

The grace of God hath appeared

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[0 : 00] Titus chapter 2 at verse 11. It is written, 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, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

The grace of God hath appeared. Titus is, I suppose, one of the less well-known of Paul's epistles.

It's one of the last letters that the Apostle wrote, written to his friend Titus. Now, we read, as we read the New Testament, we meet many of Paul's friends there, mentioned in the course of his letters.

And none of the friends that Paul mentions in his letters are given more honorable place than this man's title. He's mentioned 13 times in all in the New Testament, especially in 2 Corinthians.

And wherever he's mentioned, he's mentioned in a context which speaks to his credit. 2 Corinthians 2, verse 13, for instance, Paul says, I had no peace of mind in Troas, because I did not find my brother Titus there.

[1 : 41] Titus wasn't there. And so Paul found himself lacking in peace of mind. And in chapter 7, verse 6, of the same letter, Paul speaks of Titus' coming as a comfort to him in a time of harassment.

And in chapter 8, verse 23, Paul speaks of Titus, my partner and my fellow worker. These are just three examples. There are many more that one could quote.

in 2 Corinthians and elsewhere in the New Testament about this man, Titus. Man of unusual ability. Man in whom Paul obviously had the greatest of confidence.

The very man that you'd expect to see trusted with our tough assignment. And that's what exactly we find. We find Titus in the New Testament trusted with very difficult times for the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We find him, first of all, in Corinth, sorting out the problems in the church there. You remember that the Corinthian church was beset with problems of one kind or another.

[2 : 55] We find him in Crete, building up the church there in this epistle. And the church in Crete, as we'll see, had many problems too.

Now we don't know very much about the church in Crete. We don't know how it began. But we do know that there were Cretan Jews at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

They're mentioned in Acts chapter 2. And it may well be that as a result of what they heard from the Apostle Paul there, from Apostle Peter, there on the day of Pentecost, they went back to Crete and they established a Christian church there and then.

Certainly we know that Paul had been to Crete at some point and had left Timothy there. We see that in verse 5 of chapter 1 of the letter to Titus. For this cause, says Paul, I left thee in Crete that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee.

So Paul had been to Crete. And either on one occasion or on, when Paul was there, a church had been set up in Crete. Church which is beset with some very difficult problems.

[4 : 06] These problems we find referred to there in chapter 1. In chapter 1, verse 10. There are many, says Paul, in Crete, there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision.

There was wrong teaching in the church in Crete. There were those who were those who were unruly and vain talkers.

And they were teaching they belong to the circumcision party. Those who taught this this doctrine that it wasn't enough to be converted you must be circumcised too.

That faith in Christ, that what Christ has done isn't enough for our salvation. We must go on to do what we can do often. Our salvation by Christ plus ourselves.

And this self-righteousness of course is something which is cursed, which followed the apostle Paul round all the churches which he visited and is a curse to the church right down to our own day.

[5 : 14] The problem of wrong teaching. Of a religion of what? A religion which says simple faith in Christ is not enough. We must in some way add to it by ordinances, by sacraments, by one thing or another.

That wasn't the only problem. We have in verse 12 the other problem. We have the national temperament of the people of Crete. One of themselves says Paul even a prophet of their own said the Cretans are always liars evil beasts slow bellies.

They were always liars. They were unreliable and deceitful people. They were lazy brutes. They were evil gluttons. They lived for the things of this world. They lived for their next meal as we might say.

They were interested only in the satisfaction of their natural instincts. These are the kind of people to whom Titus was seeking to minister.

And I don't think it takes much imagination on our part to see certain parallels between the situation existing in Crete all these hundreds of years ago and the situation obtaining in our own land and perhaps even in this town of Inverness in our own day.

[6 : 29] Because we are surrounded are we not today in the church by false teaching? And we are surrounded by people for whom faith is a simple faith and Jesus Christ is not enough.

The people who want to add to it constantly. People whose salvation is dependent not on what Christ has done or what Christ has done alone but on what they can do also.

