

Living By Grace

Titus 2:11-15

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Last week as we examined Christ's words in Matthew 4:4 we looked at the incredibly far reaching implications of the Reformation doctrine of Sola Scriptura, or Scripture alone. And once you understand what the Reformers meant by that, you realize that it is no mystery that the West was revolutionized by the Reformation – in technology, economics, politics, art, and so many other areas. Of course, we saw that we are still in the infancy of applying Scripture to music, math, logic, linguistics, etc. But I think I was able to demonstrate that the Bible provides all the axioms needed for every discipline of life as well as the worldview and interpretive frameworks to help us succeed in taking dominion in each of those areas of life. As 2 Peter words it, the Scriptures give to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

Today we are looking at the issue of Sola Gratia, or “Grace Alone.” And just as many Christians only pay lip service to the foundational doctrine we looked at last week, the same Christians pay lip service to Grace Alone and have not really learned how to live by grace in everything that they do. In fact, many of the people who talk the most about grace seem to be the most powerless in their Christianity. Your views of grace profoundly affect whether your life operates in the flesh on a day to day basis or whether it is transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. So this is just as critical a subject as last week's sermon was. When Jesus said, “Without Me You can do nothing,” He meant it. When you realize that Scripture says that every breath comes from Him, and He upholds every atom by the Word of His power, and He enlightens every man that comes into the world, you begin to realize that we couldn't do anything without Him. So what does Sola Gratia mean in practical terms? That's what we are going to examine today.

There are a lot of false views of grace out there. Let me start by giving you five faulty views found within the Evangelical Church of America. 1) There are Evangelicals who have been so confused on the nature of grace that they think Roman Catholics have the same Gospel as we do. For example, earlier this year the World Evangelical Alliance issued a statement linking arms with the Roman Catholic Church on the issue of the Gospel.¹

¹See <http://www.worldevangelicalalliance.com/news/PopeBenedict.pdf> for example, and http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/evangelicals-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20111220_report-1993-2002_en.html

It's weird. They think that because Rome talks a great deal about grace that we have the same Gospel. And they *do* talk a great deal about grace. They believe grace precedes, undergirds, and finishes the Christian walk. But did you know that Mormons, Jews, and even Muslims speak about grace. The question is not whether they believe in grace, but whether it is a counterfeit grace that they believe in. And the word *sola* is what distinguishes the true from the false. They don't deny grace; they deny the doctrine of *Sola Gratia*.

2) On the other hand, there are evangelicals who think that grace is somehow contrary to law and if there is any law-keeping, there is no grace. They fail to remember that it took Christ's perfect law-keeping to make grace possible, and that grace has as one of its goals to transform individuals after they are justified and to conform them to the image of Christ.

3) Some think grace is needed for conversion (that is, for justification), but then spend the rest of their lives thinking that we can live the Christian life apart from grace. Galatians 3 tells us that is utterly foolish. It's not enough to begin with the Spirit and then continue in the flesh. Galatians 3 says that everything we do must be done by the power of the Holy Spirit. Everything we do must be characterized by grace. And we receive that grace from the Spirit by faith. So the book of Galatians is a major correction of that third group.

4) There is a fourth group of Evangelicals who define grace in a way that you would think that God really doesn't care about sin. For them grace means that God likes us just the way we are and we can sin like the devil and be secure in God's grace.

5) The fifth group are the five point Arminians who think that grace can be completely lost and that therefore we need to get regenerated and justified over and over again. In their view, sin can always put them in jeopardy of heaven, which means they don't understand sin either. But as a result of their faulty view of grace, they have no sure footing on which to grow.

Sadly, those five defective viewpoints are quite common in the so-called "evangelical church." And this passage not only corrects those faulty views, but gives us a marvelous paradigm for living by grace every moment of our lives.

Take a look at verse 2. Verse 2 says that grace teaches us something. Think of grace as a school teacher. And one of the ways that you can tell whether your version of grace is a counterfeit or the real thing is by whether it teaches the same things that Paul's version of grace teaches us. Let's look at verse 11 to see how we got introduced to grace in the first place.

I. The school of grace opens our eyes to the only way of salvation (v. 11)

First, we see in verse 11 that the school of grace opens our eyes to the only way of salvation. We totally misunderstand grace if we think that we can somehow earn, deserve or even contribute in some small way to God's favor. Let's break the verse down word by word. The word "**grace**" is a word that simply means God's favor. The word "**salvation**" implies that we were lost – we were deserving of hell. It implies that mankind is desperately in need of salvation. But notice the order in which God's favor comes. Verse 11 says, **for the grace of God that brings salvation**. So the first thing that we need to notice is that God's favor came upon us before we were saved, otherwise grace couldn't *bring* us the salvation, right? If God's favor brings salvation it means that the favor was there before there was salvation. But if God had favor on us before we were saved, that logically means that God's favor came upon us before we were changed; before we converted; before we had anything good in us. That means that there was nothing in us that contributed to God's favor. This is why we define grace as undeserved favor. God's favor began in eternity past when He elected us before the foundation of the world. And that eternal, undeserved favor *brings* every aspect of our salvation into being. Scripture says that we are born again by grace, we believe by grace, are converted by grace, understand by grace and are sanctified by grace, we will be resurrected and glorified by grace. Every aspect of salvation flows from God's prior favor. That's all logically implied in those words.

