

February 7, 2016
Sunday Evening Service
Communion
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To ponder. . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from Titus 2:11-14.

1. What is grace in general terms, and why is God's grace so amazing?
2. What does renouncing ungodliness and worldly passions look like in your life?
3. How often do you think about the appearing of Jesus?
4. What makes the repeated statement about our God and Savior Jesus Christ so important?

GOD'S GRACE MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE **Titus 2:11-14**

Some people are quite sure that eternity is a figment of religionists' imagination. They believe that nothing exists after death. To them we humans are equivalent to a pet cat or dog. That makes us humans of the same value as the rotten tree that falls over in the forest and no one cares. Whether anyone hears when it falls is open to debate.

Other people are just as sure that there is life or some kind of existence after death. Among that large segment of the world's population are those who contemplate eternity as fatalists. By that I mean, they really don't know how to prepare for eternity. They just leave it up to chance and hope for the best. That opinion sure doesn't offer much hope. Not far from the fatalistic interpretation of eternity

is the lottery approach to eternity. These people believe there is eternity, they are not sure if there is any way possible to prepare for it, so they try to do something or believe something just in case. To them preparing for eternity is like buying a lottery ticket. They hope they win in the end.

Probably the largest group among those who believe in eternity is the one with people who are pretty sure there is a heaven to gain and a hell to avoid. To that end they believe it is necessary for them to do something or lots of things in order to assure they will enter heaven's gates. Virtually all false religions teach that we need to accomplish certain works in order to have any hope of getting into heaven. Sadly, nearly all these false religions disagree on the specific kinds of work one needs in order to enter heaven. And even after spending a lifetime doing certain kinds of good works, the poor earthling still has no guarantee that Saint Peter, or whichever saint or angel guards the gate, is going to let them in.

To address that doubt, the Roman Catholic church invented the doctrine of purgatory several centuries ago. According to this doctrine, most people are not good enough to go directly to heaven. Therefore, in the game of life, we will have to stop in this temporary state called purgatory where we will undergo purging that qualifies us for heaven. In times past, the church taught that the effectiveness of that purging often depended on how much money our living relatives put in the church coffers.

None of these human inventions about eternity offer any hope. However, the truth of God's Word offers great hope. So great is the hope found in our text that I wonder how people survive in this present age, as Paul called life in this passage, without it. We have incredible hope because God is incredibly gracious. And because God has showered that grace on us in salvation, we live like we have hope. First came God's grace, then came our hope, and, because of that sequence, we live unique lives that are characterized by good works.

God's Grace Brought Us the Savior (vv.11-13).

Great news! God's grace brought salvation. *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people (v.11).* We really cannot fully grasp the benefit we have because God has revealed His

favor to us. God's grace is best described as His surprising favor. The general idea behind the Bible concept of grace is whether one person will be accepted or be favorable to another. In that sense, there is always a compelling reason for the favor or acceptance.

But when God shows grace, it is always surprising. All humans are fallen creatures who are in rebellion against God. God's description of the human race as their thoughts being evil all the time is very telling (Gen. 6). And yet it is in that context of the total unacceptability of humans that we read, "Noah found favor in God's eyes" (Genesis 6:8). What a shock! Likewise there is little mention of grace in the New Testament until we come to *Acts* and read about the gospel of salvation going to the Gentiles. What surprising favor that God would offer salvation to utter pagans who were outside the promises and covenants God made with Israel!

Not only is God's grace surprising but it is intentional. Grace doesn't just sort of show up. The Greek syntax in this verse reveals that God intentionally revealed His surprising favor. God made His favor appear. How? How do we know that God is favorable to us who are born in rebellion against Him?

Salvation is the display of God's grace. Salvation is deliverance. To be a recipient of salvation is to be rescued out of some danger. The idea implies that the victim cannot rescue himself. More directly, the Bible concept of salvation is deliverance from the power and penalty of sin. We are born in slavery to sin and, therefore, we sin. We cannot help but break God's law. We cannot help but do our will above God's will. We cannot help but live in a way that offends our Creator. We cannot break free from the power of sin. We desperately need to be rescued out of that condition.

Because we belong to sin, we will pay the penalty for the relationship. The penalty is eternal suffering in the lake of fire. All people who pay the penalty of sin will suffer the same fate as Satan. And worse, we have no hope to escape that end. That is, no hope apart from God's grace displayed in what God offers. God offers the most amazing favor to us who do not deserve it. God holds out to us the offer of freedom from sin's bondage and freedom from sin's penalty.

Maybe you have experienced trying to work with a dog that had been neglected or beaten in the past. Typically a dog like that will not

come to you but will cower in the corner, looking at you out of the corner of his eye as if he expects you to come after him with a stick. How to you change that attitude? You get down on your knees so you don't look so big and imposing, and you hold out your open hand with a treat for the dog. Chances are pretty good that the dog will slowly come to you for the treat. To us who have been enslaved and beaten by the taskmaster sin, Gracious God holds out the promise of salvation. That is grace.

God's grace will also bring the Savior again to complete that salvation. The grace of God is manifested in that it brings us salvation. But it also brings *the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (v.13)*

Here is an amazing statement. Our great God and Savior is Jesus Christ. This is another great Christological confession. It is much like the first one on record from Thomas who declared regarding Jesus, "My Lord and my God." The confession affirms that Jesus of Nazareth is equal with God. By God's grace, our God and our Savior came the first time. He was Jesus the baby born in the manger. He was Jesus who was named such because Jehovah Saves (the meaning of Joshua the Hebrew equivalent).

