

Grace and Godliness

Titus 2:11-14

The doctrine of Grace is one of the most precious truths in all of Scripture. By grace, we mean that in Christ, God has poured out on his people unmerited favor of vast proportions. This truth undergirds every aspect of the Christian's life. Yet, at the same time, there is perhaps no doctrine more abused than the doctrine of Grace. Every variety of sin has at one point or another been justified on the grounds of God's grace.

In the early days of the church, there were those who argued that because God was so gracious, people could live lives of rampant sin. In fact, according to some the more they sinned, the greater God's grace abounded towards them. The Apostle Paul denounced this view as a wicked perversion of grace. Jude had to deal with those who sought to "turn the grace of God into licentiousness" or "sensuality." These were people who had perverted God's grace and in doing so they denied Jesus Christ.

The Apostle's had no tolerance for those who would misuse God's grace as grounds for careless living. The reason for this is because true grace actually compels one to live a godly life. When the grace of God is rightly comprehended, it energizes our efforts to be holy and makes us discontented in all those areas where our lives tend to contradict the theology that we confess.

This was a major issue in Crete. The Apostle Paul had sent Titus to this large Island in the Mediterranean to appoint elders in a group of young churches. Paul and Titus had most likely planted these churches but had left and in their absence, a group of false teachers had emerged. Paul called them "rebellious, empty talkers, and deceivers" in 1:10. Their teaching was having a wide influence and was destroying many families in the Cretan churches.

The content of their teaching is not exactly clear, but Paul was concerned. He was especially concerned at the lifestyle of these false teachers. Look at chapter one, verse sixteen: “they profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.” You can see that they were confessing to know God, but they were denying him by their deeds. By their lives. Perhaps they made a good confession of faith – they could recite sound Theology (they knew the WCF by heart), but their lives denied the very theology, the very God, they confessed.

This was a grave danger. Just as it is a grave danger in the twenty-first century. There is always a temptation for those who have the best theology, the most biblical theology to be those who live the lousiest lives. There is something about fallen man that allows us to be comfortable, and often blind to, the large gapping chasms between what we confess theologically and how we live practically.

This is not acceptable. And so, Paul commands Titus to appoint elders who would be able to muzzle these false teachers who were teaching one thing and contradicting it by their lives. That’s chapter 1. Appoint elders who will “be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it” (1:9). And then, in chapter 2, he gives the content and grounds for the type of life that complements good theology

Now our focus is really on verses 11-14. And here, Paul gives 3 reasons why the Christians in Crete were to live their lives in a way that complemented sound theology. And what we want to do this morning is look at those three reasons and Lord willing be challenged to bring our lives into greater conformity to our theology.

Lets stand and read our text: Titus 2:11-14

In one long sentence that spans verses 11-14, Paul laid the foundation for a godly life – which in a word is the Grace of God. The grace of God is the foundation for a godly life. But Paul does more here than give the foundation of godly living. He actually lays out an argument for why Christians must live godly lives. In other words, why we must bring our theology and life into unison. Three arguments. Let me give them to you and then we will walk through the text together:

1. You must live a godly life **because** your life is to be an affirmation of the saving grace of God (2:11)
2. You must live a godly life **because** your life is under the training influence of the grace of God (2:12-13)
3. You must live a godly life **because** your life is not your own, but it belongs to Jesus Christ (2:14).

First, you must live a godly life - that is a life that complements your theology, because your life, as a Christian, is to be an affirmation of the saving grace of God. Let me show you where I get this.

We've already mentioned the false teachers who had erected an insurmountable wall between their theology and their lives so that their theology had NO impact on their living. But there was another problem in Crete that compounded Paul's concern. That was the pressure of the godless Cretan culture. Crete was an Island society that was notoriously sinful. It was well-known for its lack of ethics and materialism even among pagans. Listen to how one of their own prophets described them in Titus 1:12: "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." (attributed to Epimenides who lived about 600 B.C.). That seems harsh. But notice Paul's assessment: "this testimony is true."

The Cretans were liars. They were evil beasts. There is a bit of irony in this characterization because since Crete was an Island, they were able to get rid of large life-threatening animals. So, while other countries had to deal with real wild beasts, in Crete the wild beasts were Cretan's who had assumed the role of wild animals in the absence of the real thing. They were a people led by instinct and pleasure.

They were also lazy gluttons – or literally, “lazy bellies.” These were people who lived like animals, only to satisfy their appetites. They lived and were led by sensual desires.

