

## Grace Has Appeared

Zach Wallace | Titus 2:11-15 | May 17, 2020

### Intro

Goodmorning! My name is Zach. I'm a Pastoral Resident here at City Life. We're a little ways into the second year of my residency and it's been a wild ride training and learning how to care for the church in a time when that looks really different. But that's the only uncharted territory I find myself in. My wife Grace and I are overjoyed to be welcoming our first child into the world just a month from now. We've spent the last several months preparing; preparing our home, preparing our hearts, preparing our minds. We've read a ton of articles, and taken the classes, and sought counsel on how to raise our son well. But no matter how much I try to prepare myself, I know that there will come a day when for the 1000th time, or it might only take 3 times for me, I will lose patience with my son when he asks me "why," and hating the words coming out of my mouth that I have promised myself I would never utter, I know that will say "because I said so." And that's exactly what we might expect Paul to say in our passage today. So far in Titus, Paul has been giving instructions for how the church in Crete is to conduct themselves as members of the household of God. He's pointed out the problems with Cretan culture, set qualifications for leaders, and given specific instructions for the different demographics of the church, that they would "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior." Paul is telling them that their conduct needs to be fitting with their identity as God's people. He has the authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ (1:1) and all of the things that he has told Titus are good and right and don't necessarily need an explanation. But, in our passage today, Paul is going to tell them why and how they are able to do this. He's going to unpack what the gospel is, how it sets them apart, how it enables them to live differently, and how it offers us so much more than we could ever dream of. Paul tells us what Christ has done, what he is doing, and what he will do. Grace redeems us, grace renews us, and grace reminds us of our hope. Redeems, renews, reminds. Let's pray.

### Redeems us

First grace redeems us. So let's jump into the text starting in verse [11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people](#). The grace of God has appeared. In 2 Timothy 1:10 Paul says that grace has been "manifested through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ." Grace appeared in the world. Jesus has come in the flesh bringing grace through his life, death, and resurrection. This is the gospel; the good and true story that Jesus has defeated sin, death, and evil through his own death and resurrection and is making all things new, even us. Christ has brought saving grace for all people. This isn't to say that everyone will be saved, but it is a grace that is offered to all people and all kinds of people. All the different people Paul has talked about so far: male, female, young, old, those in authority (the overseers), those with none (the slaves), even lying, evil, lazy Cretans. There is no one who has done anything that is too grievous or is

too far away for the grace of Christ to redeem them. Christ has brought hope to the darkness. This is such a fundamental thing that it can almost be easy to overlook. Jesus Christ, fully God, came into the world, fully man born of a virgin mother, and lived a perfect life that no one else could have lived until he was murdered on a cross and paid the penalty for our sin, having the full wrath of God poured out on him, he was laid in a tomb and he rose from the grave on the third day. Grace appeared in Christ! And he has redeemed us. He has paid our debt with his blood and we are freed from sin, death, and evil. Grace has appeared bringing salvation. Salvation that we need. And oh do we need it. There is nothing we can do to earn our salvation. No matter how much we crush it at work, or care for the poor and oppressed or fight and march for justice, all good things, but they're not enough. It is only by grace through faith in our great God and Savior Jesus Christ that we can be redeemed. And grace has appeared! This is incredible news. The appearance of Christ is good and hopeful news for all of us; every single person. Our only hope of salvation from the just penalty for our sin is the grace that Jesus brought with him when he came into this world as a person. If you are not a Christian today, your only hope of salvation is found in the grace of God that has appeared in Christ's coming. Whether you feel it or not, you are in desperate need. And if you do feel it, if you're seeing your need, Christ is welcoming you right now. His grace is free to anyone who would receive it by faith.

