

**Text:** Titus 2:11-15, Part 2

**Title:** Teaching Grace – On the Christian Life

**Truth:** God’s grace trains us to live godly and to look for Christ’s coming.

**Date/Location:** Sunday August 8, 2021 at FBC

## Introduction to the Text

I am encouraging you to memorize this section:

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

15 Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

Last time we learned about the appearance of God’s saving grace in the first coming of the person of Jesus Christ. We could have, and perhaps should have, added explicitly that it is not only the *appearance* of Christ, but also the *work of Christ done during that appearance* in substitutionary atonement on the cross that brought this saving grace to humanity.

That grace has brought deliverance from spiritual death for all people. I understand this in the sense that it is available, not that it is made effective universally. It has made a universally accessible appearance to all men, not saving all but rather as the saving basis for all to come to God through Christ by faith. No come = no effect—other than to heighten your condemnation (Heb. 10:29).

We pick up with the next verse and the prior notes’ section numbers. We are reminded again that God’s grace is the basis of the instruction about Christian conduct in 2:1-10.

## IV. Grace Teaching, v. 12

A. God’s favor not only saves, it also teaches. There is *evangelism*, and there is *discipleship*. God’s grace saves in evangelism and teaches

as you grow into more mature discipleship. The proper ultimate source of teaching for us is not the world, not philosophy, not school, not books, not media. The proper source of teaching is the grace of Christ. If what you are learning (or doing) contradicts what the grace of Christ teaches, then what you are learning is *wrong*. Does the grace of Christ teach the kind of lawless, divisive, hateful, murderous activity that goes on today? To ask the question is to answer it. Does the grace of Christ teach you to gossip, be lazy, be fearful, to be full of lust, to be proud, to look down on others?

- B. Grace as a teacher means more than mere conveyance of information as in raw classroom-style teaching. It is “training” like in an apprenticeship model; it is discipline in the old-school model of education; sometimes it involves difficulty and pain. In this way it deeply educates and develops a person into someone more like Jesus.
- C. Grace is an entirely different sort of thing than law. We have people who claim the Christian life is lived to obey law. We have legislators who live to make law. Any major criminal act is supposed grounds for creating new laws to prevent such behaviors. All of that is futile. Only when someone lives by the instruction of grace will they succeed to mortify the flesh. Attempting to be justified by law is opposed to grace (Gal. 5:4). The law pointed out sin (Rom 3:20) and grace abounds to overcome sin. John 1:17 says that the law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
- D. The content of what God teaches us in his grace is given in three parts:
  1. Deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.
  2. Live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.
  3. Look for the coming of Christ.

We will look at these, each in turn.

## **V. Grace Teaches us to Deny Ungodliness, v. 12a**

- A. *Denying ungodliness* means to eschew sinful, ungodly, lustful activities. The kinds of things that you as a Christian know are

wrong are off limits. This includes putting anything ahead of God; loving sinful things; coveting; immorality; misusing God's name; thinking lustful fantasies; looking at lustful images; becoming drunk; being addicted to anything; maintaining a pattern of complaint, gossip, laziness, fear, or gluttony, and the like; any works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). Any of those sins mentioned in Titus 1:10-16 are off limits. If you are unsure if something is ungodly, or you are feeling the desire to rationalize it to be 'ok,' then there is already a problem. To be sure, check with a trusted Christian advisor.

B. *Denying ungodliness* means more than just not doing ungodly things; it means avoiding them *and* hating them. It is to turn away from them (2 Tim. 2:19). Denying ungodliness is not only verbal opposition to it, but it is also repudiation, refusal, denial, distancing from ungodliness. "Just say NO" to such things!

Sometimes this is easy because some sins are disgusting to us. Other times, this is hard because there are things our particular flesh likes to do or tends to do and we do not want to admit we need to change.

Yet denying ungodliness is not all that saving grace teaches. Avoiding the wrong is only one third of the curriculum. We are also told to replace ungodly behavior with godly behavior, which has many advantages, one being that it gives us less time for sin!

## **VI. Grace Teaches us to Live Soberly and Righteously, v. 12b**

A. The text in Greek word order is something like this: "Sensibly and righteously and godly we should live in the present age." The attributes are brought forward, and the "should live is put to the back, giving this part of the sentence a good emphasis in our heads. "We should live"—for all you grammarians out there—is a hortatory subjunctive. It is an exhortation that boils down to a plain, simple COMMAND. It is morally obligatory and imperative that we live this way as Christians. There is no excuse for licentious living; no theology that can validly support living in the flesh and professing faith in Christ; there is no comfort for those who profess godliness but in works deny it.

Three positive things grace then instructs us:

- B. Soberly: sensibly, prudently, in a self-controlled manner, thoughtfully. The body and the mind are cooperating in a manner that is influenced by the Spirit of God and makes sense to other Christians. This means that off limits for Christians are non-medicinal substance use, alcohol, smoking (tobacco or marijuana), wild body movements like participants do in a rock concert, and behavior that is not thought through. This is how you live particularly with respect to yourself.
- C. Righteously. The character of the grace-taught believer is just and upright, like Jesus. It is this way in private as well as in public, especially with respect to others.
- D. Godly: devoutly, reverently, piously, respectfully toward God, devotedly. Your life matches what would be expected for someone living in the presence of God. Or shall we say, living with the presence of God in you? See 1 Cor. 6:19-20.
- E. In the present age. The only time you are alive to live godly in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:12) is the present! There is no time like the present. It does no good to say, "I will start tomorrow." On any righteousness project you are working on for yourself, start today. Do you have something for which you need to say "No" to yourself? Start right now. The extra snack, dessert, portion at mealtime...the temptation to jump on someone instead of stopping to think...the desire for a sinful pleasure...give it a "No!" right now.

