

The Defense of Grace

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Titus

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Bible Text: Titus 2:11-15
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Good morning everybody. It is a tremendous joy, a tremendous joy to preach the word. Ty asked me a couple weeks ago if I would be available to preach this Sunday because he's going up to visit Maggie, he and the family are going up to visit Maggie in Louisville, and so they're going up there and so when he asked me, I just said yes. I didn't fully know all that was on my schedule but there's no greater privilege or no greater priority than this, the word of God to study it because the impact that it has on your own soul to give time to this and then for that to then hopefully, by God's Spirit, make an impact on you. I mean, just reading it out loud has an impact on God's people and so then to be able to just, I feel like the job of the preacher is to basically say, "Okay, let's read the word of God. Now look at it. Hold on. Stop. Look at it. Pay attention to what this is saying and let this sink into your ears," because as Ted said earlier, it is our life. The word of God is our life. You know, Jesus when he confronted the devil during the temptation says that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. This makes no sense to an unbelieving world that distrusts the word of God but the word of God is more important to you than even the food and the shelter and the clothing. This is our life and we are dependent upon him for provision and so we give our attention to this profoundly and we constantly, I'm so thankful that we meet on a weekly basis to be reminded of this; that the Lord in the rhythm of life made seven day weeks, you know, he made it to be a seven day cycle so that we would do this every single week because we forget and we have to be reminded, you know. Either we don't know the word or we forget it and we need to be reminded of it.

So as we come together, let's give our attention to this and really genuinely submit ourselves, remind ourselves that this is important. So let's pray as we open the word.

Father, we come to You, we desire Your word to make its way into our hearts and, Father, You alone can impress this upon our soul. So Lord, I pray that what I say would be accurate and true to how You intend this to be delivered, and that it would be heard in an accurate and true way and applied to each person as they need it for Your glory. So help us today, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

As we start today, as we open up to the book of Titus 2:11-15, I want to ask you a question: how do you define the grace of God? What do you think about when you think

about the grace of God? What does the grace of God mean to you? How is his grace shown? What is your understanding of this? This is a massive theme obviously in Scripture and a massive theme in the songs that we sing, in our conversations, and the words that we say to one another we often employ this term, the grace of God. God is gracious toward you. What does that mean to you? If someone were to ask you to define it, if they were to ask you how is God's grace displayed? And also how does God's grace affect your life? How does his grace impact your life? What difference does it make?

So with those questions in mind, let's turn to Titus 2 and we're gonna read verses 11 through 15. It says,

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 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. 15 These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

This is a passage that is at the heart of this letter to Titus in the book of Titus. This is the heart of the letter. Everything in the book of Titus relates to this passage, this section, and this encapsulates the grace of God from beginning to end, from our salvation to our daily life to our future hope, to the purpose that God has set for us across all of eternity. This describes the grace of God. This should be our definition of the grace of God and we're going to examine this closely so that we will have an accurate view of it.

This book of Titus was an epistle written by the Apostle Paul to his associate Titus probably in the mid 60s AD. This was after Paul was released from a Roman prison. He was there because of his testimony for the Gospel but he was released and he was allowed to move freely for a few years before being imprisoned again, and he was finally beheaded by the Emperor Nero in the late 60s AD. And in case you're unfamiliar with Bible backgrounds, Paul was originally known as Saul of Tarsus. He was a Jewish Pharisee and a persecutor of the church shortly after the death of Christ. While on his way to persecute the church in Syria, the Lord Jesus appeared to him and called him to be a messenger of the Gospel and he was converted, radically transformed, and he was eventually, he eventually became known as the Apostle Paul. And after several years, he was sent out on missionary journeys throughout the Mediterranean regions of Turkey, Greece and Italy, and he went city to city preaching the Gospel and planting churches wherever he went. As he would travel, he would also take several companions with him. To name a few: Barnabas, Luke the physician who wrote the book of Luke, Epaphras, Timothy for whom the books 1 & 2 Timothy are named, and Titus, among many others.

He didn't travel alone. He always had a group of people with him, and as happened frequently, Paul would preach the Gospel, plant a church, and then move on to the next city, and as he moved on, he would send and receive letters from these churches. They

would have questions, controversies, and also reports about the progress of the church. Sometimes it was good news and sometimes it was bad, and often it was mixed news as probably with just about any church. These letters would be carried by men in his cohort. They didn't have email back then. They didn't have text messages, 5G networks and any of that kind of stuff. It was carried by these men, these trusted men.

