

What Grace Teaches Us • Titus 2:11-14

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Want To Be An Illustration?*

1. A pastor was driving a little faster than he ought to have been and looked up to see the flashing lights of a police car in his rearview mirror
2. He pulled over and rolled down his window, thinking feverishly of some way to get out of what he knew was a sure speeding ticket.
3. As the policeman came up to the window, the pastor asked, "Say, Officer, I bet you've never been part of a real live sermon illustration about grace . . . "

B. *Grace!*

1. Grace is unearned, unmerited favor
2. And the doctrine of salvation by grace is one of the foundations stones of the evangelical church.
3. In our text this morning, we have one of the most striking passages on grace in the Bible.

II. TEXT

A. *Vs. 11-14*

- 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.**

1. This passage really begins at v. 9
 - a. Paul is speaking to *servants*

- b. and telling them *how* they are to live and serve their masters
- 2. We find this kind of practical instruction often in the letters of the NT
 - a. the Apostles were careful to show how the Christian faith bears on daily life
 - b. they wanted to make sure believers realized that Christianity wasn't just a religious thing but that it applied to every area of living
 - c. so they spoke about how the Faith effects relationships in the home and the world
- 3. There's a reason why they were careful to do this
- 4. You see, Christianity was a *new* thing.
 - a. and the establishment tended to be extremely wary of new movements, specially *religious* movements.
 - b. Rome saw itself as the guardian and protector of Peace.
 - c. they were the custodians of culture and civilization
 - d. barbarians were outside the borders just waiting for an opportunity to break in and plunder the wealth of the Empire.
 - e. so Rome was wary of anything that might present trouble
 - f. at this time, several new religious groups had come in from the Eastern regions of the Empire.
 - 1) most of them were secretive and had some pretty bizarre practices
 - 2) for many of these cults, the goal was *enlightenment*
 - 3) and enlightenment was reached by extreme acts such as prolonged fasting or even taking drugs
 - g. though these groups remained a tiny minority, they produced enough followers that Rome felt compelled to keep an eye on them and try to limit their growth
 - h. they were seen as a dangerous threat because people who'd been sucked into them often ended up leaving their families and responsibilities to follow the group
 - i. they became drug addicts or ended up so unhealthy they were left to die in the streets
 - j. the main charge against these religious groups was that they *disturbed traditional family values* of the Roman Empire.
- 5. As Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, at first, people tended to see it as just one more of these new religious

movements.

6. Paul and the other NT writers wrote to tell Christians that they must show from their lives that they are not part of these other movements –
7. That Christianity is fundamentally different
 - a. it isn't a secret society
 - b. and its members aren't induced to forsake their duties and responsibilities.
 - c. on the contrary, being a Christian means being a *better* citizen, a better husband, wife, father mother, servant, merchant, or craftsman.
8. That is what Paul is saying in these verses . . .

B. V. 11

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,

1. God's grace *appeared* in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ!
 - a. in the temple, as aged Simeon held the infant Jesus
 - b. he said, "Now Lord, let me die in peace, for my eyes have *seen* Your salvation."
 2. When Jesus came, the grace of God was made visible and it's this grace that brings salvation!
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3. Tell me – how can a person be saved?
 - a. is there something we can do to merit, to earn salvation?
 - b. no! we do not go and *get* salvation
 - c. salvation CAME TO US – God's grace *brought* salvation.
 4. And in that simple truth is the *difference* between mere religion and real Christianity
 - a. religion is man's attempt to reach God
 - b. Christianity is God reaching out to sin-sick man.
 - c. religion is what man *does* to get in to God's good graces
 - d. Christianity is God's good grace bestowed through Jesus Christ
 - e. religions says "Do!" but God says "Done!"
 5. But once grace comes to us and saves us, it goes on to teach us . . .

C. V. 12

12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,

1. Grace first *saves*, then it *teaches*
2. And grace's curriculum is this - "Cease from evil! Do good!"
 - a. *ungodliness* and *worldly lusts* refers to everything unworthy of God and eternity
 - b. in the place of these things we are to install the classic virtues of a clear head, a right heart, and clean hands
3. Let me use a simple illustration . . .
 - a. let's say I come to you and say that at 3 PM today, you have to leave to go to LAX to take a flight to Cancun, where you will stay for a month in a deluxe resort hotel
 - b. what are you going to do between now and 3?
 - c. chances are you're not ready for a one month trip to Cancun.
 - d. you need to pack and pick up some things you'll need
 - e. there are some calls you need to make and arrange some business so you can go
 - f. you will probably not leave here and go to the movie or go sit in a restaurant for an hour or two
 - g. you won't go to the pet store and buy a puppy or some fish
 - h. you won't buy some flowers to plant in your yard
 - i. why?!? – because these things are a waste of precious time and they all deny the fact that you are going to be gone for a month
 - 1) who's going to take care of the puppy or fish?
 - 2) who's going to plant the flowers and water them?
 - j. no – you're going to leave here and do one thing; concentrate on getting ready to go!
4. That's what Paul is saying in v. 12
 - a. grace has brought us salvation through faith in Christ
 - b. now it teaches us that our destiny is heaven
 - c. so we put aside the petty and worthless things that are only a silly distraction
 - d. and we set ourselves to pursue the things that are eternal.

