of God that is the fence at the top of the cliff so that we do not fall into failure in the first place.

Now this is really important that you understand this because it is always tempting for someone to call someone else not graceful when they're building fences rather than being the ambulance at the bottom.

[7 : 53] But you just don't care. Well, I am, but I've built all these fences and you've gone ahead and jumped them. You've jumped grace. And now you want the grace at the bottom of the cliff because you ignored the grace at the top of the cliff.

Why do you do that? So grace is not one-sided as though it only picks us up when we're down. It actually stops us, enables us to build those fences so that we don't fall in the first place.

And that, when you understand that, it then helps you to understand how you don't fall into other areas such as the difference between not being able to tell the difference between what is common and what is normal.

It is common, okay, it is common for divorces amongst Christians to be as high as it is amongst the unsaved.

That's common. It's not normal. If it's normal, you then expect it. If it's normal, you then think you can't do anything about it. It's a bit like teenagers falling away from the faith.

[9 : 05] Too many Christians in churches think that it's normal. It's not normal. It's common. And the moment you think it's normal, you then expect it. And then the moment you expect it, you then think you can't do anything about it.

It's out of my hands because it's just normal. It's not normal. It's common. But it's not normal. The grace of God, which turns up, builds fences so that those things which look normal don't happen because they're common but they are not normal for a life that has been given grace and can now live a life of self-control.

So the temptation that I have no control over it is a mistake. The grace of God in the context here enables us to live self-controlled lives.

We are able to tell the difference between what is common and what is normal. What is normal for the Christian who has been saved by grace is now able to live a self-controlled life.

and we can see this in verse 12 when we get to it. So here's really the summary of where we are. The grace of God is not just the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff picking you up when you have fallen.

[10 : 30] It is also the fence at the top of the cliff to stop you from falling in the first place and enabling you with enough self-control not to jump the fence. God is forever putting up fences and Christians think that they can jump over them and nothing will happen.

And you shouldn't do that. The fence is there for a reason. It is there for a reason. Now these failures is that we never get to see what is on the other side of the wall when we jump it.

Because we tend to think that the distance from the top of the wall to the bottom is the same on the other side as it is on the side that you are looking at it. And I can take you to a real life example of a boy in Newquay Cornwall who jumped over a three foot wall only on the other side it was a 30 foot drop.

So the height of the wall on his side protecting him from the 30 foot drop on the other side is what I am addressing here. The fence at the top of the cliff is protecting you from something far greater than the height of the wall where you are standing.

That is the grace of God. And this is how we see it in summary. So verse 11. In Titus 2 verse 11 you will notice that self-control is the defining mark of the grace of God.

[11 : 58] And the good works that are spoken of in verses 1 through to 10 with the older men the older women the younger women and the younger men all have one central virtue.

And that is that all of them because of the grace of God are now able to be self-controlled. The husband is able to be exercise self-control. The wife is able to exercise self-control.

The children the younger they are able to exercise self-control. Why? Well verse 11. The grace that saved us verse 11 which appeared bringing salvation for all people the grace it says is also the grace verse 12 that trains teaches.

So the grace that saves is the grace that teaches and it teaches us in such a way to enable us to live a self-controlled life training us to renounce ungodliness you're not jumping the fence there worldly passions you're not jumping the fence there because the grass is not greener on the other side and live a self-controlled upright and godly lives in the present age.

So the grace that saves is also the grace that teaches. And then goes on to say that the grace of God enables us to wait for the Lord who will return.

[13 : 19] Why? Because verse 14 we recognize that the one who saved us has purchased us so that we would be redeemed from all lawlessness that is we're not going against the standard of God and we are being sanctified or rather purified by Jesus Christ for himself because we are his own possession.

So God has bought us with the blood of Christ and then he cleans us purifies us for himself. He restores us for himself and in light of that we are then zealous for the good works and the good works as we see in verses 1 through to 10 is that older men are able to teach younger men.

That's what it looks like when an older man is full of the grace of God. He's able to take a younger man and say this is how to live for God. He's able to teach with what accords to sound doctrine.

That is what I expect of older men in this church and not because it's my expectation but because it is the expectation of God of anyone that he is given grace to.

So older men it sits heavy with you I know as to whether or not you have under in the grace of God used been zealous for that good work teaching the younger men showing them what to avoid and what to pursue.

[14 : 59] the older women are to teach the younger women how to love their husbands which presupposes that the older women in the church know how to love their husbands in the first place.

Well the grace of God which gives these older women self-control the self-control is then exercised in the form of being able to love your husband well and then being able to teach the younger women how to do it.

So older women how does that sit with you? Have you taught the younger women in the church how to love their husbands? Now I know what you might say because Professor McIntosh said this to me when I was at the free church and he says that there is this Scottish reserve that no one will want to get involved in someone else's life.

Well I don't care because Titus 2 isn't Scottish it's Christian and the responsibility falls on all of us to be zealous for what it means to be a Christian.

so I understand the reserve I understand where it is but it doesn't cut it does it when it comes to Titus 2.