So Paul would write back to these churches, answering their questions or giving instructions to the churches as to how they were to correct their doctrine and their conduct, and several of these letters, 13 to be exact, are preserved today in the Bible. Thirteen of Paul's letters. He wrote many more letters than that but 13 of them are in our Bible: Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, and other books like that. You can look up the full, they're called the Pauline corpus, all of Paul's epistles. Most of them were written to churches as a whole or groups of churches, a region, letters written to a church to be passed around to the churches. But four of these letters were written to an individual: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon. These were written to individual people and in the case of Titus, Paul had apparently spent some time in Crete and had determined that the churches there needed special attention, they needed to be put in order, and so he left Titus there at some point and penned this letter to him, and when you read it, it reads something like a Civil War General would have written to one of his subordinates on the eve of an attack. It's very succinct. It's direct and it's full of direction and commands, and it's not flowery. It's very to-the-point.

Listen to Titus 1:5, he says, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you." And this was to be a temporary stay. He was to swiftly set things straight and then meet up with Paul at a place called Nicopolis. He says this in chapter 3, verse 12, he says, "When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there." So there were issues that needed to be dealt with, they were urgent, and they were to be dealt with quickly, and we'll discuss what those issues are but I mention all of this because it is clear in the New Testament that Timothy and Titus were Paul's go-to guys when it came to dealing with big issues in the churches. Timothy and Titus were like his most trusted guys. When there was an issue that he really wanted dealt with, those were the guys that he would send.

Listen to what he says about Titus in 2 Corinthians 8:23. Well, we'll go back to verse 16. He says, "But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus." So Titus was earnest for the sake of the Corinthians. "For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord." So he's a self-motivated guy who loves people. Verse 18, "We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches; and not only this, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our readiness." Okay, so just to distill this down, Paul is making a collection for the saints in Jerusalem. They're undergoing a famine. They need food. They need clothing. So Paul is going around to these churches gathering a gift for them from all of

these churches, Corinth being one of those churches. That is this gracious work that he's talking about and so he sent Titus and a couple other guys to go collect this.

If you were gathering a whole bunch of money, what kind of person would you send on that journey to carry out that task? What kind of person? You would send your most trusted one, right? You would send your most trusted people to deal with those issues. Look at what he says in verse 20, "taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift." It's like when we take the offering here, we don't send one random person to the back of the church to count up the money. They're deacons involved in this, men of proven character and not just one, several of them, counted around a table making sure that everything is being counted properly and put in its right place. Titus was one of these trusted men and this one was a particular important mission.

He says verse 21, "for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent because of his great confidence in you." So there's a couple guys here he's mentioning. We won't get into who they are but verse 23 says, "As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you." So Titus was a trusted man.

Why am I telling you all this? Why does this matter? Well, Titus was entrusted with the most important missions because of his high character and competence and his genuine care for people. Paul highly valued these co-laborers. He loved them dearly and when he sent them on these missions, he didn't know if they would return again. I mean, Paul himself was imprisoned, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked. The journeys were difficult and dangerous from natural dangers, bandits on the way, sickness and persecution. So when Paul sends these guys that he loves, he doesn't do it willy-nilly. He doesn't say, "Hey, I need some milk and eggs. Can you go to Crete and I'll see you in a few months." This is not one of those sort of casual errands that he's running. It was not a courtesy call. The issue that was happening at Crete was so pressing that Paul left Titus there to deal with it. He wasn't on vacation in Crete and the content of this letter, though brief, it's not a postcard. It's not greetings from Crete. What Paul is saying was a matter of great importance and urgency and beyond that, this letter has been preserved and inspired by God and has come down to us so that every Christian on the planet throughout history has it available to them. It's that important. The content was considered to be so precious that the believers of that time period copied it repeatedly and held onto it, and then included it in the Canon of Scripture.

So my point is this: this passage demands our attention as the most important passage in this important book that has been preserved for all eternity. Paul felt that the message was so important that it was worth dispatching his most trusted companion at great risk and he gave him these orders so we dare not take it lightly. So as we give our undivided attention to it, we come to it with these questions. What does it say? What does it mean? Why was it important back then and what are the implications for me today? This is our approach to all of Scripture. What does it say? What does it mean? Why did it matter back then?

And why does it matter today? As you have those questions in mind, let's pay closer attention to the words of what it's saying here. So we'll break this down under three headings: the definition of grace; the displays of grace; and the defense of grace. The definition of grace, the displays of grace, and the defense of grace.

