

*Two guys in a church – George and William decided that they really wanted to become godly men. So, they started meeting to pray and to encourage one another; they even set goals for themselves and their behavior, and they were accountable to each other.*

*George decided he wanted to break his nasty habit of using profanity. He decided he was going to put five dollars in the offering for every time he swore during the week. In order to stay accountable, he would tell William how many times he'd failed. The first week cost George \$100.*

*Now, George must've been doing okay financially, because that didn't stop his swearing. In fact, while he improved somewhat over the next couple weeks, he really wasn't having the success he wanted and was losing a lot of hard-earned money.*

*After the fourth week, William told George he had decided that the deal needed to be changed for the coming week, but he wasn't going to tell George how it would change. He just said, "Trust me. It will cost you both less and more."*

*When they met the following Sunday before worship, George admitted he'd failed again. William put a hand on his shoulder and said, "George, I told you this was going to cost you both less and more. It's called grace."*

*William took out his checkbook, and made out a check to the church, leaving the amount blank. He gave the check to George and said, "Your sin still costs, but for you it's free. Just fill in the numbers, and next week there will be more grace."*

*William's grace towards George cost him \$55 the first week – and on the second week it cost him \$20. There was no third week because George couldn't bear to see what his profanity was costing his friend, so he stopped swearing altogether.*

*That's what grace does – it's a force that motivates us to change, and that's what Paul desires for the people of Crete – change.*

*We are continuing in this letter from the Apostle Paul to his young coworker named Titus. As you recall, Titus is on the Island of Crete continuing the work which he and Paul had started, but now Paul is gone, and Titus is left behind on the island with his hands full of Cretans, who had been corrupted with lies and myths and the legalism of men, and they were in desperate need of sound doctrine – doctrine which leads to *right thinking* but also to *right living*.*

Last week, we read a passage where Paul described to Titus what sound doctrine looked like from a practical perspective – in an ideal household – explaining that Christians are to live like they say they believe – so that God’s Word will not be dishonored by their conduct, and ultimately, so that the Gospel message will be compelling and cause people to take a closer look.

For Paul, the Gospel must be lived out by Christians in practical ways, both in the home and in the public if the Cretan culture was really going to change, and in these next few verses, Paul tells us how and why.

So, if you have your Bible, turn to **Titus 2** and we will begin with **verse 11**.

**<sup>11</sup> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, <sup>12</sup> instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, <sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. <sup>15</sup> These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.**

Before we dig into this passage, I want to say a couple of things. In this letter to Titus, the Apostle Paul has written a lot about sound doctrine and how one’s conduct is to be consistent with sound doctrine, but with all of that said, he knows this cannot be done apart from God’s amazing grace.

This is a passage about God’s grace – and to understand grace, I need to share some key words that describe how God deals with mankind. There are three key words I want to touch on and the first word is *justice*. In a nutshell, justice is God giving us exactly what we deserve – and quite frankly – I don’t want justice. No one should ever want God to give them what they really deserve.

Then there’s *mercy*, and it’s the opposite of justice. Justice is God giving us what we deserve and mercy is God not giving us what we deserve. It’s the opposite. Now, we have no problem demanding justice against others, but when it comes to us, when it hits home, we cry out mercy.

Last but not least is *grace*. Again, *mercy* is God not giving us what we deserve, whereas grace is God giving us what we don’t deserve. Someone once said, “*Grace is everything for nothing to those who don’t deserve anything.*” Just

because God wants to, for no reason on our part, He gives His unmerited and underserved favor to us. He gives us what we do not deserve. That's grace – it's amazing grace, and it's the subject of this passage.

Now as a preview of this passage, Paul will describe God's amazing grace from three different vantage points. From the *past*, Paul reminds us of the grace which appeared leading to salvation. For the *present*, he describes grace as a force which motivates one to change, and for the *future*, Paul speaks of grace that brings hope as we look forward.

So, with that said, let's start with the *past*. Paul says in **verse 11**,

**For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,**

Paul says God's amazing grace **appeared** – and he is speaking about Jesus Christ. Jesus is grace personified. At just the right time, God's grace took on flesh, entered into humanity, He walked among us without sin, and then He gave His life for us. Although Jesus never used the word “**grace**” during His earthly ministry, if you want to see grace, you have to see Jesus.

We are told in the Bible that God is not willing that any should perish, but people could not save themselves – never could, and so by God's grace, **salvation** was brought to them.

Jesus – who is grace incarnate, made salvation available to **all men** – to all mankind who are willing to believe. Jesus came to save sinners, and to do that, He made the ultimate, once-and-for-all sacrifice on a cross to cover every sin of every person who believes.

Jesus satisfied God's *justice*, He experienced God's undiluted wrath, He took the penalty for sin that we deserved, and by His grace, He offers salvation to everyone who believes. It's a free offer, an undeserved offer, and unmerited offer, but unfortunately, not everyone is willing to take it. Many choose to decline His offer, many choose to reject Him, and for them – whether they know it or not, without a Savior, they are left to deal with God's justice for themselves.

From God's standard – not their standard, not the world's standard, but from God's standard they will get exactly what they deserve. They will get *justice* because they rejected God's *grace*. God would rather be their gracious and merciful and forgiving and loving Savior, but if not, He will be their righteous and holy Judge.

God's grace brings salvation – no grace from God – no salvation for us.