[16 : 28] So older women have you taught the younger women to love their husbands and how to be submissive to them so that the word of God may not be reviled. It's a tall order isn't it for the older women of the church and for the younger women and younger men of the church to actually follow as well.

The younger men are to be hard working the bond servants are to serve but one thing that you'll notice across the board of all of these people is that if they have received the grace of God the one common denominator in all of it is that they're able to be self-controlled.

They're able to choose that way of life because it's not by effort is it? Now because behavior before God matters we recognize that our belief before God matters equally but it is possible as we have seen in many lives and even in scripture itself for belief and behavior not to be the same.

When is it the case that belief and behavior is not the same? Well it's not the same when the person is not able to exercise self-control. So they'll say I believe this and they'll behave in a different way contrary to what their belief is because self-control is not present and if self-control is not present then where is the grace of God?

Because the grace of God enables a person to be able to say no to sin and yes to God. It enables a person to be able to turn everything over to God and follow him and to trust him.

[18 : 08] It's a choice not effort. Self-control which is a fruit of the spirit Galatians 5 is activated in the Christian life not by effort but by choice.

And therefore when you say you can't do it it's because you haven't chosen to do it. You have chosen to do something different. And you often know that you have chosen to do something different.

and so the grace of God which is present in saving grace is present in teaching grace enabling us to have self-control so that we can make sure that our behavior and our belief are equal.

That they tally that they are the same. And just to put it in a stronger way do you remember how James spoke to his people and he says even the demons believe and shudder.

So if you believe you're only at best at par with the demons. So belief alone counts but belief without the corresponding living by faith which is the behavior doesn't identify the grace of God being present.

[19 : 30] What identifies that you are living by grace through faith is self-control. And that self-control is exercised within the family husbands fathers mothers wives children that's where it's exercised here in Titus 1 through to 10 and then of course in the church which leaves us with quite a striking question and that is what do you do when you have a bunch of Christians all of which who say that they are Christians who believe but none of them are living by faith because it's not synonymous is it even the demons believe but they're not living by faith so it's possible to believe without living by faith and there's the challenge for us all isn't it that the grace of God which saves us enables us to live a self-controlled life one lived by faith in God and this is where the illustration of the grace of God being the fence at the top of the cliff and not just the ambulance at the bottom applies this is how we know what the grace of God is now it is lovely to think of the grace of God being present in our failures and we thank

God continually for the grace of God to be present when we fail because we need the grace of God when we fail because we fail but it would be wrong for us to ignore the grace of God that trains us to not fail the grace of God that actually teaches us not to jump the fence in the first place the grace of God that teaches us to live a self-controlled life and of course if that is not present then what are you denying you're denying the very grace of God that saved you so we must recognize that the saving life has fingerprints the saved life has fingerprints and one of those fingerprints was faith as we saw last week that you live by faith but another fingerprint is grace and another in light of grace is self-control all of these things are present in the life of the person who has been saved by God and they are increasing because none of us are perfect and so now it's a process of maturity so the older men are the ones teaching the younger men it is not the other way around why do you think it's that way it's lovely perhaps to have a classroom where the children where you know where the survey goes out to the children and says what would you like to learn

I don't think children should be asked what they would like to learn because I don't think children know what they need to learn I think the reason the older men are to teach the younger men and the older women are to teach the younger women is because they don't know that is the younger ones they don't know young men need to be taught by older men because young men don't know what older men do younger women need to be taught by older women because younger women don't know and if they do know more than the older women then that's a sign of spiritual maturity where the older woman has got old, dear, old, dear, but is not necessarily matured in the faith.

So you can be old and very spiritually mature, physically speaking, but the ideal, what the grace of God enables a person to be is not only to grow old gracefully, but to grow old in such a way where you're able to teach those who are younger because they don't know.

They don't know. Now this is what it means to be or to have the grace of God within your life. Why?

[23 : 50] Well, here's why, verse 14. Because Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who would be zealous for good works.

The grace of God, simply put, teaches us to say no to sin and yes to God. That's what it does every single day. Without a pastor, without a Bible lesson, without your Bible readings, the grace of God present in your life, God is taking care of this all by himself because he's protecting the value of his investment, has given you grace, convicting grace, purifying grace, training grace, to teach you on a daily basis to say no to sin and yes to God.

And then the lawlessness should not be thought of just here in terms of immorality, as in terms of stealing, or as in terms of murder.

That suddenly, because there's plenty of non-Christians who would keep the commandment of thou shall not murder. Now, they won't know why they keep it and they won't know why it is a standard.

Even though it's a standard they agree with. Because they won't attribute it to God. They'll just say, well, actually, it's a good commandment because it's in the best interest of all the people.

[25 : 20] Okay? And we understand why, on what basis the commandment is given because the commandment tells us what God is like. God doesn't want you to murder because you are made in his image and God doesn't murder.