Titus 2:11 says this, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men." This word for "grace" is the Greek word "charis," and generally it just communicates kindness or favor or goodwill, even in the giving of a gift or a monetary gift as Paul had mentioned there in 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, this gracious work. It was a gift of money to the saints. In general, it just communicates favor as Mary found favor with God in Luke 1:30. Jesus grew in wisdom and stature in favor with God and men, the same Greek word. Joseph found favor with Pharaoh, it says. David found favor in God's sight. The first church in Jerusalem was experiencing favor with all the people.

So charis has this general sense of favor and goodwill, but the way it's being used in this context, it is speaking of the grace of God that is associated with the Gospel. This favor is unearned favor. In fact, it is unmerited favor and that is to put it mildly. It's not like someone winning the lottery, right? They didn't do anything to earn it. No one did anything to earn winning the lottery, right? But the grace of God towards us goes far beyond just unmerited favor, it is the opposite of what we deserve. God's grace towards us is the opposite of what we deserve. We were not given the judgment that we did actually earn, we were given the opposite, we were given his grace. It's not a general sense of favor or a general kindness, it is the grace of God that brings salvation.

So what is it that Paul's talking about? Of course, it's the Gospel. The use of the wording here, "the grace of God," is basically an abbreviated way to explain the entire Gospel. When he refers to the grace of God, it is talking about the Gospel in general, as a whole. It's not one specific aspect of it. If you want the whole delineation of what the Gospel is? Read the book of Romans. He doesn't have room for all of that so he says, "the grace of God." The word of his grace, that's what it's referring to. It's the whole message.

So he's using this as the grace of God for everything that God does for the good of his people. The grace of God in the Gospel includes everything good that God does on behalf of his people. And here's another thing, it's not just an attitude. God's grace is not just a kind intention. It's not just warm feelings. It is kind action. It is his active working for our good. God's grace is not feelings of tenderness, it is his power moving on our behalf to accomplish good in our life. That is God's grace. Do you see the difference? We talk about the grace of God, we often have this sense of like warm fuzzy feelings, that God feels nice about me, and that's only part of it. God loves his people and because he has chosen to show his unmerited favor, it resulted in action on your behalf, powerful action on your behalf and it still does.

God is gracious to everyone, he's gracious to everyone. How? By allowing sunlight, and rain, and air, and food, and shelter, and clothing. God is gracious to everyone. That is unmerited kindness. That is unowed. God is gracious to all people, however, it is only those who have been called according to his purpose, only believers are the ones that God

is gracious to always and forever. Do you realize that as a believer in Jesus Christ, then everything is God's grace for you accomplishing your good for his glory? Do you realize that? Because you are favored by God, a favor that you did not earn, everything is his grace towards you accomplishing your good forever for his glory. Nothing is left out of that. No experience is somehow outside of God's gracious working on behalf of his people. You've got to let that sink in. If you are a child of God, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, there is not a single thing that has happened to you or will ever happen to you that is not governed purposely by the grace of God to accomplish your good. There's nothing that has ever happened in history that did not work towards that purpose of accomplishing you good. Nothing. God was active in the evil of other people. That was his grace towards you if you believe, if you belong to him. That's amazing.

Now we could just camp on that all day. I mean, just think about this, think about Joseph. Here was a man who was one man that nobody cared about, nobody knew about. He wasn't written about until Moses far after his death. Joseph sold into slavery. He was the youngest of his brothers, sold into slavery, taken hundreds of miles away, had no hope of seeing his family again, went to a land where no one worshiped the Lord. He was the only one. Went there as a slave. Was blameless and upright and only received punishment and prison for it for over a decade. Had no promise that it would get better. Had no idea what was going to happen. He didn't know the promise of God to send a Messiah. He didn't know the promise of eternity in heaven. He was sold into slavery and later rose by God's sovereignty to the highest level of Egypt. For what purpose? In order to preserve his family. Remember that? They were enduring a famine. Why does God do this? Who's in control of the weather? Who's in control of all of this stuff? God put him there. He controlled the weather, brought the family to Egypt. Why? How? So that they would become a great nation. Okay, so they became a great nation and then they were enslaved for 400 years or 300 years. They were enslaved.