But God had mercifully saved some of these people and they had come out of the sinful culture and were seeking to follow Christ. Yet, being immersed in such an culture made moral compromises convenient.

Now, combine this cultural pressure with false teachers who were comfortable with a large division between their theology and their lives, and you have an environment where the grace of God is perverted into a justification for selfish living.

This was the reason Paul exhorted Titus to give special attention to the area of good works among these churches. In 3 chapters, Paul mentions good works 7 different times. He closes the letter with a final exhortation in 3:14, “Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.”

Paul was concerned with sound doctrine and sound living. For Paul and for the NT, these two were inseparable. Right theology leads to right living.

So, in 2:1, Paul exhorted Titus, “But as for you (that is in contradistinction to the false teachers who “profess to know God but deny him by their works”)...But as for you, speak/teach the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.” Notice, he does not say teach sound doctrine (he says that elsewhere) – he says, “teach the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.” Teach

the things that are becoming/or suitable/ or proper/ or things that “accord with” sound doctrine.

Now, what are the things that accord with sound doctrine? You’ve got great theology, what should your life look like? We see this described in 2:2-10. “Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, etc.” // Verse 3, “Older women are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, etc.” // Verse 4, “Younger women are to love their husbands and children, etc.” // Verse 6, “Young men are to be sensible” and verse 9, “Slaves are to be subject to their masters” This is ALL behavior. This is the sort of behavior that befits sound theology.

Notice WHY Christians are to live this way: Look at verses 3-5, “Older women are to be reverent...(verse 4) to encourage the young women to love their families...(verse 5) SO THAT, the word of God will **not** be dishonored.” If these women do not live as God commands, then their lives will dishonor the word of God.

Look at verses 6, “Young men are to be sensible, to be an example of good deeds...(verse 8) to be sound in speech which is beyond reproach, SO THAT, the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.” If these young men do not live sound lives as God commands, then they bring shame upon themselves and upon the entire church.

Look at verses 9-10, “Bond slaves are to be subject to their own masters in everything...(verse 10) showing all good faith SO THAT, they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.” This is a fascinating statement. The word “adorn” here is from the Greek word κοσμεω. It means “to cause something to have an attractive appearance.” We have a similar word in English that’s from the same root – “cosmetics.” The word κοσμεω here refers to “a way of life that recommends doctrinal teachings.”

So, to adorn the doctrine of God our savior, was to live in a way that would commend the gospel to others. The slave was to live in such a way that his very life adorned the Gospel and thus would commend the slave's theology to his unbelieving Master. This is the same language we find in 1 Peter 3:1-6 where the wife of an unbelieving spouse is called to adorn herself with a good character rather than with external trappings of beauty. The goal was that her life would adorn the gospel in such a way that it would authenticate her theology before her unbelieving spouse and would win him over. It was an evangelistic endeavor. It was the same with the Christian slave. If his life and theology contradicted, he actually denied the theology he professed. And his evangelistic efforts would prove ineffective. (He is not saying preach the gospel, use words if necessary. Words ARE necessary. He is saying preach the gospel and live a life that affirms the theology you proclaim.

Now we come to verse 11 with all this in mind and we can see what Paul is really doing here. Why should the Christians in Crete live lives that accord with sound theology? "For [or because] the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men." Since God's saving grace has appeared, bringing forgiveness for all people, those who have experienced the true power of the Gospel must live in such a way that affirms this reality – rather than live in a way that denies its validity.

In other words, how you live your life either commends the doctrine of God's saving grace to all men or your life brings reproach on the Gospel and is a living contradiction to what you confess to believe. And is a hindrance to gospel advance because you are a walking contradiction. Your life is to affirm the saving grace of God. Now that doesn't mean your perfect. Christians always preach a better message than we live. BUT, we are always striving to bring our lives up to the level of our theology. The reason we do this is because the saving grace of God has appeared and we have experienced it. We know it. And that Grace transforms our lives –

And we want to become living affirmations of God's tremendous kindness to sinners. You become an affirmation of the saving grace of God to all men.

Here are some questions you might ask yourself:

1. Generally, does my life dishonor the word of God? More specifically, does every aspect of my life (my relationship with my spouse, my children, my boss, my taxes) honor the word of God?
2. Does my life give ammunition for the enemies of Christianity? And I'm not just talking about atheist's outside, I'm talking about the children in your home? Or Does my life shut the mouth of those who would criticize Christianity?
3. Does my life adorn the Gospel?
4. In short, does my life affirm or deny the theology I profess?

