

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Saving Grace, Part 4**

Scripture: Titus 2:11-14

Code: 56-21

We come now to that very wonderful time in our worship of the Lord when we bring ourselves under the authority of His voice through His Word and certainly submission and obedience, understanding is a part of worship. Let's open our Bibles to Titus chapter 2. For the fourth time we come to the great text at the end of chapter 2, verses 11 through 14, Titus chapter 2 verses 11 through 14.

This is one of those texts about which some Puritan could have written a 900-page book. There is so much here. There are so many themes introduced that can be sort of pursued through all of holy revelation from one end of the Bible to the other. But we've tried to resist saying everything that could be conceived to be said and reduce ourselves to the more salient and important matters at hand so that you get the impact that the Apostle Paul would have wanted Titus and those who read this letter in the past to have received.

Remember this, that the heart and soul of this particular passage is rendered to us in verse 10, where God is identified as a Savior and where believers are given the responsibility to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. The issue here is about our saving God and how we are to live to put His saving power on display. That is the point that Paul wants to render to Titus so that he may instruct the churches in the island of Crete where he is ministering when this letter comes to him. But it goes way beyond Crete and way beyond that time and way beyond Titus to be instructive to us because God is still a saving God and He is still endeavoring to have His people adorn the reality of His saving power in the way that they live.

Now as we come to the text again for the fourth time this morning and the last time, I want to start, if I might, by backing up to deal with this underlying reality that God is a saving God. And not to do that, I think, would be sin. It would do a severe injustice to God who desires to be displayed as a Savior and who has said so much in Scripture about His saving character that it demands the preacher respond and reiterate that great truth.

The religions of the world are built on fear. Anybody who studies world religion knows that primarily the compelling issue in religion is fear. That is to say, the sinner has a deity or deities, God or gods, and somehow he has to placate their hostility. They are angry when they are violated. They are vengeful when they are offended. And so in the religions that man invents there is always this desperate need to placate an angry deity. The sinner who has violated his God seeks to mitigate somehow the God's animosity toward him, to assuage the wrath of this uncompassionate, unfeeling, insensitive deity who can only live with his own offenses and cares little or nothing for others.

Typically their gods are hostile. And in these religions that are concocted by men at the behest of demons, there are always some patterns by which men can appease their deities, or at least hope to

do so.

Generally they fall into two categories. They are ceremonial or moral. In other words, I've offended my deity somehow so I must do something ceremonial, something ritualistic or something moral, something in terms of personal achievement to appease this otherwise angry god or else he will devastate me in some way, even to the point of destruction and death. So that the religions of the world have people madly attempting to placate a god or gods who get great pleasure out of destroying them. That is really the heart of false religion.

Now we can understand that because false religion is concocted by Satan. And it is called by the Apostle Paul "demon doctrine." And it is espoused by seducing spirits through hypocritical human spokesman. And inevitably it is religion of fear. I don't care what brand it is, all the religions of the world are really predicated on fear which can be alleviated, we hope, we can't be sure, but we hope through certain ceremonial mechanical devices, or certain moral acts or acts of human achievement. Hopefully that's going to appease the gods.

Keep in mind that these religions are spawned by Satan himself and Satan knows no comprehension of grace, no comprehension of mercy, no understanding of forgiveness, no loving kindness, no goodness, nothing that would cause him or any of his demons, any of his minions to be placated. So when anybody is involved in a false religion, it may be a man-made religion on the surface, but it is a Satan-inspired religion under the surface, it is a demon-invented religion under the surface. It will be a religion where grace and mercy and loving kindness and forgiveness and compassion and sensitivity and all of that are basically feigned or altogether absent.

Christianity on the contrary is utterly different because it comes from the true God who at His very nature is compassionate, who in His very heart is merciful, gracious and loving. And it never a question of placating an otherwise hostile vengeful God who is going to destroy you and find his greatest pleasure in doing that unless you can achieve something ceremonially or morally to somehow convince him not to do that. Christianity is utterly different from that. Our God does not stand on the initial posture of animosity and hatred and bitterness and vengeance and being blasphemed and offended and therefore angry and wanting to express Himself in destruction, devastation, condemnation and death. Rather our God is a Savior. That's the thing I want to get across to you. Our God at heart is a saving God. His longing is to save people from their sins with no ceremonial achievement and no moral worthiness at all making any contribution to that salvation. Christianity is so utterly different. We preach the God, the true God, who loves sinners, the true God who has mercy on those who hate Him, who offend Him, who blaspheme Him, who ignore Him, who violate His commandments. Our God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Our God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Our God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge and blessedness of the truth and be delivered from the wages of sin.

