

Grace Has Appeared Titus 2:11-14

I remember **my first Christmas after becoming a follower of Jesus**. My perspective on this time of year was so much different once Jesus reoriented my whole life; my appreciation for the wonder of the Christmas was radically different after God opened up my eyes to see the beauty of Christ. Testimony of my conversion. I was born in Detroit, MI... and I used to spend every Xmas for twenty years there... baseball ... seminary ... met Kimberly...]

I am a man who has been transformed by grace.

One of **my first sermons** in college was here in **Titus 2:11-14**, a text that I have always treasured because it talks about the saving grace of God **so concisely and so powerfully**.

I know that while you're story may be different from mine many of you in this room are here because you've been changed by Jesus too. Every conversion story is a miracle.

Regardless of what you did in your pre-conversion days, Paul says that you were "dead in your sins" but "God made you alive together with Christ" and it is "by grace that you have been saved!" (Eph 2).

Paul can't go very long without returning to this topic of the transforming grace of God.

Here in Titus, Paul has been talking about some very ~~mundane, practical matters~~, related to Christian living, and then suddenly he erupts, "The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people."

It's never off his mind, and it should never be off our minds either.

We need to come back to it as believers again and again; and **if you're not a Christian, then it is my privilege to unfold the message of grace for you.**

No one is so morally good that they don't need the saving grace of God, and no one is so morally bad that they are beyond the reach of God's saving grace.

The glorious news of the Bible is that salvation is **NOT about what we do for God, but what God has done for us**. Christmas is shouting this message.

In a word, it's called **Grace**.

Some experts from around the world were at a conference on comparative religions, discussing the distinguishing feature of Christianity. C.S. Lewis walked in and asked, "What's all the rumpus about." When they told him the topic of conversation, and responded, "That's easy, it's **grace**."

Indeed the good news of Christianity is that God loves unworthy people, he changes them; it's not about what we can do for God, but what God has done for us in Christ.

In our text, not only tells us that the Christian life is about grace **from beginning to end**, but that Paul **Grace has appeared in a Person**.

- Grace is not an abstract idea.
- God's grace is personal.
Grace had fingernails.
- Grace walked among us.
- Grace died.
- Grace rose.

- **Grace will come again!**

Notice, that this passage has two **“appearings”** (the word from which we get the word **epiphany**). Paul points to **the first coming of the Savior in verse 11**, and then tells us what he came to do in that coming in verses 12, 14, and describes the **second coming of the Savior in verse 13**.

#1: The Savior’s First Coming (11-12, 14)

Verse 11

“For” – Paul links this text with verses 1-10.

- There, he gave a series of ethical instructions to the church.
- Now, he gives **the motivation** and **the power** for living out that life – the gospel.
- Usually, Paul gives the doctrine of grace, and then supplies a big **“therefore”** before launching into the ethical imperatives. But here in Titus he uses the reverse approach.

“the grace of God” – God’s love lavished on the unworthy is **the glory of the Christian life**, and is **the fuel** for living out the Christian life.

Psalm 126:3, “The Lord has done great things for us; **we are glad.**”

If the Psalmist could say that, **how much more** can we who live on this side of the cross!

Karl Barth once said, **“Laughter is the closest thing to the grace of God.”**

Laughter involves **relief, surprise, and a moment of joy**.

Grace is like that.

Grace has appeared in Jesus Christ, and He has brought us relief from the weight of sin and death, and has produced the fruit of joy in our lives.

Grace and joy go together just as they are **spelled** alike and are **pronounced** alike in Greek: *‘charis’* and *‘chara’*.

The **angel** announced, “I bring you **good news of great joy** that will be for all people!”

Grace brings joy.

A failure to understand and mediate on God’s grace leads to an absence of deep and abiding joy.

“has appeared bringing salvation for all people”

In **chapter 3:3-7**, Paul elaborates on our need, and God’s provision, of for salvation in the next chapter:

³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. ⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior **appeared**, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Here, he says this salvation is available for **“all kinds of people”** (he’s not teaching universalism), including the groups he just mentioned in verses (2:1-9).

And this grace has **“appeared,”** the reference to the coming of Jesus in human history. **Advent** is about a problem, a promise, and a provision.

- **The Problem: Sin. The Promise: A Savior. The Provision: He appeared!**
- **Christianity is historical!**
- **I just watched the Hip Hop Revolution** on Netflix, a show about the history of Hip Hop. It was very interesting.
- **At the birth of Jesus in human history, a worldwide revelation was started. Something cataclysmic happened in history.**

God has always been gracious for He is the **“God of all grace,”** but in the visible appearing of Jesus, God’s saving grace was displayed climactically in Jesus’ birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

John tells us that the Word became flesh... and that He was full of “grace and truth.”

Of course, some want to try to deny **the historical fact of Jesus living among us.** But that idea demonstrates not only a lack of faith, but a disregard for history.

Even Agnostic New Testament Professor Bart Ehrman (no friend to Christianity) argues that Jesus did in fact exist historically. In his book *Did Jesus Exist?* he says, **“Jesus did exist whether we like it or not”** (340). At an event, someone in the crowd challenged Ehrman by stating that there is no evidence for Jesus ever existing. Here was his response:

There is no scholar in any college or university in the Western world, who teaches classics, ancient history, New Testament, early Christianity, any related field, who doubts that Jesus existed.... The reason for thinking Jesus existed is because he is abundantly attested in early sources. That’s why.... *Early and independent* sources indicate that, certainly that Jesus existed. One author we know about *knew Jesus’s brother. And knew Jesus’s closest disciple Peter.* He’s an eyewitness to both Jesus’s closest disciple and his brother... I think that atheists have done themselves a disservice by jumping on the bandwagon of *mythicisim.* Because, frankly, it makes you look foolish to the outside world. If that’s what you’re gonna believe, you just look foolish. (“Did Jesus Exist Historically?”) On this, I agree with Ehrman.

