

LESSON 9

Love That Teaches

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. 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.

— Titus 2:11-14

We love by teaching one another how to live, older to younger and life to life, and every lesson we pass on is one the grace of God has been teaching us since Christ appeared.

Introduction

CRETE WAS A HARD PLACE TO PLANT A CHURCH. Paul had left Titus on the island *to set right what was left undone* (1:5), and the work was rough. There were *many rebellious people, full of empty talk and deception* (1:10). Paul even quotes one of the island's own poets: *Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons*. Then he adds a sentence that must have stung. *This testimony is true* (1:12-13).⁴⁷

Part Two of our study has asked what love does when people are hard to love. So what does Paul tell Titus to do with a congregation gathered out of that culture? *Teach them*.

We closed the previous lesson with an assignment: read Titus 2:1-14 and notice how often Paul comes back to a sound and sensible mind. Count from the elder of 1:8 to the grace of 2:12, and the same family of words appears six times in about a dozen verses.⁴⁸ It's the family we saw in Lesson 2 in Romans 12:3, think sensibly. The CSB renders it sensible in some places and self-controlled in others, which hides the repetition if you're reading in English. Paul wants Cretan minds set right, and he works on it in every age group in the church.

This lesson follows Paul through the classroom he sets up in the congregation (2:1-10), the grace that has appeared (2:11), what that grace teaches (2:12), and the life we live between two appearances of Christ (2:13-14). Then it goes to Jericho, to a rich man in a sycamore tree who met the grace of God before he'd changed a thing.

Titus 2:1-10 – A Classroom for Every Age

Paul's instructions in chapter 2 come arranged by age and station: older men, older women, young women, young men, Titus himself, and slaves. It reads like a list of household rules, but read it closely and you'll see a plan for teaching.

The older women *are to teach what is good*, and Paul uses a single word for it, one found nowhere else in the New Testament.⁴⁹ The purpose follows: *so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and to love their children*. Both of those love words are also found only here. And the word behind *encourage* is the sensible-mind word again, turned into an action. The older women are to train the younger ones to think soundly.

Notice what's being taught. It's love. Paul assumes that loving a husband and loving children are things a young woman learns, and that she learns them best from a woman who has been doing it for forty years.

Titus is to *encourage the young men to be self-controlled in everything*, and then comes the harder word: *Make yourself an example of good works* (2:6-7). His life has to back up what he says. Older men are to be *sound in faith, love, and endurance* (2:2). Younger men are watching to see whether faith and love actually last.

Three times in these ten verses Paul gives the reason. *So that God's word will not be slandered* (2:5). *So that any opponent will be ashamed* (2:8). *So that they may adorn the teaching of God our Savior in everything* (2:10). Everyone on the island could see how the congregation lived.

The last of the three is spoken to slaves, the members with the least standing in the room. This is a hard verse to read today. Paul addresses people already living under that system, and he tells them their lives matter to the gospel. Their honesty could make the teaching of God beautiful. *Adorn* is a word for decorating, for arranging something so its beauty shows. A slave who wouldn't steal from his master made the gospel look good to everyone who knew him.

Titus 2:11 – Grace Has Appeared

Verse 11 opens with *For*. Everything in 2:1-10 rests on what follows it, and what follows is an event. Paul doesn't build any of this on Cretan willpower.

For the grace of God has appeared. The word means to shine out, to come into view. Zechariah used it of the dawn God would send, *to shine on those who live in darkness* (Luke 1:79). Paul uses it once more in this short letter: *But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared* (3:4).⁵⁰ Grace and love appeared together, in Jesus Christ.

Here's the quarter's thread again. Love is given before it is commanded. Long before Paul asked the older women of Crete to teach love, God's love for mankind had already arrived on the island in the preaching of the gospel.

Bringing salvation for all people. That phrase reaches back over the whole list in 2:1-10, old and young, men and women, slave and free. It reaches the people the poet described, too, and Paul refuses to stand apart from them. *For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived* (3:3), he writes, and he finishes the description with *hateful, detesting one another*. Grace didn't wait for Cretans to become easy to love, and it didn't wait for you either.

Titus 2:12 – What Grace Teaches

Now comes the surprise in the passage. *Grace instructs*.

The word is *paideuō*, built on the Greek word for a child. It means to bring up, to train, to educate, and it can include correction.⁵¹ Hebrews uses it for the discipline of the Father: *the Lord disciplines the one he loves* (Hebrews 12:6). Training is one of the ways love shows itself.

A lot of us have only been taught half of what grace does. We know grace pardons. We haven't always been told that it trains. If grace only forgave, it would leave you exactly where it found you. In Titus 2, it does both.

The lesson has two parts. First comes a no: *to deny godlessness and worldly lusts*. Grace teaches you to refuse, and it starts with the desires that pull hardest in this world. Then comes a yes: *to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way*. Those three words cover a whole life. *Sensible* concerns how you govern yourself. *Righteous* concerns how you treat other people. *Godly* concerns how you stand before God.

