

The Books of Titus, Philemon, and Jude, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 4: The Grace of God That Trains Us

Titus 2:11–15

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This short passage is the theological heart of Titus, and a great deal is at stake doctrinally. Paul defines the relationship between grace and godliness in a way that excludes two opposite errors. On one side is the antinomian error that treats grace as license to keep sinning; on the other is the legalistic, works-merit error that treats godliness as the means of earning salvation. Paul's answer is precise: grace itself trains us in godliness. The teacher should help students see that grace is not opposed to effort but is the source and teacher of holy living, and that good works are the fruit of salvation, never its purchase price.

The passage is also rich in Christology and eschatology. Verse 13 names Jesus "our great God and Savior," one of the clearest New Testament affirmations of Christ's deity, and verse 14 summarizes the purpose of His self-giving death: to redeem and purify a people for His own possession. The "blessed hope" of His appearing should be taught as the real, future, personal return of Christ in glory, the horizon that gives shape to present obedience. This is also a natural place to affirm that the Christian's hope is Christ's return, not a future earthly political reign.

The formational aim is to free students from a thin view of grace and a fearful view of holiness, and to unite the two as Paul does. Send them home seeing grace as a patient teacher that is even now training them, between the cross and the crown, to renounce sin and live wholly for the God who bought them. The disciple being formed is one who pursues godliness not to be saved but because, having been saved, he or she now belongs entirely to Christ.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul says "the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people" (v. 11). What does it mean that grace has "appeared," and what does this verse teach about the universal scope of the gospel offer and the way salvation comes to us through God's grace?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the word "appeared." Paul says grace "has appeared," using a word that pictures a dawning, a rising into view. The abstract kindness of God took on a face and a name in Jesus Christ. Grace is not merely a divine attitude; it has shown up in history, in a Person, at the cross. Help students feel the concreteness of this.

Address the phrase “bringing salvation for all people.” This affirms the universal scope of the gospel offer: grace has appeared with salvation available to everyone, not a select few. This is the place to note, gently, that the gospel call is genuine and universal, over against any teaching that God has secretly limited His saving offer to a predetermined group. God “desires all people to be saved” (1 Timothy 2:4).

Clarify how salvation comes: by grace, the unmerited favor of God. We do not earn it or originate it. At the same time, as the rest of the lesson will show, this grace is received through a faith that trusts and obeys. Set the foundation here: salvation is God’s gracious initiative from first to last, freely offered to all.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Grace appearing concretely in the person and work of Jesus Christ
- The universal scope of the gospel offer (1 Timothy 2:4; Titus 2:11)
- The genuine, universal gospel call against the idea of a secretly limited offer
- Salvation as God’s gracious, unmerited initiative

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that grace “appeared” rather than merely existing as an idea?
- Why does it matter that salvation is offered to all people?
- How does grounding salvation in grace protect us from pride?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul says grace trains us “to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions” (v. 12). What is one ungodly habit or worldly passion that grace has already helped you renounce, and what is one that you sense it is still training you to let go of right now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question turns verse 12 inward. Grace trains us “to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions.” The word renounce pictures a decisive turning away, a saying no. Help students recall something grace has already helped them leave behind, so they can see God’s training as a real, lived experience and not a theory.

Then move to the present tense of grace’s work. Sanctification is ongoing; there is always a next thing grace is teaching us to release. Invite honesty about a current struggle, the habit or passion grace is presently working on, perhaps one the student has been resisting.

