

The God of all grace

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[0 : 00] Let us come this evening to the portion of God's Word read, Epiphany 4 to Titus, chapter 2. And let us read again at verse 11.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching and denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

Any scheme of morality, whether it be Christian or not, any scheme of morality demands a foundation sufficient to uphold it and sustain it.

It has to be grounded in what people can accept and believe as truth.

And it is a fact of history that as soon as any accepted, widely accepted doctrine which has underlayed social morals, as soon as that is eroded or taken away, then within a very short time, the particular morality of that society will also be eroded.

[1 : 39] and may well eventually disappear. And we don't have to go into history to seek for illustration of that very simple but vitally important fact.

It's self-evident in the day and generation in which God has placed us. our forebears, our immediate fathers and grandfathers, inherited from a godly people in our land, a truly Christian set of morals.

Men then believed in godly living. Men not only believed in godly living, they passed godliness on to following generations.

But I think sadly we have to say is no longer the case. And has not been the case now for a very long time.

It is just untrue that any longer a generation growing up in Scotland will automatically learn the pattern of godliness from its immediate fathers.

[3 : 12] The stream of godly living has been narrowing now for many years. And when we take the country as a whole it is really just a trickle.

And the moral chaos in the world around us and the sadness the sadnesses and the tragedies that moral chaos always brings in its way these speak to us almost daily.

And they tell us again this vital but very simple fact. that in order to be sustained any system of moral teaching must have a foundation of accepted truths upon which it rests.

As soon as the being of god is attacked for example or the deity of christ or the reality of the work which he has accomplished accomplished the very foundation and basis of christian morality per se has been eroded and eventually christian morality itself will disappear.

And of course these very basic beliefs such as the existence of god and the deity of christ and the accomplishment of redemption by christ these basic beliefs have been under attack in our land for the last hundred years or hundred and twenty years certainly and sadly under attack not only from out with the christian community but from within the so called christian community as well.

[5 : 06] This is one of the factors that is in Paul's mind when he gives these exhortations to Titus his young the young preacher of the gospel he tells Titus that in his preaching he is to exhort men and women of various classes he begins with the aged men no one is too old still to be taught of god even by a young preacher the godly men no matter how old they are will learn and their godliness will increase and develop even with age well Titus is to teach behaviour godly behaviour and he is to do it with every class of person who will come within his hearing christ claims on all ages on every individual and all classes but

Paul knows the truth that before you can expect holy living there must be a basis for it and the christian gospel does provide a basis for holy living the christian gospel is in fact I believe the only message given to men or among them that not only demands holiness of life but provides holiness holiness of life it's all very well to make demands god does that but god makes demands when he makes demands upon sinners that sinners cannot meet it is it is required of us that we be holy and yet our whole nature and inclination and bent is to unholiness it is to sin we are born in sin and shaped in iniquity now notice this first of all that despite that fact despite the fact that no sinner without the help or grace of god can ever meet god's demands god has never lessened the demands he makes and the demand is simply this holiness what is holiness it is all the demand of the holy god upon his creatures demand as it is unveiled in its detail in the moral law and paul knows as i say that man is unable to meet it and yet he says to a young preacher when you're preaching preach high standards they're all there in front of us and they're not merely high standards they are the realities of christian character they are the realities which when missing mean that christian character is absent he's delineating the behaviour that god expects for his people of the old men and the old ladies because even ladies get ages of the young men and the young women of servants and so he goes on honesty integrity sobriety not purloining not filling your own pockets but showing all good fidelity summing it all up like this that they may adorn the doctrine of god our saviour and all things listen my christian friend just listen to that that you might in your daily life in your daily walk in your home in your work that you might set off embellish the doctrine of god our saviour hypocrisy and that embellishing it setting it off being a perfect background for it your life and your character will commend the doctrine and the saviour to others and one of the most common charges against christians and it's been common since the time of the lord himself is the

