

**TITUS:
THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE GRACE OF GOD
AND THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH**

**The Centrality of Grace to a Life of Obedience
Titus 2:11-15**

Dr. Nicolas Ellen

The development of the church in Crete in adhering to and living by sound biblical doctrine is conditioned upon the grace of God. The practice of Elders/Overseers/Shepherds/Pastors functioning in their personal character, their private ministry and their public ministry in a manner that is above reproach is conditioned upon the grace of God. The development of men, women, and slaves to function in a God-honoring manner within their roles and responsibilities is conditioned upon the grace of God. God's grace is the foundation for our salvation, our sanctification and our service.

Dr. Mounce summarizes the big picture of Titus 2:11-15's connection to Titus 1:5-2:10:

"Having given a list of instructions for different people in the church, Paul lays down the theological basis for godly living. He argues that God's salvific workings intend more than salvation, that integral to the salvation is the recognition that the free gift of grace comes with a cost, that of obedience. . . . the free gift of grace teaches believers that the only acceptable response is the offering of a life pleasing to the Lord. To the end of this theological discourse Paul appends a short personal note to Titus. He must continue to speak and encourage the Cretan church to accept these teachings, especially the obligatory nature of Christian obedience. He must strongly rebuke with full authority those who would oppose him. Paul is not teaching the annulment of grace; he is teaching the full measure of grace and the purpose of God, to cleanse for himself a special people, a zealot for good works, so that believers may 'learn to be intent on good deeds' (2 Tim 3: 14)." ¹

I. God's grace has appeared. (v11)

- A. In this text, God's grace is His beneficial activity on behalf of humans.
- B. In this text, God's grace is Jesus Christ.
- C. In this text, God's grace is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the penalty of sin, the power of sin and the presence of sin that enslaves mankind. This is accomplished so that mankind may be delivered from sin, devoted to Christ, developed in Christ and delighted in the return of Christ.

¹ William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 46: Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 634-635. Kindle Edition.

- D. God's beneficial activity on behalf of humans has been brought to light and made known through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

II. God's grace brings salvation to all types of people. (v11)

- A. Salvation is deliverance from the penalty of sin – deliverance from the separation from God forever in eternal damnation to burn forever in the lake of fire.
- B. Salvation is deliverance from the power of sin – deliverance from the slavery of evil; from being controlled by the evil desires of your heart.
- C. Salvation is deliverance from the presence of sin – to be set apart from evil and to dwell in the new heaven and new earth with Christ forever.
- D. God's grace which was revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ has brought a deliverance from the penalty of sin, the power of sin and, one day, the presence of sin to all who will receive it.

III. This grace of salvation not only delivers us from the penalty, power and, one day, presence of sin, but it also teaches us to live in a manner that displays that we have been delivered from the penalty, power and, one day, presence of sin. (v12-v13)

- A. Those who have received this grace of salvation are instructed to deny ungodliness – to turn away from living without respect, regard, resolve or reverence for the character, commands and commission of God.
- B. Those who have received this grace of salvation are instructed to deny worldly desires – to turn away from unrestrained desires for forbidden things; to turn away from wanting good things in this world in the wrong way (e.g. lusting, coveting); to turn away from the lust of flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.
- C. Those who have received this grace of salvation are instructed to live sensibly – to live by good judgment based upon the standards of God; to stay within the limits and boundaries set by God in Scripture in relation to their character, conduct, conversation and commitments.
- D. Those who have received this grace of salvation are instructed to live righteously – to live in such a way before people and with people that is deemed acceptable and pleasing to God according to Scripture.
- E. Those who have received this grace of salvation are instructed to live godly – to live with devotion to and respect for Jesus Christ, our God and Savior.

- F. Those who have received this grace of salvation are to be genuinely anticipating the blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ – to have a happy expectation of seeing Jesus Christ in the fullness of character.

IV. Our God and Savior *Jesus Christ* (Who is the means by which God the Father provided this grace of salvation) purchased us so that we may be severed from a life of sin, sanctified as His possession, and serving with eagerness as He designed us to do. (v14)

- A. We have been redeemed from every lawless deed – Jesus paid for every sin we have committed and could commit with His own life. He purchased us for Himself by His crucifixion on the cross, His death, His burial, and His resurrection from death.
- B. We are being purified to be a people of Christ's possession – We have been set apart as Saints by calling and we are being set apart from sin to devotion to Him in lifestyle.
- C. He is purifying us to be zealous for good deeds – we are being sanctified to serve as ambassadors to unbelievers and as builders of Christ-like character to believers.
- D. Salvation is not an end but is a means to knowing, becoming like, and being useful to our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

V. Therefore, this connection between salvation, sanctification and service must be recited to the congregation, as well as used to reason with and reprove the congregation. The Elder/Overseer/Shepherd/Pastor must do this knowing he has the God-given right to do it. The Elder/Overseer/Shepherd/Pastor should not let anyone in the congregation reckon as insignificant the connected salvation, sanctification and service doctrine of authentic biblical Christianity. (v15)

- A. Leadership must speak the salvation, sanctification and service doctrine to the congregation – to express this doctrine to the congregation.
- B. Leadership must exhort the salvation, sanctification and service doctrine to the congregation – to urge, to encourage, to call to order, to reason with the congregation to live in line with this doctrine.
- C. Leadership must reprove the congregation with the salvation, sanctification and service doctrine – to rebuke, to seek to call them to repentance of sin in light of the salvation, sanctification and service doctrine.
- D. Leadership must do this with authority, allowing no one to disregard them – the Elder/Overseer/Shepherd/Pastor must speak, exhort and reprove with the confidence that God has given him the position and right to do this. As a result, he is not to let anyone in the congregation get by with ignoring this way of living.

Key Point: Saving Grace does not produce a license to live any way we want and bank on the salvation from Christ as security that we are still going to heaven. Saving Grace teaches us to deny ourselves the worldliness that corrupts us so that we may pursue the godliness that changes us into the image of Jesus Christ. If you are claiming salvation but living like those who do not belong to Christ, either you are suffering from Spiritual Amnesia or Spiritual Deception-- meaning, either you have forgotten that you have been saved to know Christ, to become like Christ and to be useful to Christ or you are really not a Christian but have been deceived into thinking you are. Experiencing the Saving Grace of God should lead us to consistency in denying self and a stable God-ordered Life. May you examine yourself and ask God for wisdom to discern between Spiritual Amnesia and Spiritual Deception. And may you move into or continue to function in progressive sanctification and good works unto the Lord. (Romans 6:1-23)

[Concepts about worldliness and godliness taken from
Essential Virtues: Marks of the Christ-Centered Life by Jim Berg
(Greenville, SC: JourneyForth, 2008).]