We never want to be content with dissonance between theology and life.

So, first, you must live a godly life because how you live either affirms or denies the theology you profess.

Second, you must live a godly life because your entire life is under the training influence of the grace of God. Look at verses 12-13, "For the grace of God has appeared... instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus."

The main idea in these two verses is the "training, or teaching" function of God's grace—it's the word παιδεω. It's where we get our word "pedagogy" which describes the work of a teacher. In classical Greek it referred to the training of children, and it is used in the book of Acts to describe Moses being "trained/educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" and Paul's being "trained" by Gamaliel. So the idea is "instruction for informed and responsible living."

This is what Grace does. It trains and instructs. Specifically, it trains us to (verse 11) “deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope...”

The first thing in this training regiment of grace is what to deny or renounce. And he mentions two things:

First, ungodliness. Ungodliness is simply a lack of reverence for God or carelessness before him. It can also refer to living with no regard for God. Jerry Bridges gives a helpful definition: “Ungodliness may be defined as living one’s everyday life with little or no thought of God, or of God’s will, or of God’s glory, or of one’s dependence on God.” It is living practically, as an atheist. God has no place in your life. God’s will, God’s design for you has no influence in how you relate to your children, your wife, your boss. The grace of God trains us to renounce this sort of ungodliness.

Second, grace trains us to renounce “worldly desires.” These are desires, longings, cravings, or wants that align with the prevailing interests of the world and are in opposition to God. In other words, a worldly desire is to want something that God has forbidden. Its an illicit desire. (In our culture, there are books written by professing Christians arguing that if you were born with an illicit desire for the same sex, then God made you this way. You are a Gay-Christian and should embrace it. Friends we all have desires, but wherever those desires/wants are for something God has forbidden, then we must renounce it. We do not embrace it!) Grace trains us to renounce illicit desires. We are to grow in our hatred of ungodliness and worldly desires. “You who love the Lord, hate evil” (Psalm 97:10).

But grace also teaches us what to embrace. First, grace trains us to embrace a life of self-control. You see this in verse 12, “live sensibly.” The word here speaks of “self-control.” It literally refers to having a “sound or healthy mind.” As a metaphor it refers to the “ability to curb

desires and impulses so as to produce a measured and orderly life.” That is self-control. It is having control of the senses. Grace trains us to live self-controlled. This first word then, is oriented toward self.

Second, grace trains the believer to live “righteously.” To embrace a life of upright living. This refers to horizontal living. It is living with a character that aligns with God’s standards of righteousness. It is just and righteous living. (Notice, these two words need no adjective. Righteousness is righteousness/Justice is justice). This is life directed towards others.

Third, grace trains us to live “godly in the present age.” To embrace a life of godliness. This speaks to the vertical orientation of one’s life. Although he lives in the present evil age, his life is godly – his life reflects his relationship to the living God. It is a life of conscious dependence upon God and of our responsibility towards God.

And Fourth, grace trains Christians to live a life of hope, or confident expectation. Look at verse 13, “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus...” In verse 11 we saw that the grace of God has appeared (that is the first advent of Christ), here we are told that the Christian lives with a steady expectation of Christ’s second coming, “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior.” It is called the “blessed or a happy hope” – but it will not be a blessed experience for all. The complex of events that will unfold when Christ returns will be a terrible judgment on the world, but a great and final deliverance for God’s people. It will be the consummation of their salvation – it will be deliverance from the wrath of God on the world and deliverance from the lifelong warfare with which Christians are engaged. The day is coming when the battle will be over. When our lives and our theology will be in perfect harmony. The Lord Jesus will ascend His earthly throne and we will be like him.

But in the between, we live hopeful lives. Grace trains us to live looking for Christ's coming as our "blessed hope." The grace of God teaches us of the Father's kind disposition towards us in Christ, so that we do not dread/fear His coming, but we long for it with Joy! (2 Peter 3:8-13; Revelation 22:7, 12,17, 20).

Grace radically transforms us to deny what we once loved (our flesh) and to live godly lives, as we wait for the return of Christ. His return is the end that is always in view. When you start a new project, the experts say to begin with the end in mind. The reason for that is the "end" crystalizes your path. It determines your steps.

