

## Saving Grace, Part 1

Titus 2:11

56-18

Let's open our Bibles this morning to Titus chapter 2 again. We have been dealing for a number of weeks in the very practical instruction of this great chapter, and today we come to the doctrinal foundation on which all of that practical truth is built - verses 11 through 14 of Titus chapter 2.

As we approach this text, just a few opening comments. One of the familiar terms that we hear in our society is the term *star*. And it usually isn't used to refer to some celestial body but rather to refer to some individual, somebody in the movies, or somebody on television, or somebody in sports, somebody in the music field. All of these people are labeled "stars" when they reach a certain preeminence, when they shine brightly in their given field, when the world knows about them and they sort of outstrip the others around them. Annually books and magazines and television programs and documentaries select these brightest stars in every field, and we watch a steady parade of them across the television as various and sundry awards ceremonies take place, and they receive the achieved award for their stardom. These are the world's stars and in the most cases they are fallen stars. I mean, fallen in the sense that they're not believers. They aren't the real stars in our world, at least not by God's definition.

Listen to what it says in Daniel chapter 12, and verse 3. "And those who have insight [or wisdom] will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

What the Holy Spirit is saying in Daniel chapter 12, verse 3 is this: those who have divine wisdom – doctrine - those whose divine wisdom allows them to see through the sinfulness of their own wicked generation to follow the path of God's righteousness, and then those who lead others to righteousness are the true stars. Those who know doctrine, they have insight and wisdom. Those who live out that doctrine in an obedient life and who thus lead others to righteousness are the true stars, and they will shine, not for a brief moment in the world, but forever and ever.

That's a great promise. That's a promise that relates not to the temporal issues of life but to the eternal - a promise that one who knows the truth, who lives the truth, and by the knowing and the living of the truth leads others to the truth will in eternity have a full capacity to radiate the glory of God in heaven forever and ever. As I said, the stars of earth are fallen stars. The stars in heaven will be unfallen and exalted.

In Luke chapter 1, and verse 15 it says of John the Baptist, "He will be great in the sight of the Lord." The question comes, Why? Verse 16, "He will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. He will go as a forerunner before the Messiah in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." He will be great; he will be a star because he turns many to

righteousness.

In the end of the book of James, the very last verse, it says, "Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." Anyone who is instrumental in leading someone else to righteousness is a star by God's definition.

Now in Philippians chapter 2 there's an interesting statement that I want to tie in with this. It says in verse 15 of Philippians 2 that we are "lights in the world." We are lights "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." We are lights if we are "blameless and innocent, children of God...holding fast the word of life." So if you live innocently and godly as the children of God; if you live out your life faithfully before the Lord; and you hold fast to the Word of life, you are a light in the world. And lights now become stars later.

Who will be the stars in the glory of eternal heaven? Who will shine the brightest in eternity? People like you. People who follow the instruction of Titus chapter 2. Older men, verse 2, who are "temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love and perseverance." "Older women likewise who are reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good." Younger women, who "love their husbands, love their children, are sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands." Young men, who are "sensible," who are characterized by "good deeds, purity and doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach." And bondslaves who are "subject to their own masters in everything, who are well pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith." Those are the stars.

Now the amazing thing about it is that that's not really a list of achievements, is it? It's all a definition of character. It's people who know truth, who live truth, who therefore lead others to truth that will shine as the stars forever and ever. People like you, like you older men, like you older women, like you younger women, like you younger men. People like you who work for someone, who are employees who live godly lives. And because of what you know and what you live, others come to know Christ. Those of you who, not because of some achievement, not because of your intellect, not because of your artistic ability, not because of your creativity, not because of your intellectual prowess, not because of your athletic ability, those of you, rather, who live godly lives - you become the stars. Why? Verse 5 says because you make sure that you live "so that the word of God is not dishonored." Verse 8, "so that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us." The end of verse 10, "so that you adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect."