But there is a certainty in these words that is encouraging as well. Commentaries have pointed out the curious usage of an *adjective* for "salvation." The English word "salvation" is a noun, but the Greek is not a noun. It's an adjective meaning "saving." And if you look at the Greek form of the word, it is feminine, singular, nominative and it corresponds to the feminine, singular nominative of the noun "grace." So most commentaries point out that literally this should be "saving grace." It's not a grace that makes salvation possible (as Arminians contend). It is a grace that always and effectively saves. It's an irresistible grace. And that's why our version says that it actually *brings* salvation. When that grace is present, salvation results. It is a saving grace. It's a very strong; a very encouraging term.

A third thing to notice is that this *prior* favor of God that *presently* brings salvation, had to pierce the darkness. You can't really see that in our version. But the word for "has appeared" is Ἐπεφάνη (επιπηνανε), from

which we get the English word epiphane. But it has the idea of illumination in darkness. It's true that something "appears" when the lights turn on (so that is a legitimate translation), but the Greek really emphasizes the lights. And its interesting that exactly the same Greek word is elsewhere translated as a light shining. The dictionary defines it this way: to shine upon, to light up, to cause light to come upon some object by way of illuminating it, to illuminate, to cause something to be seen in the darkness. So it's more than just appearing. Yes, it is a reference to the appearing of Christ. But it is the lights coming on. He's using a metaphor to indicate that not only was God's grace prior to anything that we did, but we contributed nothing but darkness, and the darkness had to be pierced with the light of Christ's appearing.

John begins his Gospel by saying **in Him was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.** Even with the light there, they did not comprehend it. Luke begins his Gospel by saying of Jesus, that He was: **to give light [that's the same word as our word here in Titus 2:11 – "to give light] to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.** And this is precisely what men need before they can learn any lessons from grace. Grace needs to open blind eyes to be able to see the truths of Scripture. There is no synergy (or cooperation) here between God and man as if man is seeking for God. Romans 3 says that there is none who seeks after God. It is God's shining into the darkness. On God's part grace is sovereign and unconditional and on man's part grace is completely unmerited. All we contributed was darkness. God's favor contributed everything else. So already you are seeing that Sola Gratia necessitates two other solas – sola Christus (Christ alone) and Sole Deo Gloria (to the glory of God alone).

And the fact that Jesus appeared **to all men** or shone His light before all men shows that this favor was not intended for a small corner to produce a tiny holy huddle. It was moving out towards all men. There was an invasion of light going on. Now let me make a clarification here. Obviously it isn't all without exception or everyone would be saved. "All without exception" is *one* of the five dictionary definitions of the Greek word "all," and would mean "each and every man." But it is not all without exception, but rather is all without distinction. The School House of Grace is not an exclusive, private club for rich kids only. No. It reaches and it saves all men without distinction. In other words, both the Jews and Gentiles that this book talks about; the old and young he has just finished exhorting; the males and females, the masters and servants the rich and the poor. All without

distinction. There is an invasion of heaven to earth and a spreading of the Gospel of the kingdom.

So Paul instructs us on how we even got into the school house or into God's homeschool program – because home and school are one and the same in God's program. We were dead in our sins and trespasses, lying out in the darkness of the world, and God's favor went out of the school house in search of us, found us, brought us in, resurrected us, healed our blind eyes and turned on the lights so that we could learn. And it is only after we get saved that verse 12 says of this grace that it continues **teaching us that** and then we learn all kinds of new things about grace. But we have to be saved before we can learn them. Once we are in the school house, we can *never* be satisfied with only learning of how grace saved us. That's glorious. That's wonderful. But grace teaches us so much more once we get into God's homeschool family. We don't just get into the family by grace; we learn many lessons by grace. And the ignorance of what it teaches us can be costly. So the rest of these verses tell us that grace is our teacher teaching us a bunch of lessons after we get saved. Let's look at them.

