

What the grace of God teaches us

Titus 2:11-15

Waterloo Road 31st October 2021

¹¹ επεφανη γαρ η χαρις του θεου σωτηριος
appeared for the grace of God saving
πασιν ανθρωποις ¹² παιδευουσα ημας
to all men, instructing¹ us,
ινα αρνησαμενοι την ασεβειαν και τας
that denying the ungodliness and the
κοσμικας επιθυμιας σωφρονως και δικαιως
worldly lusts sensibly and righteously
και ευσεβως ζησωμεν εν τω νυν αιωνι
and Godly we might live in the now age,
¹³ προσδεχομενοι την μακαριαν ελπιδα και
expecting the blessed hope and
επιφανειαν της δοξης του μεγαλου θεου και
appearance of the glory of the great God and
σωτηρος ημων ιησου χριστου ¹⁴ ος εδωκεν
saviour of us Jesus Christ, who gave
εαυτον υπερ ημων ινα λυτρωσηται ημας
himself on behalf of us, that he might ransom us
απο πασης ανομιας και καθαριση εαυτω λαον
from all iniquity and cleanse for himself a people
περιουσιον ζηλωτην καλων εργαων
own possession, zealous of good works.
¹⁵ ταυτα λαλει και παρακαλει και ελεγχε
these speak and encourage and reprove
μετα πασης επιταγης μηδεις σου
with all command; no one of you
περιφρονειτω
let despise.

¹ παιδευουσα Pres. Part. Act. mon. S. f. of παιδεύω G3811 from παῖς, παιδός, ὁ, ἡ G3816 *child, boy, youth*

When you meet Jesus, John tells us that what you will be struck by is he is ‘full of grace and truth.’ In John1:14 he says

*The Word became flesh **and** made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory **of** the one **and** only Son, who came from the Father, **full of grace and truth.***

So when Paul writes to Titus about the grace of God he is not talking about some religious concept, he is speaking about Jesus. The glory of God is demonstrated throughout history as the God who saves his people. I was reading the other day Exodus 3 when God reveals himself to Moses. I realised we can get a bit too hung up on God declaring himself as the ‘I AM’, significant as that is, and ignore how he introduces himself to Moses. Exodus 3:6-8

“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob

7 The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

He is first the God who engages with people. Secondly he is a saving God. He is known for being for his people. The exodus is the demonstration of a basic characteristic of God. He rescues people from slavery and brings them to a land flowing with milk and honey.

Jesus is God and he comes therefore with the same characteristic. He is here to bring salvation. So our passage this evening begins with:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

It is the briefest of summaries of the Gospels you can get but rich in content.

First we need to remind ourselves that grace is very special. In every religion there are explanations of how you reach out to God. Here God again reaches out to us. And offers us salvation at his expense.

This is stunning Good News. No longer do we have to strive to achieve Nirvana, or perfection or even for our good deeds to outweigh our bad as other religions would have it. God gives us salvation freely as we turn to him from our failures and ask him to save us and give us new life.

Second, Jesus brought salvation by offering himself as the once and for all sacrifice for sin.

Third. He has appeared. This destroys Atheism. Jesus came demonstrating that God exists and that is neither dead or gone somewhere else. He is right here among us, actively engaging in our salvation and, through his Spirit, transforming us ready for heaven – the land of milk and honey – to be with him for ever.

Now I could linger on this subject for some time but you will want to go home some time!

So we will move on.

Paul tells us that the grace of God teaches us three things. First to be godly. Second to live in hope and thirdly to have purpose. So lets look at each of these in turn.

First the grace of God ..

.. teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

Be godly

One of the key issues of our Good News is that God, in his mercy, promises us eternal life through receiving the free gift of salvation. This takes away the normal incentive to be morally upright. If salvation comes free and guaranteed, then I can do as I please and not be at risk of losing my salvation. All good Bible Students are thinking Romans 6 at this point. I will not read all of it but here is a taster:

Romans 6:1-4

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Here Paul is more explicit.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

If you have put your faith and trust in Jesus, you recognise that your sins cost him dearly. That sin causes God great pain and you don't want to hurt this wonderful friend who loved you even to death on the cross.

Further, when you re-enact your salvation in baptism, you demonstrate that you have died to sin in Christ. When you were pulled out of the water, you demonstrated you were resurrected into new life.

In addition, John writing in a letter to some churches says this: 1John 3:9

⁹No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.

Now we must be careful not to take this out of context. John has already said:

1John 2:1

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

And 1John 1:8-10

⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

The point John is making is that in receiving God's salvation in Christ, we are born again by the Holy Spirit, and therefore that new life should be evident in having a god-likeness, or as

we tend to say, Christ –likeness. We are called by our Saviour to ‘follow me’ to be like him. To behave like him.

