

## God's Powerful Grace

### Introduction

- I love football. And in particular, I love the Philadelphia Eagles. They're my favorite team—have been since I was 7 years old. Football is a game of fundamentals. Successful teams execute the fundamentals well, things like blocking and tackling, for example. You can do a lot of other things, but if you don't execute on the basics, you won't be successful.
- The Christian life is similar. There are basics—fundamentals in the Christian life—that we need to hold firm to. If we don't get them right, we're stunt our growth at best, and fall into serious error at worst. Grace is one of those fundamentals. A right understanding of grace is basic to the Christian faith. In fact, the Christian life is all of grace. From the first moment we trust Christ to the day when we go to be with Christ, it's all of grace. It's fundamental for the Christian.
- But it's often the basics that we forgot or get wrong. And that's why passages like this one in Titus 2:11-14 are so important for us. They remind us what is fundamental to our faith in Christ.
- And we not only need to be reminded of these truths, but we need to experience them. We need to experience them, perhaps some of us for the time and others in a renewed way.

So, let's look at the text together.

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

I've entitled this sermon God's Powerful Grace and I have four points:

1. The Grace of God Brings Salvation for All People
2. The Grace of God Teaches Us How to Live
3. The Grace of God Helps Us Wait for Jesus
4. The Grace of God Reminds Us Who We Are

### The Grace of God Brings Salvation For All People

- Verse 11 again, **For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.** Now when I hear this I think "What does that mean because hasn't God always been gracious?" Did He just start showing grace? Not at all. We read about God's grace all throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. We see His gracious character; we read about His kindness and mercy toward His sinful people, we encounter His steadfast love and patience. It's simply not true—as some have claimed—that the God of the Old Testament is full of wrath and the God of the

New Testament is all about grace. If you've read your Bible, you know that that isn't right. God does not change—He's always been a God of grace. So what does Paul mean?

- Well, he is saying that something special has happened. He is saying that something unique in the history of the world has occurred. God's grace has been revealed in a way that man never imagined! Listen to John 1:14:

**John 1:14**

**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth**

- 2,000 years ago, the Word became flesh when God sent His Son into the world in the person of Jesus Christ. He didn't send Him to condemn the world, but to save it. The grace of God appeared in Jesus Christ. Again, before Jesus, people experienced God's grace, but the fullest expression of His grace, the fullest expression of His undeserved favor to sinners is found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. If you want to encounter God's grace in all its radiance, look no further than Jesus. He is the image of the invisible God and the exact imprint of His nature and stunningly, in His grace, He came to seek and save lost and rebellious sinners like you and me. He brings salvation.
- Friends, Jesus lived the perfect life that none of us have lived. And He died as a substitute in our place for our sins on the cross. And then three days later, God raised Him from the dead because the penalty for sin had been paid in full. If we repent of our sins and turn to Him in faith, He forgives our sins and He sets us free. He declares over us "No condemnation!" Jesus has conquered both our sin and the grave and we have nothing to fear!
- And no one is excluded from the invitation to believe in Jesus. This salvation is available to all people (all people!). The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for *all people*. The Gospel is an international message and the offer of forgiveness must be proclaimed to all people everywhere. That's why our mission statement as a church says, "We proclaim Jesus Christ to everyone to present everyone mature in him."
- No one is excluded. The Gospel crosses every barrier—ethnic, social, cultural. Jesus died to ransom people for God from nation on earth. All people!
- Furthermore, no one individual is excluded either. While salvation is not automatic, one must repent and believe, but anyone can be saved! Salvation is available to any sinner! *God can save anyone!*
- God can take the most debased sinner and through His powerful grace bring them to repentance; grant them faith in Christ; forgive their sins; cleanse them; and add them to His church for His glory. Do you believe that? Think about that person you know who you think is light-years from God; there's no chance. God loves to do the impossible and let me encourage you to keep praying for that person because God responds to the prayer of faith.
- Friends, God deals with real sinners (real people), big-time sinners. His grace isn't soft and it's domesticated! And we should know this, because we know our own hearts and we know that He's dealt so bountifully with us.
- But maybe you're not a Christian and perhaps you wonder if God would save you? Could He set you free from your bonds? The answer is yes!! Christ came to save the worst of sinners. Jesus says that He will give rest to all the weary and heavy laden with sin. He said that He will never turn away anyone who comes to Him. Listen to what the apostle Paul says:

**1 Timothy 1:15**

**The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost**

Paul wasn't just teaching a bit of theology here. He had first hand experience with the grace of God. He calls himself the foremost because he persecuted—ravaged—the early church. He hated Christians. But God powerfully saved him and changed His life. He made Paul His chosen instrument to take the Gospel to the Gentiles and build up the church of God. He wrote most of the New Testament.