People who are trusting in their own righteousness, their own goodness, their own church going and so on. We have this problem in our own church today. We have people for whom religion is all taught deceiving others, just as the cretins have.

And we certainly have people around us today who are dishonest, who are sensuous and hedonistic, pleasure-seeking people. Hundreds of them all around us in our society today.

This could be a description of our modern society, couldn't it? Those of you who have any experience at all of reaching out with the gospel of Christ will have met the difficulties and problems that Titus encountered and creased.

[7 : 36] People who are quite happy with the religion they've got. A religion of just floating along, doing what they think is right, going to church, fulfilling their religious ordinances. Faith in Christ is not enough.

People who are not interested in religion because they are dishonest, they are sensuous, they are hedonistic, they are living only for this world and they are not interested in the thing of eternity.

So it's a difficult situation in which the apostle Titus, which Titus found himself. What does Paul tell him to do? What is Paul's message?

Well he says in verse 15, these are the things you should teach. The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation. Titus is pointing a ways on his problem, a ways on the difficulty, a ways on the indifference and the apathy and the opposition.

He's pointed to the grace of God. Now what does Paul say to us today, to you and to me, as we say, increasingly secular society, where the word of God is becoming increasingly unknown and the law of God increasingly under, like, where respect for the word of God is decreasing conscience.

[8 : 57] Paul says to us today, here in Inverness in 1989, the grace of God has appeared. And that's the message that you and I are getting as the answer to our spiritual needs, to the spiritual needs of our land.

Go back, says Paul's title, go back to the simple facts of the gospel. So he speaks first of all then of the grace of, he tells us first of all then that the grace of God has appeared.

Verse 11, the grace of God has appeared to all men. Now this word grace, it's the word we meet very often, isn't it? It's a Bible word.

It's a technical term. What does it mean? We use it so often it flows glibly off our tongue. Do we understand the implication of this word grace? What is grace?

Well first of all, grace can be described very simply as God's smile upon those who deserve rather his throne. Grace is God's generosity towards those who deserve rather his judgment.

[10 : 11] Grace is God's seeing sinners not as they are in their sin but as they can be and may be and will be in Jesus Christ his son, the one in whom he is well pleased.

Grace is God's saying to the unlovely, to the sinful, to the wicked, I want them for my own. I want them for myself.

Whether we are guilty of respectable things or whether we are guilty of what we call gross sins like the cretice, grace, God looks upon us as we are and reaches out to us not because of what we are but for the sake of his own love.

Grace, someone has said, I came across this last week, grace is the child of God's love and the parent of his mercy.

Isn't that a great phrase? God is love and therefore because God is love he looks in grace upon the underserved and because he looks in grace on the underserved he stretches out a mercy to them.

[11 : 27] You and I, whether whatever our sin may be, whether we are guilty of very respectable sins, whether we go to church every Sunday and we are very proud of ourselves, we haven't, we are not like these treaties, we are not liars or evil beasts or slow-bearers, but whether we are like them and we know that we are pleasure-loving and that we are only interested really in satisfying our influence.

To us, the gospel speaks, the grace of God has appeared to all men. friends, then will you and I realize and take to heart the fact that our salvation is dependent wholly upon the grace of God, not in anything we ourselves are, not in however worthy we may be in human terms, not in anything we do, not even in our repentance or our faith, not in our church going, not our baptism or our profession of faith or coming to the Lord's people, not in the Christian profession of our parents or our grandparents or even of ourselves, but wholly and utterly and exclusively on the grace and favor of our God.

The grace of God has appeared, God's smile on those who desert us. God. The grace is secondly not merely the smile of God but grace is God in action.

The grace of God says Paul to Titus that bringeth salvation hath appeared. It's appeared so that men can see it and he's speaking of course of the coming of Jesus Christ into the world.

John chapter 1 verse 17 the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. He has visited and redeemed his people.

[13 : 37] How do we know what God is like? How do we understand the grace of God? We see the grace of God depicted for us most clearly in a way which we cannot mistake in the person of his son Jesus Christ who came into the world.

This word appeared. The grace of God is appeared. It's a word which is used in the New Testament of the sun or the moon appearing from behind the cloud in a day of darkness in a day of trouble.

