

The Beautiful Gospel

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[0 : 00] Good afternoon and welcome to our lunchtime Bible talk. Please do feel free to stay around afterwards for some lunch at the back and some tea and coffee. There's lots of people here that love to get to know you, to have a chat with you, so please do feel free to stay behind.

Now, if you were not here last week, we started looking at Titus chapter 2, and that's what we're going to finish off this week. So please do turn in your Bibles to Titus chapter 2, Titus chapter 2. This week we're going to be focusing on verses 11 to 15, but let's read the whole thing together to remind us about last week's message.

Beginning in verse 1. But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be superminded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith and love and in steadfastness. Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good and so train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. They are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior,

Jesus Christ, 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. Declare these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. Let's pray.

[2 : 55] Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that you speak to us through it. And so we pray now, as we turn to listen to your word, that you would be speaking by your spirit to our hearts, that we might learn, but also be able to have our lives changed by the wonderful grace that you have given us in Jesus and through your word. Amen.

Imagine the challenge of climbing a massive mountain. It's a treacherous adventure ahead, and you don't know anyone who's ever climbed it before.

Maybe that's what you feel as you read the first part of Titus chapter 2. Maybe last week you left thinking, I'd love to model the Christian life. I'd love to be self-controlled.

I'd love to adorn the gospel. But Paul, it just feels like climbing an unclimbable mountain. Well, what if I told you, as you climbed the mountain, you had a Sherpa with you, an expert climber to help carry your gear and to give you instruction as to how to keep on going.

Each day, he points you to the top and says, let's keep going for it. The top is in view. It'll be worth it when we get there. Not if we get there, when we get there.

[4 : 29] Wouldn't it be great if we had a hope like that for the Christian life? Wouldn't it be great if Paul told the Cretans something like that?

Well, he did. He's given a spur to help take us there and to help us along the way. That's what we see in our passage today. Paul's moved from the life that accords with sound doctrine to explaining what that sound doctrine is. He's moved from explaining what the Christian life should look like to telling Titus, the Cretans, and us how it's possible to live this life.

Paul's telling us how we are helped up the mountain. Last week, we looked at a beautiful gospel people. This week, we're looking at the beautiful gospel.

To show us where we're going, look briefly at verse 14. God gave Jesus to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession.

It's not just a rescue from something that Jesus has done. It's a rescue to something. And we will see that the rescue will be complete at Jesus' return.

[5 : 55] God will make us into his gospel showpiece. That's what Paul unpacks in these verses. God will do this. Jesus gave himself to redeem and to purify.

That's where we're going. That's how we can live the Christian life that Paul teaches in verses 2 to 10. So let's see how it works out. In Titus, Paul starts with what our lives should look like in chapter 2.

He instructs that Christians are to model to each other self-control. He says that Christians are to adorn the gospel in the world by how they work and live.

That's the mountain. But Paul goes on to say that this is because the grace of God has appeared, verse 11. For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation.

And so that's our first heading. God's grace has appeared to save and train us. Paul builds the life of self-control that Titus is to teach on God's saving grace.

[7 : 05] Paul quotes the strong words of the Cretans' own prophets, that they're liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. If this was what Crete was like, then the church was going to be full of people that were like this or that were recovering from this.

But he says, Christ has come bringing salvation for all people. God's grace has appeared. Jesus has been to the cross. And with that, he has brought salvation to the grumpy, drunken, gluttonous evil beasts that were in Crete, never mind the ones that were in Glasgow.

Now, we can't let the strength of Paul's language in this letter make us think that we're any better. Remember, Jesus' death and resurrection was as necessary for us as these Cretans.

We have been saved from the same fate as they have. The truth is the same for us. Jesus came bringing salvation for all people, the men and the women, the older and the younger.

Remember, in fact, verse 9, even the slaves, Jesus came to bring salvation to Crete and to Glasgow.

[8 : 26] And Paul says in verse 11, it is because of this, because we are saved, that we can have lives that adorn the gospel. We have received salvation from sin.

Jesus really has done that for us. All of us here, if we trust him, will receive his salvation. No matter the extent of our wretchedness or what our hearts were like, salvation has come and thankfully it has.