Joseph, enslaved, rose to power. People come, multiply, now they're enslaved. How many people died in that slavery? How many babies were killed? Remember that? Pharaoh killed all those babies. And God did this, he raised them up in the midst of the most powerful nation on earth at that time, and also one of the nations whose archaeology is the most well-preserved. Fascinating. God did this there. He raised them up in order to show his power against Pharaoh, and it was such a mighty display of power that there was no doubt that this was the one true God and that was his purpose, and it was in that moment of time where he displayed his power that God delivered his word to us, the words that we still read to this day. If he had not sold Joseph into slavery and if his people had not been enslaved themselves, if all those people did not endure the bondage of Egypt, there would be no opportunity for God to display his power in such a way so that we would have the word of God and they would not know that he was the Almighty Creator. And through that to create a people who preserved his word through thousands of years and through those people so that we could know God, it was through them that the knowledge of God is set out across the world. Through all of the evil that they suffered, that was the grace of God towards his chosen people to provide his word, his promises, and ultimately his Savior who also endured unjust suffering and treatment his entire life simply by being born. The only man who didn't deserve all of this pain, and he

suffered for it his entire life living in this sin-cursed world. Jesus Christ suffered the curse of Adam's sin and also suffered the wrath that was due you and me, and the most evil thing that ever happened was that he was sent to a cross and savagely butchered there. Savagely. And that was God's grace. His powerful working through the events of history that he would save you and bring many sons to glory.

Everything in history, he ordered the beginning from the end. Every single thing for his people that has ever happened has been an act of his grace to accomplish your good so that you would be given an eternal hope. This life is temporary. You're gonna die. All the hopes, all the dreams, all the influence, all the power, all the money, all the pleasure, it's going to pass away and it's gonna be sooner than you think, and the pain will pass away sooner than you think as well, but it's producing for his people an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, far beyond all the suffering added up throughout history. That is what he is doing.

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, then everything is his grace. Think about this, it's Romans 8:28, "For we know, we know this, that all things work together for the good of those who love God, those who love God and have been called according to His purpose." For those who don't love God, it's the exact opposite, everything is working towards their condemnation to show the justice of God. But for those who love God and have been called according to his purpose, it is his grace working for your eternal glory. Amazing. That's amazing. So when we complain against our circumstance, we complain against the good gift of God, the grace of God, the grace of God that he is working for me personally, and that he will work through my life and through my suffering for the good of someone else, some other believer down the line.

So as we see, God's grace is more than just a kind attitude, it is his beneficial powerful action toward us. So that's the definition of grace, that leads us to the displays of grace, number 2. God's grace is displayed by providing four things from this passage: salvation from sin; training for life; hope for the future; and an eternal purpose. It provides for us salvation from sin, training for life, hope for the future, and an eternal purpose.

Let's start with the salvation from sin. The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men. This is, first, the most obvious display of his grace, the one that we think of most often, but don't let it become cliché. Salvation is this unmerited gift of God and he initiated the plan of salvation, determined that that salvation would be a free gift to be obtained by faith alone, not by works, and he ordered the events of history, he completed that plan through the substitutionary sacrifice of his cherished Son Jesus Christ whom he raised from the dead, who is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High, and this salvation is the display of his grace even as it was said before, it is available to all men who repent and believe. What is this saying that, you know, bringing salvation to all people? It means this: that there is no people group that is an outsider. There is no people group that is left out of this. It is made available to all who would believe. There's no Jew or Greek or Gentile, whatever. Everyone has equal access to the Father through this free gift and there's no sinner that cannot be saved, and as long as there is breath in your lungs, it is never too late to access this free gift.

The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It is available to all. All of your relatives. The most debauched. The most rebellious. The most hateful. The meanest. All of them can be saved by the grace of God and they're no further from that grace than you or I are if they believe. And make no mistake, there was no other way for you to be saved. You were truly deserving of his wrath. In fact, if you look down at chapter 3, look at this, verse 3, chapter 3, verse 3, "we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Let me ask you something: when you came to believe in Jesus, what was it for? Was it to be saved from your wickedness? Was it to be saved from your sin? Was it to be spared the wrath of God? Or was it this, to fill your empty heart? "I was just feeling empty and God was, there's this God-shaped hole in my heart and God filled it." Did you ask him to come and fill up your empty love cup? You didn't have enough love and God came and gave me this love. Or, "You know, I was just feeling purposeless and God gave me a meaning." Or do you think God came to make you feel special like no one else could and that, you know, "So I find my, you know, I am who God says I am. I am loved. I'm good enough. I'm cherished and God accepts everything about me." Is that why, is that what brought you to Christ? Because if that's the case, if that's what you believe, it is not the Gospel that you believe. That's not the Gospel. You understand what I'm saying. As much as that makes us feel good, that is not the Gospel. Your biggest need was not love, your biggest need was forgiveness. Your biggest problem was not loneliness, it was your own sinfulness, as was mine.