Remember the end of the book of Acts chapter 27 verse 20 when Paul was on his way to Rome and there was that great shipwreck which is dramatically described at the end of the book of Acts and we are told when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

Then you have gone along a country road in the dark where there are no streetlights and you don't know where you're going and you're walking along very carefully following the verge of the road and then suddenly out of the clouds the moon appears and you can see the whole countryside in outline you can see the houses over there and the farm over there and I gate into a field here and you know where you are and you're lost no more whereas you'll be lying tossing in a sleepless bed in the darkness of the night and all the worries and concerns of the previous day are magnifying themselves as they do so often under these circumstances when suddenly through the window you see the first light of dawn appearing in a darkened sky and suddenly things begin to take on a new complexion and life doesn't seem quite so bad after all.

And that's what's happened in this dark world a world that is lost a world that is burdened by sin and by lawlessness and by rebellion against God into the darkness the moon comes out from behind a cloud into the darkness the first rays of the sun the sun of righteousness risen with healing in its wings Jesus Christ has come into the world far from thee our footsteps wandered on dark paths of sin and shame but our midnight turned to morning when the Lord of glory came grace of God has appeared and when Paul speaks of the grace of God appearing in Jesus Christ it's a reminder to us that we must never separate in our thinking grace from triumph we sometimes speak of having grace don't we or finding grace we must be very careful not to think of grace as a kind of spiritual blood constitution which we receive to help us over a particular situation when we have grace what we mean is we have Jesus Christ and when we find grace what we mean is we find Jesus Christ not something we infuse into our system but someone whom we meet and whom we know and with whom we walk we find grace only when we find Jesus we seek grace rightly only if we seek

[17 : 01] Jesus there is no salvation there is no grace without Jesus the one is the evidence of the presence of the other the grace of God has appeared secondly secondly the apostle says here the grace of God brings salvation go and tell them go and tell the people in Crete that Christ has appeared and he has appeared to bring salvation go and tell them these people who are lazy and sensuous and hedonistic and dishonest go and tell them that it doesn't need to be like that go and tell men and women sunk in sin and all the miseries of sin that they don't have to be that there is a way out that there is a way out that Christ has come bringing salvation and Paul goes on in this passage to tell us first of all how this salvation was brought about and if you pass over a verse or two and come to verse 14 we'll see what the apostle says there he speaks of the great God and our saviour

Jesus Christ who gave himself for us how was our salvation achieved how did Christ come to bring salvation he brought salvation by the giving of himself for us he gave himself in his life but he gave himself supremely and most of all in his death on the cross of Calvary and very briefly Paul says here first of all that Christ's death was a loving death he gave himself when you want to show someone that you love them you give them a present you give them something and the more you love them the bigger the present you give them you give a bigger present to your husband or your wife or your child than you give to the next door neighbor because you love your husband your wife your child more than you love the next door neighbor although you may be very fond of the next door neighbor and they may be very nice people but the more you love someone the more you want to give them

Christ's death was a loving death and he gave everything that he had the greatest thing he had the most precious thing he had he gave himself it was a loving death Christ gave himself for us in love and secondly it was our voluntary death he gave himself the cross of Calvary friends remember was not and must never be regarded as an unfortunate accident as a plan that went wrong and ended up in tragedy our saviour is not the victim of adverse circumstances which prove too much for him an idealist whose ideals went wrong but a positive act of his own choice he went willingly to his death he wasn't driven to it by his father but he went to Calvary in perfect obedience to his father's will remember what he says in

John chapter 10 the reason my father loves me is that I lay down my life only to take it up again no one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again this command I received from my father it was a voluntary day a willing day and thirdly it was a sacrificial day he gave himself for our he gave it himself for our advantage for our benefit he didn't come into the world to show us something although he did show us the love of God he came to do something for us something which we cannot do for ourselves because of the sinfulness of our hearts and the rebelliousness of our lives what he did he did not for himself for him lay suffering and agony and pain he did it for us to show us to open for us the kingdom of heaven