Certainly John 3:16 sums it up. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." God saw a world of sinners whose sin was directly against Him, it offended Him, it blasphemed Him, it dishonored Him, it violated

Him, it broke His law and yet He loved them and sought not to destroy them but to save them.

When you go back in to ancient ethnology and you study the history of religion, or whether you study the modern and contemporary forms of religion, even those that border Christianity in a cultic form, whether you're talking about animism or polytheism or some contemporary form of cultic Christianity, you will find that they are all busy trying to placate the God they imagine God to be and somehow satiate His hostility and somehow eliminate His judgment through ceremonial mechanics or through moral accomplishment.

If you were to go back into the animism and the polytheism of ancient Old Testament times, you would see the same thing. If you go back into the ancient civilization of the Greeks and the Romans and look at their very sophisticated complex religions filled with emanations and demiurges and spirits and sub-gods and deities of all kinds, you would find basically that people existed in fear under all of that plethora of deities and supernatural entities, fear that somehow these terrorizing beings were going to destroy them unless they could somehow achieve something ceremonial or something moral that would placate them.

The true God is not like that. We understand false religion to be like that because Satan is a hater and a liar and a murderer and knows no grace and knows no mercy so whatever religions he invents will reflect that with only a feigned dimension of compassion in them. But our God, the true God, is loving and kind and merciful and gracious and forgiving to sinners who have seriously and irremediably violated His person and His law. And yet He desires to forgive them, and to forgive them not based on any achievement religiously or morally which they might have accomplished.

Now this is nothing new. If you can go back into the Old Testament you will find even the Old Testament writers aware of this. Micah who has a prophecy of judgment to give ends it like this, verse 18 chapter 7, "Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever." Here it comes. "Because He delights in loving kindness." That is God's delight. Satan delights in evil, wickedness, slaughter, hell and thus his religions are religions of fear.

To put it another way. The God of the Bible will be the judge but He would rather be the Savior and not have to be the judge. He will be the executioner. He will destroy both body and soul in hell, but He would rather be the deliverer. He will hold men accountable for their sin who refuse Him but He would rather be the forgiver. He will be just and He will be righteous and He will be equitable and He will render a proper verdict on sin and sinners, but He would rather forgive.

Why? Because it is His nature to love and therefore His nature to save and His nature to forgive. He longs to display His grace. He longs to display His love and display His mercy. And the most magnanimous way He can do that is by delivering sinners from their sin when they don't deserve to be delivered, when they can't do anything to achieve a deliverance, either ceremonially or morally. God, wanting to display His glory then, wanting to display His loving kindness, mercy and His grace, His forgiveness, His compassion, forgives sinners on the basis of no merit of theirs. His saving work is what displays His grace and glory. He wants to display it to angels, first of all, as well as to all other created beings. But the angels could never see His grace based upon their own relationship to Him

for no grace operates in the angelic realm, therefore it requires sinners who deserve nothing to be saved for God to show the magnanimity of grace. God longs to display then the greatness of His grace and His love and His mercy by saving sinners from the judgment they deserve by no merit of their own but purely on His own grace merit...on the choice of His own love and the mercy of His own will.

And so, He sent Jesus Christ to the cross because justice had to be satisfied. And Jesus Christ died on the cross satisfying the justice of God which required death. And since justice is satisfied, grace can reign, grace can operate.

Now since God so longs to forgive sinners, so longs to deliver them, to rescue them, as it were, from their eternally horrible fate, God then is appropriately called a Savior. And nothing is a truer title of God than Savior. He is the God who saves.

