

Grace That Saves and Trains

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In the book of Titus, we're going to find the Apostle Paul, as we have been, is writing this letter to Pastor Titus, a young but very mature man tasked with shepherding a new group of believers on the rough island of Crete. Now, the Cretan believers had a massive societal problem. They were living in a chaotic and very much idolatrous environment. They were having to unlearn their former chaotic ways while simultaneously guarding themselves against hypocrites and false teachers who were teaching things that they shouldn't for personal gain. Ultimately obeying rules out of fear of punishment which is under the law. A believer obeys out of love. Let me repeat that again. A believer obeys out of love, out of gratitude, and out of the inward power of the Holy Spirit.

Apostle Paul wrote this section beginning in verses 11-15. This is a new section. We're going to touch on the first two, which is verses 11 and 12. We're going to find that the Apostle Paul anchors Titus and this new group of believers on the island of Crete in the most transformative way, which is what the power of the gospel does in a believer's life. As we look around us in the 21st century, we quickly realize that modern-day America is not much different than from what the Cretans experienced on their island. I'm going to show you that we are flooded just in modern context by worldly philosophies. They had similar things. But here in our modern culture, a little bit different. We get spam notifications. Spam notifications on our devices, on our computers, and cultural pressures that urge us to conform to what? What is the similarity to those that were experienced amongst the Cretan believers and us here in America? is this. They all strive to bring a meaningless instant gratification mindset that places you me at the center of all things. This is the heart of the problem of the Cretans. This is the heart of the problem in America. That is me is the focus. Me is at the center. Right? But God has a completely different design for us as believers. Amen. We will see that God's grace shows us that it is not you. It is not me at the center, nor is it the world at the center, but him at the center. That's where we're going to see is what God's grace produces in a believer's heart. While the law disciplines through external strict rules, right? Following a bunch of rules, that's what the law was given as, God's grace is completely different. It's unearned. Unearned favor of God that brings salvation to all people in the person of Jesus Christ. And what grace does after a believer becomes found in Christ, trusting in Christ for salvation, grace then activates beyond that to training us. That's right. Grace trains us to become more and more conformed not to the world but to Christ. We will focus then on verses 11 and 12 examining the text together. So go ahead and please stand out of respect for God's word

as I read and you listen silently as I read from passage in Titus chapter 2 beginning with verse 11.

It reads, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." May God bless the reading of his word. You may be seated.

So if you look at the text in verse 11, focus in on the grace of God, salvation. All men. Paul begins by establishing the solid foundation of our entire faith, which is the grace of God. The word grace simply means unearned favor. God gives to us what we could never earn and what we do not deserve. Paul writes that this grace hath appeared. This is meaning a historical present reality in all of our lives whether lost or saved in this room. Appear by the way shares its root with the word epiphany. We use this modern word. What does it mean though? Truly, it means this. A sudden, brilliant revealing of light. Of light. Do you sense a biblical context here? You see, grace is the visible physical embodiment of God in Jesus Christ, the light. That's what an epiphany is supposed to mean. And he is the one that appeared or is was the epiphany to the world which was what? We were all if we're a believer in Christ right now, we were all lost in darkness, right? Sin brings about darkness, but Jesus in his embodiment of God brings light into that darkness. Amen. So then the grace of God is a person and his name is Jesus Christ. He took on human flesh walking walked among us died on the cross and rose victoriously from the grave to bring salvation. You see that in the text. Notice the text says this salvation has been brought to all men. Let's just zone in on that. What does he mean to all men? This means the offer of salvation is all people and no longer restricted to just one nation. The nation of Israel was initially chosen by God to stand as his witnesses. But they rejected his son. They rejected his son. So then at the cross, what do we see? Humanity provided definitive proof of what? Inherent corruption and separation from God. That's what we see at the cross. What sin does is gives us inherent corruption from the inside out and then a separation from God which then there's a term for this which is called total depravity. Not partial depravity but total depravity. What does that mean? It means that sin touches every part of our being. So it affects the way we think. It affects our will and it affects all of our desires, everything and all, making us ultimately spiritually dead. Not partially dead. No, completely dead. Spiritually, incapable of then saving ourselves without the grace of God, namely the Lord Jesus Christ. Ultimately, God opened the way to reveal his grace to all the world, extending the offer of salvation to anyone who believes, showing again humanity's total dependence on God. Total dependence on God. And what is that? God's grace. For salvation, we need him to do everything which he did. Amen. Amen.

