

Titus: Becoming a Sound Church

04 God's Grace, Our Hope

May 21, 2017

I. INTRODUCTION

When I was a kid we loved to swim in the middle of the hot summer, probably as most of you did as well. One particular day while swimming at a friends house, there was a fun island in the middle of the pool that stretched from one side to the other.

We used it to for many things but one thing we loved to do was swim under it. Sounds fun but it quickly turned terrifying. As I was swimming under my hand got caught on a rope that was attached to the dead middle of this gargantuan raft.

The rope was intended to be on the top for people to hold but the raft had gotten turned over and my hand somehow got caught in it. As soon as my hand got tangled up, I panicked!

I mean instantly I knew I could not reach either side of the raft to get air and needed to get my hand untangled if I was going to survive. So I tugged and tugged and tugged until I was exhausted.

I distinctly remember going limp and suddenly my hand just fell, almost floated, out of the rope. NEW LIFE! I vigorously swam to the surface and took a huge breath and then collapsed on a chair.

After all that effort and fighting what freed me was surrender...what freed me was not my effort but rather lack of

effort. I spent what felt like an eternity kicking and tugging against this raft and what finally worked was surrender

I think sometimes the Christian life is thought of as how much can I do to make God happy, how hard do I need to tug away at life to get the most out of it, or if my character, my bad habits and behaviors are going to change I guess I have to try harder.

Looking at the list from last week one could have walked out of this room thinking, “Man, I have to try harder!” Well today will be a fountain of fresh water that will be refreshing.

Last week without this week is the difference between legalism and true Christianity. The difference between crushing expectations and joyous work!

This week is truly the heart of the Book of Titus, nothing we have discussed is possible without this next section! This is a tremendously high view of Christ

READ Titus 2:11-15

II. FOR THE GRACE OF GOD HAS APPEARED (2:11)

God’s grace has been seen, we don’t need to wonder if God is gracious, it has appeared. There is no ambiguity in regards to God’s grace. Where has it appeared? Where is Titus and those in the Church suppose to look to clearly see God’s grace? Jesus! In the face of Jesus is God’s grace observed!

We learn this from the immediate text in front of us...it is all about the work of Jesus on the cross. God taking flesh is where Paul and all those who have went on before us understood God’s grace.

The great reformer Lurther had a saying, “Don't give me God without giving me his humanity.”¹ Because the evidence of God’s love, kindness, and care is most clearly seen in his humanity—taking on flesh—and then culminated in his death, that was consummated at his resurrection and gloriously revealed in his return.

This appearing of God’s grace can only be understood as a work of God... Its appearing has come outside of man’s efforts, it has been brought about at the hands of God himself in history, in a time and place—which is deeply implied and flat out said in this text.

“Appearing” is a highly suggestive term and used only a few times in the NT, one of which is found in Luke 1:79 talking about how Jesus’ birth was giving light/appearing to those in darkness...Jesus appearing is shedding light on darkness, his appearance is like no other, he is not a simple ruler rolling into town for this term was common to announce Roman empires appearing, they saw them as “divine appearances.”²

He is reminding those at Crete that they are not just simple serving an idea, or a really elaborate story, no...God’s grace has appeared in flesh,...brothers and sisters do you believe that?! Isn’t this the best motivation to life

A. *bringing salvation* - a result of God’s grace is salvation... what about the statement *for all people*, especially since Paul opened this letter with using the term elect.

¹ Carl R. Trueman, *Reformation: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000) 47.

² Lea, Thomas D., and Hayne P. Griffin. *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Vol. 34. The New American Commentary. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992) p 310.

Well, if we consider the context just before this verse, it seems Paul is saying that God's grace has brought salvation to all kinds of people and that salvation will come to all different ethnicities—much like the different groups stated above, even slaves.³

Paul began this letter with a firm belief that his gospel work, and ours, will have effect because God will indeed save some from all walks of life.

This statement cannot mean that all people will be saved, because we know that some will not be saved. Why would God promise something that does not come about?