Now clearly in the book of Titus, I want you to notice this, Jesus Christ is called Savior. And that's a very common designation for Him in the New Testament, we're aware of it. But look at chapter 1 verse 4 of Titus, for a moment, just by way of reminder. The end of the verse identifies in verse 4 there chapter 1, "Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior." There clearly Christ is identified as a Savior. Look at chapter 2 verse 13, right in our text, the end of the verse, "Our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Then down in chapter 3 verse 6 it mentions again, "Jesus Christ, our Savior."

Very clearly then, Paul wants Titus to be very aware that Jesus Christ is a Savior. In fact, in verse 11 of chapter 2, please notice, "The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation." We told you the grace of God is really a way to express the incarnation. God's grace which is part of His nature becomes incarnate in Christ to bring salvation. I mean, that is the substance of the incarnation. Jesus came to save sinners. That's His own statement, that's the affirmation of the very declaration of the purpose of His coming. The angel in Luke 2:11, "Today in the city of David there's been born for you a Savior who is Christ the Lord." In the book of Acts chapter 13 and verse 23, a very wonderful statement, "From the offspring of this man...that is David...from the offspring of this man, David, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus." God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus. He has come as a Savior.

Hebrews 2:10 tells us that it was fitting for Him to perfect many sons but first to perfect the author of their salvation. Jesus then comes as Savior. But He is not the only Savior. Go back to Titus 1 again, verse 4, I'm sorry, verse 3, verse 3...Titus 1:3, "According to the commandment of God our Savior," says verse 3. Go in chapter 2 down to verse 10, "The doctrine of God our Savior." Then in chapter 3 down to verse 4, "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared." Now you'll notice again, three times Christ is identified as Savior, three times God is identified as Savior. I already read you Acts 13:23 which says, "God sent Jesus to be a Savior." So saving purpose then starts with God. It is God who sends Christ who initiates saving purpose.

First John 4:14, a very important statement and one which we all should know, says this, 1 John 4:14, "And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." God is a saving God. And I know it is popular for those who criticize Scripture to make the

God of the New Testament a saving God and the God of the Old Testament a very judgmental condemning vengeful God. Draw some line between the two deities, that's an old, old kind of heresy that stays around in varying forms. But the God of the Old Testament is the Savior God who sent the Christ of the New Testament to be the Savior of the world. God is a saving God. He is and He always has been.

Now that is a theme that you find throughout the whole Old Testament. It is wrong to assume that the Old Testament does not present God as a God who saves. It does. In fact, as in 1 Timothy chapter 4, where Paul says in verse 10, "God is a Savior of all men, especially of those that believe." And I pointed out to you that that means that God just in a temporal general earthly physical sense is a saving God. Why? Because He doesn't kill every sinner at the moment of his first sin. He passes by sin. He lets a sinner live and take another breath. And he lets the rain fall on the just and the unjust. And he lets people enjoy a sunset and smell a flower and see a blue sky and kiss someone they love and hold a baby and taste good food and feel warmth and a cool breeze and see an ocean and the very fact that they live to do that is indicative to the fact that God is a saving God who has delivered them from the just due for the first sin they ever committed which was death and hell.

But not only is He a Savior in the temporal sense but even in the spiritual and eternal sense as He saves sinners from the sin that is in them and the sin that would damn them and ultimately takes them to heaven and glory in the future. God by nature is a saving God. Now you see it in the Old Testament. You can go all the way back to Genesis, for example, a very short verse, Genesis 49:18 says this, "For Thy salvation I wait, O Lord," says Jacob. For Thy salvation I wait, O Lord. Here is one of the patriarchs who recognizes that God is a saving God. God is a delivering God.

You say, "Well, did he mean that in a temporal sense?" Yes. "Did he know it in a spiritual sense as well?" Yes. For Abraham had surely known the salvation of God in a spiritual sense because of his faith and so had many others. In Exodus chapter 14 there are several verses there built around the great saving event of God delivering Israel from Egypt. In Exodus 14 and verse 13, Moses said to the people, "Do not fear," remember they were being chased by Pharaoh's army, the Egyptians, "Do not fear, stand by and see the salvation of the Lord." Moses who also believed God for spiritual salvation knew God was a Savior in a temporal and in a spiritual sense, in an earthly and in a heavenly sense and a physical and a spiritual sense. And so he urges the people to stand by and see the deliverance of God, the salvation of God.

