

The Amazing Grace of God

Titus 2:11-15

Introduction:

- 1) No doctrine of Scripture is more precious to mankind than the doctrine of salvation (soteriology). And, no word is more crucial to the doctrine of salvation than is the word grace. That the sovereign God of creation would reach down from heaven and rescue undeserving sinners from the bondage and slavery of sin, from spiritual death and eternal separation from God in a place called hell, can only be described in one word: the word grace.
- 2) Salvation is a wonderful doctrine of the Bible. It is also a badly misunderstood doctrine as well, especially as it relates to our understanding of the work of Christ and how it applies to sinners.

It is not popular in our day to claim that Jesus is the only way to God. Modern culture and theologies see this as too narrow and restrictive, intolerant, unloving and unworthy of the God we imagine God to be.

Three theological ideas dominate the contemporary religious scene when it comes to the issue of salvation. **1) *Universalism***, also known as *pluralism*, teaches that there are many ways – or even an unlimited number of ways – to God. This is the idea that all roads lead to God, and therefore everyone will eventually be saved and make it to heaven. This is a popular position among more liberal theologians, as well as those who embrace New Age ideologies. This view is well represented by theologian **John Hick** who says, “Most New Testament scholars today do not believe that Jesus, the historical individual, claimed to be God incarnate. The old exclusivist view that only Christians are saved has been abandoned by the majority of Christian theologians and church leaders. There is, in fact, a basic moral outlook which is universal [in all religions], and I suggest that the concrete reality of salvation consists in embodying this in our lives in a spiritual transformation whose natural expression is unrestricted love and compassion. The basic moral teaching of the religions remains the same. It constitutes the universal ideal. What are called the conflicting truth-claims of the religions do not in fact conflict, because they are claims about different human awarenesses of the divine. We are living today in a time of transition which amounts to a move to a new paradigm of Christian thought.” (*World Faiths Encounter*, (Mar. 2001), 3-11). **2) *Inclusivism*** affirms that Jesus is the only Savior but that it is possible to be saved by Jesus even though you may never have personally trusted Him for salvation. Inclusivism teaches that salvation can be received through a positive response to God’s revelation in nature and conscience (called general revelation) or possibly even through other world religions. Although other religions have an imperfect understanding of the one true God, the truth that they do possess is seen to be adequate to save them. It is said that we may be able to recognize these “anonymous Christians” (a phrase coined by the Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner) by the good deeds they do. Hence, belief in a works salvation often

accompanies this position.

Clark Pinnock and John Sanders are representative of this perspective. **Pinnock** for example says, "According to Acts 4:12, then, Jesus has done a unique work for the human race, the good news of which needs to be preached to the whole world. But this uniqueness does not entail exclusivity. . . . The Son through whom all things were made is constantly at work in the world. The Spirit of God broods over the whole creation and over history. We should not think of God as absent from the world except where the name of Jesus of Nazareth is pronounced. Although for many evangelicals the finality of Christ spells exclusivism, I believe our high Christology can also create space for openness and generosity to the world's peoples. We do not need to think of the church as the ark of salvation, leaving everyone else in hell . . . I have always been impressed by the view put forward at the Second Vatican Council to the effect that the person who dies having sincerely sought after God, but not having learned about Jesus, will not be automatically condemned in the judgment but will be given the opportunity to plead the blood of Christ." (Clark Pinnock, "Acts 4:12 – No Other Name Under Heaven," in *Through No Fault Of Their Own*, 112-14). **Sanders** is even more clear in how he believes someone can get to heaven without personally trusting Christ: "The Father reaches out to the unevangelized through both the Son and the Spirit via general revelation, conscience and human culture. God does not leave himself without witness to any people. Salvation for the unevangelized is made possible only by the redemptive work of Jesus, but God applies that work even to those who are ignorant of the atonement. God does this if people respond in trusting faith to the revelation they have". (John Sanders, "Inclusivism," in *What About Those Who Have Never Heard*, 36). **3) Exclusivism** is the teaching that has been held by the church for most of its history. It is the orthodox, evangelical position which teaches that salvation comes only through a personal faith commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This does not include those who never reach an age of moral responsibility and accountability such as infants, small children, or those who are incapable of moral discernment, such as mentally handicapped people. Evangelicals have generally held the view that these individuals are the objects of God's saving grace and mercy. But exclusivism does affirm the absolute uniqueness and finality of God's revelation in Jesus. He alone is the one and only Savior, as taught in John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5. It is only in Him that one can be saved. God would not have sent His only Son to die on a cross if He could have saved us by some other means. The cross of Christ is God's great testimony that Jesus is the exclusive way to the Father.

