

I conclude with a letter and a testimony from R. Kent Hughes:

The reason for Paul's gluing godliness to the message of the gospel can be detected in a letter I received not long ago (2012) from another young preacher. He wrote:

It is with a heavy heart of discouragement that I write this letter...I am so troubled at the number of men who are falling in ministry. I always knew this happened, but those are not longer statistics, they are close friends and mentors that I have had in ministry. I look at these men who have walked far longer and deeper with God than I have, and I wonder how in the world will I be expected to make it if they did not. Most fell because of sexual immorality, others left under clouds of suspicion. In the last three weeks I have been told of four ministers, all friends of mine who have had to resign from ministry...I fear becoming another statistic and watching my family suffer for my sin. Please forgive me for dumping these burdens on you...

Hughes responds by writing, "When the message of the gospel comes unglued from godliness, faith shatters. No matter how commendable our intentions may be, the message of grace apart from godliness—OR GODLY ENDEAVOR APART FROM AN UNDERSTANDING OF GRACE—destroys the hope that the gospel offers. This truth was powerfully and sadly demonstrated in the lives of many of my young ministry friends after we graduated from seminary. As pastors in training we often challenged each other with the phrase, "We will live for the glory of God." Though the words sounded noble, they damaged us. What we were really saying to one another in our youthful zeal was that we would strengthen our resolve, bow our necks, and through our own goodness and grit march the kingdom of God forward. The focus was not on our need for a dependence on grace but upon our personal determination to live more godly lives than those who preceded us.

The results were devastating. We could not measure up to our own standards. Of those who graduated with me, very few are still in ministry. Many fell into sexual immorality, relational incompetence, or dishonesty. By trying to live godly lives without due focus upon God's enabling grace, we had no protection from the despair that our own weakness and hypocrisies created. Such joylessness only exacerbated spiritual weaknesses that robbed us of spiritual health and credible ministry. Only those who discovered the power of grace found strength to continue in ministry. Hughes/Chapell *Guard the Deposit* p. 308

Firm Footing for "the Good Fight": Titus 1:1-4 JUNE 11, 2023

Paul wrote the letter to Titus, and yet perhaps not so much for his own sake as for the people's sake so that Titus's ministry would be strengthened with apostolic authority.

Many things make this letter especially attractive now (June 2023). Here are just two—1. vs. "that you *should set in order the things that are lacking*" 2. "God who cannot lie" desires to communicate with us about matters of critical importance.

This majestic God who cannot lie offers us a "hope (vs. 2) that will stand up and do battle for you—in you—in your frequently troubled heart where you need it most—and where the "good fight" is most often won or lost." READ 1:1-4.

I will endeavor to explain this *extremely compact* language under three main points: The Grace of God is *Intervening Grace*: The Grace of God is *Transforming Grace*: The Grace of God is *Indispensable Grace* :

I. Intervening Grace:

Saul of Tarsus had always seen himself as a servant of God, but the service he offered earlier in life was designed to establish his own status before God. In ignorant pursuit of his own righteousness, Paul had become an enemy of Jesus Christ, breathing out threats against His church, and **participating in the murder** of His people:

Acts **9:1-4** Then Saul, still breathing threats **and murder** against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.... Acts **22:4** I persecuted this Way **to the death**, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women...

Acts **26:9-11** Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and **many** of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when **they were put to death**, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in

every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them....

Now this same persecutor, [through the intervening grace of God](#) is “an apostle of Jesus Christ”

God will pardon the worst sinners and will grant useful service to them, **though there is no human reason for such divine love.**

II. Transforming Grace: vs. 1 “according to the faith of God's elect”

The word “elect” informs us that God chose people out of His own free mercy and not “works of righteousness which we have done

“according [with particular reference to] to the faith [doctrine 1:9;2:1, 7] of God's elect”

Their doctrine agreed with the faith (doctrine) of all the elect from the beginning of the world.

In these phrases is a spiritual yardstick with which we can “try the spirits”/test the teaching. **Pure and purifying** the lives of believers. By this mark judge the doctrines and the spirits...

“according [with particular reference to] to the faith [doctrine 1:9;2:1, 7] of God's elect” **and the acknowledgment of the truth which is according [with particular reference to] to GODLINESS.**

KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH IS TO GODLINESS WHAT FLOUR IS TO PANCAKES.

Crete was filled with spiritual challenges: 1:12,13. Godly believers would stand out like a sore thumb wouldn't they?

Christian living stunned the public in the first century: 2:9,10.

How long will God's “grace, mercy, and peace” last?

vs. 2 “in hope”.... Paul has been talking about doctrine and the fuller

knowledge of it resulting in godliness. Now he tells this doctrine and this acknowledgment of it rest on Someone who cannot lie:

Look back “before time began” see grace, mercy, and peace all the way back. Hope is future (“hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?) go as far as eternity into the future-- see grace, mercy, and peace all the way forward—endless.

This majestic God who cannot lie offers us a “hope (vs. 2) that will stand up and do battle for you—in you—in your frequently troubled heart where you need it most—and where the “good fight” is most often won or lost.”

Buddy Ryan 1986: “I don't see how we can lose”. Our hope is pure and purifying: I John 3:1-3.

“hope” nearly always implies pilgrim thinking and living: Bulletin notes on Paul & William Tyndale.

III. Indispensable Grace vs. 4

We are hearing much and will continue to hear far too much about equity, inclusiveness, and other Marxist buzz words—that are supposedly desperately needed to halt systemic racism, white supremacy, and border control. The book of Titus offers us a two word answer to all the make believe crises and many real crises:

“common faith”

Paul is a “blue-blood Jew” if there ever was one. Titus is entirely Gentile. They are in the same family. See 2:11 “all men”

Paul called him *his son* Titus 1:4, *his brother* II Cor. 2:13, *his partner and fellow helper* II Cor. 8:23, *one that walked in the same spirit.*

Matthew Henry p.686

Firm Footing for “the Good Fight”

The Grace of God is *Intervening Grace; Transforming; Indispensable Grace. With particular reference to doctrine and with particular reference to godliness—we may not separate them--why?*