Down in verse 30 it had come to pass. "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day." And then came the song of Moses in response, chapter 15 verse 1, "I will sing to the Lord for He is highly exalted, the horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song and He has become my salvation." And there, of course, he is celebrating the fact that God had saved the nation Israel from death at the hands of Pharaoh's army.

God was known in the Old Testament as a saving God, merciful and compassionate, even to a people who while in Egypt had not been worthy of such salvation. He led a generation out of Egypt who were not all worthy. He found those who trusted Him, those who put the blood on the doorpost and the lintel. They identified them and the angel of death passed by. And then He rescued the whole

nation of Israel out of there, something up to two million people. Some of them would have been trusting Him in their heart and experienced salvation spiritually, others would not have. And yet He rescued them all because it's His nature to be a saving God. And here Moses sings of His salvation. You come into the Psalms, and we won't take the time to go through them but you'll find repeatedly in the Psalms something like what you read there in Exodus 15, that the Lord is my salvation. He is my strength and my song, it has become my salvation. In Psalm, for example, Psalm 3:8, "Salvation belongs to the Lord." You have people rejoicing over salvation in Psalm 9, Psalm 13, Psalm 18, Psalm 20, 21, 35, 51, on and on and on. In fact, the word "salvation" appears at least 60 times in the Psalms alone where you have the hymnal of Israel and they're forever singing of God's salvation. And by the way, the verb form appears even more times than those 60 times.

And throughout the Old Testament, just to give you a little bit of an idea, the term "salvation" appears 113 times and the verb form "to save" appears nearly 100 times, so somewhere around 200 times the Old Testament identifies the saving work of God. Fifteen times God is called Savior. Predominantly those appear in the book of Isaiah. Turn to Isaiah, if you will, and we won't go through all of the other passages, but in the book of Isaiah it seems to be Isaiah's unique task toward the end of his book, starting in chapter 43, by the way, to talk about God as Savior. It becomes a theme to him. And I think it's an important thing to note for you. Early in the Old Testament the emphasis is on God's saving in a temporal, physical, earthly way. But as you get toward the end of the Old Testament and you get into the prophetic literature and the wisdom literature and out of the sort of narrative historical section, you begin to see God not so much in the temporal earthly physical saving role but in the spiritual and eternal and heavenly saving role. And that's the way Isaiah, I think, views Him. Isaiah 43, for example, verse 3, "For I am the Lord your God, the holy one of Israel, your Savior." Down in verse 11, "I, even I am the Lord and there is no Savior besides Me." Over in chapter 45 again, go down to verse 15, Isaiah 45:15, "Truly Thou art a God who hides Himself, O God of Israel, Savior!" exclamation point. Down to verse 21, the end of the verse, "Is it not I the Lord and there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior, there is none except Me." Over in chapter 49 verse 26, the last verse in the chapter, he says, "I am the Lord, I am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob." Over in chapter 60 and verse 16, very similarly, "I am your Savior, your Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob." And then lastly in chapter 63 and verse 8, "For He said, 'Surely they are My people, sons who will not deal falsely,' so He became their Savior."

You find Him called a Savior also in other places, for example, Hosea 13:4. But the point that I want to get across to you is that the saving work of God is not the abnormal work. I think if you study the Old Testament, if you aren't alert and you aren't listening carefully, or if you listen to some of the critics of the Old Testament, you might get the idea that God is this hostile, angry, vengeful, killing deity who just gets some kind of glee out of wiping out peoples and individuals and displaying the fury of His vengeance. The truth of the matter is that is always a last resort for God. He would much rather be the Savior, that is the heart of His being. And we see it over and over and over again in the Old Testament. In fact, when God memorialized an event that He wanted the Jews to celebrate as a remembrance of Him, He memorialized a saving event, didn't He? He memorialized the deliverance

from Egypt by which He saved His people, namely the Passover. In Deuteronomy chapter 16 and verse 1, the celebration of the annual Passover is a commemoration of God as a Savior who demonstrated the greatest act of salvation when He took the whole nation up and out of Egypt and delivered them into the promised land...leading them through the Red Sea which had parted to make the way dry and then drowning their enemies behind them in order to deliver them. That became the historical touchstone of the saving nature and work of God.