When we talk about this salvation, we must understand it in three distinct biblical tenses. Past tense, present tense, and future tense. Let's go through all of them. It's a good

reminder for us believers. Amen. What has been done in the past tense? We have been delivered from what? The penalty of sin. All that the guilt comes from sin. All of that that penalty is removed. delivered completely in the past. The moment you believe, you are permanently then adopted into the family of God. You see that wonderful text in first Peter that we've been transformed from the kingdom of darkness into who? The kingdom of his dear son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Permanent adoption can no longer be transferred back. That's past tense, present tense. We are being delivered. We are being delivered daily from the power of sin due to this fallen world that we live in. So what does that mean? You are an overcomer. You are an overcomer. You are able to overcome your sinful disposition which is you want to put me at the center is no longer a valid statement in a believer's life. God convicts you of that, doesn't he? And you know what? He convicts you and shows you that you can live a new way. And that's the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives that says we don't we do not have to live for ourselves, but we live for the glory of God. This is what the power of the Holy Spirit does. Helps us to overcome sin. Then we see the future tense. We will be delivered from the presence of sin. Not not before then which is when when Jesus returns or we go to meet him in our death which will create a new heaven and a new earth. You see we are going to experience the new heavens and the new earth for every believer in Christ. Isn't that a wonderful glorious thing that you don't have to change anything in this earth to make something new? No. Christ has to do that. He could only make a new earth. Can us make a new earth? Of course, the answer is no. So, we get we have been delivered from the penalty of sin. We have been delivered from the daily onslaught of the power of sin. and then we will be delivered from the presence of sin.

I want to imagine with me a global conflict that has finally been resolved by a supreme authority to signal the end of the war, the ultimate war. The authority issues an official universal official order of pardon and peace. Because the terms of this piece is perfect, the document is secured with an unbreakable tamperproof seal. It cannot be edited, rephrased, or watered down. If a messenger tries to alter even a single syllable to make it sound more palatable or fits opinions, the seal breaks and the message loses its official authority. The message must then remain entirely unchanged. To get this news to the ends of the earth, a massive network of messengers is mobilized. Their instructions are simple. Do not rewrite the message, just deliver it. Do not rewrite the message, just deliver it. So then the dispatch begins. And it quickly spreads as a relay. Receive and pass on. Receive and pass on. A messenger drives the document to major cities. A local runner takes a copy and hikes it into the mountains. A naval crier takes the message across the oceans to isolated islands. They face rough terrain, opposition, and exhaustion. But the chain never breaks. The unchanged news is then passed fatefully from hand to hand, expanding exponentially across the globe.

Here is a spiritual connection. This is precisely how the gospel operates through faithful believers in Christ. The unchanged message, the gospel of Jesus Christ is then the good news, a spiritual pardon with God, the supreme authority. He's the only one that can destroy the war uh the war or rather end the war. It cannot be modified this message to fit the culture or be diluted because of a avoiding offense. No, there is the offense of the cross, isn't there? So this message is then fixed historical that cannot be changed, cannot be tampered because it is tamperproof truth. Christ died for our sins, my sins, your sins. It becomes personal. And then what? Your sins were buried. Just like he was buried. Your sins were brought to its completion. Death. But you didn't have to die. He died in that grave for you. And then it doesn't end there. Amen. He rises gloriously. Amen. Amen. And he is now seated at the right hand of God the Father, which that is going to be our experience one day. We're going to be no longer in the presence of sin, but in the presence of our God and our Savior. What a glorious thing. And so, as faithful messengers, which starts with the local churches, our God's global relay team, what was once passed down is received and then continues to pass down to others. From the first century to the 21st century, the great commission of every believer, every pastor and missionary is this is not to invent a new message. We are the boots on the ground as it were. We carry the exact same good news that Paul and Titus writes about in our very text that we read from this morning. Amen. So what is the ultimate fulfillment? Expansion of this network isn't random. It has a guaranteed finish line. Every time a believer shares the gospel of Jesus Christ, every time a church, a church is planted, every time the Bible is translated into a new language, the message advances to a new coordinate on the global map. This continual forward movement is driving toward the exact moment the Lord Jesus promised in Matthew 24:14. This is his exact words. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations. And then and then shall the end come. Amen. There is an end when all nations have been reached by the preached word of the gospel. This is what we are proclaiming. This is what I am proclaiming to you this morning. So the relay is not to stall out. And the messengers will not fail. The unchanged message of the gospel of Jesus Christ is backed by who? In unstoppable power? The Holy Spirit. Whose power is greater than the holy spirit living within us. No human be no human being only the spirit of power. The holy spirit's power. And then we have the prophetic words of the lord Jesus Christ. Prophetic just simply means it will happen. It shall happen. It's a promise. And he gives that it will be reached to all the nations. He's the author and he will finish it. Amen. through faithful messengers. He is the one that's going to close the chapter of church history. That is where we are right now. But one day there will be an end to this church history.