Keep the tone hopeful, not condemning. The fact that grace is still training us is good news; it means God has not given up and is actively at work. Frame the current struggle as the next classroom in grace’s patient curriculum, not as evidence of failure.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Renunciation of sin as a decisive turning, empowered by grace
- Sanctification as grace's ongoing, present-tense work
- Honest acknowledgment of current struggles as part of growth
- God's persistence in training His people

Discussion Prompts

- What has grace already helped you leave behind?
- What is grace currently training you to renounce?
- How does seeing struggle as grace's classroom change your attitude toward it?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul says grace teaches us to live "self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age" (v. 12). How do these three words describe a complete Christian life (toward ourselves, toward others, and toward God), and why does Paul stress that this living happens "in the present age" rather than only in eternity?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Unpack the three adverbs in verse 12 as a complete picture of the godly life. "Self-controlled" describes our relationship to ourselves, mastering our appetites and passions. "Upright" describes our relationship to others, dealing justly and rightly. "Godly" describes our relationship to God, living in reverence and devotion. Together they cover the whole of life: inward, outward, and upward.

Stress the phrase "in the present age." Paul is not describing some future perfected existence but life right now, in this messy, fallen, in-between time. Grace trains us to live differently here, today, among unbelievers, under pressure. Holiness is not postponed to heaven; it is the shape of life in the meantime.

Help students resist compartmentalizing. Some are strong on self-control but weak on justice toward others; some are devout toward God but undisciplined with themselves. Paul wants all three growing together. Invite reflection on which of the three is least developed in their own walk.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The threefold shape of godly living: toward self, others, and God
- Holiness as life "in the present age," not postponed to heaven
- The integration of inward discipline, outward justice, and upward devotion
- Grace as the teacher of present, practical godliness

Discussion Prompts

- How do these three words together describe a complete Christian life?
- Why does Paul stress that this living happens “in the present age”?
- Which of the three is least developed in your walk right now?

Question 4

Student Question:

Paul anchors our daily living between the cross behind us and Christ’s return ahead of us, calling that return “our blessed hope” (v. 13). Is the return of Christ actually a living hope for you, something that shapes how you spend your days, or has it faded into the background? How might keeping that horizon in view change your choices this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question targets the “blessed hope” of verse 13. For many believers, the return of Christ has quietly slipped from a living expectation to a doctrine they affirm but rarely think about. Help students notice honestly where it sits in their actual mental and emotional life.

Explain why this hope is meant to be formative, not just future. Throughout the New Testament, the certainty of Christ’s return is given as a motive for holy, watchful, purposeful living (2 Peter 3:11–14; 1 John 3:2–3). People who truly expect their Lord live differently from those who have stopped looking up.

Without straying into speculation about dates, help students recover the horizon. What would change this week if they lived as people who genuinely expect Christ to appear? Encourage one concrete way of letting that hope shape a decision, a priority, or an attitude.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The return of Christ as a living hope, not merely an affirmed doctrine
- Eschatology as a motive for present holiness (2 Peter 3:11–14)
- Watchfulness and purpose flowing from genuine expectation
- Hope set on Christ’s appearing rather than on earthly outcomes

Discussion Prompts

- Is Christ’s return a living hope for you, or has it faded into the background?
- How does expecting your Lord change the way you live today?
- What is one way you could let that hope shape this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul calls Jesus “our great God and Savior” (v. 13) and says He “gave himself for us to redeem us” (v. 14). What does this passage teach about who Jesus is and what His death actually accomplished, and why does the deity of Christ matter for our salvation?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question draws out the high Christology of verse 13. Paul calls Jesus “our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” The grammar most naturally identifies Jesus as both God and Savior, making this one of the New Testament’s plain affirmations of Christ’s full deity. Help students see that Scripture does not present Jesus merely as a great teacher or moral example, but as God Himself come to save.

Connect deity to redemption. Verse 14 says He “gave himself for us to redeem us.” Only one who is fully God could accomplish a redemption of this scope, bearing the weight of human sin and purchasing a people. If Jesus were merely a good man, His death would be a tragedy, not an atonement. Because He is the great God and Savior, His self-giving actually redeems.

