



## **“THE GRACE OF GOD...”**

### **Part 2**

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Good morning. I hope it has been a good week since we last met here and I pray it's the beginning of an even better one for each of us. It's my privilege to have a few minutes of your time to explore the bible and to dwell on one its greatest themes: the grace of God.

Last week, we began a lesson about four important truths Paul set forth in one passage about God's grace.

Grace is commonly misconstrued – and that is on both ends of the spectrum. Some minimize the grace of God with a self-righteous, almost entitled attitude toward the things of God, while others exploit God's grace by so emphasizing it until they lose sight of God's holiness and disdain for sin. But in Titus 2, Paul presents the proper perspective, which if we share that perspective, it will dispel the false notions and abuses of the grace of God which seem so common in our culture. And as we shall see today, these misconceptions are not only a modern phenomenon, but Paul had to combat them in the early church as well. We return now to Titus chapter 2. Read with me beginning in verse 11: ***“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”***

We spent almost of all our time last week talking about the REDEEMING grace of God. Today, we look at three other aspects of grace that are just as essential that we understand.

Grace means 'favor' and it refers to several facets of the Christian life and our relationship with God. I think it is safe to assume, though, that when most of us hear the word "grace" in a spiritual context, we immediately think of salvation from sin, and that's appropriate because there is no more important and

impactful manifestation of grace than its role in redeeming us from sin and causing us to stand in God's favor instead of under His wrath and condemnation. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God," said Paul in the familiar passage, Ephesians 2:8. You may have heard it said that God's mercy withholds what we do deserve (God's wrath) whereas His grace gives us what we DON'T deserve – His blessings, chief of which is salvation from sin. None of us deserve salvation nor can we ever become deserving of it. It is the "gift of God" as Paul said.

Last week, we spent our time together looking at how the bible says grace saves through faith. We gave great emphasis to the fact that salvation is offered to man solely on the merits of God's grace and is claimed through trusting, obedient faith in Christ. We explored the much-debated relationship between grace, faith, and works and how there is some kind of work that is expected of the one who would receive the grace of God but not such work as could ever be claimed to earn or merit salvation. I urge you to contact us and request the printed copy of last week's lesson or go back and watch it and study with me what the bible says about that important subject. We talked about Paul in Titus 2, describes God's grace as a REDEEMING or SAVING grace. Let's look at the passage again, Titus 2:11-14. He says: "For the **grace of God that brings salvation** has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, **that He might redeem us** from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

So, it was the grace of God, not the work of man that wrought salvation's plan. Salvation was procured and offered to mankind based on God's love and concern for the fallen race which is incredible when you consider the fact that God would care anything about those who had rebelled against Him. But that's what mankind had done. "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.", said Paul in Romans 5:6-8. That is the grace of God! You need it. I need it. Ne'er one of us will ever be forgiven of a single sin or take one step on heaven's golden street without it. But that's not all Paul teaches us about the grace of God.

In Titus 2, Paul not only affirms that God's grace is REDEEMING grace, but that it is also REACHING grace. Listen again to verse 11: "For the **grace of God that brings salvation** has appeared to all men..." The last phrase is just as significant as the first and we need to be sure to understand what Paul is saying. First, he's affirming that God's grace reaches EVERY sinner... not just some. The popular theology of Calvinism says that God pre-selected certain individuals for salvation and if true, we would have to naturally conclude that He also purposefully ordained many individuals to be condemned. In other words, if you were not chosen for salvation from before time began, then you were condemned to hell before time began and you had no choice in the matter. But Paul says: "the grace of God that has brought salvation has appeared to all men". Now that doesn't mean all people are saved. Because there are many, many passages which plainly show that is not the case. "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.", said Jesus in Matthew 7:13.

So, if the grace of God which has brought salvation has appeared to all, why aren't all saved? Because, as Paul taught us a few weeks ago in Romans 10:16, "they have not all obeyed the gospel." That's why. You see, grace offers pardon to EVERY sinner, but that pardon must be received! That brings up a critical distinction we must understand! Grace is UNCONDITIONALLY offered to EVERY sinner. God's grace has

appeared and been extended toward us while we were enemies of God. It was universally and unconditionally offered, but listen, it is not universally and unconditionally received! It must be received in obedient faith. And it is possible to reject a pardon that is offered. Did you know because a governor or a president issues a pardon to a condemned criminal, that pardon still must be accepted? It's hard to imagine why one would do so, but the person on death row can refuse the pardon. It's also hard to imagine how a sinner could reject a pardon from eternally hell but refuse it but that's what many people do by choosing to remain in their sins and refuse to heed and obey the gospel and surrender their will and their lives to Christ. Friend, if you desire to be saved, you don't need to wait for a sign, or search for some inner signal from the Holy Spirit to know God's grace is offered to you. You need to read the bible and listened to it when its preached because it has already told you here that God's grace has appeared to you. If you want to be saved, you need to do what Saul was told in Acts 22:16. "Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