Sensible is the sixth appearance of the family Paul has been repeating since 1:8. What the older women were told to teach the young women in 2:4, grace is teaching all of them, so the older members are passing along the same lessons grace is still teaching them.

That's why this text belongs in a quarter on love. When you sit down with a younger believer and show him how to live soundly, you're doing for him what grace has been doing for you.

Titus 2:13-14 – Between Two Appearings

Verse 13 adds a second appearing. *While we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*. The noun belongs to the same family as the verb in verse 11.⁵² Grace appeared once, in a manger and on a cross. Glory will appear when He returns. You live between the two, taught by the first and watching for the second.

The CSB reads the closing phrase as naming one Person, *our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*. Paul calls Jesus God. All through this little letter he passes the title *Savior* back and forth between the Father and the Son, three times each.

Verse 14 tells what the first appearing cost. *He gave himself for us*. We met nearly the same words in Lesson 1, in Ephesians 5:2, *Christ also loved us and gave himself for us*. Here Paul leaves the word *love* unspoken and simply describes what love did.

He gave Himself for two purposes. The first is *to redeem us from all lawlessness*. *To redeem* is to buy someone out of bondage by paying the price, and that word wouldn't have been lost on the slaves of verse 9.⁵³ The second is *to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession*. The phrase reaches back to Sinai, where God told Israel, *you will be my own possession out of all the peoples* (Exodus 19:5). God was making that kind of people on Crete.

Those people are *eager to do good works*. The word is the one for a zealot. Good works come up six times in this short letter, and Paul never once makes them the price of salvation.

Looking to Christ

Luke 19 shows the grace of Titus 2 arriving at one man's house.

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, and he was rich (19:2), and everyone in Jericho knew how he got that way. He climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus over the crowd, and Jesus stopped beneath it. *Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today it is necessary for me to stay at your house* (19:5).

Watch the order. Jesus didn't ask for repentance first, or restitution, or a promise. He invited Himself to Zacchaeus's house. In Lesson 4 we sat at Levi's table and watched the Lord welcome another tax collector the same way.

The crowd saw it and complained: *He's gone to stay with a sinful man* (19:7). To the crowd, Zacchaeus was exactly the kind of man who is hard to love.

Then grace began to teach. *Look, I'll give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord. And if I have extorted anything from anyone, I'll pay back four times as much* (19:8). A man who had spent his life grasping learned that same day to deny worldly lusts and to live righteously, and he started with the people he had cheated.

Jesus answered, *Today salvation has come to this house* (19:9). Salvation came into view in Jericho, the way Paul says it appeared to all people. Then Jesus gave the reason. *For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost* (19:10).

That's the order of Titus 2:11-14. Grace appears. Salvation comes. A man is taught to refuse his old appetite and to live righteously, and he becomes eager to do good.

Christ came to you the same way, before you'd changed anything, and He's been teaching you ever since.

Conclusion and Application

Titus 2:1-14 shows us how love teaches:

- Every member is somebody's student and somebody's teacher, and the lessons are lived before they are spoken, with the world watching.
- The grace of God has appeared in Christ for all people, including the hardest to love.
- Grace pardons and grace trains, teaching us to refuse godlessness and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way.
- Christ gave Himself to make a people His own, and as Zacchaeus learned, grace comes first and the change follows.

What does love do when people are hard to love? Paul's answer for Crete was to leave Titus there and have him teach. Grace has been teaching us the same way.

Now think about your own life. Who taught you how to live as a Christian? Who is learning it from you now? If a young believer in this congregation copied your speech, your habits, and your home, what would he learn? And have you let grace teach you, or only forgive you?

For Discussion

1. Read Titus 1:5-16. What made Crete a difficult place to build a congregation, and why do you think Paul's answer was teaching?
2. Count the sensible-mind words from Titus 1:8 through 2:12. Why would Paul press this one quality on every age group?

3. Older women are to *encourage the young women to love their husbands and to love their children* (2:4). What does it mean that love can be taught? Who taught you something about love?
4. Titus is told to *make himself an example of good works* (2:7). Why does example carry more weight than instruction alone?
5. Three times in 2:5-10 Paul names the effect your life has on outsiders. How does the way this congregation lives make the teaching of God look to the people around it?
6. Paul includes himself among those who *were once foolish, disobedient, deceived* (3:3). How does remembering what grace found in you change the way you treat people who are hard to love?
7. Most of us know grace pardons, but we haven't always heard that it trains. What difference does that make in daily life?
8. Grace teaches a no and a yes in 2:12. Which of the three words, *sensible, righteous, or godly*, is grace working on in you right now?