He is the Christ. He is the One ordained in eternity to pay the price for salvation. He is the member of the triune Godhead who would come to earth as one of us in order to redeem us. He is the promised anointed Messiah who was foretold by prophets and for whom devout Israelites waited. Therefore, He is also our Savior. He is Savior by virtue of the fact that He has already offered the acceptable sacrifice to buy sinners out of sin. His own blood was the only acceptable sacrifice. There is no Savior without sacrifice. We have this one and only Savior because God is gracious.

And because of God's grace, our Savior is coming again. We look forward with full confidence to the Savior coming again. Our salvation will be complete when we see Him at His appearing. That forward look, that hope, effects the way we live. John put it like this: *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure (1 John 3:2-3)*. Therefore the same

favor of God that brought us the Savior from sin also prepares us to live with Him.

God's Grace Prepares Us For Eternity. (vv.12-14).

God's grace trains us. There is a twofold application of that training. First, God's grace trains us what to avoid as it is *training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions (v.12a)*. The goal of grace working in our lives is that we learn to renounce ungodliness and worldly passion.

Ungodliness is a lifestyle that is in conflict with the characteristics of God. Ungodliness begins with thoughts that are opposed to God and His character. How do we know if we have ungodly thoughts? God's law reveals His character. More than that, God's Son revealed how God's character looks in the human flesh. Ungodliness then is a lifestyle that worships the creature rather than the Creator. The philosophy of humanism is one of the most accurate expressions of this conflict. Humanism concludes that man is the measure of all things. This is the overriding philosophy of our day.

Worldly passions are the desires characteristically found in the world system. The world system is a philosophy, thought pattern, and, therefore, practice that reveals the fallen condition of the creation. It is a way of living that manifests the influence of Satan. It is characteristic of the natural desires of people born fully infused with the sin principle. In other words, worldly passions are the normal desires that every normal person experiences and expresses. These passions are in conflict with God's character which is clearly defined in God's law. In short, worldly passions are desires for the individual to be exalted, the center of attention, experiencing ease, comfort, and pleasure at all costs. Worldly passions believe that life is about the individual.

People who experience and appreciate God's grace are learning to renounce such a lifestyle. No one is naturally exempt from the temptation to live ungodly, worldly passion-kind of lives. Generally professing Christians learn how to get as close to that lifestyle as possible and still claim to be distinct. Often the Christian community waits until a worldly, humanistic trend is waning before they adopt it as acceptable Christian living. God's plan is for us to identify

thoughts and actions that are in conflict with His character and renounce them.

The Greek word behind the English *renounce* could be literally translated, "Having said 'no'." Recipients of God's grace have learned how to disdain, to hate, to loath and, therefore, to refuse thoughts, attitudes, and actions that make up a way of life in conflict with God's character. But many professing Christians must honestly respond to that statement by confessing that they have not come to that conclusion nor do they practice such a renouncing of worldliness. Why not? Either they have not experienced God's grace in salvation or they have not responded to God's grace as He trains them to respond appropriately.

We learn to renounce as God's grace trains us. God's grace instructs us like a parent instructs a child. When God shows us His favor He convicts, rebukes, instructs, and disciplines so that we can learn how to say "No." How does that happen? What instrument does He use to train us? *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*.

At the same time God's grace teaches us what to renounce, it trains us what to pursue. The Bible teaches us to say no to sin, *and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age (v.12b)*. The same Word of God given by the grace of God trains us to live self-controlled lives. A self-controlled life begins with controlled thinking. The word speaks of thinking soberly. Sobriety is the opposite of being under the control of a substance like a drug or alcohol or external stimulants toward excitement.

God's grace poured out in the Bible trains us to think right. Paul described right thinking for us. *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8-9)*.

Right thinking through God's grace will result in upright lives. Or we could say, "Right thinking leads to right living." Right living is a life that is characterized by righteousness. God's character is the measure of righteousness. Therefore, such lives are godly lives. To be

godly is to be reverent. Reverence recognizes that God is holy and to be respected. A reverent life will reflect God. Sadly, a reverent life is almost a polar opposite of common, acceptable living in this age.

Therefore, living like that (godly, upright, reverent) in this present age is going to be extremely obvious. The Bible must change our opinions and preferences rather than us forcing the Bible to agree with our opinions and preferences.

Negative reactions to right living could cause us to be discouraged. God's grace helps us there also. God's grace provides hope in the training (vv.13-14). Our Savior's appearing is our hope. While trying to think right and live right, we are *waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (v.13)*. When we strive to live like God, we will desire to be with God. Therefore, we live in this present world with an eye on the coming of our God and Savior Jesus of Nazareth.

Finally, we should discover that genuine hope lives in light of our Savior's purpose. We are waiting for our God and Savior, Jesus, *who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works (v.14)*. He laid down His life at the cross in order to redeem us. He laid down His life in order to purify us. He laid down His life to make us zealous for good works. But what are those good works? What do they look like?

Good works are works that reflect supreme love for God. Good works demonstrate a conscience desire to do what is best for others (i.e. help them conform to their Creator) even if it requires sacrifice on our part. Good works cannot substitute for the price God the Son paid to redeem us. But good works are the proper response from those who Christ redeems.

Anyone who is growing in these characteristics of godliness are able to do so only because God is gracious. Are you thankful for God's grace?