3) As we think about the doctrine of salvation, there are several important text in the Word of God that address various facets of our salvation.

- John 3 teaches us about spiritual birth.
- Romans 3 teaches us about justification by faith.
- 2 Corinthians 5 teaches us about reconciliation with God.
- Galatians 3 teaches us about deliverance from the curse of the Law.

- Hebrews 7-10 teaches us about our Great High Priest and His Perfect sacrifice for sin.
- 1 John 2:2; 4:10 teaches us about His propitiatory work of atonement. And,
- Titus 2:11-15 teaches us about the grace of God that brings salvation to all men... and this list is not exhaustive!

Transition:

It is the grace of God and the glory of God that Paul highlights in Titus 2:11-15. What He discusses concerning these 2 realities can also be summed up in one word: Jesus. What is it that God wants us to know and embrace when it comes to the “glory of the only begotten Son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14)?

I. God’s grace teaches us how to live. 2:11-12

For ties the weighty sentence of vs. 11-14 to the practical instruction of 2:1-10. Here then is the doctrinal foundation for the practical instruction. In this instance belief follows behavior, and yet, in a real sense belief and behavior continued to be woven together in a beautiful tapestry of biblical teaching in the text before us.

1) God’s grace has come to us. 2:11

- Grace of God – His unmerited favor, His goodness and kindness, His compassion and mercy demonstrated toward undeserving sinners.
- Brings salvation – deliverance, rescue from sin and its judgment. The crucial point is clear: no grace, no salvation.
- Has appeared (made known in a way previously unknown) to all men. The perfect atonement of Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God made all men savable. There is a universal and unlimited provision. Every sin of every person has its answer in Jesus. No nation, tongue, people or person is excluded from His saving work. Those who perish in the horrors of hell must walk over a blood stained cross that bears their name.
- By His very nature our God is a saving God. His gracious gift of salvation has appeared for all. That includes you and that includes me. Hallelujah! What a Savior.

2) God’s grace must change us. 2:12

1) There has been a debate among certain evangelicals called the “Lordship Salvation” debate. In its most extreme form persons opposing Lordship Salvation will say that:

1. Repentance is not necessary for Salvation.
2. Faith is simply intellect assent to a proposition.
3. The will is not involved in the act of conversion.
4. Good works may or may not follow faith, ie. one should separate salvation from discipleship.
5. Apostasy of a saved person is possible via what is called “dead faith,” a bizarre understanding of James 2:14-26.

- 2) I would submit that Titus 2:12 deals a death blow and puts to an end once and for all “any theology that separate salvation from the demands of obedience to the Lordship of Christ.” (Mounce, 423). Not calling for perfection, Paul says a new direction is the outgrowth and expectation of God for those experiencing His salvation. The grace of God, the goodness of God, the greatness of God, the glory of God teaches (instructs, trains us up) us negatively to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and positively to live soberly (toward ourselves), righteously (toward others) and godly (toward God) in this present age, right now, today. And remember: it is grace, God’s amazing grace that teaches us to live this way. I cannot do it in my power, my strength, my genius, my ability. No, it is His grace that breaks the power of cancelled sin!

Transition: God’s grace teaches us how to live.

II. God’s grace teaches us where we should look. 2:13

Living in this present age (v. 12) is a constant reminder that there is an age to come. This earth is not my home and this world is not my final destination. With father Abraham we “wait for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10), and we look for Jesus “who delivers us from the wrath to come”

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Thessalonians 1:10).

1) We know what to look for: His coming.

Looking speaks of an eager and confident expectation. And for what are we looking? It is 1) the blessed hope and 2) glorious appearing (better “the appearing of the glory,” *NASB*) Thus we have a 2-fold appearing in this passage of Scripture. There is the appearance of God’s grace (v. 11) and God’s glory (v. 13). Both appearances speak of the same thing: Jesus. The grace that has appeared speaks of His 1st coming. The glory that will appear speaks of His 2nd coming. With a constant gaze and the experience of grace, our eyes are fixed heavenward with one and only one hope: His Coming.

2) We know who to look for: our Savior.

- We look not for anyone coming from heaven but someone coming from heaven. It is not Gabriel or Michael, or any of the rest of the angelic host. No, they simply will not do. They are inadequate for what we hope for and what we need. We look and long for the one who is our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Here is a clear and magnificent statement of the deity of the Son. It joins other wonderful direct declarations of this truth like John 20:28; Romans 9:5; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20.
- He is our great God not our greater God, for after Him no one is great! He is our great God, the object of our worship, creator and Savior, forgiver of sins, final judge, the one to whom we pray, the one in whom all the fullness of deity dwells in a body (Colossians 2:9). He is Savior, my deliverer, my redeemer, my rescuer, He is Jesus the Christ, God’s Messiah, God’s anointed, the one who came and the one who is coming again.