### **Renews us**

For those of us who have professed faith in Christ, the good news of Christ's coming and the work of grace doesn't stop after we have been redeemed by grace. Grace redeems us and then grace **renews us**. [For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, Verse 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age](#), Grace appeared and did a saving work in us and now it is doing something else in us. We are redeemed by saving grace and renewed by transforming grace. This passage tells us that grace renews us in two ways, in our training and waiting. First in training, grace instructs us. It gets to work teaching us, to what, [to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age](#). This word renounce is the same word we see Jesus use in Luke when he says ["If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."](#) Renouncing ungodliness and worldly passions isn't just calling things bad or disliking them, it's rejecting something else's claim on our lives, the slave to sin and death we once were before grace redeemed us. And we have to keep doing this over and over. Training isn't easy. If you've ever trained for something, you know that it's tough. Training means teaching ourselves to do things that don't come naturally to us. It's not natural to run 26 miles or deadlift 1100 lbs, nor does it come naturally to us to say no to sin when in the heat of temptation, and it takes hard work and discipline to do it. Thankfully, we have something new within us. We have a good and patient teacher, the grace of Christ. Grace takes us by the hand and leads us away from ungodliness and

worldly passions and toward [self-controlled, upright, and godly lives](#). Self-control, uprightness, and godliness are three positive qualities that encompass the different relational spheres in which we live. Self-control refers to our relationship with ourselves. It's that internal battling dialogue when we are tempted. Upright points to our social relationships. It's the way the others perceive the change in our hearts by the nature of our actions. Godliness points to our relationship with God. It's our following after and imitating his character. This is an all-encompassing growth in holiness. Saying "no" in self-control is a lot harder than just politely declining a cup of coffee. It's denying something deep within us that screams for gratification. Maybe for some of us it is that cup of coffee. We're refusing to satisfy what we once longed for because grace has taught us to see holiness as better. We can say no to sin in self-control because we have been freed from the power of sin and trained to see holiness as beautiful. I went to a private Christian school when I was young and my teachers would very likely have told you that I had problems with self-control. I must have written out every verse in the Bible that mentions self-control 1000 times. Did that help me grow in self-control? I wouldn't say so. I needed grace to teach me to love my neighbor, that my classmates learning was more important than my jokes, to respect my authority, my teachers knew better than I did and I needed to listen to them, that my true identity in the saving and redeeming work of Christ means I don't need the attention of everyone in my class. Grace taught me that maturity means knowing when it's appropriate to make a joke and to love and respect those around me. But my training in self-control hasn't stopped. A few months ago John Seago called me out for having had too much to drink. He saw a lack of self-control in me and grace compelled him to bring it to my attention and exhort me to conduct that is fitting of someone in the household of God. Grace's training work continues in us. It is an ongoing process. Christians can say no in self-control to gossip because grace has trained them to love others and not talk behind their backs. We can say no in self-control to another drink because grace has taught us that drawing near to God is better than escaping our emotions. We can say no to pornography because grace has taught us that purity is not trying to take something from us, but offer us something better. That's how grace trains us. It teaches us to treasure holiness and the no of self-control becomes not only so much more attractive, but possible. This is why we as the church can be a people of peculiar goodness, because we treasure something greater than our sin and it makes us look and act differently.

### **Reminds us of our hope**

So grace has redeemed us and is renewing us, but how long must this renewing work last? What are we waiting for? Verse [13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, waiting for our blessed hope](#). We are trained, and as we train we wait. As Grace and I have been preparing for parenthood, we've been eagerly anticipating the arrival of our long awaited son. The training and waiting are intricately tied together. Our longing for the birth of our son makes the work of preparing for his arrival a joy. Both training and waiting require patience and diligence, but this training and waiting in holiness is not a