So what does this mean for us here today? First, it means nobody is beyond the reach of God's grace. Nobody is nobody is beyond God's grace. It doesn't matter how broken your past is. The saving grace of God has appeared to you. He's already come. He's already

finished the work of the penalty of sin on the cross. Second, it completely strips away our human pride. As Martin Luther heavily emphasized regarding this text in this way, this text or rather Jesus Christ is a severe blow to human free will or self-righteous virtues for that matter. If we could become godly through our own intentions, rules or religious effort, then grace wouldn't need to appear. And by that same token, Christ saving power and receiving the finished work at the cross was the very thing that we all needed. We needed that to appear to us. Amen. We needed Jesus to come and die on the cross for our payment of our sin. So that's right there the salvation work of what the grace of God does, of what Jesus Christ does on our behalf.

Secondly, let's see what the grace of God does once you have become a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are now in Christ. Look with me verse 12. It says, "Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lust. We should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." See, once grace saves us and we are in Christ, grace then immediately changes roles in the believer and becomes our teacher. Our teacher, notice that teaches us. That's the grace of God. And Paul employs a powerful Greek term here. He combines this word which is rooted in this word called pais meaning child. Okay? So imagine a child and then that child receives disciplinary instructions and it's mainly to train this young child towards maturity. So a child turned into a mature person. That's what grace does. So then the question is are you as a believer continually maturing in your walk with the Lord? Are you continuing to live out this part of the text? Let's look into it. How does this look like in a believer's life? You see, a child cannot first of foremost be guided by his unformed reason. He has no reasoning abilities. As we are born again, we are a child of God. And a child cannot then he or she live by his own abilities, by her own abilities. know it's a supernatural ability given to us by this supernatural word and the supernatural gifting of the Holy Spirit. Both are now active in one's life. And now you are constantly receiving guidance. You're constantly receiving correction. You're constantly re being restrained by the authoritative word of the father. So God designs that we as childish as we are sit in the school of grace to learn how to live. So grace teaches us how to live. We don't get learning from anywhere else. No, we get our learning from this word from this word. And this course has two distinct parts. First we must reject certain things and then we must live according to certain ways. So let's focus on what we must first reject. We are instructed to denying ungodliness and worldly lusts. Notice the ing form in the word denying. This means it's a in progress. Okay? You're not perfected yet. You are currently in progress. That's what sanctification means. To deny then means to be completely uh to completely reject, to renounce, and to send away without a second thought. So you notice as a as a believer in Christ, you don't let it sink in. You don't let ungodliness sink in in your life or world or worldly lusts. God gives you that supernatural ability to just don't even have a second thought. So let's focus on those two words. Ungodliness. This is ungodliness in the inner heart due to sin. We don't want to honor

God. That's what ungodliness means. And so instead of refusing to trust and fearing God in a way that's of being afraid or submitting to him is no longer in the believer's life. You now can fully trust him. You can now fear him not in being afraid but of reverence. And then what? You want to submit to him. You want to constantly surrender yourself to him because that's the only way to honor him. Next, worldly lust. I explained this in my previous sermon about disordered loves. You see, worldly lust is another way of saying disordered loves. craving rather instead of loving people, we crave our own selfish desires, whether that be wealth or honoring, receiving honor or self advancement that put you at the center and leads you to use people, not actually love people. That's what disordered love does. You don't actually love people. You just want to use them for your own selfish gain.

