

Titus 2:14 - The Gospel: God's Solution
Joel Ebert
8/13 Grace Community Church

Good morning everyone, please turn to Titus chapter 2. We'll be discussing the church, particularly how the church can stand in the midst of opposition. What we're going to find is that God has given us everything we need for life and godliness. Please stand as we read God's Word.

Titus 2:11-14 NASB95 - 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.

Let's pray. Dear heavenly Father, please help us to stand strong against all the forces that come against us, and thank you for the Gospel, which gives us everything we need to thrive in every situation. Amen. You may be seated.

I'd like to start with scientology. Scientology is a religion started by a man named L. Ron Hubbard. The point is to be free of the things that hold us back from reaching our full human potential. To do this, you have to go through a program called The Bridge to Total Freedom. There are about 8 steps, they can take a lifetime to get through and cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Many have tried and when they reached the top, they realized there was nothing there. It is an empty religion. I have here a letter written by L. Ron Hubbard to one of his friends.

Savanah, Georgia

Jan. 13, 1949

Dear 4E:

...

Have a nice office. Had another one but didn't take to [the] noise. Present one is in the same apt. building, very neat and very quiet, with its own silk and gilt. Could become a den of vice very easily, I fear, so I only allow women over 16 in there.

...

Good publishing trick, by the way, is to have the bookseller make the buyer sign a release releasing the author of all responsibilities if the reader goes nuts.

...

Looking over its project, I find a son of a luckless millionaire here has taken to drink and the millionaire wants him cured bad. Might undertake it for ten grand some afternoon. Don't know why I suddenly got the nerve to go into this again and let it loose. It's probably either a great love or an enormous hatred of humanity.

Love and Kisses,

Ron

P.S. This here epistle is confidential.

This shows us how bankrupt other religions are. The book of Titus is essentially the same kind of letter. Paul, an apostle in the early church, wrote to Titus, a church leader. When we compare scientology to the book of Titus, we see the honesty and sobriety of God's Word. We should never take for granted what we have in the Word of God.

Paul's intentions in writing to Titus are that Titus would establish this young church and guard them from all the destructive influences that surround them. There is false teaching, immoral living, dissension, and more threatening the health of this church. Paul tells Titus to teach sound doctrine, refute false teaching, rebuke the immoral living, and raise up leaders who can do the same.

We have similar problems to what this early church was facing. We also face opposition within and from the outside. God's solution for our problems is the same as the solution for theirs: The Gospel. God's desire for us is that we be a mature church, standing strong, and bearing fruit for his glory. The doctrine of our salvation gives us everything we need to overcome all the forces that would undo our faith and make us victorious and joyful in Christ.

Our Salvation

Looking at v. 11-14 in Titus 2, we see that Jesus, by the grace of God, gave himself to gain a people for himself. This story starts before creation. The triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, purposed within himself to gather a people to himself, save them from their sins, and lavish his love on them for all eternity. Jesus said that all the Father had given to him would come to him, and he would raise them up on the last day. We are a gift from the Father to the Son. In due time, Christ came and took on human flesh, and paid the price for his people to be saved from their sins and to become a people for himself. This is a love story. It is like many fairy tales we heard when we were children. A man coming and putting himself in great danger, facing the dragon, to save the girl. We as his people are central to why God created the universe. This love story is the deepest story there is.

The reality of our salvation is so fundamental to life that it affects all of human life. What could be more basic than who God is, who we are, and what our relationship is to God? In light of the full salvation we have in Christ and that he has reconciled us to himself, we should be able to see that the challenges we face as a church in our day pale by comparison.

Grace, Not Legalism

Turning to v. 11, we see that Paul starts with grace. Grace is God's generosity that is based on his goodness and not on ours. We have been reconciled to God as a free gift—we didn't do anything to earn it, and we can't do anything to keep it. Legalism is the opposite. Legalism is a set of man-made rules where our relationship with God is based on performance instead of his love. Legalism is indeed a threat to us today. It is attractive, since there is an external result we can point to when we meet the man-made standards. The legalists in Paul's day were called Judaizers: these were people who wanted to pull Christians back into the Jewish law, which Christ fulfilled. Today, Catholicism represents a legalistic system.

Legalism is also enticing because it seems like it can protect us from sin. This was the problem in Jesus' day. The Jews set up many man-made laws so they would never again break the Law of Moses and face the judgment of God. But Jesus had harsh things to say about this. He said that they honored God with their lips, but their hearts were far from God. This is a warning for us today. We should never think we're ok with God because we can point to others' sins. Many of us are very good at pointing out false teachers, but at the same time, our own hearts are far from God. May it not be true of us.

The opposite of legalism is grace. In Paul's letters he usually teaches about our salvation, then he says that we should live differently in light of our salvation. He does the same thing here. He gives a list of commands (starting in 2:2), then he tells us why we should live differently. It isn't just a list of commands; that would be legalistic. We live differently because God has already saved us. It's the same thing we see in 1 Peter:

1 Peter 1:3-5 NASB95 - 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Here we see that our salvation is already there, ready to be revealed. We already have it. This is something no one else can say. Everyone says that salvation is by grace, whether it is Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Mormons, but only the true Gospel says that we already have our full salvation. We're not working to gain it; we already have it. That's the Gospel of grace.

Grace sets us free to serve God in a way that no legalistic system can. Romans 6:14 says, "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace." This is the power of the grace of God. We have freedom from sin and power over sin because God has saved us in Christ. Paul knew the power of the grace of God over sin and false teaching, and that's why he leads with it here.