- No one saw that coming and Jesus can work in your life the same way. It doesn't matter who you are or what sins you've committed. If you turn away from them and trust Christ to save you, believing in His substitutionary death in your place and His resurrection from the dead, then you will be saved. And your life will not be the same! He will make you a new creation and only God knows what good works He has prepared for you to walk in for His glory!
- The grace of God has appeared in Jesus Christ bringing salvation for all people!

**The Grace of God Teaches Us How to Live**

- Verse 12: **“training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age”**
- It is through the grace of God that we have forgiveness of our sins and that's glorious, but grace does more than forgive our sins and declare us righteous. The grace of God in Jesus Christ is a power at work in the life of a Christian because the Christian has the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Christ—living inside of them. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of grace. So grace isn't just something that happened to us at one point in time—no, grace is what we stand in by faith, it describes God's daily disposition toward us in Christ, it's our whole experience with God through the Spirit. And here, that experience includes teaching and training. Through the Spirit, grace becomes our teacher.
- So what does grace teach us?
  - First, it teaches us to **renounce** ungodliness and worldly passions. This word renounce is also translated **deny** or, as the NIV translates it, grace “teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions.” It's a strong word. It doesn't mean to simply avoid ungodliness and worldly passions (though we do do that), but to forcefully renounce them. Say No to them! To really, really hate them from the heart.
  - And that makes sense, right? Think about it: What is ungodliness? Isn't it every thought, word, and deed opposed to and out of step with God's holy character? What are worldly passions? Aren't they the desires of our sinful nature, the manifold lusts of our hearts, pride in possessions and earthly riches. Ungodliness and worldly passions are things like sexual immorality, sensuality, idolatry (which includes covetousness), adultery, homosexuality, theft of any kind, pride, anger, murder, greed, drunkenness, slander, gossip.
  - Friends, ungodliness and worldly passions are dangerous. You have to know that as a Christian, your life is not a playground. You are in the middle of a warzone! You are a soldier in the army of Christ and

arrayed against you on the other side are the world, it's passions, your flesh, demonic forces, and Satan himself. They wage war against your soul! If you don't know that, you are going to be toast. The world is trying to shape you to think and feel like it does. And it's subtle.

- So here's an example in our culture. You're not going to get arguments for why sexual immorality (sex before marriage, homosexual relationships, even adultery in some circumstances) is good. No, here's what's going to happen: Movies and television and social media are going to portray them as positive so that you start to feel that they are. And that starts to shape the way you think as well.
- What I'm concerned about, what all of your pastors are concerned about, is that you would be become more shaped by what's on your social media feed and by what's in your Netflix watch list than by the Word of God and the Gospel. I'm not calling social media bad; I'm not calling Netflix bad. I'm saying that you must feel what God feels about ungodliness. To do otherwise is called loving the world and if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us. That's why we renounce ungodliness and worldliness.
- We've been saved from the eternal consequences of these things at the great cost of our Savior's life! How can we who have been **made alive** still prefer the awful stench of death? We can't! It's unthinkable! And it's impossible! Grace teaches us to renounce all of these things and to live differently. To feel differently. Grace teaches us to live like our Savior and He was described as one who loved righteousness and hated wickedness.
- So, second, grace teaches us to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age before Christ comes. Put simply, grace teaches us to live a life in step with God's character. It's a life that loves, really loves righteousness and all of God's ways. It's a life that is no longer mastered by sin and its appetites. And that's what self-controlled here means. Paul's not talking about a scheduled life or a life of strict discipline per se. He's talking about mastery over one's sinful impulses.
- ***Friends, we can live self-controlled lives.*** Did you know that? Self-control a fruit of the Spirit. A Christian can never say, "I just couldn't help myself—temptation was too strong!" We can't say that because it's not true! No, we have the Holy Spirit; there's always a way of escape; His grace is always available to us to help us:

#### Hebrews 4:15-16

**15 For we do not have a high priest [Jesus] who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

- Through the Spirit, through grace, we choose uprightness and godliness ***because***, as we mature in the faith, and walk closer with the Lord, and become more like Him, our hunger and thirst for righteousness increases and God promises to satisfy that hunger and quench that thirst. That's where grace is bringing us friends—into the satisfaction and ***joy*** of righteousness.