II. The school of graces teaches us to be sanctified (v. 12)

The first lesson it teaches those who have truly been saved is that sanctification is not an option. If point number I dealt with regeneration and justification (which is the beginning of our Christian walk), then this point deals with sanctification. Verse 12: **teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.** This is exactly opposite of the doctrine of grace being taught by those who believe in the Carnal Christian theory; who deny that sanctification *always* and *necessarily* follows justification. While Paul would deny that you are even justified if you are not being sanctified, they insist that you can accept Jesus as Savior and reject Him as Lord. Well, I am sorry, but you can't divide Jesus up that way. Everywhere in the Scripture His Lordship comes first – he is Lord and Savior. You can't have one without the other.

So I want you to notice that in this verse Paul says that grace teaches two things: First, something negative. Grace is against something; it stands in opposition to something; it denies something – or (as William Hendriksen translates it) it renounces something. Grace is always against something. What is it against here? Verse 11 says that true grace denies or renounces **ungodliness and worldly lusts.** And if your grace is not working in you to

the denying or the renouncing of ungodliness and worldly lusts, then it is a counterfeit grace. If it doesn't stand against anything, it is a counterfeit grace. It is not a saving grace.

And so it stands against sin and all of our fleshly desires, and it stands for something positive; it stands for righteousness. But notice the order: you've got to stand against something before you can truly stand for something. Here's what it stands for: that **we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.**

Soberly is the same Greek word for "rationality." You see the Greek word being used earlier in verses 6,4 and 2. And I love the fact that Paul wants us to be rational. We have been saved to be rational! Amen? Grace teaches us to think with our head. But unfortunately there is a common notion of grace that you find in some circles that tells you that if you are really spiritual, you will believe contradictions. And Paul says, "No way! Grace teaches us to be rational." I have met people who believe that barking for Jesus and slithering on the floor is a sign of spirituality and revival. And Paul says "No." Grace teaches us that we should live rationally! Some believe that if you haven't had irrational experiences you haven't been baptized by the Spirit. And Paul says, "No. Grace teaches us that we should live rationally." Some say that they are allergic to theology and all God wants is our hearts. But what does Scripture say? It says that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength *and mind*. That's a pretty interesting lesson of grace, isn't it? Grace teaches us to live soberly or rationally. That means that many versions of grace out there are counterfeit. And if you are in the homeschool of God, God is teaching you step by step to be more and more rational.

The next thing that grace teaches us is that we should live **righteously**. Any conception of grace that says we can sin so that grace may abound is a false view of grace. Paul says that true grace teaches us to live righteously. God is interested in righteousness. He is interested in how we live. Not only is righteousness compatible with grace, it always flows from true grace. You are not even saved if you are not beginning to live righteously. When I was doing street evangelism in Calgary, Alberta, I met a drunk on skid row. After sharing the Gospel with him he fumbled in his pocket and showed me a spiritual birth certificate that some fool evangelist had given him before. He had said a prayer and been handed this spiritual birth certificate and been told that now that He had made a decision for Christ, if he ever doubted his salvation, all he needed to do was to look at the certificate and not doubt his salvation. But true faith doesn't look at a man-made piece of paper. It looks to Jesus. And what does Jesus do when those

who have been saved look at Him? He beckons us by grace to be more and more like Him; to be more and more righteous. If you see a teacher whose version of grace does not teach you to live righteously, run from him; don't listen to him because he is teaching the exact opposite of what Paul says true grace teaches.

The next word deals with a life devoted to God. That we should live **godly**. Some translate that as devotion to God. And the point is that grace stirs up the heart to seek after God; to commune with Him; to have a life that is wrapped up in God. And so God doesn't just want an intellectual Christianity. He does want our intellect, but He also wants all of us. Grace was given to make us totally devoted to God. And those who have no interest in devotions and worship may need to question whether they have truly tasted of grace. One of the evidences that we are being taught by grace is devotion to God. One of the evidences of regeneration is the newly given desire to pray to God. William Gurnall said,

Praying is the same to the new creature as crying is to the natural. The child is not learned by art or example to cry, but is instructed by nature; it comes into the world crying. Praying is not a lesson got by forms and rules of art, but flowing from principles of new life itself.

The Puritan Thomas Watson said that prayer is the natural spiritual reflex that he likens to a baby breathing. The point is, that however faltering our crying and spiritual breathing is, it is one of the first things that grace teaches a new believer to do. We are drawn to devotion, not simply to activity. And there are many People who are fooled into thinking that they are saved when they have desire for devotion or communion with God.

So in these words we have seen that grace teaches us how to be sanctified in relationship to self, to others and to God. But there's one more phrase in verse 12 – all of this is to be **in this present age**. That implies that it is possible to be rational, righteous and devoted to God in this present age. We don't have to wait till we get to heaven. Nor do we have an option of waiting till we get to heaven, as the carnal Christian theory teaches. *True* grace teaches that we are to live this way in the present age. And literally that is in the “now” age. To me this is encouraging. It means that it is possible; grace makes it possible. You can overcome by God's grace.