The impossible burden of living a perfect life to please God is gone. Jesus has made sure of that. So for us, as we try to live lives that model and make the gospel beautiful, we do so freed from the burden our sin brings.

Living a godly life is not what saves us. Jesus is. So living the self-controlled godly life comes from him. It's because we are saved that we desire the life that shows the beauty of the gospel.

Paul is saying, a godly life can begin once we are saved. So as we stumble and feel with our self-control, thankfully, it doesn't condemn us.

[9 : 50] Salvation has appeared. We're freed to live the Christian life. It's like the story of the school teacher who took aside the pupil struggling in advanced class, desperate to do well, but afraid of failing, wanting to drop out.

And the teacher says, how about I give you a pass now? You don't have to worry about your final grades. How does that sound? Pupil?

Sounds unbelievable. Yes, I'll take that. The pupil is now freed from the burden of possibly failing the exam. And that's similar for us.

But Paul doesn't stop there as he works out the significance of God's grace. It doesn't just save us. Verse 12, Paul calls the grace of God our trainer.

God trains us. Not only does Jesus bring salvation, he trains us to live the Christian life. It's like the Sherpa climbing alongside us, teaching us as we go.

[11 : 01] God reminds us of his grace. He exposes our sin and he encourages us to keep going. To have in mind the future, the top of the mountain.

He disciplines us as we go along for the ongoing journey. This is how we become self-controlled, upright and godly. By knowing our sin is forgiven, it's dealt with.

And that slip-ups are not fatal. That we will continually be made aware of how we need to change. Disciplined to keep going.

Learning what to say no to and when to have self-control. But finally, being encouraged that our certain hope is in the future.

The prepared heavenly city that awaits us, the mountain top. Training is a process. An athlete training for the Olympics doesn't start the day before.

[12:04] My flatmate recently ran a marathon and he started training well in advance. Some of it was miserable. But he was disciplined along the way to keep doing what was needed.

There was constant progress in his fitness. Sometimes a big jump, sometimes little progress. But in the end, the training had to happen the whole way through until the event happened.

And when he started running the marathon, he ran with the finish line in sight, knowing that if he reached it, he'd get his medal. And sure enough, he did. And God has wonderfully saved us, but he doesn't then leave us alone to struggle through the Christian life.

He's with us as we climb the mountain, baby step by baby step, along with us, reminding us you have been forgiven. You have been saved and training us to keep doing our best to say no to sin and helping us to see ultimately the inheritance that awaits for us in heaven.

You see, we're not just saved from our past sin. God is concerned that we are now increasingly a people, verse 14, redeemed for his possession, purified, zealous for good works, a showpiece, something that makes the gospel look beautiful, from verse 10.

[13:45] we can live lives that accord with the gospel because of the gospel. You see, the true gospel truly transforms, and it's not instant, but it's ongoing, and it increasingly trains and transforms us to reject wrong desires.

Oh, how encouraging that is to me because I know what my heart's desires can be. but constantly to change them, to desire the future more than anything else.

This is why it's possible for Christians to adorn the gospel and make it look beautiful. It's because the gospel is at work in us to change us. When we adorn the gospel, it's not because we've worked hard at it on our own.

it's because the gospel has saved us and is now training us in the present. We have a new desire to actually please God.

Paul didn't leave the Cretans despairing at how they could ever make the gospel look beautiful. He tells them that when they live godly lives, it will look beautiful. And then he tells them that the same grace that saved them is training them for that.

[15:09] And central to the training is waiting for the future. One commentator says of these verses, the gospel is good news for the last day, but it is also good news for the next day.

That's where we are. We think about the next day. How do I get through it honoring Jesus? How do I get through today being faithful to him?

And the answer is the last day, desiring the last day. If you look at verses 11 to 13, there's a pattern. Verse 11, grace appears.

Verse 13, God's glory will appear. But in between, is verse 12. And it tells us that the grace of God trains us in this present age.

The age in between the two comings of Jesus right now. The key to the training is in verse 13.

[16:11] While we're in between Jesus' first coming and his return, we are waiting for him to come. We're waiting for his return and glory.

We're trained to look towards the future, knowing that we have been saved and so being confident in our blessed hope.