Okay, that's what the commandment is given for. To reflect God so that you would reflect God. Now, of course, that involves not doing certain things. But there are other laws which make it into the political realm which we must be careful of.

In other words, no one here would want to vote, right, for women on the front line of battle. Okay? None of us would want to vote, biblically understood, for women to be in the infantry with a machine gun on the front line.

Why? Because the law states, right, the biblical law states that you are not to, you are not to boil a calf in its mother's milk.

We say, well, that's got nothing to do with the infantry. That's got nothing to do with women. That's got nothing to do with the modern practice of women in warfare. It's got everything to do with it. You're just not reading the law of God properly.

[26 : 32] You're reading it simply contextually in its old setting and not taking the value of it and applying it to a modern day setting. The reason it applies to women in battle is because you don't boil calves in its mother's milk.

What is a mother's milk for? A mother's milk is to provide life, to give life, and to sustain life. So you don't take that, which is meant to give life, and then use it as an instrument of death.

Boiling a calf in its mother's milk is to take that, which is to sustain life, and use it then as an instrument of death. So you don't take a woman who could be a mother and then put her in the infantry.

You don't take that, which is meant to give life, and then put her in a place where she then causes death. That's the application of the law. The trouble is, there's not many Christians who spend enough time reading it carefully enough to understand these modern day applications of a clear law of God.

And the church has failed in this area because there were women in pulpits long before there were women in cockpits in fighter pilots. So we've failed because we've shown the world we don't understand what God is talking about, and everyone else has followed suit.

[27 : 51] So we have lived lawlessly because we have not, we've jumped those fences because we have not really paid attention to what God has spoken.

So when it says here that God has redeemed us from all lawlessness, it means that you now think differently. Not that you just behave differently in terms of you don't steal, you don't murder, you don't do any of the other Ten Commandments that are present, or any of the other laws that are there, but you understand why you don't do them.

Because this is a case of purification, this is a case of becoming like Christ. There is a behavioral difference between the person who is saved and the person who is not saved, and the behavioral difference is that we're law keepers.

God's law, that is. We keep God's law. And we're able to do that because we have been given self-control in the grace of God. We're able to live a self-controlled life.

Now why is all of this happening to us? Why is God making us a people who can be self-controlled? Because he's purifying us in such a way that we become more like him because we are his.

[29 : 10] God is refining you every single day. Every single day you are being refined by God because you are his possession.

The only illustration that would probably come close to what I'm trying to say is imagine buying something that has tremendous value but is covered in muck and rust and debris.

And you pay a great price for it and then you spend the rest of the time restoring it back to his former glory. Well that's the Christian life from God's point of view.

He has purchased you at the cross and he spends the rest of your life bringing you back to the future, bringing you back to the glory that you will one day inherit.

In the eyes of God you cannot be any more beautiful than what you are right now. You cannot even be any more perfect than what you are right now in the eyes of God because he sees what you will be.

[30 : 17] He sees what you are and what you will be once all the refining has taken place because he has an eye for that thing. But you don't. And so often you think you're much further along the line of being refined and pure than you actually are.

Well here's the exhortation then as we close. The grace of God that saves you is the grace of God that teaches you. The grace of God that teaches you teaches you to say no to sin and yes to God.

The grace of God will always turn up when you fail because you will fail. But the grace of God also teaches you and builds fences at the top of the cliff so that you don't fail.

That's how we change. No change is possible without repentance. No change is possible without a constant turning to God. No change is possible without self-control or else you just do the old things that you used to do.

You have no control of your life. So self-control is an essential gift of God to you in order for you to be a different person. And why does all this happen?

[31 : 31] Because God has given you his grace. The grace that saves you is the grace that teaches you. And so to quote Paul in Romans 6 he says are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

In other words because grace is always going to be there it's always going to be there when I fail then it really doesn't matter if I keep failing. Because wherever I sin God's grace is going to be present.

That's true but that's not a reason for keep sinning. That demonstrates God's greatness and his love for you. But it's inexcusable for you to use that then as a reason to keep doing the very things that you are not meant to do.

And so how does God protect that? How does God protect that so that we are able to tell the difference that we have truly changed? Well because accompanying the grace of God is self-control.

I am now able to say no to sin. So the four stages is that once upon a time I was able to say no to sin.

[32 : 33] Then in sin I was not able to say no to sin. Okay and now I am able to say no to sin because of the grace of God. I'm able to say no to sin.

Can I be overwhelmed? Of course. Can I have weak moments? Of course. But they are often choice moments. I'm choosing not to exercise self-control in the faith of God.

And so recognize this day that the grace of God is not just the ambulance at the bottom when you fail. It is. So be assured when you fail. But it is also the fence at the top of the cliff teaching you not to jump in in the first place so that you don't fail.

Amen. Amen. May God strengthen you all in the grace that he has given to you. May he bless you and keep you from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[33 : 40] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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