



TITUS

A HEALTHY CHURCH

IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

SERIES: A HEALTHY CHURCH

TITLE: A HEALTHY CHURCH TAKES HOLINESS SERIOUSLY

SCRIPTURE: TITUS 2:11-3:2

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INTRODUCTION

We are now in our fourth week of our series through Titus. Thus far, we have learned that healthy churches take leadership seriously, truth seriously, and discipleship seriously. This week, we will see how healthy churches take holiness seriously.

When many people think about pursuing holiness, they tend to think primarily about disciplined effort—the willpower to resist temptation and make good choices. And while our effort toward holiness is certainly necessary, our passage today emphasizes the essential role of God’s grace in producing holiness in our lives. As we look at our text, we will discover several ways that God’s grace works in us to help us become more like Christ.

Titus 2:11–3:2

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

³ Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

Explanation

The Grace Appeared

Paul has spent much of Titus 2 explaining what godliness should look like in the lives believers, no matter their age. Now he explains the basis for how Christians should live this way. The answer is grace.

Paul writes, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.” The word “for” is important. Paul is connecting everything he has just taught about godly living with God's grace. Christian obedience is not an attempt to earn God's favor. Rather, godly living is the result to the grace we have already received.

Grace is therefore much more than God's willingness to overlook our sin. Rather, grace has been bought through the precious blood of Christ. The word “grace” serves as a summary of God's saving work: He sent His Son, who was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died for our sins, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven.

Ephesians 2:8–9 famously states: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Grace is exactly what sinful people need because we cannot save ourselves. We stand guilty before a holy God, and we do not possess within ourselves the ability to make ourselves righteous before Him.

The fact that grace has “appeared” points to God's grace being revealed visibly and personally in Jesus Christ. God made His saving grace known through His Son who entered the world in human flesh. John describes this reality in 1 John 1:1-3, explaining that the apostles heard, saw, and even touched the One who is the Word of life. These verses read,

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word^[a] of life—² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— ³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you.”

Paul also says that this grace brings salvation “for all people.” This does not mean that every person will ultimately be saved regardless of their response to Christ. Scripture does not teach *universalism*—the belief that everyone will eventually be saved whether they believe in Christ or not. Instead, Paul is emphasizing the broad reach of God's saving grace. The gospel is not restricted to one ethnicity, social class, gender, or stage of life. The salvation God provides through Christ is offered to all people. Romans 1:16 captures this beautifully: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” The grace of God is available to every kind of person, and everyone who comes to Christ in faith receives the same gracious salvation (Rom. 10:13).

Grace That Trains Us

Paul continues by saying that grace is “training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.” The same grace that saves us also trains us.

Grace is not merely God's kindness that rescues us from the consequences of sin. God's grace begins a work of transformation within us. Justification leads into sanctification. The God who declares us righteous also begins making us increasingly righteous in the way we live.

This is why we cannot separate grace from godliness. A person who has genuinely experienced God's grace should increasingly desire to live for God. This does not mean Christians become sinless or that our obedience earns our salvation. Rather, God's grace produces a new direction in our lives.

Unfortunately, one false understanding of grace is that because we are saved by grace, we are free to continue living however we want. This idea is

commonly called *antinomianism*, meaning “against the law.” It treats grace as though God's forgiveness gives Christians permission to embrace sin. Yet, Paul rejects this thinking emphatically in Romans 6:1-2: “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?”

Paul makes the same connection in the Ephesians 2 passage referenced earlier. Verses 8-9 emphasize that salvation is by grace through faith and not by works. But verse 10 immediately adds, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Paul's language that grace is “training” us is important. Training implies a process. Christian growth does not happen instantly or automatically. God works in us, but He also calls us to actively pursue holiness.

This helps us avoid another misunderstanding of sanctification sometimes associated with what is often called *Quietism*—the idea that spiritual growth occurs primarily by passive surrender while we simply “let go and let God.” Certainly, we should depend completely upon God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit. But Scripture never presents Christians as passive spectators in their spiritual growth.

Instead, Scripture presents God's work and our responsibility together. Philippians 2:12-13 captures this beautifully: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Our obedience does not compete with God's grace. Our obedience is one of the ways God's grace works through us. We pursue holiness, practice spiritual disciplines, renew our minds with God's Word, resist temptation, confess sin, and choose obedience. At the same time, we recognize that our ability and desire to do these things ultimately come from God's work within us.