If your idea of God's grace is that you're being, if you're to be filled up, you do not understand his grace because he did not come to fulfill your selfishness. Do you understand? He did not come to fulfill your selfishness. He came to destroy your selfishness because that is what has led to your condemnation, your focus on your own desires, your own passions above God's. He did not come to fulfill your selfishness but to destroy it. More on that later.

So the grace of God is first displayed in salvation being offered to anyone in the world who would believe, and the second way that that grace is displayed is by training us for life. Now this is really interesting. Titus 2:12, "instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." This is really interesting. The word for "instructing" here is actually the word translated "training, educating, teaching, correcting, instructing," but it also is the same word that is used for "discipline." In fact, the best way to take this word, the translation of this word in this context is that it is to teach by chastisement. It's the same word used in Hebrews 12, "Do not despise the discipline of the Lord, for every son whom he loves he chastises,

he disciplines." His grace chastises you in order to teach you to deny ungodliness and worldly desires. Is that your understanding of grace? If your understanding of grace is that God leaves you alone to just be who you are, you have missed it. It's like a surgeon leaving your cancer alone. That's not love, that's not grace, that's not kindness. That's amazing that his grace is his chastisement in order to train you to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.

You know, this is the same word is the word that was used when Pontius Pilate whipped Jesus. He had him whipped in order to teach him a lesson so that he would not, you know, raise up a rebellion. He intended to whip him and let him go, sort of to teach him a lesson. It's the same word.

How often do you leave your sin behind simply because you were reading your Bible one day and you found, "Hey, I'm not supposed to do that." So you stopped. And how often is it that you endure pain as a result of your sin and that teaches you to let go of whatever it was that you wanted so badly? How often must you endure pain and trial in order that you would be holy?

So notice the content and the goal of this training. It's the grace of God that trains us to deny some things and to do some other things. The word for "deny" here means "to repudiate; to disown; to refuse; and to restrain." Not everything is acceptable to the Christian. The grace of God does not permit us to do whatever we want. It does not permit us to do that. In fact, just the opposite. Isn't that interesting? We think that the grace of God kind of gives me license and freedom to just kind of do whatever I feel like doing, and that God's just gonna be gracious to me, he's just gonna forgive and everything's gonna be great, and as long as I feel sorry about it, then everything's gonna be fine. No, the grace of God does the opposite. It does not permit you to do whatever you want, it chastises you to deny ungodliness by whatever means necessary. If you're a child of God, God will not allow you to walk in sin. He won't let you do it. If he does let you go on, you don't belong to him as Hebrews 12 says, that every son endures discipline. If you don't endure the discipline of God, if you don't have the discipline of God in your life, it's because he doesn't love you. That's what that means. It's because you don't know him. You're not a child of God.

Listen to me, this is just what the Scripture says. This is what the Scripture says. Can we accept this? The grace of God chastises and trains you to deny ungodliness. What is this? Impiety. It's unrighteous behavior that comes from a lack of respect for God. That's what it is. When you do unrighteous things out of a lack of respect for God, that's what ungodliness is. It's living like there is no God or living like God's not worth paying attention to, and his law, his standard, his way of life, his character doesn't really impact your life. Living in a way that that's how you live, that is ungodliness and the grace of God trains you and chastises you to pay attention to that and to turn from that.

It also trains you to turn away and deny, repudiate worldly desires. What are these worldly desires? Worldly literally is earthly, and desires, it's epithumia, it's lusts. We've talked about this before. The cravings of your heart. The strong passionate cravings of

your heart. God's grace trains you to deny those. These are passions that are set on earthly things. These are your own cravings, the things that you want from this world. Rather than having a mindset on heaven, rather than desiring the glory of God, rather than strongly desiring to serve him by benefiting his body, doing his will, no, you have your heart set on money and pleasure and lust and pride. You want prominence. You want fame. You want people to love you. You want people to know you. You want to do your good works in order to be noticed by people. You want to post your prayers on Facebook so people will like your prayers. What on earth?

The passions that are earthly-minded, seeking to gain advantage here in this life rather than looking to eternity, rather than looking to the return of Christ for your reward. Anything other than that is an earthly desire and if it becomes too strong to where it rules you and you're unwilling to submit to the will of God, unwilling to trust him with your life because you want something so badly, that is a worldly passion and the grace of God is training you to deny that. In fact, Jesus says in Luke 9:23-24, he says to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it." Are you willing to lose your life for the sake of Christ? Are you willing to deny yourself every single day for the sake of Christ? I know that we are tempted but are you willing? Are you willing to set those things aside? Because the grace of God will train you to do that and often will do that through pain. That is the grace of God in your life, training you to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, worldly passions, self-centered pride and pleasure.