But the interesting thing about grace is that it does this gradually, not suddenly. The word for “teaching us” is from the same stem as *pedagogue*. As Hendriksen points out, a pedagogue is a kind of teacher who leads children step by step in their learning. And grace too, gently (but firmly and consistently) teaches us and leads and guides us forward. We don't get there overnight. We grow in grace gradually. And so any form of perfectionism

that says a Christian can instantly be perfect or live above known sin is also wrong. Even the apostle Paul had still not arrived at the end of his life, even though he had grown a great deal. And so, all forms of perfectionism automatically have a defective view of grace. Grace is always going to be showing us new ways in which we can be more like Jesus. It's like a magnet drawing us to him. So if you think you have arrived and you have seen no evidence of personal growth in the last few years, you probably have a counterfeit grace and need to cry out to the Lord for the real thing. Grace is a pedagogue teacher who gradually, gently leads us along teaching us principle upon principle of how to live. It's a lifetime of learning. And what a perfect analogy of sanctification – it is growth. So the true nature of sanctification by grace is the second point.

III. **The school of grace teaches us to be driven by the future (v. 13)**

But there is a third point that I see in verse 13. Verse 13 is continuing the sentence that begins with what God's grace is training us in. The third major point that the school of grace teaches us is that we need to be driven by the future. Verse 13 says, **looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.** Notice first, that Jesus is clearly called God here. There is one appearing, and since the article is before God and encompasses God and Savior, it is one Person, and this one Person is called "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." He was fully God and fully man. So this is a great passage to turn to for JW's and others who deny the Trinity.

But another thing to notice is that God's grace will drive us to look forward to this appearing of Jesus, and that this appearing will be a blessed hope. Not a *scary* hope, but a *blessed* hope. The ultimate goal in history in some way drives our vision and our lives. In fact, Romans 8 says that the whole creation is anticipating it and looking forward to it. There is a progressive movement of all creation toward that final goal. That will be the time when all sin will be removed from creation, all thorns and thistles removed; all curse, all eating of meat by animals, all pain and suffering. And history is moving towards that glorious hope irresistibly. Grace makes us long for it. It makes us realize that what we are currently experiencing is not all that God intended for planet earth. Grace intuitively makes us have a holy dissatisfaction with the way things are in this world, and to long for the final product and to look forward to that day.

And yet, what we do in the present age (which is verse 12) has a part in how we look forward to that day (verse 13). We aren't passively waiting to get bailed out. We are denying ungodliness and worldly lusts and by rationality, righteous living and devotion to God, we are hastening that day. That's what 2 Peter 3 tells us – that God is not willing that any of the elect should perish, and He is holding off the Second Coming until the last of the "us" that He is talking about there are saved and all the purposes of grace in history are being accomplished. He won't come back until that happens and until culture itself is renewed. Engaging in that task is hastening that day, and ignoring that great task slows it down. We have a job to do, and until it is done, Jesus Christ is not coming back. And that job is in part, the Great Commission – making Christian nations, and from those Christian nations making a Christian civilization that fully obeys the Bible. But the Greek word *pedagogue* indicates that it is a gradual process.

IV. The school of grace teaches us to have zeal for Christ's cause (v. 14)

And so point number IV says that the grace teaches us to have a zeal for Christ's cause in this world (verse 14). Now, let me remind you again that verses 11-14 are all one long sentence in the Greek. The parts of this sentence are all logically connected. Any view of eschatology which takes away our zeal (verse 14) is a defective eschatology. Any view of eschatology which is irrelevant to what we do now (verses 12) is a defective eschatology. All of the parts of these four verses logically hang together. And they all flow from what grace teaches us.

So, verse 14 indicates that grace hugely motivates us to move ourselves and planet earth as close to that final pattern as we can. It says, **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.** This is as radical a contradiction of modern antinomianism as you can get. Now, the word "Antinomianism" is a word describing someone who is against the law of God. And antinomianism in the name of grace is rampant in Reformed and non-Reformed circles. They can teach grace, grace, grace all they want to, but if they ignore the purpose of grace in this verse, it shows that they have misunderstood grace. True grace (according to the grammar of the sentence) is teaching everything in verses 12-14.