Paul describes Christian growth in terms of both what we *renounce* and what we *embrace*. Grace trains us “to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions” and to “live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives.” This is an important pattern throughout Scripture. Christian maturity is not simply learning how to stop doing bad things. It involves replacing sinful patterns with godly ones. Ephesians 4:22-24 says it similarly, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

This matters because simply removing a sinful behavior without replacing it with something righteous often leaves a vacuum. God's grace does not merely teach us what to stop doing. It teaches us what kind of people we should become.

Grace While We Wait

Grace not only has impact because of what Christ has accomplished; it also looks forward to what Christ will accomplish. Paul says Christians are “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” The Christian life is lived between Christ's first appearing and His second appearing.

Grace has appeared in Christ's first coming. We now live in the present reality of salvation while waiting for the full realization of everything God has promised. We already experience many blessings of salvation. We have forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, adoption as His children, freedom from slavery to sin, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and new life in Christ. But there is still more to come. We await the resurrection of our bodies, freedom from suffering and death, the end of temptation and sin, the renewal of creation, and most importantly, the fullness of God's presence forever.

Romans 8:18-25 describes this tension beautifully:

¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Creation itself is waiting for its redemption, and Christians who already possess “the firstfruits of the Spirit” still “groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” Our salvation is already real, but it is not yet fully realized.

Peter expresses the same hope in 1 Peter 1:3-5:

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Christian hope is therefore not wishful thinking. We are waiting for something God has promised and Christ will certainly accomplish.

Grace Is Grace Because Jesus Gave Himself

Paul now explains the foundation of this grace: Jesus “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.”.

Grace is not merely God giving us something we do not deserve. Grace is ultimately seen in the self-giving of Christ. He gave Himself to redeem us from our slavery to sin and to make us His own. Notice again the two sides of salvation. Christ redeems us *from* something and *for* something. He redeems us from “all lawlessness.” He rescues us from the guilt and dominion of sin. But He also purifies us for Himself. We are not merely forgiven people who have been released from punishment. We are a people who now belong to Christ.

First Corinthians 6:19-20 makes a similar point: “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” We belong to Christ because He purchased us. Peter describes the same identity in 1 Peter 2:9-10: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Grace Must Be Taught

Paul closes the chapter by returning to Titus and his responsibility as a teacher: “Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.” This brings us back to the beginning of the chapter. In Titus 2:1, Paul told Titus to “teach what accords with sound doctrine.” Now he tells him to declare these things with authority.

Grace is not a secondary doctrine that can be adjusted to make people more comfortable. It is foundational to the Christian faith. Churches today must confront any error that circulates around grace such as universalism, antinomianism, or quietism.

And because grace is central to the Christian life, it must be taught continually. We never outgrow the gospel. Christians need to be reminded again and again of what God has done for us in Christ and how that grace should shape the way we live.

Grace in Action

Paul begins chapter 3 with another reminder of what grace-produced godliness looks like. Titus is to “remind them” to live appropriately toward both authorities and those outside the church.

This list demonstrates that Paul's concern for godliness extends beyond how Christians treat one another inside the church. Grace should transform the way believers interact with the entire world. Christians are to submit to rulers and authorities (see also Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17). Believers are to be ready for every good work (Ephesians 5:15-16; 1 Peter 2:12; Matthew 5:14-16). Their speech matters. They are to “speak evil of no one” and avoid unnecessary quarrels. Finally, believers are to be gentle and courteous toward all people. Paul is reminding Titus that Christians should be marked by humility and kindness even toward people who disagree with them.

Discussion Questions

- On a scale from 1-10, would you say that you are *zealous* for good works? Why?
- What stands out to you about grace in our passage today?
- What are some different ways that the Bible or Christians tend to use the word “grace” and how does our passage specifically use the word?
- Try to pay attention to some of the changes in verb tenses throughout our text. What do you notice?
- Do you notice any repeated words or ideas in the text?
- Look at the list of attributes that Paul shares in Titus 3:1-2. Does anything stand out to you about how the attributes relate or progress?

- What are some examples of “putting off” and “putting on” in everyday Christian life? What is something you could put off and put on in the context of either your home or work environment?
- Titus is to teach and remind believers to live godly lives among each other and also outsiders. Where do you find yourself acting one way among Christians and a different way among unbelievers?
- How does looking forward to Christ's return help us persevere in godliness when obedience is difficult?
- Is there a “good work” you can plan to do this week?