

THE SCROLLS

Measures of a Disciple | Titus 2:11-14

Life Lesson

Genuine transformation does not come from the burden of self-reliance, but from daily surrender to the guidance of grace. When you understand that the same God who forgave your past is also present to teach you today and secure your future, holiness stops being a burdensome task imposed by legalism and becomes the joyful response of a heart filled with love. True freedom is not found in trying to make yourself worthy of Christ, but in walking as His beloved possession; trusting in His return to calm your daily worries and inspire a quiet, courageous desire to do good wherever He has placed you.

Examine Scripture

Read Titus 2:11-14

As you read Scripture, slow down and ask these three questions to move from information to transformation:

1. *What does this passage reveal about who God is?*
2. *How is God calling you to grow or change?*
3. *What is God leading you to do or who is He calling you to be in your everyday life?*

Guided by Grace

We often think of grace as a golden key—something that unlocks the door of salvation, pardons our past, and secures our place in heaven, leaving the rest of the daily Christian journey up to our own grit, willpower, and moral determination. We tend to see grace as a past transaction at the cross or a future hope for glory, but we often treat the present as a time of self-reliance. We ask for grace to get us across the starting line, but then we lace up our sneakers and try to run the race with our own strength.

But what if grace is not just a past pardon or a future goal? What if grace is your present, active guide? In Titus 2:11-14, Paul increases our simple view of grace. He shows that grace is not a passive, immovable doctrine, nor is it a lenient parent who ignores our faults. Grace is not an abstract concept; it is incarnate, active, and instructive.

Paul illustrates that the Christian life is anchored between two magnificent horizons: the past appearance of God's grace at the nativity and the cross, and the future unveiling of Christ's glory at His return. Suspended between these two moments, the believer is not left orphaned or unguided. The same grace that rescues us from sin's penalty is the very grace that takes us by the hand each morning, guiding us through our daily struggles, habits, and decisions to teach us how to say a firm "no" to temptation and a joyful "yes" to a life of holy zeal.

“For the grace of God has appeared . . .”

John MacArthur once wrote, “Jesus Christ not only was God incarnate but was grace incarnate.” That is exactly what we see Paul referring to. Grace is not just some abstract theological term; grace is a person. Grace is Jesus. His first appearance was not just God incarnate; it was the revelation of grace and mercy. John reminds us of this in (John 1:14-16): “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness.”

The verb translated as “has appeared” is “epiphane” (ἐπεφάνη). It gives us the English word epiphany. In ancient Greek writings, it

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meant the sudden, radiant display of a hidden deity or the arrival of a royal ruler bringing rescue to a besieged city. Paul uses it here in the Greek aorist tense, showing it happened at a specific point in history. God's grace broke into darkness not as an impersonal force or just a spiritual truth. Grace appeared as a person, Jesus Christ.

“bringing salvation for all people . . .”

The effect or result of grace appearing through Jesus Christ is salvation. The sudden appearance of grace, blazing like the sun, was not destructive but redemptive. Although the brightness of Jesus's glory and grace repels the darkness in our sinful hearts, causing temporary discomfort and conviction, the ultimate goal is not destruction or judgment, but mercy and salvation.

The salvation that the grace of God provides is both inclusive and exclusive. It is inclusive because it is available to everyone. Since no one can earn this grace and salvation, we are all on equal footing; it is offered not because of our deserving efforts but because of God's merciful grace. However, salvation is also exclusive. While it is available to all, its application depends on a person's response of faith to the Gospel. In other words, salvation is not universal in the sense that it applies to all regardless of their faith, lifestyle, or response to the Gospel. Some heresies claim that salvation is universal regardless of personal response, but the whole counsel of Scripture shows that salvation is made possible through Jesus' work on the cross, and one must respond in faith to Him. In other words, it is not automatic. Paul taught this to the Ephesian Church in (Eph. 2:8): “For you are saved by grace through faith.” You are saved by the grace of God that appeared with the incarnation of Jesus. But salvation also requires “through faith.” Salvation involves both the complete sovereign work of God and the faithful response of man.

“instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts . . .”

The appearance of grace in Jesus is a pivotal moment in history, but Paul did not stop there. Now, he highlights the active role of grace in our lives. In other words, grace isn't just for salvation; it's for daily living. Without grace, we cannot live the life that God calls us to.

First, Paul explains that grace is “instructing” us. He uses the Greek word “paideuoussa” (παιδεύουσα). This term comes from “paideia,” which refers to the comprehensive moral, intellectual, and physical upbringing of a child. It is more about training than just teaching. Grace is not a lax, indulgent parent; grace is an intentional schoolmaster. Grace disciplines, corrects, shapes, and strengthens the believer.

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What is grace teaching or training us to do? Grace not only gives us the ability but also trains us to reject godlessness and worldly desires. Without God's grace, we have no hope of resisting the temptations of our hearts. We simply lack the strength or courage on our own. We must depend on God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit to help us. Grace helps us renounce our sinful past and become more like Christ.