charge of hypocrisy what is a hypocrite it is one who is not truly what he professes to be or one whose profession is different from his conduct and paul is saying to titus tell them that their conduct must be in line with their profession i don't have too many more shabbos with you as my people this is one of the messages i will leave with you that your conduct in all things adore the doctrine of god our saviour god's demand is for complete holiness it's an impossible demand but is it no paul goes on to say it's not exhort them to live like this preach the highest standard to them and as soon as the standard is preached the heart is going to ask how can it be done it can be done says paul listen it can be done preach it for the grace of god there's the answer preach it for the grace of god were it not for grace my friend this standard would be impossible were it not for the power of a triune god working for you salvation and for mine were it not for a crucified saviour were it not for all what grace means yet it would be impossible but the grace of god the grace of god says paul has done three things that make holiness and godliness not only a possibility but a reality for all who are in christ the grace of god he says has done three things the grace of god has appeared and the grace of god has brought something and the grace of god teaches the grace of god appearing and bringing and teaching that makes it possible let's dwell on these for just a little while this evening the grace of god over against all the inability of man over against the total depravity of human nature let's not be afraid of the words because the reality is there total depravity lost in sin away from god heading for the place of uttermost desolation that's what we are by nature god's command comes and it says do this do this do this and then it says to us thou shalt not thou shalt not thou shalt not and whenever we attempt to do or whenever we attempt to not to do we find ourselves where paul found himself the good that I would

I do not and the evil that I would not that I do what's the answer it's here in the grace of god the grace of god appearing coming how did it appear well it appeared in a way that grace only can appear grace let's think of it for a moment as graciousness and we see then that grace is something that cannot be divorced from personality you know as I know some perhaps outstanding Christian saintly man or woman and we said oh what grace has manifested what a gracious passion he or she is and we see in grace and body now we just mean that that passion that character has been brought upon by some power that has made them special different they're forgiving and they're humble and they're tender and they're prayerful and they're dependent on god there are a whole lot of things put together we call them gracious grace is something that belongs to personality and belongs to character and that can't be divorced from personality and when the grace of god appeared it appeared because god himself appeared and he tells us how he says that the grace of god that brings salvation has appeared to all men some translations put the all men a little further back but it just means not only to jew but to gentile as it so often means through scripture the grace of god had been manifested to israel for generation after generation after generation now it had been broadened out it had appeared and it had appeared in the passion of the great god our saviour jesus christ when christ came grace came with him and in essence real grace never ever came into the world apart from christ grace is is god's favor toward the unworthy grace is god's favor toward the sinners that's what makes it a wonderful thing and that grace began to appear over a very long period it appeared the moment man had sinned and been separated from god as we talked this morning about the voice of god the first question in scripture was adam man who had sinned hiding away from god do you know what that question was it was the first appearance in a fallen world of grace and it came because the eternal purpose had already provided a channel for its outflow it had chosen a people in christ

and it had chosen a christ for the people one to be anointed and the one chosen was none other than the eternal son of god himself and paul says yes is it possible is it possible because grace has appeared there's the first thing my friend god has stepped out to meet us in all our lostness and all our needs and when we're made to know our sins and made to know that christ is the alone saviour we begin to feel that there's hope for us all the standards that we fail to meet we fail to meet even our own human standards far less the divine demand and our failure brings home to us our sinnership then the gospel tells us there's been an appearing of grace an appearing of the unmerited favour and love of god and it came in the passion of his son and it was not only appearing and appearing there was a bringing the grace of god that brings let me just emphasize that word god coming and god bringing with him what a gracious god we have the the greek underlying this is not just bringing but gifting for the grace of god that gifts salvation and that's an idea that runs broad swept through the gospel he is god who spared not his own son but gave him and gave him and gave him even into the desolation that we were talking about this morning the cry from the cross why has thou forsaken me why indeed because the father in his love gave him gave him to stand in the place of the curse that all who trust in him might never stand there you get the same idea sharpened up brought out clearly and perhaps the most familiar text in the whole of scripture god so loved the world this was the character this was the nature this was the kind of love with which god loved the world god so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life bringing because gifted grace of god gifting gifting what gifting salvation bringing salvation with when he came my friend he came as a savior he came under no other character but the character of a savior he came into this world for no other purpose for no other reason but the reason that paul gives further down there in verse 14 look at it who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself us special people zealous good works he came to redeem us from iniquity and to have to himself a