9. Read Luke 19:1-10. In what order did grace, salvation, and change come to Zacchaeus? Why does that order matter?

10. Name one younger Christian you could help teach how to live. What would it take to begin this month?

Looking Ahead

Lesson 10 – Love in Relationships, Colossians 3:12-17

Titus 2 showed grace teaching you what to refuse and how to live. The next lesson shows what grace dresses you in. *Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,* Colossians 3:12. Paul writes to a congregation as one household and tells its members what to wear around each other, with love put on over everything else. The lesson opens Part Three, which asks what love looks like over the long haul. Read Colossians 3:1-17 before class, and notice how often Paul talks about taking something off and putting something on.

⁴⁷ The line is usually attributed to the Cretan poet Epimenides. *Deception* in 1:10 translates *phrenapatai*, “deceivers,” BDAG, s.v. φρεναπάτης, compounded from *phrēn*, “mind,” and *apatē*, “deception.” Titus 1:10 is its only New Testament occurrence. Its verb, *phrenapataō*, occurs only at Galatians 6:3, the text of Lesson 6.

⁴⁸ The adjective *sōphrōn*, “prudent, thoughtful, self-controlled,” BDAG, s.v. σώφρων, appears at 1:8 (*sensible*), 2:2 (*sensible*), and 2:5 (*self-controlled*); elsewhere in the New Testament only at 1 Timothy 3:2. The verb *sōphronizō*, “to make sensible, encourage, advise,” BDAG, s.v. σωφρονίζω, appears at 2:4 (*encourage*), its only New Testament occurrence. The verb *sōphroneō*, “to be of sound mind, be reasonable,” BDAG, s.v. σωφρονέω, appears at 2:6 (*to be self-controlled*), as well as at Mark 5:15 and Romans 12:3. The adverb *sōphronōs*, “soberly, moderately,” BDAG, s.v. σωφρόνως, appears at 2:12 (*sensible*), its only New Testament occurrence. At 2:2 the CSB’s *self-controlled* translates a different word, *nēphalios*, “sober, clear-headed.”

⁴⁹ *Kalodidaskalos*, “teaching what is good,” BDAG, s.v. καλοδιδάσκαλος; *philandros*, “loving one’s husband,” BDAG, s.v. φιλανδρος; and *philoteknos*, “loving one’s children,” BDAG, s.v. φιλότεκνος. All three occur in the New Testament only at Titus 2:3-4. *Adorn* in 2:10 is *kosmeō*, “to put in order; adorn, decorate,” BDAG, s.v. κοσμέω, the verb used of the new Jerusalem prepared like a bride adorned for her husband, Revelation 21:2.

⁵⁰ *Epiphainō*, “to show oneself, appear,” BDAG, s.v. ἐπιφαίνω, occurs four times in the New Testament: Luke 1:79; Acts 27:20; Titus 2:11; 3:4. In Acts 27:20, during the voyage that took Paul along the coast of Crete (27:7-13), *neither sun nor stars appeared for many days*. *Love for mankind* in 3:4 is *philanthrōpia*, BDAG, s.v. φιланθρωπία, which occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only at Acts 28:2, of the kindness the islanders of Malta showed the shipwrecked Paul. The adjective *sōtērios*, “bringing salvation,” at 2:11 occurs as an adjective only here in the New Testament.

⁵¹ *Paideuō*, “to bring up, instruct, train, educate; discipline, correct,” BDAG, s.v. παιδεύω, from *pais*, “child.” It occurs thirteen times in the New Testament, including 2 Timothy 2:25 and Hebrews 12:6, 7, 10. In Acts 22:3 Paul says he was *educated at the feet of Gamaliel* and that he was *zealous for God*. Those are the two words of Titus 2:12 and 2:14, *paideuō* and *zēlōtēs*. Under the law Paul had been trained and made zealous; under grace the same two things happen to the whole church.

⁵² *Epiphaneia*, “appearing, appearance,” BDAG, s.v. ἐπιφάνεια, occurs six times in the New Testament: 2 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 1:10; 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13. 2 Timothy 1:10 uses it of Christ’s first coming, and the rest of His return. 2 Thessalonians 2:8 sits just above the text of Lesson 11. In Titus, *God our Savior* appears at 1:3; 2:10; 3:4, and *Christ Jesus or Jesus Christ our Savior* at 1:4; 2:13; 3:6.

⁵³ *Lytrōō*, “to free by paying a ransom, redeem,” BDAG, s.v. λυτρόω, occurs three times in the New Testament: Luke 24:21; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18. *His own possession* is *periousios*, “chosen, special,” BDAG, s.v. περιούσιος, found in the New Testament only at Titus 2:14 and drawn from the Greek Old Testament at Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:18. *Eager* is *zēlōtēs*, “one who is earnestly committed,” BDAG, s.v. ζηλωτής, the word that names Simon the Zealot, Luke 6:15. *Good works* (*kala erga*) appear at Titus 2:7; 2:14; 3:8; 3:14.