But I also agree with **what the NT says about Jesus;** and **what Jesus said about Himself!** Jesus did exist, yes. But sadly Erhman doesn’t affirm that **Jesus was the Son of God, who died an atoning death for sinners.**

These truths are unpacked in the following few verses.

Skip down to Verse 14

What did Jesus come to do?

“who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, who are zealous for good works”

We hear echoes of the **Exodus here**. Paul draws on the concepts of the **Passover Lamb**, Israel's **being set free from Egyptian bondage**, and from **the covenant with Israel**, where God called them his "treasured possession." (Ex 19:5)

Some want to claim this is unnecessary. Is substitution really necessary? Is it really that important? Only if you don't want to go to hell.

I mean, this is the heart of the gospel. The Christian can rejoice because Jesus took our punishment at the cross. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. He saved us from the penalty of sin.

This statement also echoes Jesus' statement about himself in **Mark 10:45**.

And we read about Jesus dying as a substitute **elsewhere in the NT**.

Ephesians 5:25-26

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.

Illustration of Proposal story

- **Jesus loves his bride, his treasured possession.**
- This motivates the Christian life; **Galatians 2:20** – he loved us. The cross demonstrates it.

Verse 12, 14

How do we now live? Verses 12-14, tell us that we're to be a people who pursue **godliness** (12) and enthusiastically do **good works** (14).

V. 14: "people who are zealous for good works"

- Paul hammers the importance of good works in this letter (3:1, 8, 14)
- Notice also the **corporate nature of this**.
- **"a people for Himself."**
- Christianity is **personal but not individualistic**.
- We're redeemed to **be part of a people**.

God has always had a people for himself, a people that he displays his glory to and displays his glory through.

Jesus saved us to be a people devoted to good works.

V 12: Godliness. Grace trains us. Grace changes us. This is a fact.

True conversion involves **a change in affections**.

We don't want to go back to our sinful behaviors.

And it involves a new power to live a godly life.

Paul says that God enables us to **say "no" to sin and say "Yes" to God**.

- **"renounce" certain behaviors – ungodliness, worldly passions**
- **Adopt Christ-like behaviors – self-control, upright, godly (a life like Jesus)**

This list reiterates his points in **2:1-9**.

- Paul has a word for **older men, older women, younger women, and younger men.**
 - I love how for **younger men** Paul simply says, “Tell them to be **self-controlled**” (that pretty much covers it!).
 - **It’s not a virtue on display everywhere. Twilight, Edward movie.**
 - The point is that the Christian will live **differently than the unbelieving world.**
 - **Grace trains men to not perverts or predators, but protectors of women.**
 - **Grace makes ungodly men, honorable men.**
 - In Crete, **they weren’t known for godliness.**
 - Titus 1:12
- Paul isn’t encouraging legalism, but grace enabled godliness.

In short, Grace enables us to **love God, one another, and the world.**
 We can even love people who we find Challenging.

This is good news for those who have some Cousin Eddies in their home this time of year!
Clark: Can I refill your eggnog for you? Get you something to eat? Drive you out to the middle of nowhere and leave you for dead?
Eddie: Naw, I'm doing just fine, Clark.
Instead of killing your family, you can kill them with kindness – by grace.

#2: The Savior’s Second Coming (2:13)

The next appearing is an appearance of glory!

Paul tells us we await it. We long for it.

Stott says of *epephanē* the following:

This word was used in classical Greek of the dawn or daybreak, when the sun leaps over the horizon into view; of an enemy emerging out of an ambush; and of the supposed saving intervention of a god or gods in human affairs.” (Stott)

An appropriate word for his second coming!

In Jesus’ first coming, his glory was veiled.
 Many didn’t perceive it.

But soon, **the veil will be lifted, and Jesus’ glory will make an epiphany.**

John says, **“we shall see him as he is.”**

This Savior is our **“blessed hope.”**

Hope is found in a Person: Jesus.

So the Christian lives life, looking back at what Christ as done in his first coming, and looks forward to what Christ will do at his second coming.

This is the glory and fuel of the Christian life.

Stott reminds us that we must do this every day:

This deliberate orientation of ourselves, this looking back and looking forward, this determination to live in the light of Christ's two comings, to live today in the light of yesterday and tomorrow—this should be an essential part of our **daily discipline**. We need to say to ourselves regularly the great acclamation, "Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again." For then our present duties in the home will be inspired by the past and future epiphanies of Christ....

... the two comings of Christ are like 'two windows ... Through the western window a solemn light streams from Mt. Calvary. Through the eastern window shines the light of sun-rising, the herald of a brighter day. Thus the School of Grace is well lighted; but we cannot afford to do without the light from either West or East.

Amen. Let the light of both windows bring you hope and joy and peace this evening!

Christian friend,

We have been saved from the **penalty** of sin – through Jesus' redeeming work.

We are being saved from the **power** of sin – enabling us to say no to sin and yes to God.

We will be saved from the **presence** of sin – when the Savior appears in glory.

We can say this with John Newton – the author of *Amazing Grace*:

"I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I want to be. I am not what I hope to be. But still, I am not what I used to be. And by the grace of God, I am what I am."

- John Newton

The angel put it succinctly to Joseph: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matt 1:21)

If you're **not a Christian**, then hear that good news.

Elsewhere Paul said, "**The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.**" (1 Tim 1:15)

This is what Christmas is about. Christ came to save sinners like us.

No one is beyond the need of his saving grace, and no one is beyond the reach of it.

We would love to talk with you about trusting in the Savior tonight.

[Pray]

Let's stand and sing and be reminded the glory of Christ – in the past, present and future....