[22 : 10] special people bringing salvation because given for that purpose coming for no other reason his appearing was in order to this bringing Christ didn't appear just to manifest God although he did that Christ did not appear even to manifest the love of God the love of God alone he did that of course Christ came to fulfill the love to bring it to fruition he came to redeem a people whom God had loved before the world was and whom God had chosen in Christ before the world was or let's look at it from the other side he came to give his life a ransom for whoever will believe in his name that's as true as the others bringing salvation he came bringing he came bringing gifts with him this is one of the things that was sung prophetically of him that he had come down and then he ascended up bearing gifts for men and he's done that my friend what wonderful gifts the grace of

God has brought to us what did he bring well he brought forgiveness of sin he brought reconciliation with God I shouldn't say he brought he brings he's brought it certainly into history and he brings it into human personal human experience when he comes my friend if Jesus has come into your life he's brought these things with him you know that your sin is forgiven you know that you're at peace with God you know God he's changing you day by day from glory to glory until you're like himself he's brought innumerable things with him and every one of them he's ready to give to you love joy peace all the fruits and graces of the holy ghost can and does work in a believing heart

Christ has brought them or to use the text the grace of God brought these things with it the appearing of grace we're so used to it we've become so familiar with the idea that it no longer thrills our minds and our souls we should do but what a thrilling thing it is it has appeared he has appeared and he has brought brought salvation my unconverted friend here tonight unconverted you are some of you have sat before me now for almost nine years and you're still unconverted well my unconverted friend I have one hope for you you entertain that hope for yourself still hold on to tonight still here it is that Christ Jesus the grace of God brought salvation and it was for sinners there's nobody in heaven tonight but what was unconverted one or let me put it a little bit differently there's no one in heaven but needed the regenerating renewing grace of

God you never saw a Christian man or a Christian woman but they had to be brought from death into life and every Christian that you've ever seen is a testimony to you that God can do it and oh my friend if he can do it for others he can do it for you it doesn't matter how old you are or how near the grave or even how near to the pit of hell you are tonight you're not beyond the reach of the one who came to seek and to save the lost the appearing and the bringing of the grace of God and my Christian friends this appearing and this bringing is what makes the kind of life that Paul is talking about possible temperate sober grave sound in faith and in love loving even the unlovable and the unlovely for

Christ's sake well the grace that can't be separated from personality and that can't be separated from love that grace makes it possible he has appeared and he has brought grace within your reach and within my reach there's something else that grace does Paul speaks of it as appearing as bringing as teaching what does grace teach it teaches the very lessons that Paul was demanding laying upon Titus to inculcate to others to teach others grace does the teaching and in essence Paul knew when he wrote this in essence it would not first of all be Titus who did the teaching it would be God it would be Christ grace grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men teaching us let me pause and ask you a very simple question my friend are you taught of

[28 : 53] God the phrase our forebearers used a great deal when they saw a holy godly christian man or woman who say there's one who's truly taught of God.

And some of these people could not even read their Bible. They certainly didn't have the helps that are available to you and to me today.

All these common things. All these excellent Christian books. We need never spend a day of our lives that will assemble, that will exhaust us in biblical fashion to true godliness of life.

And yet it's all going to be in vain and this power comes from God. The power that brings life and that teaches its lessons and that makes the kind, forms the kind of character of which our forefathers spoke when they said Ah yes, taught on God.

There's something about the gospel, you see, that goes beyond the reason of man, that goes beyond the understanding of the preacher or the understanding of the hearer.