You cannot accept Jesus without also denying yourself. If you're truly experiencing the grace of God, he is training you to do this. He is training you to do this and if you love God, you will be so grateful for that when you are set free from your passions and pleasures, when you put them aside because those things are what kill you, those things are what make you so depressed, and so angry, and so upset, and so discontent, those passions and pleasures and that's what causes you to doubt the grace of God and his work in your life. God's grace is shown by teaching us by any means necessary and often through pain, hardship and trouble.

Listen to 1 Corinthians 11:32, "when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world." He's talking about when the Lord caused some people to die because they took the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, Paul's saying when we are dealt with by God, we are disciplined so that we will not be condemned. We belong to him.

Hebrews 12:6-10, "Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we

may share His holiness." Now if you're a believer, you cherish that. You are thankful for that. You desire that. And though you may not want to go through it again, you're glad it happened, right? You're glad it happened because of the peaceable fruits of righteousness that the hardship produced in your life. If you love Christ, that is a joyous thing.

Listen to Revelation 3:14-22, "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," I'm so self-sufficient, "you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me."

This discipline that comes by his grace is to cause us not only to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts but rather to put on some things: sensibility; to be self-controlled; sober. It means we are to live in a wise manner as keeping self-control over one's passions and desires. The world tells you follow your heart, follow your passions, the grace of God tells you to deny those and bring those under control and to live sensibly. Not just whatever feeling comes over you. You are to live sensibly, purposefully, in a self-controlled way. This is what the grace of God is doing in our life.

It is also teaching us to live righteously. The word means "to be upright; fair or just." It has the idea that we live in a way that has integrity before a watching world. We live in such a way that people cannot rightly accuse us of hypocrisy, dishonesty, selfishness or arrogance. Now they will accuse us of these things perhaps slanderously, but let it never be true of us. May we never be greedy and living in a dishonest way in the workplace. Don't lie on your work reports, on your taxes, to one another, to your boss.

That is ungodly and the grace of God will train you perhaps through chastisement to live righteously and godly, it says. Of course, this is the opposite of denying ungodliness. We're to live in a godly way. That's a devout way, reverent. Respect and fear for God should dominate your life and he will get your attention to make sure that you do not forget him; that our actions are lived out before him, he sees every step we take and we are consciously living before him. That's what it means to live in a godly way, that our actions convey the fact that we understand God is watching and evaluating what we do, and because we love him and we revere him, we will do righteous godly action.

Okay, so the grace of God provides salvation from sin, training for life, and now hope for the future. Look at verse 13, "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." The word "looking for" means "to look forward to." We look forward to the blessed hope in the appearing of the glory of our

great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. He will appear at a moment in time. We will see him. We've been promised to see him face-to-face. He promised that he would take us to where he is. He promised that we will be with him and we will be like him. There will be a moment in time in which we see him face-to-face. He will appear in glory. It will be overwhelming. It will be exhilarating. To those that don't know him, it will be terrifying. But to those who are looking forward to this blessed hope, it will be absolute joy. He will strengthen, confirm and establish you at that time. He will exalt you at that time. We will be rewarded for faithfulness to him at that time. And we will dwell with him forever. We will be reunited with loved ones. Every tear will be wiped away. Every wrong will be made right. Wickedness and injustice and slavishness to sin will be dealt away with. It will not exist anymore. Every weed will be pulled and stuff won't fall apart, and we won't get old and sick and die.

That is what we look forward to. Do you look forward to it? Do you anticipate that? Because that is to define our life. That is what we're looking forward to. We're not looking forward to opportunities here on earth. We don't know what's gonna happen here. We're not looking forward to, you know, our kids getting married and all the grandchildren. Now I'm not saying that that's wrong or evil but that is not our hope. That is not the anchor of our soul. If your heart is set on those things, you will be easily shaken. But if you have a hope set in the return of Christ, that is unshakable because he is controlling everything to get to that point and it will happen, and you and I will be there. You and I will see him face-to-face.