5. There are some who have the foolish idea that if we're saved by grace not works – then it doesn't matter what we do, because grace comes *apart* from what we *deserve*.

- a. but Paul is clear here, the grace that saves, also teaches
 - b. and what it teaches is *holiness*
 - c. if it doesn't, then it isn't the kind of grace that saves!
6. Dietrich Bonhoffer was a German pastor who lived during the era of Adolph Hitler
- a. while most of the pastors and churches of Germany went along with Hitler's program,
 - b. a small group of dissenters refused to kneel to fascism
 - c. Bonhoffer was one of their leaders
 - d. he wrote a powerful little book at that time titled *The Cost of Discipleship*
 - e. Bonhoffer looked around and realized that the doctrine of grace, rediscovered by Martin Luther several hundred years before, had been cheapened into an excuse for a worldly brand of Christianity that had no spine and little morality
 - f. he wrote these words . . .
 Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Costly grace is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.
7. Bonhoffer didn't just wax eloquent on such costly grace.
- a. he was arrested for opposing Hitler and thrown into prison
 - b. and because he refused to yield, he eventually died in his cell,
 - c. just one week before the prison was liberated by the Allies.
8. This is the kind of grace Paul is speaking of.

D. Vs. 13-14

13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

- 1. V. 11 tells us that the grace of God has saved us from the PENALTY of sin.

2. V. 12 says that grace is saving us from the POWER of sin.
3. V. 13 tells us that one day grace will save us from the very PRESENCE of sin!
4. In Paul's day, when a royal visit was expected by a city or town, everything was cleaned and decorated.
 - a. the road for several miles outside the city was repaired
 - b. the walls were mended and given a fresh coat of plaster
 - c. weeds were dug up, trees were planted
 - d. the houses were given a whitewash
 - e. the king was coming and everyone wanted to present their best appearance.
5. The Christian is the one who is always prepared for the coming of the King of kings.
6. That's why Paul says that grace teaches us to look for Christ's appearing
 - a. this upward look reminds us of our true identity and destiny
 - b. and it helps keep things in their right perspective
 - c. this world is not our home – heaven is
 - d. it is for the day of our Homecoming we live now!
7. The titles Paul gives to Jesus in v. 13 are important
 - a. He is our great God
 - 1) the Jews who lived outside of Israel referred to Yahweh as the "great God"
 - 2) this stood in contrast to the petty gods of the Greeks and Romans
 - 3) if you've ever watched Hercules or Xena, you have something of an idea of how petty and ridiculous the gods of Greece and Rome were.
 - 4) the Jews wanted everyone to understand that Yahweh was totally unlike the deities worshipped by everyone else – so they called Him Great
 - b. Paul also calls Jesus, *Savior*.
 - 1) that word had a far more rich meaning than it does for us today
 - 2) Savior meant *deliverer, benefactor*
 - 3) the one who liberates from any and all hindrances to the fullness of life and living
8. Christian, aren't you thankful today that the God you worship is a

Great Savior?

- a. aren't you thankful that you aren't a Hindu, locked in bondage to some 8 billion capricious gods?
 - b. or that you aren't a Nichren Shoshu Buddhist, bowing before a little piece of paper?
9. We serve a Great God, a Mighty Savior, and Awesome King.
10. There's a tape in my library by Rev. Lockwood titled "My King!" He says this,

The Bible says my King is a 7-way king.
He's the King of the Jews – that's a racial king.
He's the King of Israel – that's a national king.
He's the King of Righteousness
He's the King of the Ages
He's the King of Heaven.
He's the King of glory.
He's the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Well, I wonder – do you know Him?

David said the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork.

My King is a sovereign king.

No means of measure can define His limitless love.

No far-seeing telescope can make visible the coastline of His shore-less supply.

No barrier can hinder Him from pouring out His blessing.

He's enduringly strong.

He's entirely sincere.

He's eternally steadfast.