And any time a Jew ever thanked God for who He was and thanked God for what He had done, he would always go back to that great event and thank God for delivering His people from Egypt. In fact, perhaps a Psalm that illustrates that very, very clearly is Psalm 66. And I won't read it to you but here is a Psalm of thanksgiving, "Shout joyfully to God, sing the glory of His name, make His praise glorious. Say to God, how awesome are Thy works and how great is Thy power." And he talks about worship. And again, "Sing praises, sing praises." And what is it that they start with? "He turned the sea into dry land, they passed through the river on foot, let us rejoice in Him. Here is the God of our salvation, the God who delivered us from Egypt, the saving God."

All of that to say to you, beloved, that God wants to be known as a Savior.

People's faith in the Old Testament was built on God's saving work. They trusted in Him personally because of the salvation they had seen, both personally and nationally at His mighty hand. You see Deuteronomy 6 verses 20 to 24, a reminder of trusting in God because of His saving acts.

Deuteronomy 26 verses 5 to 9, trusting God because of His saving acts, Joshua chapter 24 and elsewhere.

So, throughout the Old Testament, God is seen as a saving God. Yes His salvation is temporal, He saves them from Egypt, He saves them from enemies and slavery and disease and draught and famine and plagues and poverty. But all of that is to testify outwardly that He wants to save their eternal souls. And when they put their faith in Him and they put their trust in Him, He not only saved them temporally but He saved them spiritually and eternally. And as I said, the latter part of the Old Testament, as you get in to the prophetic literature and the wisdom literature and you begin to analyze the attitude and the heart of God and see the revelation of His nature through the prophets, the writers of the wisdom literature, you see the emphasis is on the eternal, personal, spiritual salvation rather than the temporal, national, physical deliverance that is so much characteristic of the earlier part of the Old Testament. But God has always done both.

And even today we talk only about spiritual salvation and yet God is still a temporal Savior. He still delivers whole nations of people from what they deserve by way of judgment because of His mercy. Jeremiah talked about God as a Savior in chapter 17. Hosea talked about God as a Savior in chapter 1. It's throughout the prophetic literature as well as the wisdom literature.

Perhaps to just grab one chapter which exalts this would be to take Isaiah 12, a very brief chapter, very brief for prophetic literature in at least the major prophets, only six verses long. And here is Isaiah long after Moses, long after the Exodus, but he praises God in terms that are very much like what we read in Exodus 15, "I'll give thanks to Thee, O Lord, for although Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away. Thou doest comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not

be afraid for the Lord God is my strength and song and He has become my salvation," that's drawn right out of that Exodus 15 text. "Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation and in that day you will say, Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name, make known His deeds among the peoples. Make them remember that His name is exalted. Praise the Lord in song for He has done excellent things. Let this be known throughout the earth. Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel." Why great? Because He is a Savior.

God is a Savior. That's the message of the Bible. That's the message of the Old Testament. That's the message of the New Testament. God is a Savior in a temporal and eternal sense, in a national and personal sense, in a material and spiritual sense. God saves sinners from the consequence of their sin in this life and in the life to come. And all of this, of course, sets the stage for the coming of Christ.

We come to the gospel of Luke, for example. And we hear this, Luke 1, Mary...she's been told she's going to have a child, the Messiah. And it says, "Mary exalts the Lord," verse 46, "And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." She recognizes that God is a Savior and that He has sent a Messiah to save, to accomplish His saving purpose.

Down in verse 50 she notes the mercy of God which has been demonstrated in His salvation upon generation after generation of those who genuinely fear and honor Him. He is a saving God. Down in verse 76, Zechariah has been told that his child is going to be the forerunner of the Messiah, namely John the Baptist, and he says your child...the child will be the prophet of the Most High and he will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways and to give His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins because of the tender mercy of our God. Here is Zechariah's great prophecy, really, when he was filled with the Spirit, noting that God is a saving God who is sending a forerunner to announce the arrival of His Son who will save and forgive sin.