When you live a life that exalts the Word and silences the critics and lifts up the glories of a saving God, you will lead others to Christ. Now the theme that I want to press home, and we've been doing it all through the series, is that God is a saving God. And the major message that He wants to communicate to the world is that He can save. And the way that He communicates that is to demonstrate it through saved people. And if saved people don't act like saved people, then God is not getting His message across - we're hindering it.

The aspect of God's nature as Savior is the major emphasis on Him in this letter. Back to chapter 1, verse 3; the verse ends, "God our Savior." Verse 4, "God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior." Chapter 2, verse 10, "God our Savior." Verse 13, "Our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Chapter 3, verse 4, "God our Savior." Chapter 3, verse 6, "Jesus Christ our Savior." Every time there's reference made to God and Christ in this letter, it is to God and Christ as Savior, with the exception of the introduction of God in the first two verses.

In other words, if God is going to demonstrate His saving power, He's going to have to demonstrate it through saved people. They become the evidence that He can save. "Save" means "deliver men from sin." As I said last week, turn sinners into saints. So our Lord here is always depicted in saving terms. That's central. After all, didn't Jesus say, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to" - What? – "save that which was lost." Those who are faithful instruments, demonstrating His saving power by their transformed lives, will be the stars of heaven. They are lights now, they are stars later. All the commands and all the demands and all the exhortations to holy living in the New Testament and in this chapter have as their purpose to reach the lost with convincing evidence that God can and does save. The key to such evidence is transformed lives.

Now obviously we have to speak the truth. You can't be saved without hearing the truth about Christ. But getting someone to listen to it is dependent upon the demonstration of its power they have seen in the lives of others. So God saved us to make us holy so that others could see the transformed lives that God has produced and come to Him for the same transformation. That is precisely the point of the text before us. With that in mind, let's read, beginning at verse 11.

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed, and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you."

The key phrase that I want you to focus on in that text is the end of verse 14, the last phrase, "zealous for good deeds." That's the culmination. The grace of God appeared. Salvation came to all men. With it came instruction on how to live. With it came a blessed hope waiting for the coming of Christ. And then he recapitulates that Christ gave Himself that He might "redeem us from every lawless deed, that He might purify for Himself a people for His own possession" - here it comes – "zealous for good deeds." Why? Because it is that passion for goodness that demonstrates the transformed life.

Go down into chapter 3 for a moment and notice verse 8. "This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to engage in good deeds." *Why?* Because "these things are good and spiritually profitable for men." They lead men to conclude that God saves.

The Lord saved us, then, with a view toward creating in us a zeal for good works, a passion about doing what is right for the sake of its impact on those around us. We were saved to become stars. We are to let our light so shine before men that they may glorify God. And some day that light will become a shining star in the heaven of heavens.

All the components of salvation were designed to display God as a saving God. And the whole point of salvation is to deliver us from - What? – sin, from sin. Sin that cripples and debilitates and crushes human life. Sin that hangs on as an uncured plague. But saving grace comes along and is designed to deliver us from sin so that the saving power of God may be made manifest.

Now, as we look at these verses, and we'll not be able to complete them - there's too much richness here - but as we look at them, there are four features of the work of saving grace with regard to sin. There are four elements, four aspects, four components. When saving grace comes and does its transforming work in order that we might move from being sinners to saints and display God's saving power, there are four ways in which saving grace overpowers sin. Four of them, and they're very commonly expressed. And you will have heard them before, at least three of the four. But I want you to see them in the light of this great text.

First of all, when saving grace comes, it is designed to deliver us from the penalty of sin, from the penalty of sin. Verse 11, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men." Now this simple, direct statement is saying that saving grace rescues sinners from the inevitable vengeance, judgment, and wrath of God. The word "salvation" means "deliverance," or "rescue." When you use the term "rescue" you're obviously talking about saving someone from a very serious fate, usually death. In this case obviously death spiritually, death physically, and death eternally. Death at the hands of God "who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," as Jesus said.