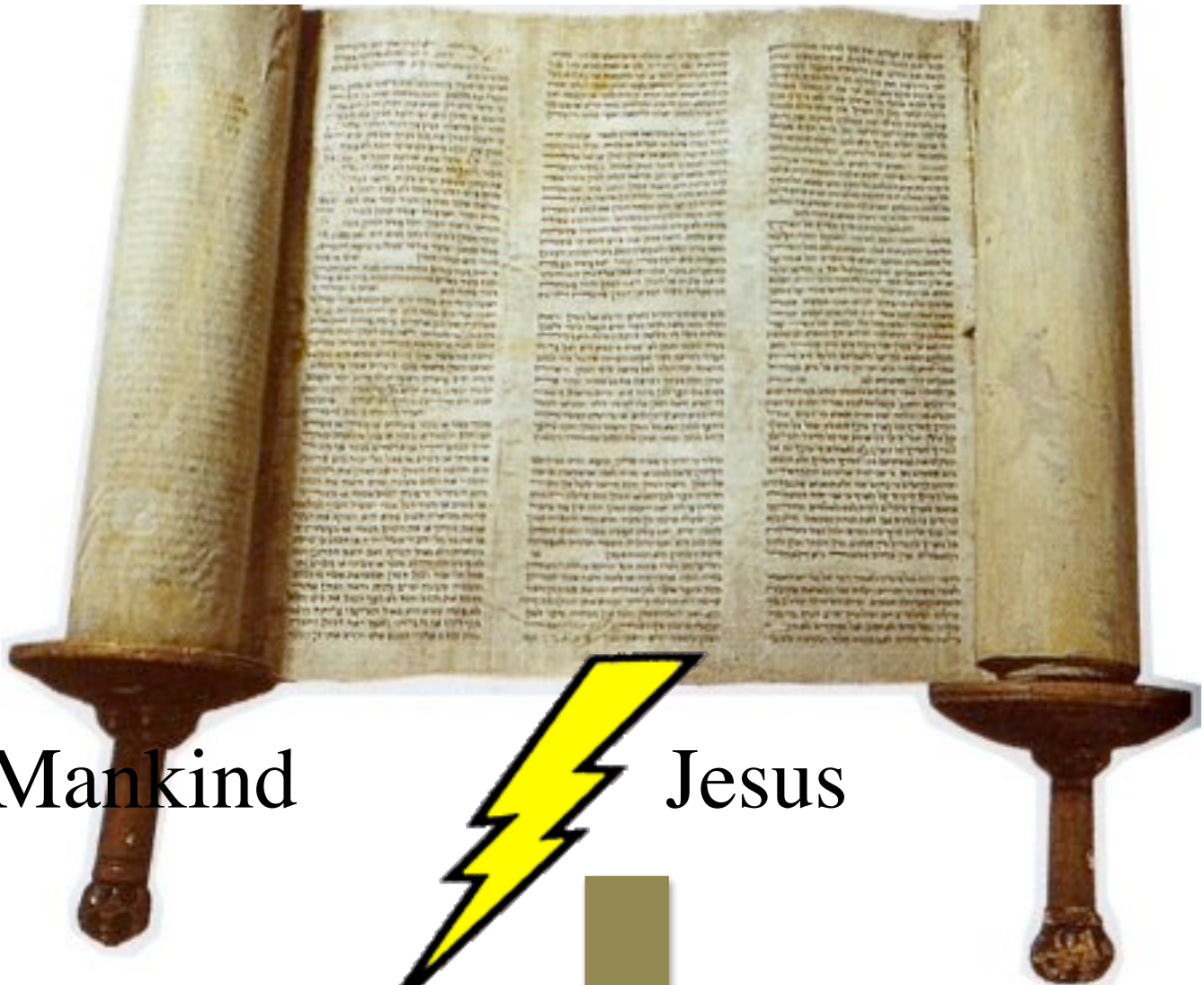
A. It teaches us to flee from lawlessness (v. 14a)

Notice the purpose phrase in this verse *that He might redeem us from every lawless deed*. There are three things that I want to highlight from this phrase. First, if we are redeemed *from* lawless deeds that means that redemption not only saves from hell, it saves us from our sinful actions themselves. It means we can overcome our sinful bad habits. It means that in area after area of our lives we can move from a Romans 7 experience to a Romans 8 experience of victory. And that's exactly what the angel told Joseph in Matthew 1:21 that this was the purpose of Christ's incarnation – **for He shall save His people from their sins**. You have not learned the lessons of grace if you think that you have a free ticket to heaven and now you can live any way that you please. Paul says, "God forbid." Jesus did not die to make us comfortable in our sin. He died to save us from our sins and to make us law-abiding.