[30 : 19] The Holy Spirit has to open the mind and the heart. He has to make his way into the soul. And it's only when he does not that the teaching of the grave freely begins.

And what does it teach? The very first lesson it teaches is this to deny ungodliness.

What is it to deny ungodliness? It is merely to deny that which already denies God. ungodliness is just the denial of God.

In our lives, when it's sin and disobedience, it's a denial of God's demand upon us. And we say no to him.

But ungodliness in any shape or form is just a denial of God. And we are first of all to deny that denial. And we are to allow God to be God in every realm of our lives.

[31 : 27] And we are doing that. This is the first lesson that grace teaches. It brings us into the dust before us. And we say to him, Yes, you shall be my God.

No matter what it may cost me, no matter how it may hurt me, thou shalt be God. And then we are only allowing in the place that he really has anyway.

Deny ungodliness. Say no to it. And worldly lusts. Worldly desires.

And worldly purposes. And worldly pursuits. That will cut us off from God. Just the other day, I was reading a little book fairly recently published.

And then the writer was saying, what I believe is all too sadly true. He was saying something like this. There has never in our land there has never been a generation of Christians as worldly as the Christians in this generation.

[32 : 50] And he cited a few examples talking of professedly evangelical Christian people. Citing just a few examples that have been very sad reading.

and yet there are examples that can be found in almost every professing Christian congregation today.

Where Christians put the world first and God second. And the moment we do that we are not denying worldly lusts.

teaching us that denying ungodliness there has to be self-denial. Jesus said that. There has to be a denial of all that will deprive God of his right and his place in our lives.

And only then can there be a positive. And there has to be the positive. Teaching us that denying ungodliness we should live soberly.

[33 : 57] We should live in the light of eternal reality. This does not mean of course that you just that you have to live day by day without being drunk.

The word covered a far wider field than that. It means that you have to live as in the light of God's throne. not to be foolish and vain and allowing the false ideologies of this world and the false thinking of this generation to dictate the pattern of your life.

And he doesn't stop there. He says righteously. And that just means right acting. And he has in view I think right acting towards our fellow creatures.

Not first of all towards God but towards our fellow men. My Christian friend, brother, sister, do you live righteously among other people?

Do you love them in the name of Christ? If not, you are not acting lightly towards them. Do you forgive them in the name of Christ? Do you rebuke them in the name of Christ?

[35 : 13] Godly. Do you believe there's a love and we have to live righteously and godly not only in our relationships to other people but in our relationship to God himself.

This sums it all up that we should live soberly, righteously and godly. What is it to be a godly passion? Well I think it's just something that is to walk knowing that we are walking under his eye all the time.

Walk in his light and reflect his light to the world around us.

I don't know, it's very hard to define what godliness is, it's very hard to define what Christlikeness is, but we know when we see it.

And we know when we fail in our own lives to be godly or to be Christlike. That's what he asks. He asks for it.

[36 : 33] Because it's possible, the grace of god has appeared. And we continue the words of another book of the new testament and apply them to ourselves now.

And the words of simply these. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Let us pray.

Our gracious God we thank thee indeed tonight for the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is able to rescue and redeem and to lift.

Yes, and even to exalt. The one who can take the beggars from the downhill and set them among the princes of God. The one who can take the drunkard out of the gutter and redeem them and make them new creatures.

The one who takes sinners and makes them into saints. We bless thee tonight for the appearing and the bringing and the teaching of the grace of God.

[37 : 42] And grant, O Lord, that the appearing and the bringing and the teaching would be for us as individuals. Not merely an historical past, an historical reality.

But grant that for each one of us there will be a present experience. And that knowing and loving the Lord Jesus, we would walk with him day by day, growing in grace and in knowledge.

And in turn manifesting forth the grace that has touched us. Bless each one of us as thou knowest our need and go before us through the days of this week.

And so keep thine hand upon us that whether we die or live, we may be found in thy hand.

For Jesus sake, Amen.