Now in **verse 12**, Paul explains that this amazing grace is not only a saving grace but it's also a changing grace – a life transforming grace. Paul says that this grace is,

**instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,**

The grace that brought salvation, is the grace we live by in this present age. *“Now wait a minute pastor – I thought we were saved by grace, and then once saved, we are to live according to the Law.”* **Is that what Paul said here?** No, because Paul knows that's an impossibility. None of us could ever live up to the perfection required by the Law. Only Jesus could do that. None of us are declared righteous – none of us are made right with God by keeping the Law. We are saved by grace and we also continue to live by grace.

*“Well pastor, those people who say they live by grace use that as a license to sin and to do whatever they please. They got their “fire insurance” so to speak – they got their easy salvation, and now they have the freedom to live like the devil.”*

**Again, is that what Paul said?** No, he says, it's grace that teaches us to say “no” to the things of this world that other people don't say “no” to. It's grace that teaches us to live self-controlled lives – lives focused on others instead of ourselves – lives devoted to the Lord. Yes, grace brings freedom, but in that freedom, the force of grace motivates us to love and to live for God.

*Trish and I used to have a dachshund named “Gus” – but he should have been named Dyson, or Hoover, or Eureka, because he was a vacuum cleaner with short stubby legs. That dog would eat anything that wasn't nailed down. Gus is no longer with us, but I'd like to think he had a great life for a dog. He had a house and a fenced in backyard all to himself. Gus was fed a couple of times a day, not to include the numerous treats he was given. Gus had a way of staring at you to make you believe he hadn't eaten in a year. Gus had play toys and chew toys, and he was treated like one of the boys in our family. Gus was well loved and cared for.*

*And with all these comforts at his disposal, you would think that Gus wanted to stay at home with us, **but what did that dog do?** Gus would regularly try to get*

*outside the fence in our backyard, so much so, that we had to put bricks between the fencing slats so he wouldn't squeeze his fat little body through and escape.*

*So, what was wrong with Gus? Even though Gus had a pretty good life, he was not free, and because he was not free, Gus wanted out, and unfortunately, away from the very people who loved and cared for him.*

*Living under all the rules and regulations of legalism is like living inside a fence. There is no freedom, it's suffocating, it's demoralizing, it's defeating, and like Gus – we want out, unfortunately, away from the One who really loves us.*

*When I was a boy, I used to go to my grandparent's 400-acre farm in Central Illinois every summer. They had a little rat terrier named "Spike", and he had the freedom to go anywhere he wanted on the farm. There were no fences that he had to be concerned with, and where do you think Spike was regularly found? On the porch waiting for my grandfather.*

*There weren't any fences. Spike was free to go anywhere he wanted, but he stayed on the porch waiting for my grandfather, waiting for him to come out – to take him somewhere.*

*That's what the grace of God does in our lives. It's the grace of God that knocks down the fences – and the freedom that God provides causes us to fall in love with the Master – to want to be near Him – to want to serve Him – and to want to obey Him.*

You see, according to Paul, for those who believe, grace is not license to do as we please – God forbid – instead, like a teacher with a child, grace instructs us and it motivates us like a powerful force to change – to move us farther and farther away from sin and closer and closer to Jesus Christ. As we reflect back to the *past* and appreciate the salvation that Jesus has graciously given to us – our only reasonable response in this *present* age is to change and to live for Him.

We are saved by grace and we live by grace. That's what Paul was telling Titus, and it's the only way the Cretan culture is going to change. Without grace, there is no salvation. Without grace there is no motivation to change, and without grace there is no *future* hope.

Let's continue with this long sentence beginning with **verse 13**, where Paul says,

**<sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, <sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.**

Jesus Christ – who graciously sacrificed Himself for us – who became our substitute – who paid the full penalty for **every** sin we have ever done and will ever do, is the same Jesus who is **appearing** again.

Paul says that Jesus is our **great God and Savior** – He’s one in the same, and with great anticipation we are to be looking for Him. Paul does not ask us to look for the Tribulation period. He does not tell us to look for the Antichrist, or for persecution, or wrath, or judgment to come – but for the Lord’s appearing – that’s our **blessed hope, and how in the world could we ever look forward to His appearing outside of grace?**

Jesus will be appearing in **glory**, and in mighty power, and in righteousness, and in holiness, and in stark contrast to Him, without amazing grace, we would all be hiding under a rock in shame and in terror because of our sin against Him. But in His amazing grace, Jesus calls us His very own. We belong to Him as a prized and valued **possession**. We are treasured by Jesus and we know this because in His grace, He bought and paid for us with His own blood.

God’s grace saves us. God’s grace is a force that changes us, but not only that, it is grace that enables us to look to the future in hope.

In the last verse, **verse 15**, Paul says to Titus,

**These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.**

Paul explains to Titus that he has the **authority** given to him by the Word of God to preach the truth so people can hear it and respond to it, and he has the authority to hold people accountable to it. Then Paul says to Titus, “**let no one disregard you.**” **Now why would Paul say that?** Well, here’s why.

The religious folk who felt they still had to *earn* God’s favor would reject this teaching of amazing grace, suggesting that under grace there are no standards, and people can do whatever they want. Without an understanding of grace, they would try to add legalistic laws and rules and regulations to grace – thereby nullifying

grace. Grace would no longer be amazing. Paul tells Titus that the truth must be taught, whether it is popular or not. That's his priority.

I want to close by sharing the words to a hymn most of you know called "Amazing Grace". Listen to the words as they relate to our passage in **Titus**.

*Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed.*

*Through many dangers, toils, and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.*

*The Lord has promised good to me,  
His Word my hope secures;  
He will my Shield and Portion be,  
As long as life endures.*

*When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we'd first begun.*

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