Second, notice that sin is defined by the law. We are redeemed from every *lawless* deed. God doesn't want lawlessness and if we are being saved from sin we are being saved from lawlessness. 1 John 3:4 defines sin this way. It says, **sin is lawlessness**. That's God's New Testament definition of sin – sin is lawlessness. That means that sin is anything that is against the law of God. Sin is not some nebulous bad thing that has no relevance to Old Testament law. Sin is lawlessness. And Hebrews 1:9 says that Jesus hates lawlessness. Let me read that verse. It says, "You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness." On the day of judgment Jesus will say to some people who thought they were Christians, **depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness** (Matt 7:23). Obviously God continues to be interested in the law, and those who resist the law are resisting God's whole purpose in sending Jesus. They are ignorant of the lessons of grace. You have not learned the lessons of grace very well if your version of grace teaches you to ignore the law. Lawlessness is antithetical to true grace. Grace enables us to keep what we could not keep in our own strength. And that has puzzled some people. People ask, "If God's purpose was to save us from lawlessness, why did Paul say that we are not under law but under grace." And the context indicates that Paul is not saying that grace makes us lawless, but that grace rescues us from the curse of the law. Think of it this way:

Here's some crummy artwork that I threw together on Saturday afternoon. Up on the top is a picture that represents the law of God – the Torah. On the right hand side under the law is Jesus. Galatians 4:4 says that Jesus was born "under the law." He is clearly under the law. So we've got Jesus as our human representative under the law over here. The very next

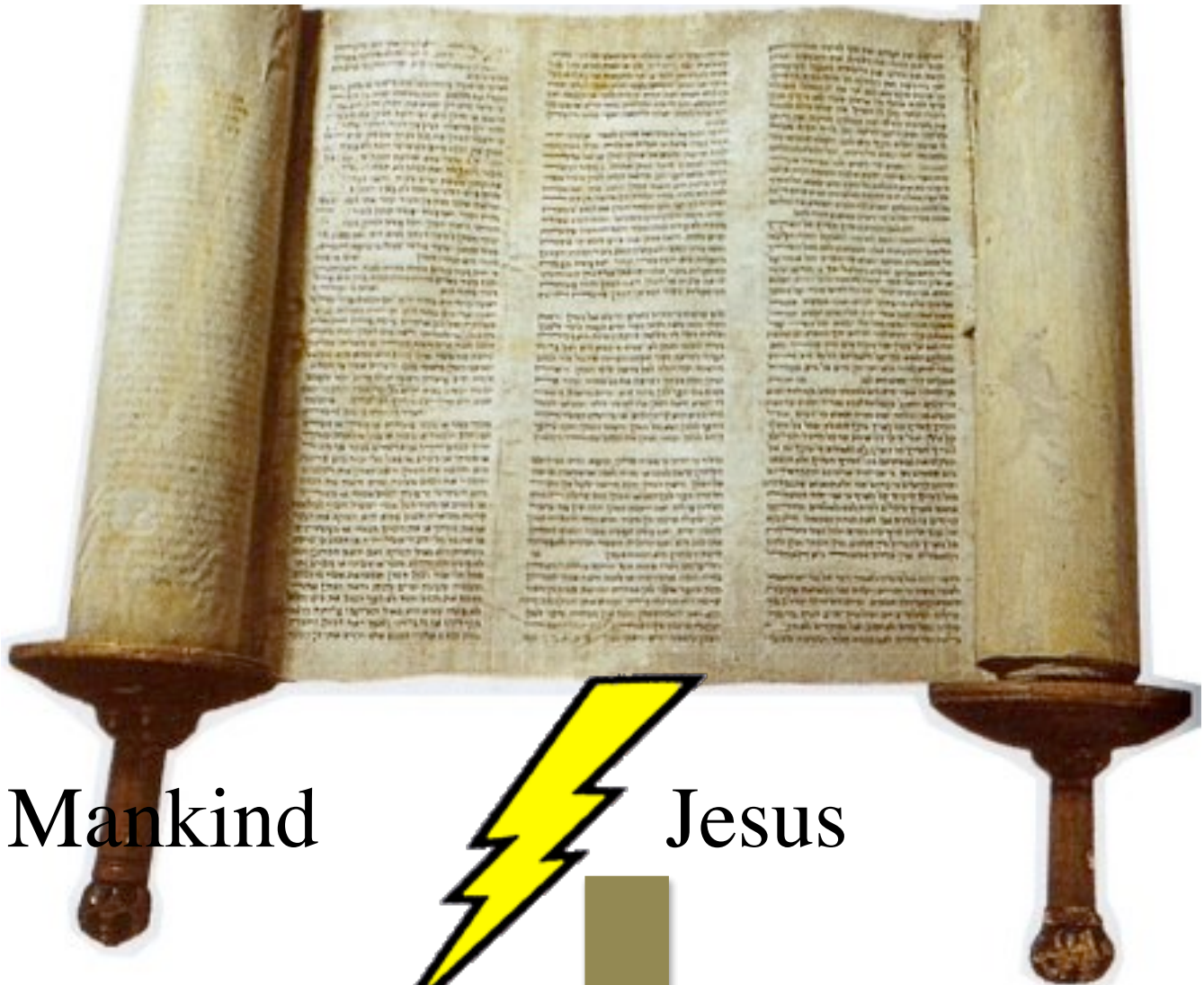
verse (Galatians 4:5) says that all those who are not saved are under the law outside of Christ. And they need to be saved because the law demands perfection, which no man cannot achieve. Even one infraction brings judgment. And so this lightning bolt represents the curse of the law threatening God's wrath and destruction on all mankind. But it says that Jesus was born under the law in order to redeem those who were under the law and to adopt them as sons.