Christ's death was a sacrificial death and Christ in his death shows us the grace of God and if you want to know what God is like and if you question in your heart the grace and the love of God then look at Calvary look at Calvary how the salvation was achieved it was achieved by the saviour's giving of himself and secondly Paul tells us here what this salvation involves it involves two things first of all it involves our redemption from all iniquity he gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity from all wickedness from all lawlessness the word be it now this word redemption you remember is a word which is used of paying a price it's an idea the idea of ransom which we have ourselves we hear of it very often today in this day of international terrorism hijacking and so forth when someone is kidnapped and a ransom is on and if the ransom is paid the victim is set free and that's what is happening here here we have here we have

[23 : 03] Christ paying the ransom price in order to set us free and Paul tells us here that he sets us free from all iniquity Christ by the giving of himself by the shedding of his blood has set us free from all iniquity all those things that hold us down all those habits from which we cannot extricate ourselves although our past history which rises up to condemn us and which so often holds us in its grasp all the evils that our consciences condemn all our sad history of sin and rebellion and disobedience all the wasted battle all that we have done wrong Christ redeems us from them so they are no longer the dominant power in our lives he died to redeem us from all wickedness the price has been paid not in silver and gold but in a much more precious coin the price has been paid in the blood of the sages

Christ died to redeem us from all iniquity and all who are his are redeemed from all iniquity not just some iniquity not just some things the less serious ones but from every sin that stands between you and me and our God if we are in Christ then we are redeemed and we are set free from the guilt and from the power and especially here from the power of sin see what the messages are for us here there is no sin that burdens us which stands outside this divine act of redemption and no matter how evil we are no matter what your how sinful your life is being Christ the redeemer is able to set you free to ransom to release you from the bondage of that sin now it's important for us to remember that Christ died to redeem us that Christ died to set us free not to make it possible for us to be saved but actually to save us there's a very important distinction that we must remember there to the late

Professor Murray Christ did not come to put men in a redeemable position but to redeem to himself a people and that is what Christ has done he hasn't died in order to make it possible for us to be saved he has died in order to save his people and if we are his if we are his by faith then this is what has happened we are redeemed we are set free we are no longer the slaves of sin and we can be certain that all for whom Christ died are redeemed terrible warning this is to us a reminder that we can no longer make our sin an excuse we can no longer say when we do something which is wrong and we know it's wrong yes but I will sin because you see that excuse is no longer open to us in Christ we are saved we are redeemed and as the principle of sin is still reigning in our hearts and it's time we did something about it

Christ has redeemed us from all iniquity long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night thine eye diffused a quickening ray I woke the dungeon flamed with light my chains fell off my heart was free I rose went forth and follow thee cried when that should be the testimony of every Christian here I rose came out out of the dungeon followed the he died to redeem from all iniquity but that's the negative side of his death the second implication of his salvation is that Christ died to purify unto himself a special people a peculiar people zealous of good work you see the redemption of God the grace of God has come has appeared bringing salvation not just for our sins not just for your sake and mine to deliver us from the bondage of our sins but for

God's sake also to prepare for himself and to sanctify for himself our special people we are redeemed not only for our own sins but for his sins what does it imply for us it means for us first of all that we are a special people a precious people you remember we read from Exodus 19 of the covenant promise that the Lord made to the people of Israel in the wilderness you will be my special people my treasure people what's the most precious possession that you have remember we were having a bible study group a house bible study in the congregation to which I belong and one of the questions that came up in the course of the discussion was what was the most precious thing you have if your house goes on fire what do you rescue for the mothers were all going for their babies and the pious old ladies were going for their bible what is the most precious thing that you have well the most precious thing that

[29 : 16] Christ has is his redeemed his ransomed people all things are his the earth belongs unto the lord and all that it contains cacling a thousand hills are his but in all his possessions the most precious that he has is his ransomed church Christian believers this is what Christ says of you you are special you are precious you belong to him you are the most precious thing that the saviour has and when you are discouraged feel this low self esteem when you feel you are right at the bottom of the ladder and everyone is against you and everything seems to be working against you remember remember that behind the adverse circumstances behind the world with all its insensitivity and all its unkindness there is the fact that Christ loves you and that you are precious to him that you are his treasure a special people a peculiar people and secondly we are a purified people the church you see is redeemed not just to go back into the sin from which she has been set free and Titus is to go and tell the people of Crete come you will come to