Let the doctrine fuel worship. The teacher should not leave the deity of Christ as a cold proposition. The God of the universe gave Himself for us. That is the kind of truth that, rightly grasped, melts the heart and fuels the very godliness the passage is calling for. Help students move from affirming Christ’s deity to adoring Him for it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The full deity of Christ affirmed in “our great God and Savior” (v. 13)
- The necessity of Christ’s deity for an effective atonement
- Redemption as the self-giving of God Himself for us
- Right doctrine fueling worship and love, not just assent

Discussion Prompts

- Why does it matter for our salvation that Jesus is fully God?
- How does the deity of Christ change the meaning of the cross?
- How can affirming who Jesus is move us to worship Him?

Question 6

Student Question:

Paul says Christ gave Himself to “purify for himself a people for his own possession, who are zealous for good works” (v. 14). Would the word “zealous” honestly describe your attitude toward good works, or has your faith become passive? What is one good work you could pursue with fresh zeal because you belong to Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question fastens on the word “zealous” in verse 14: Christ purified a people “who are zealous for good works.” Zeal is heat, eagerness, energy. Paul does not envision a redeemed people doing good works grudgingly, but with eagerness. Invite students to honestly assess the temperature of their own devotion.

Address the drift toward passivity. Many believers begin zealous and slowly cool into routine, attending, affirming, but no longer pursuing good works with any fire. Help students name this honestly without shame, and recognize that cooled zeal can be rekindled.

Connect zeal to identity. The verse roots zeal for good works in being purified and possessed by Christ. We do good works zealously not to earn His favor but because we belong to Him and love Him. Ask each student to name one good work they could take up with fresh eagerness, flowing from gratitude rather than guilt.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Zeal for good works as a mark of the redeemed (Titus 2:14)
- The common drift from zeal into passive routine
- Good works flowing from belonging to Christ, not earning Him
- Rekindled love as the fuel for renewed zeal

Discussion Prompts

- Would “zealous” honestly describe your attitude toward good works?
- What tends to cool our zeal over time, and what rekindles it?
- What good work could you pursue with fresh eagerness this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul says Christ died “to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession” (v. 14). What is the relationship in this verse between grace, redemption, and a transformed life, and how does this guard us against thinking that grace leaves us free to keep living however we please?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is one of two heavier doctrinal blocks in the lesson, and it concerns the relationship between grace and a transformed life. Verse 14 says Christ gave Himself “to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people.” Redemption and purification are joined. The grace that pays our debt also cleanses our lives. They are not two separate transactions but one saving work.

Use this to answer the antinomian distortion of grace directly. Some imagine that because we are saved by grace, how we live no longer matters; some even reason that more sin gives grace

more to do. Paul demolishes this. The very purpose of Christ's death was to redeem us from lawlessness, not to license it. Grace that left us in our sin would not be the grace of this passage at all. Romans 6 makes the same argument: shall we sin that grace may abound? By no means.

Hold the balance carefully. The point is not that we purify ourselves to earn redemption, which would be the opposite error of works-merit. Christ purifies us. But the grace that saves is inseparable from the grace that changes. A claimed grace that produces no transformation is a counterfeit. Help students rest in grace as gift while embracing the transformation grace intends.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Redemption and purification as one inseparable saving work (Titus 2:14)
- Grace as the enemy of lawlessness, not its license (Romans 6:1–14)
- Transformation as the purpose, not the price, of redemption
- Guarding against both antinomianism and works-merit

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it a contradiction to use grace as an excuse to keep sinning?
- How are redemption and purification connected in this verse?
- How do we treasure grace as gift while pursuing the change it intends?

Question 8

Student Question:

Paul reminds you that you are part of “a people for his own possession,” purchased by the blood of Christ (v. 14). How does it change the way you see yourself to know that you are not your own but belong, body and soul, to Christ? Where do you still live as though your life were your own to spend as you like?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question presses the phrase “a people for his own possession.” The redeemed are not their own; they have been purchased by the blood of Christ and now belong to Him. Help students feel the weight and the comfort of this. As 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 puts it, you are not your own, for you were bought with a price.

Explore how this reframes identity. In a culture that prizes self-ownership and autonomy above almost everything, the gospel says our deepest identity is that we belong to Another, and that this belonging is the most secure and loving relationship in existence. Being possessed by Christ is not bondage but the truest freedom.

