

Midweek Message

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

(Titus 2:11-4 ESV)

This past Sunday, as I talked to the men of the congregation since it was Father’s Day, the subject of God’s grace was brought up and how our children should be taught about grace. One of the things I mentioned was that every aspect of our lives, all that we are or ever will be, all that we have or ever will have, is gift of God’s grace. We saw how the Apostle Paul considered everything about himself, all he was as well as all he could do, was all about God’s grace at work in and through him. Since grace is such an important aspect of our lives, especially as those who’ve come to faith in Jesus, I thought it might be good for us to look a little bit more deeply into this wonderful aspect of our relationship with God. In the passage above there are at least five points I would like to share regarding God’s grace.

First, notice what grace brings to us in verse 11 where we’re told, *“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.”* What we need most in this life is salvation as it alone will impact our eternal destiny. We know from Scripture that our sinfulness has condemned us to God’s judgment and that only as we experience His forgiveness will we be able to enjoy His presence in a restored relationship with Him. As Scripture tells us, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9 ESV)*. You see, our salvation is completely dependent upon God acting on our behalf because no human being can earn God’s pleasure as we’re sinful from conception and everything we do is tainted with sin. Even if we could stop sinning today and live a perfect moral life from this point forward, we still have all the past sins for which we must give an account.

Second, notice how this grace appears to us in verse 14 where we’re told, *“who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness.”* This grace comes to us through a person who gave Himself for us to redeem us from our lawlessness. You see, Jesus is the grace of God who gives eternal life to any and all who’ll look to Him, trusting in His finished work on the cross. Since we cannot earn God’s favor because of our sin, we then need another who is able to act on our behalf, taking our punishment for sin so that God’s justice is fully satisfied, and then being able to clothe us with His perfect righteousness. The Scriptures teach us that Jesus did exactly that, *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV)*. Jesus is the only human being to walk the face of the earth having never sinned in thought, word, or deed. He is God incarnate, being fully man and fully God, who loves us so much He chose to give Himself as a sacrifice for our sins so that we might be restored to Him. You see, that’s the way grace works. It gives of itself to satisfy the desperate need of those who are completely unworthy.

Third, notice how this grace instructs us in verse 12 where we’re told, *“training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.”* Salvation isn’t just about our eternal destiny but also about the transformation of our lives in the here and now. If all God wanted to do was to get us to heaven, He could have accomplished that immediately when we came to faith in Jesus. God has left us here that we might be those who reflect His goodness and grace to a world in which people are lost as they stumble around in the

darkness of their own sin. Although we certainly must work out this grace that has been lavished upon us, we aren't those who can truly claim that our efforts alone change and transform us. Scripture, once again, makes this very clear when we're told, *"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:12, 13 ESV). You see, on the one hand we're to put forth the effort to live in holiness but on the other hand it's only possible as we rely on the grace of God at work in us.

Fourth, notice what grace promises to us in verse 13 where we're told, *"waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."* The believers greatest hope isn't found in this world nor the things of this world. The complete fulfillment of our hope is future as we wait patiently for the coming of our Lord Jesus, and the Kingdom He has promised to bring with Him. We have such a wonderful future coming our way when Jesus returns when He consummates His eternal Kingdom in which there will be no more disease, no more strife, no more wars, no more anger, no more death, and anything else that brings heartache, despair, and hopelessness. But what about now as we continue in this life even though we look forward with great hope. I've often wondered how forward looking we are as we live our lives in this world, especially as American believers who've been given so much blessing of worldly goods. Perhaps this current pandemic has helped us to realize what's truly important for us because so much has been removed from us. Maybe God is working in such a way in our lives during this crisis that we might refocus our passions in life toward Him. Scripture tells us, *"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory"* (Colossians 3:1-4 ESV). As God's people, those who've been redeemed, our passion, our focus, our desire should always be for the glory of God and the progress of the Kingdom our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Finally, notice the reason for God's grace in verse 14 where we're told, *to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."* God's work of redemption is to restore a people, of His choosing, to Himself who will continue in this life, and the next, to glorify Him in all they think, say, and do. Scripture emphasizes this, *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"* (1 Peter 2:9 ESV). You see, God's work of grace in our lives is to establish a people who are His and His alone. We're to be those who look always and only to the Lord who provides for us, protects us, and will one day bring us to the place where we'll live and reign with Him forever and ever. Jesus came into this world to redeem us from our wickedness, purify us for Himself, and then transform us into those who are eager to minister to a world that needs the same grace of God we've experienced. We see this described even more in Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 10, *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."*

You see, all that we are or ever will be, all we have or ever will have, has nothing to do with ourselves as it's only through God's grace freely bestowed upon us. This grace alone is sufficient for our eternal salvation as well as our continued journey on the road we call life. So, look to the Lord in this time of crisis, knowing that it's all of grace, both now and forever.

Pastor Mark