Over in chapter 2 verse 11, as I noted earlier, when the child is born He is a Savior who is Christ the Lord. Down in verse 30 Simeon says, holding the baby, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." And over in chapter 3 and verse 6, John starts to preach and in verse 6 he says, "All flesh shall see the salvation of God." Jesus Christ is not doing a work other than the work of God. God sent Him, Acts 13:23, to be a Savior. First John 4:14, God sent Him to be the Savior. Jesus in Luke 19:10 said, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." In John 3:17 we read, "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world but that the world should be saved through Him." His primary work is not judgment, condemnation and vengeance, it is salvation.

Over in the twelfth chapter of John, the verse that comes to mind is verse 47. Yes, "If anyone hears My sayings and doesn't keep them, I do not judge him for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world." Then He says, "He who rejects Me, he will be judged." Judgment is God's reluctant work, salvation is His eager work.

Romans 1:16, Paul says, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." That is, my friend, Christianity. We have a saving God who sent His saving Son to save us from our sins. That is the gospel of Christianity. And that is the message of our text.



All of that gets us to our text.

Titus...I can't believe how much time went by. I was enjoying that so much I didn't even notice, I hope you felt the same. Titus 2 verses 11 to 14 focus on God as Savior. And we've already covered most of it. We'll just wrap it up in the next few moments.

Saving grace, we noted, first of all, delivers us from the penalty of sin. We commented on that with regard to verse 11, "The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men." Inherent in the term "salvation" is deliverance from the ultimate penalty of sin which is hell, eternal punishment where the worm never dies, the fire is never quenched.

Secondly we noted that saving grace delivers us from the power of sin, verse 12. Saving grace comes and not only deals with our future but deals with our present by instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desire and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age. Salvation is not just for the future, it is for the present. Saving grace here is personified as an instructor, as a teacher. It breaks sin's domination and then it reprograms us for holiness. Justification then becomes sanctification. Salvation, the moment of our salvation makes a decisive break with the power of sin and the old husband, according to Romans 7, is dead and grace is now our new master and sanctification begins. And, beloved, I've said it again and again, there is no such thing as justification and salvation without sanctification. They are twins. They are two sides of the same coin. When we were saved we were saved from the penalty of sin, hell. From the power of sin, so that now we no longer want ungodliness and worldly desires, we want to live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age. We have new longings and new desires and new wishes. Reflected in Romans 7 where Paul says, "In the inner man he delights in the law of God which is holy, just and good." And we saw also, thirdly, that salvation not only deals with the penalty and the power of sin, but it deals with the presence of sin, verse 13. "Now we are looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Now that we've been saved our view is forward, not out of fear that we might end up in hell, but out of anticipation because we will end up in heaven. And when He comes to take us there we will be removed from the presence of sin all together. This vile body shall become like his body. We shall be made like Him, 1 John 3:2 says, for we shall see Him as He is. We will take on His perfection, His holiness. This corruptible will become incorruptible, this mortal will become immortality, will become immortal, I should say. Our sin will be gone. The redemption of the body will deliver us from this flesh.

So sin has been dealt a very devastating blow as to its penalty in the future, its power...in the present and even its presence. Some day we will be free and forever free from the presence of sin.

Now there's one more thought here. And this is the simple thought of verse 14, that we also have been delivered from the possession of sin...the possession. It's really a form of sin's power. But looking at verse 14 it says, "He 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."

One of the things that's true about a person who is not saved is he is a child of the devil. Romans 6 says he is a slave to sin, a slave, a bondsman to unrighteousness. We are owned by Satan. We are members of the kingdom of darkness. But when you become a Christian you are translated out of the

kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. You have a new King. You have a new possessor, you have a new owner, you have a new ruler. Sin is no longer your master, your owner. It doesn't possess you anymore. God has made you His own personal possession. And He says it right there toward the end of verse 14, "A people for His own possession." The unregenerate sinner is the possession of a sinful domain, a kingdom of darkness. He is owned and controlled. He is a slave in bondage to iniquity. He is a slave of unrighteousness. But saving grace breaks that ownership. And now we are God's own children.