“and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age . . .”

With the disciplining and refining work of grace in our lives, Paul flips the coin and shows that grace not only keeps us from worldly things but also helps us pursue godly things. In other words, grace plows the field of our hardened hearts to sow seeds of godliness as we become more like Christ. Sinclair Ferguson writes, “Grace does not leave us where it finds us. If grace pardons our guilt, it also breaks the power of canceled sin.”

Paul presents a threefold pattern of our spiritual growth in grace. First, we are to grow inward. Grace trains us to live in a “sensible” way. Some translations use the word “self-controlled,” which adds more clarity to the meaning. Grace is what we need to die to ourselves and control the sinful urges of our “old nature.” Second, we are to grow outward in righteousness. This refers to our integrity and how we behave toward others. Grace trains us to speak and act truthfully with integrity. Lastly, we are to grow in grace upward. This is our godliness; it is our personal holiness lived out through the power of the Holy Spirit. As John Owen reminds us: “Holiness is nothing but the implanting, writing, and realizing of the gospel in our souls.”

Adding these three qualities enables us to live in this present age in a way that reflects Christ. In other words, grace is not just for the past (our salvation); it is also for the present (our sanctification). Every day, we need to rely on the grace of God to live the life He calls us to.

“while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

In modern English, “hope” often conveys wishful thinking, but in Greek, “elpis” (ἐλπίς) conveys a confident expectation grounded in an unbreakable promise. It is called a blessed hope because it brings genuine joy to those who hold it. Unlike worldly hopes that fade, wealth that diminishes, health that declines, or status that disappears, this hope keeps us anchored in the certainty of Christ's work on the cross.

The first appearance of Jesus was the epiphany of grace. The second appearing of Jesus will be the epiphany of glory. The return of Christ is not described merely as an event, but as the unveiling of glory

Personal Reflection

1. In which areas of your life are you depending on human willpower or legalistic guilt instead of letting God's grace guide and shape you?
2. What specific temptation, habit, or cultural influence is currently vying for your heart's affection, and how can grace empower you to say "no" to it today?
3. Paul describes three parts of a grace-filled life: living sensibly (self-control), righteously (integrity), and godly life (holiness). Which of these areas currently needs the most attention and growth in your walk?
4. As someone bought and purified as Christ's "treasured possession," where in your family, church, or community can you live out a renewed "eagerness to do good works"?
5. How might your current anxieties change if you actively looked forward to the appearing of your Great God and Savior today?

Commentaries

*Expositor's Bible Commentary
(Abridged Edition): New Testament*
Edited by Kenneth Barker

New Bible Commentary Edited by D.
A. Carson

NIV Application Commentary: Titus
by Walter Liefeld

Titus by John MacArthur

Mt. Zion's Mission

*Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to
MAKE, MATURE, and MULTIPLY
disciples of Jesus Christ.*

personified. Believers are not longing for a place (heaven) so much as a person (Jesus).

Just in case we weren't paying enough attention, Paul makes sure to emphasize that he is referring to "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (v. 13). Grammatically, this is one of the clearest and most explicit statements of Jesus Christ's full deity in the entire New Testament. In Greek, when "kai" (and) connects two nouns preceded by a single definite article, both nouns refer to the same person. In other words, Paul is not saying that we are waiting for God and Jesus as separate beings. He asserts that God and Jesus Christ are one and the same. A powerful declaration of Jesus's deity.

"He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works."

What drives us to live a life guided by grace? Jesus gave Himself for us, so our only response is to dedicate ourselves to Him! He redeemed us from our old life and cleansed or prepared us for our new life in Him. He did this to create for Himself a people: "a people for his own possession." This phrase describes a king's personal, highly valued treasure—wealth chosen specifically for his own joy. We are Christ's prized inheritance, bought at the cost of His own blood.

Our response? We should perform good works to honor Him! Once again, Charles Spurgeon reminds us, "Christ died not merely to make us safe, but to make us holy . . . A saved man is a sanctified man, and a sanctified man is a zealous man in the service of his King." Tim Keller echoes this idea: "The gospel of grace creates a dynamic for good works that legalism never can. Legalism breeds fear and pride; grace breeds humble, joyful zeal."

If you try to live the Christian life solely through your own willpower, you'll inevitably fluctuate between feeling proud of self-righteousness and feeling hopeless after repeated failures. But when you surrender each day to grace's guidance, holiness becomes a natural flow rather than a tiring task, shaped by a heart captivated by Jesus Christ.

Look back at the cross where grace first appeared for you: your debt is paid, your lawlessness is redeemed, and your soul is forever cleansed. Look forward to the horizon where your blessed hope will soon appear in radiant glory: your King is returning. And in this present age, step into your day with bold confidence, knowing that you are not walking alone. You are Christ's prized, personal possession, bought at infinite cost, empowered by His Spirit, and guided every step of the way by His matchless grace.