Then how must we then live? Grace teaches us a beautiful three-fold manner of life that covers every relationship to actually have ordered loves. So let me go into that. Let's look at the first one. Three-fold part of it soberly. This is toward yourself. This is for your good. This means living with self-control. It's a good thing to have self-control, right? It's the opposite of excessive impulsive reactions. you you tend to now have a better understanding. Don't just follow your emotions. Don't just follow what you think. No, rather you pray. You rather look at the word of God. You you talk and you ask for help. And then what does it do? It helps you to be discreet. That's what another word for soberly means. You weigh the consequences of sin. You now realize the consequence of sin. Before you didn't. Satan blinded your eyes to the consequence of sins. So therefore, you just kept doing it because you didn't see any problem with it. But now you sense this consequence to this sin to that sin. Putting me at the center. And then what it does, it also not just spiritually but physically. This word soberly means for your appetites. You don't crave worldly things. Your speech is different. You don't talk like the world. And then your habits. You're now disciplined according to the instructions of the word of God. Not disciplined to the worldly instructions. Next we see righteously. Righteously. This is now towards others. Towards others. This means doing right to our neighbors. Actually loving our neighbors. Ordered loves. Ren to each person their due and honoring and respecting the person. That's what love looks like, right? You respect the other person's body. You respect and honor that person in your words and you treat them exactly as you would want to be treated. And then third, godly. This is toward God. Toward God. This means living a life completely committed to reverencing God, to respect him above everyone else, trusting him above everyone else and relying upon his grace alone to be transformed and be committed believer of Christ. Notice where we called to live this way. He says in this present world, not not after. It's right now. This is right now for you. This present age is of course evil in the context of what we've been reading about the chaos of the Cretans. Certainly we're living in that same environment. Sin is sin, isn't it? Sin still affects humankind. So the apostle Paul emphasizes that godly living is meant for the here and

now. You're supposed to be light. You're supposed to be salt as Jesus said, not just for the time in heaven. A lot of people think that are immature and shallow think when I'm saved then then it's just that glorification part. They miss the whole sanctification part, the currently in progress, the current maturing of the believer. We must remember the past, present, and future. Amen. Amen. Not miss any of those.

To illustrate the concept of denying our internal impulses rather than blaming our surroundings, that's the easy one to do by default. Imagine with me a professional. His name is John. Okay? And this John is a believer. He's overwhelmed by the non-stop toxicity of social media, the relentless peeing of work notifications, and the constant drama of his social circle, John felt his mental health slipping and slipping and slipping. Convinced that his modern environment was the sole cause of his anxiety and short temper, he decides to radicalize his life. He deletes all of his apps, takes a leave of absence, and rents an isolated off-the-grid cabin deep in the mountains, completely cut off from cell phone service and society. For the first few days, he enjoys the silence. But one afternoon as he sits on his rustic wood table, tries to meditate, he accidentally bumps his coffee mug, tips over, spills coffee all across the written notebook that he put on paper. It's all smeared up now. Annoyed, he cleans it up and sets the mug down again. A minute later, he notices mosquitoes surrounding him and he shifts at his chair try to squash them. And in the in the part of and in the act of squatting the mosquitoes, he knocks his mug over again over his notebook, which was on the second page of his notes, all smeared up for a second time. In a sudden blinding flash of anger, John snatches the mug and hurls it across the room and hits it against a stone fireplace, shattering the mug into complete pieces. As the echo dies down, the absolute silence of the cabin rushes back in. John stares at the mess, completely stunned at his own reaction. There was no social media feed provoking him. There was no urgent emails from his boss. There was no traffic, no noise, no one around him to annoy him. Immediately the Holy Spirit convicts him. Remember this is a believer and he says within himself, since I cannot even find peace when I'm completely alone, the problem must not be in my environment. The chaos is inside myself. He packs up his things and he goes right back where he came from realizing that he cannot run away from ungodliness because he carries a restless heart. He can't remove your heart. So he goes with you wherever you go. And so as a believer you recognize that. You recognize that you see victory is won not by fleeing external locations or even throwing away your smartphone but denying internal not external internal worldly lust of anger pride and restlessness that we carry with us wherever we go. So you see then when you come to that realization you know you need God's grace who can fix your heart. Who can change a stony heart into a heart of flesh? As Ezekiel says. Who can do that? Only God. Only God. And a and a believer realizes that again and again and again. Even through mistakes like John. He recognizes it because the Holy Spirit's in him. The Holy Spirit will never leave. That's a promise. He seals God seals the Holy Spirit

within us so that we don't need people to tell us what to do. No, the Holy Spirit prompts you from inside. No one has to force you. No one has to tell you what to do out of force. You want to do it willingly because God now is giving you a willing heart to obey him and trust him.