These instructions are made more difficult by the time in which we live. Not that other times were so much better. The age in which we live is an evil age (Gal. 1:4). It is a crooked and perverse time (Phil. 2:15).

Training grace shows us how to live properly, to live righteously. It is eschewing evil and pursuing good. But we now move on to the third item in the grace-teaching curriculum, and it moves beyond "do not do this" or a "do that." It is a forward-looking matter.

## VII. Grace Teaches us to Look for the Coming of Christ, v. 13

Grace not only teaches us to deny sin...and to live holy...it also tells us to look up (Luke 21:28)! Christians live in waiting for the return of Jesus from Heaven (1 Thess. 1:9-10).

A. Blessed hope. You have “hopefully” heard that the blessed hope is not a pie-in-the-sky wish, a legend or balm just to make Christians feel good as they suffer through life like everyone else. It is a certainty. Illustration: “Concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead” Paul was on trial (Acts 23:6, 24:15, 1 Peter 1:3). He was being tried as a Christian because he was certain—and he preached—that Christ arose from the dead and we will also. The reality that Jesus is coming back is another of our fond hopes as a Christian.

It is a blessed hope because it is a joyous expectation, a happy occasion to which we eagerly look forward. Anyone who longs for an earth that is governed properly, where disease is vastly reduced, where poverty is arrested, and where evil is addressed swiftly and justly should eagerly look forward to this as well.

On the other hand, if you are bent on doing evil or do not want God in your business, the fact that Jesus came once, and will come again, is a blasted hope,<sup>1</sup> a dreadful hope, an irritating hope. In fact, it is not a hope at all. You deny it and mock it (2 Peter 3:4) because it is a very real inconvenient truth. You do not have want to deal with it because it means accountability for your sinful life and rejection of the King.

B. Glorious appearing. This is the “epiphany of the glory.” Of the six New Testament verses that use the Greek noun for *epiphany*, four are clearly of the second coming, one is likely the same, and one is clearly of the first coming. There is a verb form as well (used in Luke 1:79, Titus 2:11, and Titus 3:4) and in all three uses it refers to the first coming of Jesus. We could say that in the New Testament of the Bible, the “epiphany” is just as much about the second coming as the first coming. This is true despite the seemingly

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<sup>1</sup> *Blasted* is a word that expresses annoyance. It is probably too mild in meaning, but it is good alliteration with its counterpart, “blessed.”

exclusive popular association of “Epiphany” with Christmas (the first coming), and in particular with the revelation of Christ to the Gentiles through the magi.

The appearance will be of Christ, but with Him will be a radiant glory that will only be rivaled by the other appearances of the glory of God in history, including the appearance of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:2). Never has such a glorious sight been seen by mankind because prior revelations of God, although glorious, have been typically short-lived and veiled in some obscurity. Think of the revelation of God in Ezekiel, or to Moses, or in a pillar of cloud and fire to the children of Israel. The latter was a very long-term revelation of God, but not in a human or personal form. His coming is pictured as the day dawning and the day star arising (2 Peter 1:19). Thus far the world has lived in relative darkness! The gospel brings light, and Christ will bring more light when He returns. For further study, see Acts 1:11.

- C. Our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is a singular person, specified by three titles—*God*, *Savior*, *Christ*, one personal name—*Jesus*, and two adjectives—*our* and *great*. The *and* between God and Savior ties them together into one single person, as we showed in Part 1 of this message on 2:11-15. This reminds us as well that we are not looking for an *event* as much as we are looking for a *person*. Whether you believe the event is the Rapture, as do I, or you believe it is the second coming itself, does not matter as much as this: It is JESUS who is coming and JESUS for whom we are watching. He will appear. And we are looking for Him. Grace teaches us to watch for **Christ**, not for events, signs of the times, confluences of events, patterns of evil, blood moons, special dates, or anything else.

There is no other “great God” anywhere. This phrase is an attack on those who would find greatness in another god (like Diana, Acts 19:27-28, 34-35).

## Conclusion

We learned about saving grace in the prior message. In this one, we learn about *teaching grace*, which we could also call *sanctifying grace*. In verse 14, we will see sacrificing grace.

God has explained through Paul the basis for living and doing church the way that was commanded in chapters 1 and 2. That basis is the grace of God that brings salvation and sanctification, and teaches us to look forward to the coming of Christ. This is sufficient motivation for us to live the Christian life.

The two things—salvation and sanctification—are inseparable. You cannot profess to know God and then in works deny Him. That is not Christianity. You must profess God *and* your grace-driven works must demonstrate the reality of your profession.

Good works do not cancel grace or obtain grace; they are the fruit of grace! Grace trains and enables this kind of life. MAP