And it says here that we are to eagerly anticipate that, and the grace of God is teaching us to do that. It's training us to do that. It has provided this hope for us. Our eager anticipation of the return of Christ is the opposite of a worldly mindset. We're not seeking pleasure here. We're not seeking to change the world as though we could create some kind of utopia here. That is a losing battle. Just ask every Communist regime that's ever existed. You can't make a utopia on this earth. You can't control everyone to do what you think they ought to do. No. We're not here to make names for ourselves or create empires. We are patiently anticipating the coming of our Savior and we are seeking to do the things that he has specifically called us to do. He is our great God and Savior. He is the one who will change the world. He is the one who will save the world. We look to him and that is what the grace that he has given us has provided, eternal life so that we now have a sure and steady hope, the anchor of our souls.

But you must actively look forward to his return. Do you? Do you actively look forward to that? Do we remind ourselves of that? That's part of why we take Communion on a regular basis, we're to proclaim his death until he comes. We're to remind ourselves of these things. It says in Acts 17 where Paul is talking to the men in Athens on the Areopagus, when God raised Jesus from the dead he confirmed that he was going to judge the world through that man, that he is going to return and he is going to do that someday. We look forward to that.

Okay, so it's provided salvation from sin, training for life, hope for the future, and an eternal purpose. Look at Titus 2:14, he "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." The word for "redeemed" means "to ransom," and the emphasis here is on the cost that it took to redeem us. Christ gave his very life, gave himself up for you, and it was for this purpose, he gave his life as a ransom in order to purify you because that's what you needed, purify you from lawless deeds. Not from low self-esteem. Not from the sins of others. Not from feelings of emptiness. But to purify you from all lawlessness so that you could be made right with him, so you could be reconciled with him, so that you could have that eternal hope.

And he has done this to make for himself a people for his own possession. Literally it says a special people because it borrows from an Old Testament expression that carries the idea that this special people is his crown jewel. Crown jewel. By his own death, he ransomed you to make you clean and then he not only did that, he didn't let you into the back door of heaven, instead he elevated you to be his crown jewel. You as the church, a purified people who once were passionate for your own worldly desires, now have been transformed and cleaned and now turned into people who love good works and now are his crowning achievement so that he can display this treasured people for all of eternity before the angels who marvel that people like you and me could be transformed into something beautiful that brings him glory, and they will worship the Lord because worthy is the Lamb that was slain.

You belong to him, not to yourself. His purpose was not just to be nice to you but to transform you and it's interesting, the word "zealous for good deeds," it's actually zealot. You were a zealot for good deeds. A zealot is an enthusiast, even a militant proponent of something; someone who is passionately committed to something; a loyalist. You are a loyalist for good deeds. You are an enthusiast for good deeds. We get after it for good deeds.

And what is it that we're to be zealous for? Of course, it's these good deeds, works that are good, again this is the opposite of worldly deeds, lawless deeds. We're doing good deeds. The word "good" means "beautiful; attractive; useful." It also means "to be at a high level regarding the purpose of something." So if I've got a cup here and I want this to hold water, this currently is performing at a high level. That's a good cup. It's not leaking water all over the place. Let's test that. Yup, it's a good cup. We once were zealous for ourselves but now we're zealous for what is good and we're passionate for what is good, and it is good according to what God says is good. You don't make it up for yourselves. You're not like Cain bringing your own offering to God. It's according to what he has said.

And it says this. Ah man, should we have an intermission and come back at 1 o'clock? I'm just kidding.

Alright so, okay, listen, we once were following worldly passions, we're now zealots for good deeds rather than zealots for selfishness, and this is interesting, right? He doesn't say, "Hey, um, to be hard workers at good deeds," he says, "to be zealots for it." He didn't call us to morbid, dull, self-denial. No, he called us from one set of passions to another.

He cleansed us from defiling passions and made us new creatures with a passion for what is truly good. From one passion to the other, not from one passion to no passion.

Listen to this, Ezekiel 37, "They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God." "You are a holy people, Deuteronomy 14:2 says, "to the LORD, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." This gets repeated in 1 Peter 2, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

Alright, the last thing here, the last main point is the defense of grace. Paul says this in verse 15 of Titus 2, "These things speak, exhort, reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you." That's often left out of this, right? It's not a very doctrinal thing to say. It's often not emphasized in our preaching. I don't know if I've ever heard this preached, to be honest with you, or highlighted. But it's interesting to me that this resembles the communication of a war general to his subordinate, and we often speak of the dangers of domineering leadership which is a true danger, however, I believe that in the evangelical world today, an equally great problem is the unwillingness of leaders of the evangelical church to exercise appropriate authority when it comes to issues of biblical doctrine and character. We exert our opinions on the colors of the walls and the carpets, but will not call people to repentance. That is backwards. Too often men insist on their own opinions while failing to stand on the word of God and to do so in a way that demonstrates earnestness and authority. Of course, you do it with gentleness. Of course, you do it with patience. But when it comes to the things that the Scripture clearly says, you're to do it with all authority.

