

The Books of Titus, Philemon, and Jude

Lesson 4: The Grace of God That Trains Us -- Titus 2:11-15

There is a famous misunderstanding about grace. Many people imagine it as a kind of divine permission slip, a heavenly shrug that says, “Don’t worry about how you live; it is all covered.” Grace, in that telling, is the opposite of effort, the enemy of holiness, the reason it no longer matters what you do. If that is what grace means, then the more you sin, the more grace gets to do its job. Paul had heard that twisted logic, and he answers it not with a lecture but with a breathtaking little paragraph here in Titus 2 that ties grace and godliness together so tightly they can never again be pulled apart.

Paul writes, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age” (vv. 11–12). Read that again slowly. Grace does not merely forgive us; grace trains us. The same grace that saves is the grace that schools us in a whole new way of living. It is a tutor, a coach, a patient teacher that takes us by the hand and teaches us to say no to what destroys us and yes to what gives life.

And grace does this by lifting our eyes to two horizons. Behind us is the cross, where Christ “gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession” (v. 14). Ahead of us is “our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (v. 13). Caught between a Savior who has already redeemed us and a Lord who is certainly coming back, we are taught how to live in the meantime, in “the present age,” the in-between time where most of life actually happens.

This is the engine room of the whole letter. In chapter one Paul described godly leaders; in the first half of chapter two he described godly living in every station. Now he tells us where all that godliness comes from. It does not come from gritted teeth or fear of punishment. It comes from grace, the undeserved kindness of God that has appeared in Jesus and that is even now training a redeemed people to belong wholly to Him. As you read these five verses, let grace do its proper work: not loosening your grip on holiness, but teaching your heart to want it.

Group Discussion: Paul says that grace not only saves us but “trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives” (vv. 11–12). Why do you think so many people assume grace and serious godly effort are opposites? How does this passage hold them together, and what difference does it make to see grace as a teacher rather than merely a pardon?

Personal Reflection: Paul says grace is training you, right now, to say no to ungodliness and yes to a godly life (v. 12). Where is grace currently trying to teach you something you have been resisting? Name one “no” and one “yes” that the grace of God seems to be coaching you toward in this season of your life.

Read Titus 2:11–15

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?
10. 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?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Ephesians 2:8–10, saved by grace through faith, created for good works; Romans 6:1–14, grace that frees us from sin rather than for it; 1 Peter 1:13–16, setting our hope on the coming grace and being holy; 2 Peter 3:11–14, how the certainty of Christ's return shapes godly living; Romans 12:1–2, offering ourselves wholly to God as those who belong to Him.