

THE GOALS OF GRACE

I invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Titus, one of Paul's epistles, written to a preacher that Paul had taken under his wing to teach and mentor. We will be looking at chapter 2, verses 11-15. We looked at this passage a couple of weeks ago when I brought the lesson, *Amazing Grace, How Does That Work?*

This morning I want to revisit that same passage in order to study a little more about grace. In this case I would like for us to give some attention to another goal of grace? Naturally, when we think of grace, our first thought is of the forgiveness and salvation that it offers us, but this passage speaks of yet another goal. We might call salvation the first goal of grace, but there is a second goal as well, and that is transformation. I think that will become obvious to you as we read again from **Titus chapter 2**. let's read together **verses 11-15**. I am reading from the ESV.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12) training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13) waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14) who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. 15) Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Now, as we re-read this passage, it is clear that the first goal of grace is salvation. Paul says, "For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people." Obviously that doesn't mean all people are going to be saved; it means the grace of God has made salvation possible for all people. We know that is true because our Lord, in Matthew 7:13, 14 made it clear that only a few were going to be saved. The Bible does not teach the doctrine of universalism, that everyone ends up being saved. However, by the grace of God the possibility of salvation became a reality for all people.

When I brought the less a couple of weeks ago I tried to make clear that grace is not simply God's loving disposition. It is true as 1 John 4:8 says that "*God is love*," and it is true that He has a loving disposition towards His creation. That is especially true for that part of His creation made in His image. But grace wasn't just God's loving disposition that made salvation possible. Grace acted by putting into place a plan by which sinful men like you and me could be forgiven and saved eternally instead of suffering the unspeakable horrors of His eternal wrath. In this text Paul speaks of God's grace appearing, but long before it appeared, grace was acting. Then, God's grace reached its zenith when God, came into this world in the person of His son with the purpose of destroying the works of the devil, by offering His body upon the cross as an atonement for our sins.

In that death, one of the goals of grace was made possible. Still, men had to hear about that sacrifice, and that is where the preaching and sharing of the gospel comes in. Paul says, "Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved," Romans 10:13. Then Paul goes on to

ask, but how will they call on Him in whom they have not believed, and how will they believe in Him of whom they have never heard, and how will they hear without a preacher?" You go check that out in Romans 10:13-17. So even the first goal of grace requires a response and participation on our part and if we can understand that, then maybe we can also understand the second goal of grace which is transformation. The goal of God's grace is first of all to make our salvation possible, and secondly, to make our transformation possible.

We might say that God's grace has one goal for the lost person, the unbeliever, and God's grace has a second goal for the believer, the person saved by grace. The first goal happened in a brief moment of time. The possibility for salvation became real when Jesus went to the cross. For those few agonizing hours that He hung there, he was completing God's plan of grace. Then when we heard of what He did for us, and we agonized over the implications of that for ourselves, we came to that moment where we too died to ourselves, and was buried with Christ by baptism—Romans 6:3 & 4, and had our sins washed away by His blood, Revelation 1:5 and 1 John 1:7. However, that wasn't the end of the matter. That was the beginning!

It is kind of like when God redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt. He brought them out of that bondage in a decisive act, but then they spent the next 40 years learning what it meant to be God's people. In the same way, God's grace made it possible for us to escape the slavery to sin we found ourselves in, but then it also made it possible for us to begin making the changes necessary for us to truly be the people of God.

In this context, Paul stresses three aspects of that transformation, and that is what I want to look at with you this morning, and then the lesson will be yours to consider and take with you this week. Notice that Paul does not only say that God's grace saves us, he goes on to say it also trains us. It trains us in three ways, and these are very, very important. Really, they are as important as being saved in the first place. If we were to remain ignorant of the ways by which we are to be transformed by the grace of God that would be disastrous to our souls. Likewise, if we are disobedient regarding the ways by which we are to be transformed by the grace of God that too would be disastrous for our souls.

So let's think about what this passage says to us about the transforming goal of God's grace. Paul mentions three things: **the first transformation** is into a life of holiness. **The second transformation** is into a life of hope, and **the third transformation** is into a life of service.

With the time we have left this morning, let's briefly consider what each one of these means for us.

First, there is the transformation into holiness. You will recall that when the gospel first began to be preached, it came with a call to repentance. That is, we were called to stop doing those things that are contrary to the will and nature of God. John the Baptist saw men coming out from Jerusalem wanting to be baptized as if they thought it had some merit in it, in and of itself, but John told them, "*Bring forth fruit worthy of repentance.*" In other words, change your ways.

We are to “renounce ungodliness and worldly passions.” We are called upon to become a people who repent, and renounce any and all ungodliness; ungodly thinking, ungodly talk, and ungodly acts. Peter tells us God is holy, and therefore we are to also be holy in all of our ways.

Christians have to kick sin out of the house, your house being the body God has given you, which becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit. Satan and his friends and all of their ways must always be persona non-grata, not welcome! You cannot afford to leave a little room for this sin or that worldly desire. As the Lord once said to Cain, “*sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is for you, but you must master it.*”

We need to be honest with ourselves in frequently examining ourselves for the sin that works like a cancer in our soul. We need to realize that the preacher is not our enemy for telling us the truth. We might very well be our own worst enemy because human nature is such that we tend to see the sins of others long before we see our own. We always have a reason or excuse for our sins. Our sins are never all that bad, and even if we have not really repented and confessed our sins, we offer a quick, “I’m sorry, please forgive me,” and then repeat that same sin again and again. What are we thinking!

Not only that, the kind of godliness that Paul has in mind is not just seen in the sinful things you don’t do, it is also to be seen in the righteous and godly things that you do. Paul said, the goal of God’s transforming grace is to train us to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age.