How did it happen? Look at verse 14. "Christ Jesus," the antecedent of verse 14, "who gave Himself for us." That's a statement of His substitutionary sacrifice. He was a voluntary offering on our behalf to buy us back from sin and make us His own. That's basic to understanding the Christian gospel. He gave Himself for us. He became our substitute. He took our place. That's what that means. It carries the idea of Jesus Christ being a substitute who died the death that we should have died.

Mark 10:45, "The Son of Man didn't come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many." In other words, to put His life on the line as the ransom payment to release us from slavery to sin. In Galatians chapter 1 verse 4 we read similarly that He gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us out of this present age, evil age, according to the will of our God and Father. In Ephesians chapter 5, familiar words to all of us, it says, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her that He might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word to present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing but be holy and blameless." He wanted us for His own possession. And Christ then gave Himself to pay the price to satisfy the justice of God that we might be released from slavery to sin and become servants of God, even children of God. First Timothy 2:6, "He gave Himself a ransom for all...a ransom for all."

And so there in Titus we see that the possession of sin is broken because Jesus Christ gave Himself for us. The "us" defines certainly believers. The "us" in a sense limits the atonement to those who can be included with the Apostle Paul as those who believe. And so our price has been paid. Christ has become a ransom. It says He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed. That word *latroo*, to redeem, means to release on the receipt of a payment, very legal term. You see, God is just and He says My law is violated, I demand penalty, payment. He can't just forgive sin if payment isn't made. Christ then comes, makes the proper payment, is a substitute, gives Himself as the price paid for the release of the slaves and therefore Peter calls Him the Lord that bought them. Paul in Acts 20 says that we've been purchased by His blood. First Peter 1:18, "Not by corruptible things but like silver and gold, like they used to use to redeem slaves, but the precious blood of Jesus Christ." That's the redemption price. Because of that He has redeemed us, He has bought us, having paid the price.

And from what has He bought us? Look at it. "Every lawless deed." I've been fighting this battle for ten years, at least, this idea that somehow you can be saved from the penalty of sin but not delivered from the practice of it. We have been saved from every lawless deed. Therefore there is no lawless deed that has any necessary claim on us. Lawlessness is the essence of sin. It's rebellion against

God. He purchased us from sin and from its power to enslave us to every lawless deed. And He did it to purify for Himself a people of His own possession. What a statement.

He saved us not only to keep us out of hell, not only to break sin's power over us and some day the presence of sin, but to take us out of the possession or slavery of sin and make us slaves of righteousness so that we begin to live a life of purity and we maintain God's law. We...we're indwelt by the Holy Spirit, Paul says to the Corinthians, our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which we have of God, we're not...we're bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your spirit, your bodies which are His. He wants a pure people. He wants a purged people, a people who will be like 1 Peter 2 says, "A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God's own possession who will proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." A people who demonstrate what it is to be transformed, to demonstrate what it is to be saved, a people who put His glory on display. It's ridiculous to think God would justify someone and not sanctify them. That He would save them and not bother to do a work that's going to transform them because that's going to make His salvation look like it doesn't even exist. And who is going to believe in such a God when that which He saves demonstrates no evidence of it? God saves in order to display His glory. And in order to display His glory He has to save and sanctify, He has to deliver us not only from the future penalty of sin but the present possession of sin.

So we have been bought. And in our salvation we have been made pure so that we can become a people for His own possession. The word "possession" means treasure. It's something over and above, an abundance, wealth, the peculiar treasure specifically devoted to Him. He wants a people for His own who are a treasure to Him.

Why? Here's the key, end of verse 14, "Zealous for good deeds." A people who live in good deeds so that others can see the saving power of God on display, that's the point. And by the way, the word "zealous" is important. He doesn't just want us doing good deeds, He wants us passionate about good deeds, passionate about them. This is what He wanted from Israel. Listen to Deuteronomy 26:18, way back in the Pentateuch. This is what He said to Israel. "And the Lord has declared you to be His people, a treasured possession that you should keep all His commandments and that He shall set you on high above all nations which He has made." Why? "For praise, for fame and for honor." In other words, God wants to lift you above everybody else so that you can honor Him and bring praise and glory to Him. Israel failed. Oh there were times when they did and there were many individuals who were faithful. But as a people they failed. So God has a new plan. He's not doing it through an earthly people, He's doing it through a heavenly people. He's doing it through the church. And we have been saved for the same reason, to be set on high above all other people so that the whole world will look at us and give glory and honor and praise and fame to God because we are a consecrated people to the Lord our God.