So the grace of God appears to rescue all men. The Bible says "the soul that sins, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." Jesus said, "You will die in your sins, and where I go you can never come." Scripture talks about hell. It talks about a place of burning, of unceasing, unrelenting fire - the fire never being quenched - a place where the consuming worms, the maggots, never die - neither does "the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth" ever cease. The horrors of that place are also defined as "outer darkness," and it is forever.

Saving grace comes for the purpose of salvation. That's to rescue sinners out of hell, to deliver them from the curse of God, the inevitable curse of God that ends up as eternal judgment.

Now let's look more closely at this statement. The word "for" ties it in to verses 1 to 10; it's a little transition. He is saying this is how you're to live, this is how you're to live, this is how you're to behave yourselves so that you "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior...for [or because]" - and then he goes on to describe the foundation for all Christian conduct. And the foundation for all Christian conduct is that God has saved you to be "zealous for good deeds" so that you could be used to lead others to Him. All the required, transformed living of verses 1 through 10 is produced by the saving work described in verses 11 through 14. God saves to transform, to display His power that others may be saved.

If Christians, as some teach, could lose their salvation, then God wouldn't be making much of a statement about His power to save, would He? That's why I don't believe that those who teach you can lose your salvation have a biblical theology. What does that do to God? Who is going to want to believe in a God who can save temporarily or momentarily until you mess up? But if Christians couldn't be lost, but could lose their faith and reject God and reject Christ and deny His lordship and still be saved, we would still not be impressed - Would we? - with God's saving power. In the first scenario we would say, "Well, He can save but He can't keep." In the second we would say, "He can save and He can keep, but He can't transform." Any of those fall short of a biblical comprehension of what God does. He saves, He keeps, He transforms. Anything less than that and the whole evangelistic strategy crumbles.

We talk a lot about the issue of lordship. And it is not only bound up in the issue of personal salvation, it is bound up in the issue of world evangelization. For if God can save someone but not

change him, then what is the substance of evidence that God can save at all? If a person is saved but you'd never know it, what's the point? God saves in order to transform, in order to make evident His power. And if His power can't keep, and His power can't keep and transform, then He can't make His point. And I wouldn't want to assume, neither would you, that God couldn't make His point, would you?

So Paul looks at salvation from the penalty of sin, and he starts with the grace of God. Go back to verse 11 - this is so rich - "For the grace of God has appeared." Every aspect of salvation is predicated on grace - whether you're talking about election in eternity past, or whether you're talking about glorification in eternity future, or everything else in between - justification, regeneration, conversion, redemption, sanctification - it is all of grace. Ephesians 2:8 and 9, very familiar words, "For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "It" meaning the whole package - everything from election through faith to glorification is the gift of God - "not of works, lest any man should boast." It is all by grace that you are saved. Romans 3:23, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," being justified as a gift by His grace.

The only contribution we make is our sinfulness. God's grace and grace alone is what saves. So the grace of God comes. Now what is grace? Well, you know the definition of it; I repeat it just to jog your memory. Grace is God's unmerited favor toward wicked, unworthy sinners by which He delivers them from sin and its penalty. It is God's unmerited favor toward wicked, unworthy sinners by which He delivers them from sin and its penalty. God's free, completely unmerited goodness by which He blesses sinners eternally.

But as we look at this phrase - I want you to look at it - Paul is not just intending us to understand grace here as a word to be defined, or as an attribute of God, but he personifies it into a person. Notice this: "For the grace of God has" - What? - "appeared." "The grace of God has appeared," *epiphaneia*, "has become visible, has come into the light, has broken forth." The word actually means "to appear suddenly and visibly." Who is the fulfillment of that? The Lord Jesus Christ. When he says "the grace of God has appeared," he is talking about the incarnation. The grace of God appeared suddenly, visibly, in the world when Jesus arrived. This is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the personification of the grace of God.

In 2 Timothy chapter 1, and verse 10, "But now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death." What has been revealed? Back to verse 9 - the grace "which was granted us from all eternity." God's eternal, electing grace appeared in Christ.