Secondly, there is the transformation into a life of hope. Specifically, Paul is talking about the hope that filled the mind and heart of those first century Christians, and that was that for the return of Christ. That hope was so impressed upon the early Christians that they agonized over what was going to become of those who were dying and the Lord had not yet returned. Read about that if you will in the 1st chapter of Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians.

After reminding the Christians about a number of things, in **1 Peter 1:13**, the apostle Peter wrote, “*Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” The word revelation in that verse refers to the Lord being seen as he returns. Paul uses an Aramaic term in 1 Corinthians 16:12, *maran-atha*, which is literally translated as “*Lord come.*” The early saints were in anticipation of Christ’ coming. It wasn’t something they dreaded, or saw as something terrible. In fact, such was their frequent prayer.

Now think about this. Most people today, including many believers in Christ, have their hope in this world rather than on the return of Christ.

- How do you think that affects the way they live their lives, the choices they make, the priorities they pursue day after day?
- What if you began and ended every day thinking about, and anticipating the return of your Lord?

- Do you think that would have any bearing on how you handled all of the challenges and opportunities that come your way every day?

The first transformation God's grace seeks to work in our life is to lead us into a life of holiness. The second transformation is into a life of hope, especially the hope that at any moment, any day, our Lord will return and take us to be with Him forever.

The third transformation that God's grace seeks to bring about is to lead us into a life of service. As God's special, unique, own people, Paul says, that we should fill up our lives with good works. Look at our text once again:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12) training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13) waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14) who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. 15) Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Do you see what God is doing; what His grace is training us to become? Number one, it is training us to be holy. Number two it is training us to live with a purpose, a purpose driven by the hope we have that "soon, and very soon, we are going to see the king!" And number three it is God's grace that trains us to be a people living useful lives of service. That is why Paul tells Titus, teach our people to *be ready unto every good work*. God's grace trains us how to spend our allotted days in things that count, things that God values highly, that are a blessing to others and bring glory to God.

By good works, Paul is not talking about righteous living; he has already dealt with that. By good works, Paul is talking about doing good to and for others. It is talking about using your life, your body, your talents, your resources to help those around you who are in need. There are a million ways to do that; at least a million.

- It's the kind of thing illustrated by Dorcas in the 9th chapter of Acts. Dorcas was a Christian woman who lived in the city of Joppa. When she died the brethren asked for Peter to come there because he was visiting in city not far away. I don't know if they anticipated Peter raising her from the dead or not, but he did. But when Peter entered the room where she was lay, prepared for her burial, the brethren began telling him about how she use to make garments and give them to people who were in need.
- James tells us that the essence of pure religion is to visit the widows and orphans as well as keeping oneself unspotted from the world.
- In **Ephesians 4:28**, we are told not to be guilty of stealing, but rather working with our own hands that we might have something to share with those who are in need.
- Jesus probably gives us the best picture of what we mean by good works when in **Matthew 25**, he pictures the judgment scene with Jesus saying to those on His right

hand, *“Come you blessed of my Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was sick and in prison and you came and ministered to me.*

That’s the kind of thing Paul is talking about, and he says, the goal of grace was to bring about a people who were zealous of good works.

So let’s look at how well grace has been achieving its goal in your case.

Number one, have you been saved by the blood of Christ?

- Have you obeyed the gospel, which means more than simply believing in God and in Christ? It means you have repented of your sins, which means you have renounced anything and everything that you know that might dishonor Him.
- Obeying the gospel means you have made the good confession, and you have been buried with Christ in baptism so that Christ’s blood could wash away your sins.
- Have you done that? If so, then so far, God’s grace is achieving its goal.

Secondly, the transforming goal of God’s grace is to lead you into a life of holiness.

- Just as you renounced all sins in becoming a Christian, you are to continue to say “NO!” to any and every form of ungodliness, and worldliness.
- Paul wrote the Thessalonians and told them to avoid the very appearance of evil.
- But not only have you renounced all ungodliness, God’s transforming grace is training you to live a self-controlled, upright and godly life.
- If there is anything or any way that is keeping you from being holy before God, you want to renounce that immediately and humble yourself before the throne of grace.
- You might be thinking, “well, I am doing pretty good on that. I’m really working on those areas of my life that are weak or shameful. I’m striving to be a better and better person, and live a holy life to the best of my ability. If that is all true, then good; God’s grace is again achieving its goal.

Thirdly, the transforming goal of God’s grace is to lead you into a life of a life of hope as you live each and every day with an expectant heart, anticipating the return of your God and Savior.

- Have you been able to put the affairs of your life in order, so that this hope is guiding your life in every way?
- If you have, then congratulations, once more, God’s grace has found its target.

And finally has the transforming goal of God’s grace led you into a life of good works?

- Are you a Christian who can honestly say that you are zealous for good works, that you are ready unto every good work?
- I am afraid too many Christians fall short in this area. They have obeyed the gospel, they are trying hard to live a faithful, holy life; they have their hope fixed on the return

of Christ, but they have never understood that it is God's will for them to get outside of themselves and focus on others who are in need.

What about you? Is God's grace achieving both of its goals? Have you been redeemed by the blood of Christ, and are you being trained in the ways of grace?

- If not, this invitation is for you. If you would like to be forgiven of your sins, having them washed away by the blood of Christ, will you come and allow us to baptize into Christ, so you can take your place among His people living for His purpose and glory today?
- If you have obeyed the gospel but have not been allowing His grace to train you in one of the ways Paul talked about in this passage, will you also humble yourself and come in order that you may confess whatever it is that is keeping the grace of God from achieving all of its goals in your life?

If you wish to respond, please come while we stand and sing!