Christians live with the end in mind, we do what we do because our King is coming. We do not want to be found idle when Jesus appears. And we realize that we are the inheritors of His kingdom. So, we don't go around trying to build an empire here, but we selflessly give our lives away in exchange for a greater kingdom that is to come.

So, grace trains us to deny and to embrace. To deny sin and to embrace righteousness. And what that does is it brings our lives into greater conformity to our theology. So, an evidence that you are in Christ's school of grace is that the gap between your theology and life is steadily narrowing. You are working to see it closed and you are often pained by the fissure that exists.

This is the very thing that God's grace is at work to accomplish within us. God is graciously at work within us, training us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and training us to live a life of self-control, righteousness, godliness, and a life that lives in eschatological awareness of Christ's imminent return. Those who are in God's school of Grace, are laboring to narrow the gap between their theology and their life. This is what God's grace is at work to accomplish (see Phil 2:11-12).

Just listen to 1 Corinthians 15:9-10, Paul writes, "For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **But by the grace of God** I am what I am, and **His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.**" The grace that was present in Paul compelled him to labor and live a holy life.

So, you must live a holy life because as a Christian God's grace is at work in you to bring about your Christ-likeness. You are in the school of God's educative grace.

The third argument Paul gives for why Christians must live godly lives is because the Christian's life does not belong to him. It belongs to Jesus Christ.

If you are a Christian, your life, in its entirety, belongs to Jesus Christ. Look at verse 14, "Who [that is, Christ] 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."

Notice three things in this verse:

First, Jesus "gave Himself for us." That is the gospel in a nutshell. That is what we call substitutionary atonement. Sinless Jesus, trades places with sinful man and takes the punishment he deserves. Jesus came to earth and lived a perfect life, the life you should have lived, and died the death of a sinner, the death you deserve. He took on himself, on the cross the punishment for every crime, every rebellion of all who would place their trust in him. That is substitutionary atonement. He died in your place. That is what Paul means when he says Jesus, "gave Himself for us."

But notice the reasons Paul gives for this substitution, verse 14: "He gave Himself 1) TO REDEEM US FROM EVERY LAWLESS DEED, and 2) TO PURIFY FOR HIMSELF A PEOPLE FOR HIS OWN POSSESSION, WHO ARE ZEALOUS FOR GOOD DEEDS."

The entire purpose of your redemption and existence is summed up here — Jesus gave himself for you, so that he would have a people who would NO LONGER be characterized by lawless lives but by holiness and zeal for good works. This is astounding.

This is the same redemptive language used to describe the Exodus. The Exodus was the single greatest act of redemption in the Old Testament. God acted in history to redeem his people so that the people of Israel would be his unique possession and that they would live holy lives. Listen to Deuteronomy 7:6, “For you are a **holy** people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to **be a people for his own possession**, out of all the people who are on the face of the earth.” Then listen to verse 11, “Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgements which I am commanding you today, to do them.”(cf. Ex 20, 19:5-6)

Now, we love to look at the Israelites and just feel good about ourselves, right? I mean God had clearly demonstrated his power and redemptive love to them in bringing them out of Egypt, yet they continued to live such lousy lives. They moaned and whined and worshiped false gods. They were a wreck. Their lives were living contradictions to the redemptive work of Yahweh displayed over Pharaoh.

But friends, we have experienced a far greater redemption and the tragedy would be that like the moaning, groaning Israelites, you would live a life in bold contradiction to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on your behalf.

Friends, if you are a Christian you belong to Jesus. Your life is NOT your own. He redeemed you in order that you would no longer live lawlessly, but would be purely His. And live a life characterized by zeal for good deeds. That is, works that you do that are done for the good of others. It is selfless living. Good works are not done in self-interest, but are done to bless others.

We have been redeemed in order that we would be zealous for good works. Interestingly, that's also why you were created (Eph 2:10). When you live a life that complements your theology, you will live zealously and selflessly for the good of others. Why? Because that is exactly how Christ lived his life. And that is exactly why we have been redeemed. Your life brings glory to God, not by your pristine theological confession – but by your life that is lived out for the glory of God. A life that is zealous for good works.

Conclusion: So, why must you live a life that complements your theology? Because your life is meant to be an affirmation of the saving Grace of God, it is under the training influence of the grace of God, and third, because in Christ, your life no longer belongs to you, it belongs to Jesus Christ. You have been redeemed to live for him. May the Lord help us to do so more and more!