Listen to this quote from Scott Hubbard in his article entitled '*Just A Little More*' *How to Quiet Your Cravings*. It's wonderfully true!

**Our Father's backyard is not stiff and solemn, filled with pursed-lipped saints who have scraped up enough self-control to stay within God's fences. Our Father's backyard is where good things run wild. Here, our Father delights us with a feast of rich food (Isaiah 55:1-2). Here, the Spirit trains God's**

**people to walk in self-control and godliness—to enjoy God’s gifts instead of abuse them (Titus 2:11-12).**

- But how does the Spirit do this; how **does** grace teach us?
  - First, grace always brings us back to the Gospel. It always brings us back to the cross. What happened when Christ died? If you’ve been around for the last few weeks, you know from Romans 6 that when Jesus died, we also died. Our old life, our old selves were crucified with Christ. The person we were before we trusted in Christ is dead. This is an objective fact: United to Christ by faith in His death, you have died. Your life under the reign of sin is over.
    - That’s why becoming a Christian is not merely moral reform. Christianity is not self-help. The Bible is not one of many self-help books. God’s not out to make you in a nice, well-adjusted, self-sufficient, more confident version of your current self. That’s not Christianity! He’s out to transform you into the image of His Son for His glory and that requires death and resurrection. That requires a new creation through faith in Christ.
    - Furthermore, salvation isn’t like a football team (general manager looks for the best players with the best skills). No, God saves moral losers, He targets the weak, the poor in spirit, the humble. We have nothing to impress God with. You bring your sin, you take that to Christ, you die with Him by faith, and then you live in a new way by the power of God for *His* glory alone! Listen to the apostle Paul’s perspective on his old life:

**Galatians 2:20**

**I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me**

- Grace teaches us that we are new creations in Christ. Our lives are now lived for Christ’s glory and His pleasure alone. Grace starts with Christ and His work and fixes our eyes on Him.
- Second, grace works in us. Grace trains us and instructs us, but not like a normal teacher. Imagine a teacher in front of their class doing their best to instruct their students. They’re enthusiastic for the subject matter; they know their stuff; they’re legit. But the kids are stone bored. They’re distracted by anything they can find, and they couldn’t care less.
- But what if that teacher was able to somehow work inside of the hearts of those kids to create in them the same love and zeal for the subject that they have? This picture would look a lot different, wouldn’t it?
- Friends, this is similar to how grace works. It teaches us, it commands us—live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives—it trains us to do so, **but from the inside**! Listen to Philippians 2:12-13:

**Philippians 2:12-13**

**Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.**

Did you hear that? God is at work in us by His grace to will—He’s working at the level of our wills (at the level of our choosing) to renounce ungodliness and instead work for His good pleasure.

- But let’s press into this a bit more. What’s this look like in the middle of the week when you’re tempted to grumble, get angry, click on that link, speak a harsh word, whatever it is?
- Here’s how it works for me: The grace of God uses the Word of God. So, a story from my life. A couple of days ago, my wife Amanda bought this big double hoop basketball game at Costco. And of course, it required assembly. Now, you might not know this, I’m not handy. But Amanda asked me to take an evening to put this together (should only take me 40 minutes). So, Tuesday evening she leaves me with the basketball contraption and my two young boys as she goes out. I had things that I needed to do that night. And as I’m pulling out part after part and reading the very helpful instruction booklet, dread is welling up in my heart (this is going to take hours and I’m never going to get to what I need to do). Now I’m getting angry and becoming irritable and my boys aren’t helping. In that moment (I was standing in front of my boys), the grace of God used the Word of God. I remembered this passage: The grace of God teaches me to be self-controlled. I thought of Galatians 5 where Paul lists self-control as one of the fruits of the Spirit. And a thought came into my mind: I know putting this together is going to serve Amanda, and Philippians 2 says to look to the interests of others, so I needed to cool it and trust God. And God gave grace. I spoke calmly to my boys, the hoop got assembled and when I got around to what I needed to do, God helped me.
- I don’t share this to put myself forward in any way. I share it because it’s often that the grace of God uses the Word of God to arrest our attention and work in us that which is pleasing in His sight. When you’re tempted, get the Word out and watch how the grace of God works in you.
- So, the grace of God teaches us how to live. But it also helps us look ahead.