Christ and you will be set free from your sin not just to go back but to be different to be holy to be purified when Christ redeems us he gives us a new nature he makes us different people he changes and transforms our hearts within he sets us free and he keeps us free and he gives us new power and he gives that word again in order that we may live lives that are consistent with our new status once Christian friends you and I were like the Cretans we were self-righteous and pleasure-loving and we thought only of the things of this world but now we have been set free we are to remain free and because we are still in a sinful world and still affected by sin we have continually to be cleansed and purified so that we can show ourselves and become increasingly the kind of people that Christ wants for himself our purified people and thirdly our zealous people we are to be our whole way of life is altered by this redeeming act of Christ we have a new way of life we live not to please ourselves and to satisfy our own desires and instincts but to do good work and we have not only a new way of life but a new attitude we are zealous we are eager we want to do that kind of thing our whole will has been altered our whole will has been changed we are to be on fire to do what is good not grudgingly or dutifully but willingly and enthusiastically let's take look at ourselves this morning friends and ask ourselves is that true of me and if it's not then let's do some spiritual stock taking because that's what the grace of God does when it appears bringing salvation bringing redemption to sin we've seen the grace of God has appeared and we've seen that the grace of God brings salvation but thirdly and in a word in conclusion there's one more lesson I want to draw from this passage

Paul says the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men it's appeared to everyone it's not just for you and for me here in this church today and so here we have our incentive to missionary endeavor we have a responsibility to take that message of that grace of God and we should take it to the far corners of the earth to India to Peru to southern Africa wherever the door is opened for us these things we are to speak according to our situation whether we can go ourselves or whether we support the work by prayer by interest of one kind or another by financial contribution here we have our incentive to missionary endeavor and our incentive to evangelistic outreach around us in our own town and in our own neighborhood and our own personal outreach so often you see we divide people up mentally don't we and there's some people well if they were converted they would make marvelous Christians and there are other people well we're not so sure about them it would take an awful lot of grace for them to be converted and we sort of write them off but that's not what Paul says to Titus he says don't write people off for the grace of God that brings salvation is a peer to all men and the grace of God can take that drunkard in the street or that woman living an evil and immoral life and change them and make them active and faithful servants of the cross just as well as that respectable nice person who sits beside you on the bus but who isn't a Christian we mustn't set limits on the grace of God for the grace of God we are told that brings salvation as a peer to all men it's a challenge to us who are Christians but it's a challenge also to us who are not Christians you see this is the message of the gospel this is what Jesus Christ came to do he came to save sinners and whether your sins are respectable and like the legalists the circumcision party within the church or whether you're guilty of gross sin like the cretins lazy and living holy for your natural instincts and love there is hope there is salvation there is redemption in the grace of Christ there is hope for you in Jesus the grace that brings salvation we are told has appeared to all men and the only condition the only need that you have to fulfill is that you are a sinner nothing else matters are you a sinner this morning do you recognize yourself do you see yourself reflected in the cretan temperament or in the kind of lives that we see these people who are living then friends there is a hope for you this morning for the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men he has appeared and there is none whose sin is so awful that it is beyond the reach of the grace of our God to him be the glory and the praise forever let us pray we give thanks

O Lord our God for this wonderful gospel good news for sinners we pray O Lord that we may be enabled to lift up our eyes to the cross of Calvary and to see in the body that was broken and mangled crucified there a friend of sinners to be able to put out our hands and to cast ourselves upon him for our eternal salvation for the transformation and purification of our lives we may live no longer for ourselves for our own desires and instincts but for the greater glory of thy holy name come O Lord in power we pray apply thy word to our hearts today speak to us in our need and show us a Saviour in all his beauty and love grant that thy grace may appear today to some of us in thy house for his sake we ask it
Amen