He must mean here to guard against an elitist mindset that would believe that salvation would only come to people that look, smell, and talk the same...NO.

God's grace reaches beyond external standards and can and will save some from all walks of life. And once somebody is gripped by God's grace, well, it changes everything because God's grace...

- B. *continually training us...* in the ongoing work of salvation in our lives, which we call sanctification we see God's grace again.

You have to realize that any works of holiness, works that reflect Christ to the world is done through the grace of God, his kind action of sending Jesus to overcome our sin so that we could...deny and live, so comprehensive is the

³ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p 319.

work of God in our lives through his grace in Jesus that we can overcome and...

1. To Deny
 - a) ungodliness—godlessness, as if God does not have a say in things, to live completely contrary to his ways.
 - b) worldly passions
 - c) We don't have to be overcome and slaves to our desires. We can actually live counter cultural and therefore show a better way, a culture built on Scriptures and the gospel.

It is radical to think that one could deny themselves anything in today's times. Everything is set up to limit denying ourselves. You have a desire, get it fulfilled. That is a crazy cycle to break but we are called to live...

2. To Live
 - a) self-controlled
 - b) upright
 - c) godly
3. Do all these things "In this present age"...Right ethical living is not looking within but rather looking outward to God's grace in Jesus, Philosophically this is counter cultural but for the Christian, right living/holy living is only accomplished in God's grace! You want to change...lean into God's grace, lean into Jesus...it is at the cross that we see the source of our sanctification, our growth and maturity as Christians.⁴

⁴ Tim Chester, *You Can Change* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010) p 127.

III. ALREADY NOT YET

- A. There is a sense in the bible, and certainly here in this text, that the Christian life is already and not yet...we have all we need now to live godly lives because God has appeared in Jesus, but oh how we long for the appearing/the coming of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ and then experience final restoration!

IV. APPEARING OF THE GLORY OF OUR GREAT GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST (2:13-14)

- A. 2:13 is very rich theologically...lets pause for a second and gather some sound doctrine about Jesus! This section in Titus is one of the clearest statements of Jesus being fully human and Jesus being fully God, notice the statement Great God and Savior, who is Jesus Christ.

Interesting that Paul had been talking about God's grace appearing in flesh and now saying when he appears in his return it will present him in glory, a display of God.

- B. Just to be clear on who Jesus is and how he is savior—gave himself up for us!
1. to redeem (Ps 130:8) us from lawlessness
 2. purify for himself a people for his possession (Dt 7:6,14:2 / Ex 19:15 / Ez 37:23) this has been the ongoing desire of God to make a people his own

and here Paul is saying that Christ is the means by which we become God's people, not ethnicity, good job, certain pedigree, intellect, the right parents, enough work, no...through Christ and Christ alone is salvation given to us and this salvation means that we are not our own and our Savior will appear again and his glory will be fully revealed. When he returns he will gather his people.

- a) who are zealous for good works, works must refer to all the above actions and attitudes, which were all done to bring attention to God (2:5,8,10), we can safely say that these works are evidences of God's grace gripping the life of an individual, perhaps that is how God's grace appears over and over again in the world, through the behaviors of Christians

V. DECLARE THESE THINGS

- A. A series of imperatives given to Titus to make these truths the thrust of his work. If there was any other message to declare it is these truths about God's grace appearing and bringing salvation that so radically changes our lives that we live self-controlled, upright lives in these days where one is encouraged to let their desires get the best of them.

VI. THEREFORE

- A. God's grace is the foundation of our salvation and all our work / all our holy living...we should be about good works, I mean this is the reason Jesus gave himself up so that we would be a people who our his and about his work, not to gain his favor but because of his favor we joyously live for him in obedience to his ways
- B. God's grace appearing in Jesus is both in his incarnation and his return. Brothers and sisters there is more to come, there is more Grace coming!!
- C. God's grace has appeared so that your self-effort would disappear...being a Christian is to stop