

For The Grace Of God Has Appeared...

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[0:00] Now as the Lord enables us, let us focus for a short while this morning on words which we have in the second chapter of the letter of Paul to Titus.

Titus chapter 2 and focusing from verse 11 onwards. 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 Saviour 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.

We read from the beginning of chapter 1 that Paul has left his associate minister and helper in the gospel in the island of Crete, there to set in order things in the church.

He says from verse 5, appoint elders in every town as I directed you, and so on. And we know very little about the beginnings of the gospel in the island of Crete.

You know Crete, it's in the Mediterranean, an island about, I think, two and a half times bigger than the Western Isles in area. And nowadays I think the population is nearly 700,000.

[2:14] But how the gospel came there, it's not completely clear, except the fact that we have mention made of people from Crete who were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the people gathered there.

People who had been Jewish and following the Jewish festivals came to Jerusalem to observe Pentecost.

And at that point, the Holy Spirit was poured out and we believe people from Crete were blessed. And as they went back to Crete, they formed the basis and the heart of a Christian congregation there.

But when the apostle is addressing Titus here, whom he has left in Crete, he tells that the Cretans were difficult people to deal with.

He says in chapter 1, at verse 12, The people there had a particular attitude to life, as it were.

[3:50] And the gospel coming into their midst needed to be applied to their particular attitudes to life, so that they would show forth the praises of the Lord who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Coming to chapter 2, on that point, in verse 10, towards the end of verse 10, it says, chapter 2, So that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

He has gone through various things, pointing them in the right direction as to how they ought to live, so that they might adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

And the word adorn there is from the same root from which we get the word cosmetics, cosmeo, to make beautiful.

And that's what these Christian people in Crete needed. They needed a gospel focus and a gospel lifestyle to enable them to live a beautiful gospel, God-glorifying life.

[5:14] And then, coming to the verse I have taken as our text, for he says, and I think the word for is really a fulcrum around which all that reasoning is turning.

He's talking about the way you ought to live, don't live like this, don't live like that. He says, because, for, verse 11, the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness, worldly passions, to live self-controlled, upright, godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, and so on.

Three points. First of all, grace, the grace of God has appeared. That's the first point. Bearing in mind the kind of lifestyle some of these people were living, he brings before them, remember, the

grace of God has appeared.

That's just the first thing. Secondly, we have to be subject to the training brought about by the gospel.

Verse 12, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. That's the second point. And the third point is, those who love the Lord are waiting for the fulfillment of our blessed hope.

[6:55] That's verse 13. It's a waiting lifestyle. Waiting for the glory of Christ, at the end of our life.

You remember that the catechism reminds us that the souls of believers at their death are made perfect in holiness and who immediately pass into glory. And their bodies, being still united to Christ, rest in their graves to the resurrection.

And then at the resurrection, believers are raised in glory, openly acknowledged and acquitted at the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God through all eternity.

That's the hope of the believer. These three things, the appearing of the grace of God, the training under which believers are expected to remain, and thirdly, they are waiting for the glory to come.

Firstly, the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people. The word grace is a wonderful word, isn't it?

[8:11] It speaks of the loving kindness of God, the graciousness of God. And it's an amazing thing when you read a way back in Genesis in chapter 3 after Adam and Eve have sinned and brought darkness upon the whole creation that God brings a word of promise that in the fullness of times one is going to come the seed of the woman to bruise the head of the serpent.

That's the first, as it were, gospel promise in the whole of the Bible. Immediately after sin comes in, God comes with a signal of grace, graciousness, kindness to a lost world.

And then all the way through the Old Testament you find again and again words that are encouraging. See for example in the prophecy of Isaiah in chapter 9 and verse 6, unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

It's as if the glimmers of a better day are being foretold by the prophet. And of course you come all the way into the New Testament and you remember the night the angel appeared to the shepherds. Do you remember what the angel said, unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.

[10:14] It is good news for all people, Jews and Gentiles together. And that's the point that is being made here. He brings salvation for all people.

the grace of God has appeared. Bringing salvation for all people.

Isn't it wonderful when you go through at the beginning of chapter 3 there and the apostle says but verse 3 we ourselves were once foolish disobedient led astray slaves to various passions and pleasure passing your days in malice and envy hated by others and hating one another.

What a sad picture of anyone's life. And Saul of Tarsus before his conversion he sees exactly that's the way he was and that's the way I am by nature and that's the way each one of us is by nature and against that terrible darkness the grace of God has appeared appeared in the life of Jesus Christ in his coming into the world in his speech speech holy speech speech inviting us to himself that we might have life in his particular power demonstrated over death in raising the dead in healing the sick in giving comfort to those whose hearts were broken and he himself going all the way to the cross in order to fulfill all that was required for peace to come to poor sinners such as we are who believe in his name the grace of God has appeared for all people and then secondly besides the grace appearing this grace is training us the grace can be encapsulated or focused in the gospel itself the message of the

Bible for the believer the Bible is a training manual it tells us how to live tells us what to leave behind tells us what to embrace and what does it say here verse 12 the gospel the Bible is training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions ungodliness and worldly passions what does this mean well the apostle is dealing with that elsewhere in the scriptures for example in Colossians chapter 3 at verse 5 it says put to death what is earthly in you sexual immorality impurity passion evil desire and covetousness which is idolatry the word of God is so pointed it puts its focus right into the very heart of our being and it finds and it shows us that we are guilty of so many sins and the other one