Trained to deny the life that ought to be silenced in 111 and trained to live a life that is suitable to speak in 19. Denying laziness, evil, gluttony now, because in the future we'll have far better.

In the future we'll have rest forever. We can be self-controlled now and upright now if our desire is for the future. it's not a case of being carried up the mountain without our feet touching the ground.

It's a case of God at our side helping us progress slowly upwards, showing us the top and reminding us that if we trust him, though we might slip, we will not fall to the bottom.

[17:23] We will keep going to the top. And so our second heading is God's glory will appear and this sustains us.

God's glory will appear and this sustains us. As we go up the mountain, we must have the top in view.

We must live waiting for the return of Jesus because when he comes, all that we hope for will be reality. the struggle will be over.

We'll be with God, sin banished, Satan defeated. We'll stand at the top of the mountain with Jesus, the victorious king. We must wait eagerly for that day, for the day when our faith becomes sight.

All the promises that we have now by faith will be real to us by sight. Paul reminds us that one day all the gospel promises will be realized, that Jesus will return, the wait will be over and that's what we live for.

[18 : 37] On that day, we will say goodbye to worldly desires forever. Self-control won't be a struggle then. we will be completely freed of sin, its penalty, its power and its presence.

We will at last be completely purified, the perfect showpiece of the gospel at work and will be truly God's treasured possession with him.

God's grace has saved us and in the future we'll enjoy all that that means. We live in between these two appearances and both of these truths give confidence for the Christian life.

Salvation is secure, that's done and one day in the future, the struggle we endure now will be over and it'll be worth it. We know the day will come when Jesus returns and so much glory that it's difficult to fathom.

We know that we can deny the flesh now because in the future we can enjoy the fullest satisfaction. We endure now because the words of the last day, well done, good and faithful servant, will be worth it.

[19 : 59] We'll be with Jesus in his victory over the world, the flesh and the devil. The future is great, the gospel is good news for the last day, God but for now we wait, struggling up the mountain with salvation already secure, God helping us with each step.

Jesus will return but verse 14, he has already given himself for us to redeem us from lawlessness.

He has rescued and redeemed us from a life that seems so common in treat, the lawless life.

Each of us who profess to follow him know all too well what we've been rescued from. A life that's equally as spiritually dead, but we're rescued from that to something, from lawlessness to be purified.

now remember that this passage is in the context of people adorning the gospel, so the purifying of verse 14 and the zeal for good works are not random comments plucked out of the air, no.

Paul's telling the Cretans that they can live lives that adorn the gospel, they can live lives that make it look beautiful people because that's what they've been rescued for.

[21 : 35] Verse 11, God is building his showpiece and we're it. Paul was not wanting to make a group of self-righteous people.

He leaves it clear that the life that accords with sound doctrine must actually accord with sound doctrine, the truth about Jesus' death and resurrection, the truth about how we're saved, the truth about the future.

And so the life is one that's shaped by those truths. That's the beautiful life. So the spur, the fuel, the way this life happens is the same way we're rescued.

It's by God's grace. the way up to the mountaintop is trusting Jesus' death and resurrection and waiting for his return. It's living between the two appearances of Jesus.

Grace behind saving us, grace beside training us, and glory in front steering us. So verse 15, Paul finishes this chapter just as he began, declare these things, teach these things, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

[23 : 01] He bookends the passage with the command to teach these precious things. He says, exhort and rebuke the two sides to this.

Where there's a Christian who's in no way living like a Christian, then rebuke, point to the life in verses 2 to 10. But to the Christian struggling to live that, exhort and encourage with these gospel truths, he hasn't left us to struggle towards holiness on our own.

He continues up the mountain with us, steering us, training us, helping us. The gospel is good news for the last day, but is also good news for the next day.

Amen. Let's pray. Father, we thank you that you have given us Jesus, that his death and resurrection was your display of grace to us.

Lord, we ask that you continue to help us adorn the gospel, help us to show that it's beautiful, help us to model self control to each other.

[24 : 20] We thank you that you do this by your grace, and so we pray that you continue to do so. We thank you for it, that it's brought us safe thus far, and we thank you that it will lead us home.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
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