Titus chapter 3, verse 4, look at that verse for a moment. "When the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us." That's a marvelous statement. Now look at this. He doesn't say when Jesus Christ appeared. He says "when the kindness of God...appeared," when "His love for man appeared, He saved us." Who is the incarnate kindness of God? Who is the incarnate love of God? Who is the incarnate grace of God? None other than Jesus Christ designated as "He" in verse 5, the One who saved us. Grace shines in the face of Jesus Christ.

In John chapter 1, and verse 14, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory." And what kind of glory was it? "It was glory full of grace." We looked at Him and we saw grace. And verse 16, "And we received from Him grace upon grace," "grace upon grace." He is grace incarnate.

And so he's talking about the incarnation, the Savior, the One who came. Bethlehem was where grace was incarnated, where kindness was incarnated, where the love of God was incarnated in the form of Jesus Christ. So he's talking about a historical event. When grace appeared the history of salvation reached its central point. His appearing started His work, which redeemed all who have ever been redeemed. Erich Sauer, the great German theologian, wrote, "Of all times, it is the turning point. Of all love, it is the highest point. Of all worship, it is the central point. And of all salvation, it is the starting point."

Grace came. Why did He come? He came - very clearly it tells you - bringing salvation. That's why He came, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." Actually that phrase "bringing salvation" is one word in the Greek, "saving." For the grace of God has appeared "savingly" - we might make it even adverbial. Or "salvation bringing." The effect of His appearance was to bring redemption, spiritual deliverance. He came to save. And, of course, this is such a repeated truth in the New Testament. I don't want to pound the issue, but at the same time I don't want to miss it.

You remember so many wonderful statements. One of them in Luke 2, "He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, he took Him in his arms and blessed God and said, 'Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bondservant depart in peace according to Thy word; for my eyes have seen Thy salvation.'" That was spoken by a man named Simeon. He picked up the baby in the temple and looked in His face and said, "I see salvation." "I see salvation." That is the reason He came. Nothing beyond that; nothing less than that.

Grace then came to save sinners. Now please notice one other phrase, very, very important. If we can get through this we'll do well. "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men." The point is initially that incarnate grace - follow the thought - was literally *laden* with salvation. He didn't come sparingly. He was loaded with it. "For all men." First Timothy 2 - we need to understand this phrase - 1 Timothy 2 helps us; 1 Timothy 2, verse 3, "This is good and acceptable to God our Savior." There's that same title used so often in the pastorals, "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." He desires all men to be saved. Paul says "there's one God, there's one mediator," and He "gave Himself a ransom for all." And "I'm appointed a preacher and an apostle...and a teacher of the nations," and "I want men in every place to pray" for their salvation. That's the breadth, the magnanimity of this issue. He came to save, and He desires that all men be saved. And Paul says, "I preach then to all, and I want you to pray for all."

It could be translated "for all men," rather than "to all men." Now would you notice, if you have a King James Version, that your Bible says, "Has appeared to all men," rather than, "The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all men." It says the grace of God "has appeared to all men." That's not a good translation, and we know that the grace of God bringing salvation has not appeared to all men. That is to say, it still hasn't. There are many people in the world who don't know about saving grace, and there are many people who will never know about it - many have died not knowing about it. And I prefer the New American Standard order. I think it is accurate that what the Greek is intending to say is "the grace of God has appeared." That's a historical event; that happened in Bethlehem. And the reason for that appearing was in order to "bring salvation for all men."

In John chapter 3, and verse 16, that very familiar verse - listen to it in these terms - "For God so loved" - What? - "the world that He gave His only begotten Son." The extent then of the gift was to match the extent of the love, and the extent of the love was the world. The appearing of the grace of

God incarnate, bringing salvation, was intended for the full scope of God's love to offer salvation to the world. "God is not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). "God our Savior who will have all men to be saved." "The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all men." "God so loved the world" - though not all will be saved.