Godliness, Not Lawlessness

Looking at v 12, we see that the grace of God instructs us. Other translations say that grace disciplines us. How could grace discipline us? The key is to look at the phrase in v 14, "a people for his own possession". That is an Old Testament term. God used that term to describe the nation of Israel. He said that out of all the nations on the earth, God chose Israel and made them a people for his own possession. The word also means his treasured possession. Because they were his possession, they were not to practice the sins of the nations around them, like incest, child sacrifice, and homosexuality, but they were to obey God's commands.

The grace of God disciplining us is about God's love for us. He is jealous for us and he doesn't want us to follow the world's ways. He wants us to follow his ways. Obedience is a blessing we

don't deserve that we receive when God gives us the Holy Spirit. Part of the call of the Gospel to sinners is that they should come out of their sin and come back to God, to be part of his people.

The Gospel does not permit unholy living. This truth does not negate salvation by grace. If we belong to God, we will be different (not perfect, but different), since God changes those he saves. He loves us too much to let us stay in our sins.

There is a warning for us here. We are living in Babylon. Sin surrounds us. Some of the stuff they do is not only evil, it is insane. It is tempting to think that just because we're not doing what they do, that we're pleasing to God. The more "normal" sins seem acceptable by comparison. We should never use the culture as the standard. We must keep the Word of God as the standard. Using the culture as the standard is a recipe for self-righteousness, which God makes clear he hates.

We belong to him. He is holy, so we should be holy. When he makes us his people, he calls us to holiness.

His Kingdom, Not This World

There is a pattern in verses 12 and 13. The phrases, "worldly desires", "in this present age", "looking for the blessed hope" provide for us a picture that we are not to live after this world, but to live according to the Kingdom of God. Paul is giving them a contrast to the cultural pressures they were facing.

This is not only about the end times, but right now. We are citizens of a heavenly, spiritual Kingdom. We are not to get caught up in the affairs of this life. We live in and for that Kingdom. Christ is King right now, he has already set up his Kingdom, and we already have the Kingdom. We are anticipating Christ's Kingdom overtaking the kingdoms of this world and being established as a physical, visible kingdom. But until then we are already in the Kingdom.

Our Kingdom is invisible and spiritual. It does not have geographic borders and is not defined by ethnicity or language. Everywhere believers exist is where the Kingdom exists. We have to live in that reality now. We do that by obeying Christ's commands.

Many of you are preoccupied with the negative things we see on the news, especially when it comes to what is happening in our country. This has led you to discouragement, despair, defeat, and it has led to frustration rather than joy. What we have to remember is that our salvation is central to the story of the universe. There is nothing more important than that. It makes what we see all around us in this world seem like no big deal. When we do something as small as share Christ with our neighbors, that little act is more central to the drama of history than everything that's happening in our country. Isaiah 40:15-17 says, "15 Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust. 16 Even Lebanon is not enough to burn, Nor its beasts enough for a burnt

offering. 17 All the nations are as nothing before Him, They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.”

This is not to say we should hide our heads in the sand. Seeking the well being of our nation is a good work. Praying for revival is a good work. But we have to put things in perspective. Eternal things are far more important. Remember the hymn, “Crown him with many crowns”. It says, “Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne. Hark, how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own. Awake my soul and sing, of him who died for thee, and hail him as thy matchless King throughout eternity.”

The Gospel tells us we have a Kingdom, and living in the Kingdom is more than enough to overcome the troubles of this world.

Good Works, Not Worthlessness

Verse 14 says that Christ gave himself to gain a people zealous for good works. Paul repeatedly talks about good works in the book of Titus. We see that in 3:8, where Paul says that Christians should be careful to do good works, rather than pursue worthless things.

We don't normally think good works are important to our salvation, but they are necessary. They are necessary because they act as a pulse. If we have a pulse, we know we are physically alive. If we have good works, we know we are spiritually alive. We have been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God ordained that we should walk in them. Good works do not earn our salvation, but they are part of the salvation God gives us. When we're saved, God gives us new birth so that we are oriented toward doing the things God loves.

There are many worthless things Christians get themselves into. To know whether our works are worthwhile, we need to look at the word “zealous”. That is not a word we use much in our time. We use words like “passion” and “enthusiasm”. A good picture of zeal is political activism. People who hold signs, go to marches, and push their agenda in every place in society are zealous for their cause. That is what zeal looks like.

What are you zealous for? What are you devoted to? Is it good or worthless? Ask yourself a simple but powerful question: What does God want done around here? We can take Jesus as our example. Jesus went about doing good—healing people's bodies, hearts, and lives, rescuing them and setting them free from the things that kept them in bondage. This is what we should be doing as well.

Good works should be genuine, out of a love for God. It should flow naturally out of our relationship with the Lord. The more we draw close to God, the more good works will flow naturally out of our hearts. They can be simple. Many of you cannot move around as much as you used to. But even something as simple as praying for people is very valuable in the sight of God. Don't think that you need to be very active to do good works. It can be as small as calling someone who is struggling.

As the church, instead of being overtaken by the trouble around us, we should be fruitful in good works, out of the salvation God has worked in our hearts.

Close

Our salvation was settled in eternity. Jesus' work doesn't fail. Jesus set up the church in the midst of trouble and opposition on purpose. He knew what he was doing. He prayed for the church in John 17:

14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 16 "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

God has given us everything we need in the Gospel. Instead of being overcome by evil that sometimes seems overwhelming, we need to take hold of the Gospel and live victoriously and joyfully in Christ.

Our great God, thank you for our salvation which you worked in us from all eternity. Help us to live in it so we can triumph over the evil in our world as you intended. Help us to meditate on the truth that we have full reconciliation with God, and may that truth cause us to live holy lives and overflow with good works. May you receive the glory, in Christ's name. Amen.