But Paul is not only showing that God's grace can reach EVERY sinner but he's affirming that God's grace reaches the LOWEST sinner. "All men" means what it says, including the most sinful and vile and guilty of people. "Men" it should go without saying, refers to mankind and not just the male gender. God's grace reaches down to the man or woman in sin's filthiest gutter. Many a person when they ever come to realize the shame and ruin of their sin, feels beyond the reach of God's redeeming grace. But they need to know that it is also REACHING grace. Listen friend: You have not committed a sin in your life that the blood of Christ cannot cover if you'll confess it and repent of it. You have not sinned so many times that the grace of God cannot wipe the slate clean and give you a new life and new beginning. Oh, there will be earthly consequences, but the grace of God can cleanse the blackest stain on the human soul. If Christ could command us to forgive another 70 times 7, then God Himself is willing to forgive 70 times 7. Don't abuse the grace of God though because one thing that happens is repeated and unrepented sin hardens your heart until you won't repent. But perhaps YOU at this moment need to hear that despite the depths of depravity and degradation you may have sunk to and as far from God as you may be, His grace can reach you, if you can hear, believe, and obey the gospel.

Paul made up a dark and sordid list that described the past lives of those who formed the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 when He said: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you." (Listen now!) "But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." If the grace of God could reach down into all of that mess, it can reach into your wasted life and lift you out and wash you clean and pure and make you holy and set you apart for God's service and His glory. If you are under the sound of my voice today, no matter who you are, where you come from, how you've lived, how terribly you've messed up your life; if you have ears to hear the gospel, God grace is reaching out to you.

Let's notice something else about the grace of God that is often overlooked and here is where so many misrepresent and exploit the God's grace: Paul tells us that it is not only redeeming grace and reaching grace, but it is also REFORMING GRACE. You hear people talk about the grace of God in ways today that cheapen and abuse the favor and loving-kindness of God. Don't we hear people suggest that they're living under grace and therefore their sinful lifestyle and their apathy toward obeying the word of God are really no big deal? I hear people say things that would logically lead one to such a conclusion all the time. I'm going to make a bold but true statement here: God's grace does not cover the sin that a person refuses to repent of. God is patient with us as we try to do His will and allow Him to form Christ

in us, but the grace of God does not excuse the sin that a person stubbornly clings to and refuses to give up. If we're telling ourselves and others that an immoral life or an immoral situation can just continue because we're 'living under grace' or that it doesn't matter how a person lives or what they believe or how they worship God because we're "under grace", we are misrepresenting the grace of God.

Listen again to Paul: "For the **grace of God that brings salvation** has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age." And look at verse 15: "...who gave Himself for us, **that He might redeem us** from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." If you are not living a repentant life that is being transformed into what God wants it to be according to His Word, you've not received the grace of God. You may be living under a delusion and have a false confidence in His grace, but if you're truly living under grace, that grace is changing your life from sin to righteousness; from glory to glory; and ultimately into the likeness of Christ Himself. If that's not the case, you may be like those of whom Jude sternly warned in Jude verse 4: certain men who "have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." They unrepentantly hide behind the grace of God and use it as a cloak to excuse their sinful living. God forbid! "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Romans 6:1-2) Then, verse 11: "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." Be very careful, lest you do what the apostles expressly warned you not to do in 2 Corinthians 6:1, "We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain."

So, it is not only REDEEMING grace and REACHING grace, but also REFORMING grace, if it is genuinely the grace of God. But then Paul tells us it is also REJOICING GRACE. The grace of God not only transforms our outward life but our inward attitude and our outlook on the future. So many people are casually living their lives oblivious to God's condemnation that they live under. If people could only understand their sinful condition and what it means to be lost and estranged from God. You have those who live oblivious to their guilt and their impending doom, and then you have those, even who profess to be saved, who live guilt-laden, dismal, depressed, and defeated lives. Such ones have little understanding and certainly no appreciation for the grace of God. For listen to what Paul says: "For the **grace of God that brings salvation** has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, **that He might redeem us** from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." Did you see what he said the grace of God produces if truly received? Not only a godly life but a hopeful, expectant life.

The phrase "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing" of Christ means much more than perhaps we see on the surface. We often use the word hope to mean wishful thinking. In other words, like I hope it rains soon or I hope I get a raise at work... But that's not what HOPE means in the bible. Hope means more than a desire; it means a confident expectation. It means a certain ANTICIPATION. In other words, the Christian who has received the grace of God, lives in and has been transformed by the grace of God and is living in view of the grace of God, not only knows in his heart of hearts that Jesus is

coming again, but we're also joyfully looking forward to it! Do you look forward to Christ coming again? Or does the very thought strike fear and terror? If that's the case, you need to come to know the grace of God. You need to let Christ have and rule your life through gospel obedience and begin walking in the light of His truth. You don't have to earn that. You can't earn it. You must surrender to it and yield to Him and when you do, His grace will transform you. It will turn the barren dessert of your life into springs of living water from within and give you hope, peace, assurance, and confidence to face another day and to face the eastern sky and the sure promise that one day Jesus will there appear and reward us according to the lives we are living. Don't receive the grace of God in vain. Receive it in faith and obedience and let it begin its transformative work in your life today.

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