He's immortally graceful.

He's imperially powerful.

He's impartially merciful.

Do you know Him?

He's the greatest phenomenon that has ever crossed the horizon of this world.

He's God's Son – the sinner's Savior.

He's the centerpiece of civilization.

He stands in the solitude of His own perfection.

He's august and unique.

He's unparalleled.
He's unprecedented.
He's the loftiest idea in literature.
He's the highest personality in philosophy.
He's the supreme problem of higher criticism.
He's the fundamental doctrine of true theology.
He's the corner and necessity of spiritual religion.
He's the miracle of the age.
He's the superlative of everything good that you choose to call
Him.

He's the only one qualified to be an all-sufficient Savior.

I wonder if you know Him today?

He supplies strength for the weak.
He's available for the tempted and tried.
He sympathizes and He saves.
He searches and sustains.
He guards and He guides.
He heals the sick.
He cleanses the lepers.
He forgives sinners.
He discharges debtors.
He delivers the captives.
He defends the feeble.
He blesses the young.
He serves the unfortunate.
He regards the aged.
He rewards the diligent.
He beautifies the meek.

I wonder if you know Him? This is *my* King!

He is the key to knowledge.
He is the well-spring of wisdom
He is the doorway of deliverance.
He is the pathway to peace.
He is the roadway of righteousness.
He is the highway of holiness.
He is the gateway of glory.

Do you now Him?

His office is manifold.

His promise is sure.
His life is matchless.
His goodness is limitless.
His mercy is everlasting.
His love never changes.
His Word is enough.
His grace is sufficient.
His reign is righteous.
And His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

I wish I could describe Him to you.

But He's indescribable
He's incomprehensible.
He's invincible.
He's irresistible.

You can't get Him out of your mind.

You can't get Him off your hands.

You can't outlive Him and you can't live without Him.

The Pharisees couldn't stand Him but they found out they couldn't stop Him.

Pilate couldn't find any fault in Him.

The witnesses couldn't get their testimonies against Him to agree.

Herod couldn't kill Him

Death couldn't handle Him and the grave couldn't hold Him.

That's my king, and His is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, and ever, and ever – Amen!

11. Here's what Paul goes on to say about this 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.

12. Just as God redeemed Israel from the slaves pits of Egypt and made them a nation of people uniquely called to Himself, grace has now redeemed us from the slave pits of this world and turned us into the children of God.

13. As children, we are to bear a family resemblance to our Father.

14. So just as God is holy and righteous, we are to be zealous for that which is holy and righteous.

15. If you go on a mission trips or even a long vacation in another country,
 - a. it isn't long before you start desiring things back home.
 - b. a nice hot shower – a hamburger and fries – a chocolate shake – people who know how to drive with some sense of sanity
 - c. we may complain about our government at times, but if you've spent time just about anywhere else, you know that our government is a dream compared to most other places in the world!
 - d. because this is our native culture, we're accustomed to the way of life here and if we're taken out of for a time, we find ourselves zealous to get back
 - e. the same is true of other nations – when they come here, it isn't long before there are certain things they miss and long for.
16. Grace changes us from citizens of this world into citizens of heaven
 - a. it teaches us the ***culture*** of the Kingdom of God
 - b. and it makes us zealous for what is good.

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Special*

1. Take careful note of what Paul says Jesus has made us in v. 14
2. His grace has redeemed us from every bit of lawlessness, and has purified us so that we might become His own *special* people.
3. The word he uses here for “special” is a unique one.
 - a. it referred to the part of the spoils of war the victorious general selected for Himself.
 - b. when the army was done with battle, they would gather all the booty and lay it out for inspection
 - c. the commanding general would then review the troops and what they had taken
 - d. as he made his way up and down the rows, if he saw something he wanted, he would take it as his right – he was, after all, the commander.
 - e. these choicest of the spoils were then loaded onto his personal wagon and taken home.
4. That is the word Paul uses here for us.

- a. God chose YOU!
 - b. We are the Spoils that God selects and makes His own
 - c. we are His treasure – we are what He gets out of all this!
 - d. as we look at the whole deal, it's obvious we get far more out of it than God does
 - 1) we get heaven and eternal glory
 - 2) what does He get? – Us!
5. But that's the whole point the Holy Spirit is trying to get across here.
 6. It may not seem like too good a deal for God to us, by He **COUNTS US HIS TREASURE!**

B. What Grace Teaches

1. And THAT is what grace teaches us
2. We are God's treasure!
3. And because of that – how else can we respond but with absolute, willing, and zealous surrender to all He wants to do in and through us?