Today is a suitable day to remind ourselves of this. Today, 31st October, is **Hallow’**en and the world around us celebrates it with relish and indulges in play acting demonic forces. But that is not for us. We are people of tomorrow, 1st November, which is the ‘**Feast of All Hallows’** or All Saint’s day and Tuesday, 2nd November is **All Souls Day** which the world conveniently forgets. Saints in the Orthodox churches are special Christians, hence the two days in the western Orthodox calendar but we are taught by our Saviour that we are all made saints when we are washed in the blood of the Lamb. So tomorrow and Tuesday is our days. To remind ourselves that we, and all those who have gone before us into heaven, have our sins forgiven, are made holy and are called to live pure and holy lives, transformed by the Holy Spirit of God.

You are on your way to heaven where no sin is entertained. You will be welcomed by Jesus running out to meet you because he loved you with an everlasting love. The grace that we have received has set us on the road to life. It would be wrong of us to indulge in sin on the way.

But we do. If you struggle in your Christian life over temptation and sin, then you are in good company this evening. We all struggle with sin. But our salvation constantly teaches us to say ‘NO!’ to sin and ‘YES!’ to godliness.

Jesus taught us to say “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” . He was very aware of our weakness but he lived without sin and calls us to live like him. So stay in the battle, show God’s love whenever you can,

This battle is not forever. And can I remind you Jesus has won the victory, n the cross, over sin and death. So we pursue holiness -

¹³while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ,

Live in hope

And we are told in Romans 5:5

...hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

There are two things to say about waiting for hope. First, waiting is not inactive. We are not invited into God’s family to sit and do nothing. We are saved to glorify God in our lives. That is why godliness is so important. Godliness is what we do while we wait. And that means living out our lives in the light of his word. Serving him as he calls us to whether it is in a normal job or as a church worker or missionary, or being retired and getting on with day-to-day living. Everyone of us waits for the blessed hope actively. Jesus was quite explicit about this.

Matthew 24:45 “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so

when he returns. ⁴⁷ Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

The second thing to say about waiting is what matters is the expectation. Standing at the bus stop in the pouring rain, you hope the bus comes on time. Standing outside the dentist waiting for your appointment you hope they find nothing to do, at least not painful!

Waiting for examination results is filled with anxiety for whether you did as good as you thought. Unless you have confidence in your performance, in which case you are eager for it to happen!

So how you *wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ*, depends on your expectation. What do you know about it? First, it does not depend on your performance but his grace. Second, it is certain because he has promised it. Thirdly, we have no idea when it will be. The early church believed it would happen in their lifetime, so when Christians died they were panicking. Paul has to reassure them and us that the dead in Christ will rise first. Now we are 2000 years on and still the church waits for the completion of history and the dramatic entry into the world *of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ*, who will destroy sin and death itself and finally remove Satan from the scene. What heaven will be like and how this all happens is beyond me. What I do know is that the new heaven and the new earth will be perfect. We will meet with Jesus for ever. All at the same time but will have personal relationship with him at the same time. Eternity will not be boring but the best description of it is a eastern

marriage banquet.- unlimited food, loads of dancing, loads of worshipping, meeting up with old friends. And you never tire of it! Now if that doesn't please you , remember heaven is beyond description because Jesus is God, indescribably wonderful.

It is that hope that stays the church through persecution and through the centuries. And it can sustain you because it is not just a distant dream but Jesus has sent his Holy Spirit to give you a taste of heaven just where you are. Jesus is with you, right now. So live in hope.

This indescribable God is described here as

our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

I have titled this :

Have purpose

But it seems to all about Jesus! Absolutely right!

Your purpose if the universe is to reveal his glory.

He has redeemed us

He has purified us

He has enthused us.

He has redeemed us or ransomed us from all wickedness.

He has purified us or cleansed us for himself a people that are his very own.

He has enthused us to be eager to do what is good.

This spells out the purpose of our salvation.

First to tackle the problem of sin by sending Jesus to die on the cross to ransom us. You are released from the captivity of sin because he paid the ransom with his own life.

Secondly to purify us or make us a holy people for himself. In other terms you are a child of God. You are one of the family. You have an eternal identity. 1 Peter 2:9 puts it this way:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

You are special because God has loved you. Live like it! But not as the ruling class and the celebrities in this world live their lives, but as Jesus taught us to live.

Thirdly to put his Spirit in us so that we are eager to do good. This reiterates what we read a few verses before.

It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, You are a Son or daughter of God, your destiny is to go to heaven, you have the Holy Spirit to guide you so live the life that God has given you and glorify God just where you are, right now! And don't lose sight of the glory that is to come – to be with him forever.

¹⁵ These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you. That is our Gospel. We have no need to be ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.

Romans 1:16

Enjoy it! Live it! Share it! And may God bless as you do so.
Amen