Then turn it to honest application. Where do students still live as functional owners of their own lives, treating time, money, bodies, or futures as theirs to spend as they please? Invite each to name one area where belonging to Christ should change how they steward what is, in truth, His.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Belonging to Christ as the believer's deepest identity (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)
- The contrast between cultural self-ownership and gospel belonging
- Belonging to Christ as freedom, not bondage
- Stewardship of time, money, and body as Christ's possession

Discussion Prompts

- How does belonging to Christ change the way you see yourself?
- Where do you still live as though your life were your own?
- What would it look like to steward one area as His this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

This passage holds together grace and godliness, the free gift of salvation and the call to renounce sin and live for God. Drawing on the whole of the New Testament, how does Scripture present salvation as God's gracious gift received through an obedient, living faith, neither earned by our works nor reduced to belief that leaves the life unchanged?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and it should synthesize the whole biblical teaching on how grace and obedient faith fit together. Begin from this passage: grace saves (v. 11) and grace trains in godliness (v. 12); Christ redeems freely (v. 14) and creates a people zealous for good works (v. 14). Salvation is entirely of grace, and it is never without transformation.

Lay out the New Testament pattern plainly. Salvation is God's gift, received not by earning but through faith (Ephesians 2:8–9). Yet that same passage immediately adds that we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Ephesians 2:10). The faith that receives grace is a living, obedient faith: it hears the gospel, believes in Jesus as Lord and Christ, repents of sin, confesses Him, and is baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4; Galatians 3:26–27), and then walks in faithful obedience. This is the consistent witness of the New Testament.

Carefully exclude both errors. Against works-righteousness: we cannot earn salvation; redemption is Christ's free gift, and our best works never put God in our debt. Against faith-only that leaves the life unchanged: the faith that saves is never bare mental assent, for "faith apart from works is dead" (James 2:26), and grace by its nature trains us to renounce sin. The biblical

middle is not a compromise but the gospel itself: grace received through an obedient, living faith.

Bring it to the heart. This is not a cold formula but the architecture of a rescued life. We obey not to be loved but because we are loved and now belong to Christ. Help students rest fully in grace while embracing the obedience grace produces, so they leave neither anxious about earning nor careless about living.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Salvation as God's gracious gift, received through faith, not earned (Ephesians 2:8–9)
- Saving faith as a living, obedient faith: believing, repenting, confessing, being baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4; Galatians 3:26–27)
- Good works as the fruit and goal of salvation, not its purchase price (Ephesians 2:10)
- The exclusion of works-righteousness and of a faith-only that leaves the life unchanged (James 2:14–26)
- Obedience flowing from belonging and love, not from fear of earning

Discussion Prompts

- How does Scripture hold together grace as gift and faith as obedient?
- Why is neither works-righteousness nor bare faith-only the gospel?
- How does knowing we obey out of love, not to earn love, change everything?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across these verses. Paul has shown you grace that saves, grace that trains, a Savior who redeemed you, and a hope that is coming. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through this passage. What is the single truth from Titus 2:11–15 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone asks students to gather the passage into one personal takeaway. Resist a generic recap; press for one specific truth and one specific way Christ is forming them.

Help the group trace the arc. Paul has shown grace that saves, grace that trains, a Savior who is the great God, a death that redeems and purifies, a people who belong to Him, and a hope that is coming. Every line has been working to unite grace and godliness in the student's own heart.

Close on the central wonder: holiness is not the price we pay for grace but the gift grace gives. Send students home wanting godliness more, not from fear, but because grace itself has been teaching their hearts to want it. Ask each to name the one truth they most need to carry into the week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Grace and godliness united as the heart of the Christian life
- Holiness as the gift grace gives, not the price grace demands
- Personal formation as the goal of the study
- Carrying one specific, applied truth into the week

Discussion Prompts

- What one truth from this passage do you most need this week?
- How has this study changed your understanding of grace?
- How is Christ forming you through these verses?