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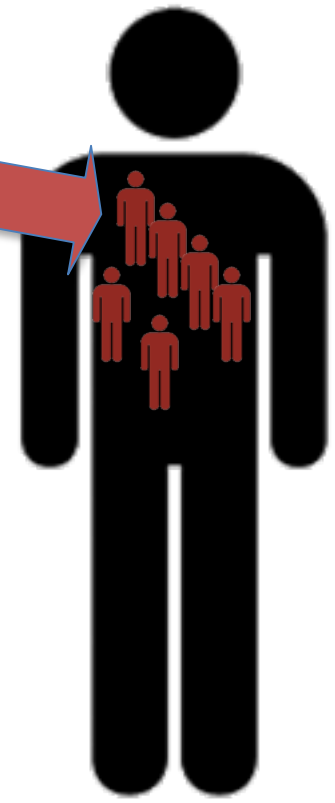
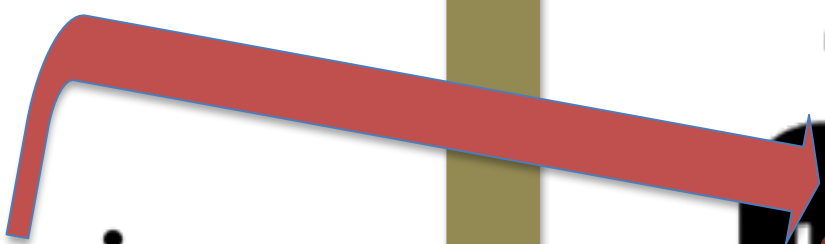
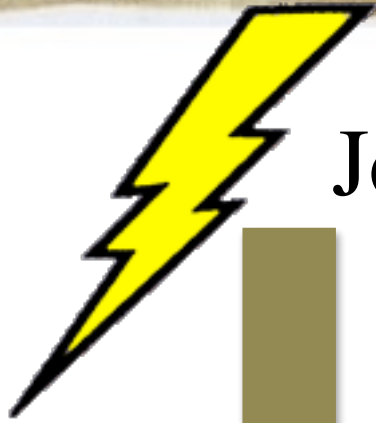
Jesus





len Mankind

Jesus



This second sheet shows how that happens. Here is the same group of fallen mankind who is under the curse of the law. But Galatians 4:4-5 says that Jesus was born under the law to redeem us from the law and make us united to Jesus by grace. So we have a red arrow transferring some of mankind and uniting them to Jesus. The humans transferred into Jesus are colored red to symbolize the fact that we have been redeemed from the curse of the law. By being transferred from this side to this side, we are no longer under law but inside of Jesus and the law only sees Jesus. The law can't get at us to judge us because it sees us as perfect in Jesus. But there is something I want you to notice. The law hasn't disappeared at the top of this sheet. 1 Corinthians 9:21 words the relationship of believers to the law this way: "... **not being without law toward God, but under law in Christ...**(ἀλλ' ἐννομος χριστῷ)" To be under law by ourselves is judgment; to be under law in Christ is glorious. And if we are united to Jesus, Jesus draws us into the law by His grace. It's no longer a curse. We delight in it. Even though we don't keep it perfectly, we are safe in Jesus, who has kept the law perfectly. But being in Jesus makes us want to keep the law more and more. Why? Because we want to be more and more like Him. And notice He has kept and continues to keep the law perfectly. 1 John 2:6 says that if you claim to be united to Jesus you ought to walk in exactly the way that Jesus walked when He was here on earth. How did Jesus walk? By the power of the Holy Spirit He walked in conformity with the law of God. And if we are united to Jesus, grace helps us to continue that walk more and more. That's 1 John 2:6. And that's why Romans 3:31 says, "**Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.**" when faith took us from this side of the sheet to this side of the sheet, it didn't do away with the law; it establishes the law. Why does faith establish the law? Because it unites us to Jesus who lives the law through us. Can you see now why Titus 2:14 says that the purpose of grace is to redeem us from every lawless deed these couldn't keep the law on the left side of the page, but when by faith we moved over here, Christ empowers us to be more and more conformed to the law's standards. So we are not without law on this side of the sheet. We just relate to that law by grace through Jesus.