### The Grace of God Helps Us Wait for Jesus

- Verse 13, **“Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”**
- Friends, this is the day we’re living for! It’s the day we’re waiting for! Grace reminds us that our Master is returning, and we will all stand before Him to give an account. He is going to physically return to earth. We don’t know when, but it is going to happen. He Word is sure.
- God has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through His Son Jesus Christ. On that day, the last day, the only day that really matters, Jesus is going to judge the world.
- This is a big reason why we renounce ungodliness and live differently. We don’t want to be found sinning when He comes, surprised at our Master’s return, and ashamed before Him. **No, we’re waiting for Him and we want to be found pleasing to our Savior when He comes!** That’s the cry of our hearts! That’s the cry of every heart gripped by the grace of God!
- Christ is our **great** God and Savior! And when He appears, it will be evident, it will be obvious, and it will be glorious. When He returns, He will come with His angels in the glory of His Father and when that happens, this present age is over. Everything will stop. All (no exceptions!) will appear before Him for judgment.

- Now Paul calls this our hope, our blessed (happy!) hope. I don't know about you, but I don't immediately associate judgment with hope, especially when you consider that on this day, the One doing the judging is the perfect, exalted, and absolutely holy Son of God!
- But for the Christian, this is a day we need not fear. We know this because of passages like John 5:24

**John 5:24**

**24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.**

**1 Peter 1:13**

**Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

- For us, the day of Christ is a day of vindication and hope, a day of grace, and not a day of dread. Christ died for our sins, we died with Him (having already been judged), and now we live in Him by faith. We've been forgiven; we've been justified; there is now no condemnation in Christ! More than that, when He appears, we will receive resurrection bodies (just like His) and live and reign with Him forever. Our destiny is to be with Christ!
- Let me also say this: For the Christian, this is also a day of relief. No more suffering, no more sickness, no more cancer, no more chronic pain, no more decay, no more getting old, no more death. No more hatred from the world, no more persecution, no more injustice, no more sin, no more shame, no more unrighteousness, no more evil or wickedness or anything unclean at all ever again. This is a day we look forward to. It's a day for which we should pray, "Come, Lord Jesus!"
- But if you're not a Christian, this is a day of dread. It is a day to fear. There is nothing here to look forward to, only the wrath of God and of Christ for your sins, which is the punishment of eternal destruction in Hell.
- So my non-Christian friend, have you considered your life? Have you considered the Gospel? We all deserve the judgment of God; there is no one in this room better than another. But Christ offers eternal life to all freely, as a gift. All you must do to receive that gift is turn away from your sins and believe in Christ. There's no work to do. Christ did all the work for you. If you will turn to Him, He will forgive your sins, He will change your life, and when He returns, He will take you to be with Himself forever.
- And my Christian friend, let me ask you: Your great God and Savior is returning. Is there anything in your life today that you would want to change if you knew that He will return tomorrow? If there is something, His grace invites you now to go to Him, confess your sin, and receive His forgiveness. He is ready to help you.
- He is coming and His return is nearer now than when we first believed. Look forward to that day; live in light of that day; wait with eager expectation for that day, for it is the only day that really matters.

**The Grace of God Reminds Us Who We Are**

- Verse 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."**

- The first thing to see here is that Jesus gave Himself for us! That's a precious truth that we must not become overly familiar with so that it no longer affects us. No, Christ gave *Himself for us*. The perfect Son of God gave Himself for us—unholy sinners—and He did this while we were still in our sins.
- We weren't looking for Him, but He came for us! That's amazing love! And it's a personal love. If you are a Christian, you can say that Christ loved me and gave Himself for me. Yes, for all who would believe, yes for all His sheep, yes for the church, but also for you, child of God, by name! He gave Himself on the cross for you!
- And what grace teaches us in verse 14 is that His death for you was not aimless. He didn't die wishing something would come of His sacrifice. No! He died for a specific people and for a specific aim: To redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession.
- Sin is lawlessness because it's breaking God's law and it enslaves us. But if you're a Christian, Christ freed you by giving Himself for you on the cross in your place!
- Christ is our great Deliverer; He sets the captives free! If you're a Christian, you're not enslaved anymore. And Paul is deliberately using Old Testament descriptions here for the people of God. Just as God delivered the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt and made them His own special people—His treasured possession, so Christ has redeemed you and bought you for His own. We are His treasured possession. His very own dearly beloved people! That's who we are!
- But there are two important things in this passage to recognize about us who are His people:
  - First, He didn't redeem us from lawlessness into a vacuum. No, He redeemed us to be pure. That's part of what it means to be His people. Far from lessening the need for purification, grace highlights its necessity and makes it possible. As we've seen, this is why the grace of God trains us to put off ungodliness and to put on godliness. It's why His Spirit works in us to develop our spiritual taste buds for what pleases God and to increasingly loathe the taste of evil. And again, because His grace is at work in us, we work to purify ourselves (not let go and let God). We see this same idea expressed wonderfully in 1 John 3:2-3:

**1 John 3:2-3**

**2 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. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.**

We are God's children now—by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. But we are not yet what we will be. We're not yet glorified in His presence. We're not yet perfect. We still sin. But when He comes, we shall be like Him. And now that we have this hope, what do we do? Do we sin that grace may abound? That's not the mark of His people—absolutely not! No, because He's at work in us, we purify ourselves just as He (Christ!) is pure. We look for those of our lives that are out of step with His character and by grace we go after them. We fight them with everything we've got. We cleanse ourselves from whatever displeases Him.

- Second, His people are zealous for good works. Good works are the hallmark of the Christian. They are the evidence that grace is at work in our lives and that we belong to Him.



- But if you're like me, when you hear this passage, you might wonder what qualifies as a good work. You might wonder if good works are the big and impressive things done for God. Things like running an orphanage, or preaching the Gospel in another country, or planting churches. Well, those are good works and may God raise up more of us to engage in them, but you don't have to do those things to be zealous for good works. Be encouraged! You can pursue good works in whatever life God has called you to. Maybe you're a teenager at home or a stay at home mom or you have a time consuming and challenging job, or you're single or you're an empty-nester or maybe you're sick and not able to do what others can. Wherever you find yourself, you can be zealous for good works. And we know this because of the larger context around our passage.
- For example, look at verses 1-10 right above our passage. Here are some good works. Be zealous for these things:
  - Older men: Pursue dignity, sober-mindedness, be self-controlled, and sound in the Gospel and the doctrines of faith, in love, and in steadfastness
  - Older women: Display reverence in your behavior and renounce slander. And when you get together with younger women, take time to teach them how to love their husbands and children, to be godly wives and mothers, how to care for their home, to be kind and pure
  - Younger men: Pursue self-control, flee youthful lusts and worldliness by the grace of God (selfish ambition, sexual immorality, foolishness, time-wasters, find out what pleases the Lord and throw yourself into it)
  - And while a bondservant's relationship to his master in Roman culture was certainly different than the employee/employer relationship that exists today, there is application for us. Employees: Listen to your employers and try to please them, do not be difficult or argumentative, work hard for the Lord's sake. Do a good job and don't waste time
- And we can expand this further into chapter 3:
  - Be submissive to rulers and authorities
  - Speak evil of no one and avoid quarreling
  - Display gentleness and show perfect courtesy to all people
  - Refuse to divide believers and work for unity
  - Be ready to help cases of urgent need
- Friends, we could go on and on. Pray for one another, serve one another with the spiritual gifts God has given you, show generosity and hospitality, bear one another's burdens, bring a word of encouragement

to a downcast saint, pursue all the fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control). You do this so well as a church!

- Good works include all manner of things done in faith for the glory of God. They adorn the Gospel of grace and are performed through that same grace. They include all manner of fruit-bearing. Christ's life was filled with good works, and because we are His people, God's grace urges us to fill up our lives up with these things as well!
- And let me say this: Quiet obedience counts, even if no one else sees right now. Some good works are hidden or known only to the Lord. But when He returns, He will reward you and the righteousness of your works won't be hidden anymore. They will be on display for His glory!

### Close

Let me close this morning. Just like in football, fundamentals matter. And as we've seen, grace is fundamental to the Christian life. Our lives are all of grace. What I want you to walk away with this morning is a sense of God's goodness and the power of His grace. He called us by His grace, He saved us by His grace, He teaches us by His grace, He works in us by His grace, He keeps us by His grace, He helps us look forward by His grace, He purifies us by His grace, He energizes us for good works by His grace, and one day, we will see Him. And we will be like Him. And it will all be to the praise of His glorious grace forever and ever.

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