Transition: God's grace teaches us where we should look.

III. God's grace teaches us who is Lord. 2:14

- The doctrine of salvation can appropriately be discussed in 3 tenses: past, present and future.
 Past: delivered from sin's penalty → justification.
 Present: delivered from sin's power → sanctification.
 Future: delivered from sin's presence → glorification.
- In these verses Paul addresses all 3.
 Sin's penalty in v.11, 14.
 Sin's power in v. 12, 14.
 Sin's presence in v. 13.
- All of this finds its efficiency in the perfect atoning work of Christ, a work that is put on marvelous display here in v. 14, in a 4-fold portrait.

1) Jesus paid for us.

- Gave himself – voluntary/vicarious.
For us – substitutionary.
Redeem – costly and liberating (Mark 10:45; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6; 1 Peter 1:18-19).
From every (all) lawless deed (iniquities).
- He paid a debt He did not owe,
 I owed a debt I could not pay!

2) Jesus purifies us.

He purchased us to purify us! His grace takes us out of the pigpen, it does not help us enjoy the pigpen.
 Sin makes us guilty & dirty.
 Grace makes us innocent & clean.

3) Jesus possesses us.

He purchased us to purify us to possess us, literally “for Himself a people a possession.” What security is ours!

- Once we were Satan's, now we are the Son's.
- Once we were sins, now we are the Savior's.
- Once we were foreigners, now we are family.
- * Now I belong to Jesus *

“Jesus my Lord will love me forever,
 From Him no power of evil can sever.
 He gave His life to ransom my soul,
 Now I belong to Him.
 Now I belong to Jesus.
 Jesus belongs to me.

Not for the years of time alone,
But for eternity.”

4) Jesus prepares us.

As those who are His and know we are His we have a holy passion: zealous (we are zealots!) for good works. Unlike the Cretans who are disqualified or unfit for every good work (1:16), we have a consuming desire to honor our great God and Savior for His glorious work of redemption. Our works are the natural response to His work. Zeal for Him becomes our daily desire having been prepared by Him for this kind of life.

Transition: Grace teaches us who is Lord.

IV. God’s grace teaches us what we should learn. 2:15

- Verse 15 concludes chapter 2 and opens the door for chapter 3. John MacArthur says v. 15, “is one of the clearest and strongest statements in Scripture about the spiritual authority of men whom God calls to minister His Word and shepherd His people” (p. 125).
- Beginning with a present tense verb “speak,” Paul follows in rapid-fire succession with 3 imperatives of command: “exhort, rebuke, let no one despise.” The man of God can speak in this way with “all authority,” because of His authority: the great God & Savior Jesus Christ.

Transition: What should we learn?

1) Learn doctrine.

“Continually speak these things.” These things certainly refers to 2:11-14, but it is likely that it refers to the entire letter, a letter filled with sound doctrine (1:9; 2:1). Believers must know what they believe about the person and work of Jesus Christ, salvation, the church, the future.

2) Learn duty.

3 of the 14 imperatives in Titus are in this verse. “Exhort” (*parakalei*) addresses our duty before God & men. Paul encourages, comes alongside to challenge us in the way we should walk (live), as we look for “the blessed hope” (2:13).

3) Learn discernment.

If exhort encourages us in the way we should go, rebuke (1:13) admonishes us concerning the way we should not go. Exhort has as its primary audience the faithful. Rebuke has as its primary audience the unfaithful. Those we confront and correct we do so with all authority. We do not compromise or cow down. We do not dialogue or debate. Discerning both the error and the danger in our midst, we shepherd our sheep, we protect our sheep, with a firm and steady hand.

4) Learn dedication.

Speaking the truth will not always be popular. It will be always necessary. It will require courage, conviction and “Christ-confidence.” This will enable you to stand “humbly tall” refusing to be intimidated by naysayers and opponents. You will not let anyone despise, disregard, look down on you for you are looking upward and heavenward for your orders, from your Savior.

Conclusion:

- Wonderful grace of Jesus, Greater than all my sin.
How shall my tongue describe it, Where shall my praise begin?
Taking away my burden, setting my spirit free,
For the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me.
- Wonderful grace of Jesus, Reaching the most defiled.
By its transforming power, making him God’s dear child.
Purchasing peace and heaven, For all eternity
And the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me!

The amazing grace of God! I am so glad it reaches me. Aren’t you glad, it reaches you!