never-ending self-denying drag. Paul says we have a blessed hope. Blessed hope is kind of redundant. Paul is telling us with an over the top redundancy that our hope is extra good. We have a happy joyous hope. Our hope is in Christ's return. We are waiting, not for our pain to go away, not for a vaccine, not for stay at home orders to be lifted, we are waiting for the return of the King - our blessed hope! We eagerly await the day that Christ will return once again in the flesh and complete the work of grace in us. When that happens grace's forging work in us will be done and we'll get to be fully and gloriously with him. When my son is born, my work of training and growing as a parent will not cease, but when glory appears grace's training work will be completed. While self-control and the self-denial of the sins we hold precious sounds like, and is, hard work, we have a hope that is coming that is so much better, a blessed happy hope. So we can rejoice. Again, the work of grace doesn't stop as it trains us. It will complete its work when Christ returns, and he will return soon! This is what makes us such a peculiar people. Our eyes are not on this world. We should have our eyes fixed on Christ, waiting and anticipating his return. I can't remember where, but I once heard an old pastor preach that if you are not eagerly anticipating Christ's return it's for one of three reasons. He shared them in ascending order of gravity. 1 You have trusted Christ as your savior, but have not been taught well about the second coming of Christ. 2 You have trusted Christ as your savior, but you have grown cold to the beauty of Christ and forgotten that his return will fulfill your deepest longings. 3 You have never trusted Christ as your savior and submitted to him as the King of your life and you are in desperate need of the saving work of his grace. Where are you this morning. Are Christ and the promise of his return beautiful to you? We should long for Christ's return. We should pray for Christ's return. Not just when terrible things happen. We should be dissatisfied with the state of our world and yearn for Christ's return. [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.](#) And while we wait we train. Grace teaches, instructs, and trains us to be fit to Christ's likeness. We become Christ's possession and our conduct reflects it, unlike those unfit in 1:16 who are unfit for any good work. Our blessed hope gives us joy and zeal for good works, good works that flow from training from grace and hope in glory. We've been saved from sin and lawlessness and freed to train in righteousness and good works that befit God's people. Our faith and hope lead to practice and our belief to behavior and all flow from grace. We're being redeemed from lawlessness. Lawlessness is rejecting God's law and living by our own rules. It's the submission to the Big Me that says I'm the boss and no one can tell me what to do. It's a refusal to submit to Christ's reign and become a people for his own possession. That's a people, not a person or individual. The church. We're not saved and purified on our own. We're redeemed and called into a family. A family of God's own possession who are zealous for good works. A central part of God's redeeming plan is calling his people to a new community, a community that is marked by their zeal for good works. This is why we have City Groups. Our City Groups are little communities of people scattered all throughout our city that are training and practicing living a countercultural life together. A life that puts others' needs before our own

and celebrates goodness and fights sin. If you aren't in one of our City Groups I would strongly encourage you to connect with one. They are where we as the church get to practice what God is calling us to here. We get to challenge one another and encourage each other to renounce ungodliness and to hope in Christ's return. They're the brothers and sisters that I trust to call me out on my sin and to point me to my savior. And they do it. The Tings show me what countercultural hospitality looks like when they invite us into their home and their lives. Not only do they host us physically but they invite us into the joyful and the hard moments of their life. They invite us to celebrate and mourn with them. Thomas is so quick to notice a need and to seek to meet it. Eli is a constant cheerleader and it's so clear that he is with and for the people around him. These people are zealous for good works. They are impressing Christ on one another and, and on me, because we are together as a community, we get to train and wait and grow together. Are you a part of the people of God?

Finally Paul exhorts Titus verse 15 **Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.** These are imperatives from Paul. They matter and Titus needs to do them. These things matter to the lives and souls of the people of the church of Crete and to us. Paul encourages Titus with the source of his authority to teach and instruct these things. It doesn't; come from his age or knowledge or his mastery of the concepts, praise the Lord. His authority comes from the doctrine, the doctrine of our God and savior, which holds all authority and his authority as an overseer who upholds that doctrine. I can tell you confidently that our Elders seek diligently to faithfully uphold the trustworthy word. Allow them to exhort and rebuke you. John Seago also called me out for trying to impress other people. He saw that I was speaking in an effort to gain the approval of the people around me and he brought it to my attention and he was right. And he helped me see Christ as more precious and to rest in my identity as his possession. The life that grace is saving and training us to is countercultural. **Let no one disregard you.** - There will be opposition. Paul expects that Titus will receive some push-back on this. The gospel and doctrine of God our Savior (2:10) is countercultural to the first-century Cretans, and here and now, and Titus, and we, will need to remain firm. Our hope is in the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. In him we are saved, in him we are renewed, on him we wait and while we wait we train. And we do it together as people of his own possession who are zealous for good works. Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again. Is your faith in Christ's redemption? Are you striving to train in godliness? Is your hope in his return? Let us be a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works, a people of peculiar goodness.