[14:20] I was going to mention to you is 1 Peter 2 11 he says abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage a war against your soul the world seeks to draw us to itself the flesh wants to have gratification and the devil wants to lure us in so many different ways he knows us at our

weakest and he is able to bring together circumstances into which we are trapped like a whirlpool I think I mentioned this somewhere already the whirlpool at the very outside of the whirlpool you hardly notice there's any movement but if you stay long enough in the whirlpool you'll be drawn in and before you know it you can't get out of it that's the way some sins are training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and then on the positive side it trains us to live self-controlled upright and godly lives in the present age what does it say in Luke 1 75 serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness and again in 2 Peter 1 make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue virtue with knowledge knowledge with self-control self-control with steadfastness steadfastness with godliness godliness with brotherly kindness and brotherly kindness with love that's the way he's drawing us to live that kind of life we find as we go on in life in the

Christian way that the devil is always aware of our situations seeking to draw us away from the scripture away from the church away from the things of god away from prayer you find that if you seek to pray on a regular basis you find that something almost invariably comes into your path to stop you from going and when you do go you find that your mind cannot focus the way you would like on the things of god it's a battle ground but this is what we're called to do this is what the gospel teaches us to be living self-controlled upright and godly lives in the present age the present age is such a difficult age isn't it there are so many people who have no regard at all for the word of god as a rule of life their god is their own focus what they want is what's big with them the world to get what the world can give to them and they can elevate themselves in whatever way they want the word of god is left unopened friends always open the word of god and pray and read and pray and read ask the lord to give you the grace to obey what it says live self-controlled upright and godly lives in this present age this present age and then thirdly and finally waiting it says for our blessed hope the appearing of the glory of our great god and saviour jesus christ waiting well those who wait are not idle they wait and they work and they work and they wait they're waiting when they're coming to the prayer meeting they're waiting in the prayer meeting they're waiting as they go home they're waiting at their work it's as if their focus is upon things that are above as the scripture commands us set your affections on the things that are above not on the things that are on the earth i know we have to have our hand in the daily chores of life and do them well to the glory of god but our focus primarily must be on himself and the things that really magnify his name and we can magnify his name by doing our work faithfully and truthfully day day by day we're waiting for him what are we waiting for our blessed hope the appearing of the glory of our great god and savior the scripture speaks marvelously about the second coming of christ doesn't it in first thessalonians 4 it says this the lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of god and the dead in

christ shall rise first the second coming of jesus christ he will come and every eye will see him doesn't matter who we are doesn't matter how far away from him we have been as what we call agnostics or self-centered or even saying that we are without god or without hope in the world we will see him and he will take his place on the great white throne and you remember the graphic picture we have in the gospel all people will be gathered with him he will put his people as sheep on his right hand and those who have disregarded him as goats on his left and you remember what he says to his sheep on the right hand come ye blessed of my father inherited the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world

I was hungry and he gave me food I was thirsty and he gave me drink and so on and they will say when did we see you hungry when did we see you thirsty when did we come and visit you in as much as you have done it to one of the least of these my brethren you have done it unto me and they went to the glory of heaven prepared for them you remember that marvelous verse in John 14 I go to prepare a place for you and if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself so that where I am there he may be also what an amazing day that will be to be with Christ to see him as he is or the apostle

John says when we are in his presence we will see him as he is and we will be like him we will have no sin we will be glorified we will be in his presence forever the scripture says that Jesus as the shepherd and lamb of God that he will feed his people and lead them unto living fountains of water and wipe away every tear from their eyes is that your hope today that surely the blessed hope of the believer the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior and then he says this to remind us of what it cost him to prepare the glory for us verse 14 who gave himself for us

[23:48] Jesus Christ who gave himself for us if you follow in the gospels Jesus being arrested Jesus being taken to Calvary being nailed to the cross crucified between two thieves what was he doing did he not have power to come down from the cross as those mockers around him said come down from the cross and we'll believe who you are but he didn't come down what was keeping him he was bound to the cross by the bands of love that he had for his people he loved them with an everlasting love and he loved them to the extent that he was willing to give himself as a sacrifice in their room and in their place he gave himself for us to redeem us to pay the price for our being set free from the condemnation of God's law he paid the price the price was his own blood his life and his death were a pleasing sacrifice to God the Father and when

Christ said at the very end of his crucifixion it is finished he had paid the whole price God now was satisfied on behalf of those for whom Christ suffered and died who gave himself to redeem us know that he has given himself for his people is it not a worthy response on our part who know him that we give ourselves to him that we give ourselves in willing obedience to him every day of our life this is what the psalmist was saying isn't it the psalmist was saying the Lord is my life and saving health he was living for the Lord he was walking in the Lord he had been filled he was doing what pleased him because he had been filled with love for the Lord and he was giving himself to his

Lord in service he has redeemed us from the lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works how zealous are we for the Lord today who are we living for who am I living for who is number one on my list well the psalmist says to do your will I take delight to do your will to live for you to walk in your ways to give myself as a willing sacrifice to you every day of my life begin while you're young and you'll not regret it continue into old age and you will not regret it sufficient unto our day is his grace for us my grace is sufficient for you my strength is made perfect in your weakness maybe when we the weakest we feel we realize how his strength is poured out upon us giving us to walk yet another step yet another way in obedience to him the grace of God appeared in the coming of

Jesus Christ particularly the gospel he has left with us that's our training manual as to telling us how we ought to live for him who appeared to us in grace and our life is a waiting life looking for the appearance of the glory of our great God and saviour Jesus Christ may the Lord enable us each one to live in this way that he commands to the glory of his name and to the eternal benefit of our own souls let us pray