So, God saves us to display His saving transforming power to the world. That's why Ephesians 2:10 says that we have been saved unto good works which God has foreordained that we should walk in them. Why? To put Himself on display, to demonstrate His saving power so that others in seeing it might be saved because that's His desire, He is a saving God. First Peter 2:12, "Keep your behavior

excellent...why?...so that people who normally would slander you on account of your good deeds as they observe them will glorify God in the day of visitation." Back to Matthew 5:48, "Let your light shine before men so they'll glorify your Father who is in heaven."

So grace came. Saving grace came to save us from sin's penalty, sin's power, sin's presence and sin's ownership, sin's possession for the expressed purpose that we would begin to live lives that are so obviously transformed, that we would be so evidently saved that everybody can see the saving power of God. And that's where verse 10 comes in, "We adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect." Grace then comes turning sinners into saints, passionate about goodness and holiness so that their transformed lives are visible to the whole world and so that God can save many, many more.

Now I reached this point in the first service and I thought to myself, "This isn't always happening. This whole scenario doesn't always work out. There's one very glaring reason why to start with. There are a lot of people claiming the salvation of God that don't even know God at all, right?" And you can only imagine what the world thinks when they look at Christianity and they're looking for some transformed lives, can't you? Because Christianity has been filled up with every foul bird. There are so many people within the tree, if you will, to borrow the picture image of Matthew 13, there are so many birds in the mustard seed that's gone into a huge tree, there's so much stuff, there are so many things in the net that's pulled in that have to be sorted out. The people in the world are looking for some transformed lives and seeing quote/unquote "Christianity" are bound to be looking at a lot of people who've never been transformed, right? Churches are full of them. Pulpits are full of them.

And Satan is endeavoring to do exactly what Jesus said he would do. Jesus would sow the good seed in the world and Satan would come right behind it and sow the tares. And people can't tell the difference. But secondly, there are many Christians who though they are in a sanctifying process because that's just the way it is if you're saved, you're in that process, you have a new nature and you're being sanctified by the Spirit of God and your longings are right because your new nature desires what is holy, just and good and loves the law of God, but in that process of sanctification some of us fall into patterns of sin. It's not the unbroken pattern of our life like it used to be, but there's a pattern of righteousness that's being interrupted by sin. And that sends confusing signals. And that's why there's so many injunctions in the New Testament, even though we are being satisfied, to put it in the terms of John 15, we're bearing fruit but the Father wants us to bear...what?...much fruit. There is a pattern of righteousness. There is evidence of new life. But that evidence can become very confused with sin. And a watching world needs to see the transformation clearly. Calls upon us to examine our hearts to make sure, first of all, we're really saved. Secondly, to make sure that the pattern of sanctification and righteousness, the evidence of transformation isn't somehow being blurred by sin.

We have a tremendous responsibility. We've been left in this world to be a people zealous for good deeds who thereby adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. Listen, folks, in conclusion I say this, God is a saving God. That is the truest thing that can be said about Him in relation to man. He is a saving God. He wants to save. But is it not shocking to us that the evidence of His saving

power is in great measure dependent on us? That is a high calling, a great privilege and an awesome responsibility.

Father, as we come to the end of this morning hour we are, to put it mildly, overwhelmed that You, a great, infinite, majestic, sovereign, invincible, unlimited, eternal God who are the Savior and the only Savior in the whole universe, incarnate in Your Son, would take this great saving enterprise that is so close to Your heart and so precious to the very revelation of Yourself and to Your eternal glory and that You would commit to us in some measure the very proof that You are a saving God by virtue of our transformed lives. What a responsibility. What a privilege. O God, may we live to put on display Your salvation. May a watching world see transformed lives. May they see them at home, at school, at work, in the neighborhood, in the casual conversations, in everything we do may we adorn the truth that You save people from sin. In Christ's name. Amen.

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