So church, here's the honesty here. It's incredibly easy to fall into the Cretan lifestyle or the American lifestyle of instant gratification of gossip and selfishness. The grace of God has called us out of this lifestyle. Amen. Out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear son. So in a modern way living soberly he's not allowing our physical senses and digital screens to constantly dominate our thoughts and our schedules. That's what that's what that's what algorithms are doing. They're filling up your time slot, aren't they? What is what else? To live righteously. What does that look like in our modern way of life? It means looking directly face to face at your neighbor. Not face to face through a device, but face to face. I was giving a message on Wednesday about that. about what it means to live face to face with your neighbor, your spouse, your coworker, the person sitting even next to you. Because when you're living with right standing with God as a believer in Christ, you're now reflecting his character. Remember that you're reflecting his character. It's not your character anymore. The primary is his character found in Christ in all of your actions toward others. He's given you an ordered love. First with God and then with others.

So here it is. As followers of Christ, maybe rather I'm going to start with this. Maybe you're here today and you wouldn't call yourself a follower of Christ. Maybe you're exploring or maybe you're even skeptical what I just said to you. But you know what? I am still glad you are here. I'm glad that you're still here in this room and you're paying attention. But I want to ask you this in a gently as possible way. What is the thing you are running to for comfort, for identity, or escape? Or all three of them? You're running to them right now. See, when the Bible talks about worldly lust, it's talking about taking good things or it can be destructive things and making it the ultimate thing. comfort, respect, selfishness. Is that you right now? You might be chasing success or even you have a hidden habit that you don't want people to know in this room, thinking it will finally satisfy you. Just keep pursuing that one thing that somehow that's going to finally satisfy you. But it leaves you empty, doesn't it? Leaves you empty. You know that out of relationship with God does that. Only God can satisfy your soul. Only God. And the Lord Jesus Christ offers you this complete salvation work from all of your sin. The things I just named and saves you. Save. That's what you need. You need to be saved from yourself and your sin. And you need to have God in your life. who transforms you from the inside out. It's what Christ does with this precious blood. You see, his blood is sinless. You need sinless blood right now. It takes faith to believe that his blood is sinless. That he lived a perfect obedient life unto the father. And he came here just for you. That was his main mission was to die on the cross for your sin, not his sin, your sin. to do it in full payment

and then to bring a right relationship with God by reconciling. That's what that word reconcile means. He pays everything in full and then brings you into a right standing. That's what we do with our debts, don't we? We want to be in a right standing. He's the only one that can cancel all your debt. His blood is that powerful. Amen. Amen.

For those who are in Christ, I speak to you who have surrendered your life in him. You see, we aren't exempt from the battle of ourselves still. We know we are saved by grace. We know that. But how often do we try to live a divided heart? That's the question I ask. How often do you still live with a divided heart? We want the Lord Jesus, but we also want to keep a little corner of our lives just for ourselves. What is that part of your life where you just want to keep for yourself? What is it? He wants us to surrender that too. When he says surrender means all. Amen. See this is the battle of the flesh versus the spirit. We read about in the book of Galatians. So I talk with you as well. I bring to your attention rather whether you're either running from God or whether you're walk with him for days in this room possibly or many years. Here's the question I ask. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you right now? What is the Holy Spirit saying to you right now? I want to give a moment.

Let him speak to you. Let him speak to you in spirit and in truth. Let's pray.

Father,

I just want your Holy Spirit to work in this room.

I want your word, Father, to be trusted

and obeyed.

Father, work in both those that are unbelievers in this room and those that are believers in Christ. Bless to that end, Father, to glorify you and exalt Christ above above everything else. We want Christ to be exalted in our lives in Jesus name. Amen.