The gospel then is good news to all men, because when God calls upon men universally to believe, He does not call upon them to believe that they are elected, or that Christ died for them in particular. He calls upon them to believe that Christ died for sin, for sinners, for the world. The atonement is not offered to an individual, either as an elect man or as a non-elect man, but as a man and a sinner simply. So says Dr. Shedd. God calls all men to faith. He calls all men everywhere to repent, Scripture says. He calls on all men everywhere to appropriate the salvation that grace has brought. And if they don't, they're condemned. It is not the extent of the atonement that condemns them, it is the absence of faith.

In John chapter 5 it is important for us to hear the words of Jesus, verses 38 to 40, "And you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent." Your problem is you don't believe. "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me that you may have life." The issue is not the extent of atonement; the issue is faith.

In John 6, verse 29, "Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.'" The crowd says, "What do we do to do the works of God?" And He says, "Believe, believe." When the Holy Spirit does His work in the hearts of unregenerate men, His work that is known as conviction, it says in John chapter 16 that the Holy Spirit will come, verse 8, "And when He comes He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment." Listen to this, "concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me." That is always the issue. That is always the issue. God has revealed His grace for the salvation of all men. God has revealed His grace for the salvation of all so that He can collect a faithful, witnessing people who demonstrate saving power in their lives and show God to be a saving God that others may be drawn to Him.

Now I want to footnote what I've just said to acknowledge an ongoing debate, and I hear about it all the time. And people discuss it with me even here at Grace Church frequently, and that's the debate between whether Christ died for the whole world, or whether He died for just the elect. Is the atonement limited or is it not limited? Do we believe in a universal atonement or a particular one? This is not easy to deal with, and you can pile up people on both sides of the issue, but let me tell you what I believe Scripture says. It's a difficult issue to understand. The way to understand it simply stating is, stated is this: the atonement is sufficient for the world but efficient only to those who believe. It makes provision that is great enough to embrace the world. The atoning work of Jesus Christ is unlimited in what it accomplished because He is the unlimited God who was the unlimited and perfect offering, but it can only be applied to those who believe, and therefore by believing demonstrate that they are the chosen of God.

People are saved because they believe and lost because they don't believe. The extent of the atonement is not the issue. The other side of this divine paradox which God fully understands is that the atonement is limited in its efficacy. For example, at His birth the angel proclaimed that Christ's name would be Jesus and that He would save *His* people from their sins - the elect.

In agreement with that we find Jesus Christ stating that He had come to save all those whom the

Father had given Him. We are told in the Scriptures that Christ died for the many; He died for his people. In John 11:52, He died for the children of God. In John 6 and John 17, He died for those given Him by the Father. In Ephesians 5:25, He died for the church. In Hebrews 2:10, for the many sons. In Hebrews 2:11, 12 and 17, He died for His brethren. In Hebrews 2:13 and 14, for the children. In Hebrews 2:16, for the seed of Abraham. And in Hebrews 2:17, for the people of God.

Folks read that and they say, "Well it seems to me that that limits the atonement." I don't understand that. I don't understand how it harmonizes. But that's not my problem. All I'm supposed to do is preach the gospel to every creation, every creature, every human. How He fits that into His sovereignty, His elective purpose, and the limits that He established for the efficiency of the atonement is His problem, not mine.

So, saving grace appeared in the incarnation to rescue us from wrath, judgment, hell. And God designed that for the world. And Paul's point to Titus is, "Look, if we're going to win this world we've got to show them what rescued people look like, right?" That's one out of three points. Let's pray.

Father, what a tremendous statement is in this one verse - just overwhelms us. And we pray that somehow what's been in my heart and my mind and what I've longed to be able to convey and struggle to clarify in my own mind over the last few days has come across clearly. These are not easy things, and I can only pray that there would be a settling in all of our minds of the truth. Lord, we want to be the saved people. We want to be the people who look like and live like we've been rescued from eternal judgment, saved from the penalty and - as we shall see - from the power, from the presence, and from the possession of sin. We want to be the transformed folks who live godly lives so that the Word of God is not dishonored, the critics are silenced, and You God, our Savior, are displayed as a saving, powerful, mighty God. So, make us zealous for good works. For this indeed is profitable for men who see us and will conclude that our God indeed can save. And we want to honor You in that way, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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