Third, notice how comprehensive this affirmation of the law is. **Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed.** Any deed that could be described as against the law of God, is a deed that grace rescues us from. The whole law, and every disobedience to that law is what is in view. This means that grace teaches us the same lesson I taught last Sunday – that man (not just Israel) is called to live by every word that

proceeds out of the mouth of God. Grace teaches us the same lesson of Jesus in Matthew 5:17-19. There Jesus said,

Matthew 5:17 ¶ “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

Matthew 5:18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

Matthew 5:19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Failing to learn from grace has been extremely costly to our modern generation. Faulty views of grace are systematically destroying the family, the church, and our whole nation. But Paul insists that true grace teaches us to flee from lawlessness.

B. It teaches us to be zealous for good works (v. 14b)

And secondly, it teaches us to be zealous for good works. Verse 14 goes on to say, **and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.** Several things to note here. First, God’s grace purifies or cleanses you. You may feel discouraged and dirty after hearing this message, but you can go to the cross of Christ, ask His forgiveness and be made white as snow – forgiven, and with God’s favor shining upon you. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. But we must turn from unrighteousness. That’s the meaning of repentance – to turn around with our whole person. And repentance and faith are flip sides of the same coin. To turn to a God in faith we must turn from something.

Second, grace purifies you **for Himself.** What’s the purpose of purification and forgiveness? It’s not to make us feel better. It’s not a psychological reason. No, it’s a God-centered reason. It’s to draw us closer to God. God’s grace didn’t purify you so that you could selfishly live to *yourself*. No. You were made for God. Grace makes God delight in you and makes you delight in God. It draws you to Him. But certainly grace purchases you for His purposes.

Third, God is making you to be **His own special people.** The word “special” means “being beyond usual” (Strong’s). In other words, you cannot be the status quo of what the world says is normal. He is redeeming you to be beyond the usual. You cannot measure what is normal by the world or even by the church. Grace makes us radically different. And it makes us

different for *Him*. It makes us step into the realm of the supernatural. The Sermon on the Mount is filled with commands that no unregenerate person can accomplish. Jesus said that loving someone who loves you is no big deal. Any unregenerate person can do that. But when you can love your enemies, you are giving evidence of supernatural grace. When you can rejoice under persecution you are a special people – you have gone beyond the normal by God's supernatural help. And so grace teaches us to continually go beyond the normal. Is that what grace is doing in you? Evaluate your life. Is there anything you do that an unbeliever could not do? If not, you are not even saved according to the Sermon on the Mount. By faith ask for the filling of the Holy Spirit and step out of the boat like Peter and metaphorically walk on the water. His grace enables you to do the impossible – like forgiving those who hurt you, blessing those who curse you, rejoicing under suffering, etc. So God's grace makes you His own special people – or His own people who go beyond the unusual.

Fourth, grace teaches us to be **zealous for good works**. If you are content to be a couch potato all day, then you have not been learning the lessons of grace. Grace saves us for the purpose of making us zealous for good works. True grace burns within us; it yearns for action and it must be released in action. Wherever true grace is, these characteristics are always present. Which means, many in the church of Jesus Christ are not even saved. They need to come to the cross of Christ to receive His cleansing and His empowering grace.

And so this whole verse is a rebuke to the modern church. Ignorance of what grace is all about has been costly to the church of Jesus Christ. It has left the church in America in a messy shambles. Jesus said that if the church has lost its saltiness, it is good for nothing but to be cast out and trampled under foot of men. To be underfoot of men is to have men or humanism dominating the church. And that is exactly what has happened in our generation. And it has not happened that way because God's grace is not powerful enough. Paul insists that where sin abounds, grace abounds much more. God's grace is plenty powerful. So humanism has dominated, not because God's grace is weak, but because we have refused to live by faith in Jesus, through the powerful grace of His Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father. And we need to pray that God would reverse that and pour out His grace upon the church in great measure. And pray that we might be a part of bringing this Reformation.

V. The school of grace teaches us to never stop learning and to never stop spreading the message of grace (v. 15)

The last lesson of grace is that we should never stop learning these lessons of grace and never stop spreading this glorious message of grace. Verse 15 says, **Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.** You might be intimidated to contradict all of the false views of grace that are out there, but keep in mind that when you bring the authority of Scripture to bear in someone else's life, it is not you judging them; it is God Himself who will use His Word to judge and change them. Matthew 7 says that we can't judge anyone independently. Our opinions or judgments don't count. Instead, John 5 commands us to judge righteous judgment or God's judgment. In other words, we are to bring the Scriptures to bear. The only authority we have over others is the authority of God's Word, and that is why 1 Peter 4 says that if anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. Don't share your opinions; share the Scripture. That's last week's message. Your opinions don't have power to change anyone, but the sword of the Spirit is powerful to do so when it is accompanied by God's grace. The school of grace should give every student an insatiable appetite to learn from Scripture and to never stop learning. But we should also have an insatiable appetite to share the truth with others of a holy grace that produces holiness. May it be so Lord Jesus. Amen.