Now this was a personal direction written to Titus to carry this out on Crete, but where is the urgency coming from? Can you guys give me five minutes? Hold off on lunch for five minutes? Okay. Let's focus. Let's make the most of this time for five minutes here.

Look back at Titus 1 and look at verse 1. Actually verse 4, he says this, "To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled," those sound like familiar concepts, "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will..." Okay, so we'll stop right there. All of these character qualities, they resemble what the grace of God is calling us to, right? This is what the grace of God is calling us to and elders are to exemplify that. Why? He says we're to "hold fast the faithful word

which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict." So the purpose of the elder is to be able to defend this grace that we've just been talking about. He's to be able to give instruction in it. He's to be able to teach it and explain it, and he is to be able to refute those who contradict. An elder is not just any good guy who signs the doctrinal statement and shows up faithfully to Sunday school. An elder is someone who holds fast to the word and is able to teach it and is able to refute those who contradict. Why does that matter? Verse 10, "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision."

Okay, so this is important. This is why Paul is writing this letter, because there are many rebellious empty talkers, people who like to teach and don't know what they're saying, people who, it says especially of the circumcision. Those are the people of a Jewish background who are saying that, yes, Jesus was good but if you want to be right with God, you have to obey the law of Moses and circumcision is symbolic of accepting the entire law of Moses, and you have to do all these external rituals and sacrifices, Sabbaths, you have to eat the grain and, you know, the right dietary laws and these kinds of things if you want to be right with God. That is the opposite of the grace of God. That is all external and Jesus Christ is the sacrifice. He is the Sabbath. And yet these men want to highlight those external shows of the law while neglecting the internal, neglecting the character, neglecting the worldly passions.

So verse 11, these people "must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain." This idea of sordid gain is that they are selfishly motivated. They're seeking godliness as some way to promote themselves either through money or some kind of because they like having a following or an influence. That's what these people do, they teach for the sake of their own gain.

Verse 12, for "One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.' This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith," so that they may be healthy, so that their faith may be right, not according to these myths. Verse 14, "not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed."

That's why this is so important, to know what the grace of God is, to rightly understand it, and then to defend it, and that is the primary role of the elder. He says in chapter 2, verse 1, as opposed to all of that, "speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." Okay, now I'm gonna read these and we'll end on this because this, these are the good deeds that you are called to, Christian. You want to know what the good deeds are, here it is, Titus 2, "Older men are to be temperate, dignified," that's respectable, "sensible," self-controlled, "sound in faith, in love, in perseverance," or steadfastness. If you're gonna be zealous for good works, older men, this is where it's at. This is what the grace of God is training you to do and to be. It's not training you to go off and change the world and be

something glorious. This not training you to go retire and spend your whole life on the beach in hunting and collecting, you know, shells and ties and whatever, golfing. This is what it's calling you to do.

Verse 3, "Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior," that's similar to godliness, right, reverent, aware of God, not immature, "not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good," this is what the older women are to be about, "so that," verse 4, "they may encourage," the word encourage means to train, "the young women to love their husbands, to love their children." You want to change the world, wives? Love your husband and your children. That is a radical radical thing in our world. Love your husband. Love your children. "Be sensible," self-controlled, be "pure, workers at home, kind, subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored." Figure out how to do those things because that is what Christ is calling you to be zealous for and that is what the grace of God is calling you to. That is what the grace of God is training you to.

"Likewise urge the young men to be sensible," self-controlled, they can't handle much more than that so that's all they're given. No, Titus was a young man and he was to show himself as an example of good deeds, "purity in doctrine, dignified," all of the qualifications of an elder are what you are to seek, young man. I don't care how old you are, that is what you are to seek. Those are the good deeds.

"Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect." Why? Verse 11, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 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, 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. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you."

Let's ask for the grace of God to be trained in good deeds that we would be zealous for.

Let's pray.

Lord, we come to You because we are called to live out this grace, to believe this grace, to accept this grace, and to defend it, and I pray, Father, that You would shape us into Your image, that You would set our priorities straight, that we would deny ungodliness and worldly desires and live soberly, righteously and godly, setting our hope on Your return and setting our course according to Your purpose. Thank You that You have purified us from all that would defile us and You have chosen us to be Your crown jewel. Lord, we cannot wait to see You and to gaze upon Your glory and to share in that, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.