

THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

"For the grace of God which brings salvation to all men hath appeared, instructing us that, having denied ungodliness and worldly desires, soberly and righteously and godly, we should live in the present age, awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all lawlessness, and might purify to Himself to peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2:11-14.

Our text clearly sets forth some tremendous truths about the glorious gospel of grace. It is not concerned with doctrine versus life or life versus doctrine, but it does teach that there may be the right kind of a life, and that such a life grows out of sound doctrine. In the Bible, doctrine is never separated from life, nor faith from practice. It is duty that springs from the doctrine, answering to it and influenced by it. There is no divorcement of Christian doctrine and Christian doing, or between faith and works. According to Paul, duties are always based upon doctrines, creed determines character, and belief is expressed in life.

The term salvation implies that men are lost, and so lost that they cannot save themselves. Man did not deserve salvation. Neither did he solicit it. It was entirely the result of divine grace. The grace of God made all the arrangements necessary for salvation, devised the astounding plan, determined the means, and fixed the time. It provided the author of salvation. It brought the message of salvation. It presents the application of salvation to the soul.

In the New Testament grace refers to that in God which makes Him love the loveless and strive to help the hopeless. Grace is the forth-putting of God's power for the good of mankind, and the motive for it is mercy which is born of love. It is not the outcome of human merit. Whatever good it confers is undeserved. Grace is the original cause of all the blessings we receive from God. We are called by His grace, justified freely by His grace, sanctified by His grace, and kept by His grace.

Salvation is the restoration of man to the knowledge, the image, and the friendship of God. Redemption is not something that takes place outside of the man; its achievement is within. It is a raising of the soul from ignorance to knowledge, from vice to virtue, from selfishness to unselfishness, from materialism to spirituality, from the mastery of Satan to the reign of God. Every Christian has the forgiveness of sins, peace with God and eternal life.

Grace brings the salvation which has been designed for us within our reach. Before any benefit can accrue from the gift there must be a willingness on the one side to give, and a willingness on the other side to receive, and unless there be both of these conditions realized no satisfactory result can ensue.

I. The Revelation Of This Gospel.

1. The Cause of this Revelation.

The revelation of this gospel of grace was purposed in the mind of God, prompted by the love of God, prophesied by the prophets of God, and perfected by the Son of God. In other words, the grace of God is the cause of this revelation. In this world, men will never be able to understand the full meaning of the word "grace." All of the goodness, love, and mercy of God are crowded into that little word. His infinite grace was revealed at many times and in many ways in the Old Testament era. But, it was revealed in a special way by the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, to which coming our text refers specifically.

Grace is the unmerited favor of God. It is the putting forth of His power and blessing for the welfare of mankind, the motive for which is mercy born of love. Our text informs us that the grace of God hath appeared. It does not tell us that it awoke or sprang into existence, but that it appeared or was manifest. Grace for sinners dwelt in the heart of God from the beginning, but it was a secret hidden from the world until it was brought to light by the incarnation of Christ.

2. The Consequence of this Revelation.

Salvation of human souls is the consequence of the revelation of the grace of God. Salvation means deliverance from the guilt of sin, the penalty of sin, and eventually the presence of sin. To be saved is to be forgiven and to have the power of sin broken. The grace of God delivers us from sin and its consequences, restores to the favor, image, and communion of God, and preserves us amidst all the dangers and temptations of this present life until we reach the heavenly home.

The grace of God has provided salvation for all, and made it available to all classes of men -- rich and poor, educated and uneducated, moral and immoral, noble and ignoble -- and men of all ages. The grace of God knows nothing of race, country, or clime. It has appeared for the benefit of all men. It offers salvation to all who will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. God makes no exceptions, and excludes none except those who exclude themselves. While Paul says that this grace brings salvation to all, he does not say that all receive the salvation which is brought to them. He does not describe an actuality, but a potentiality and a possibility. If the grace of God does not bring salvation to any man, who hears the gospel message, it is because he will not receive the gift which the grace of God brings him. This salvation is adapted to all, revealed for the benefit of all, and must be proclaimed to all. Every saved person has the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and eternal life. All the unsaved need and may have these priceless treasures.

II. The Requirements Of This Gospel.

1. Learning from Christ.

The grace of God not only makes possible our salvation, but it also instructs and disciplines us. The expression, "teaching us," implies that we must learn. After we have been born into God's family, we must be learners or disciples of Christ. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30. We learn from Christ through the Holy Scriptures, prayer, meditation, reading, conversation, godly teachers, and various daily experiences.

2. Living for Christ.

Christ instructed His churches to teach their members, who are His disciples, "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The purpose of our learning from Christ is that we may live for Christ as we should. This gospel of grace insists upon an inseparable connection between creed and conduct, or doctrine and life. Therefore, our learning must be translated into living. "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." This text equally recognizes the negative and positive sides of our living for Christ.

Viewing it from the negative standpoint, there are some things to deny or lay aside. They are ungodliness and worldly lusts. These expressions are an epitome of all that is sinful and wrong in human life. Ungodliness, which must be abandoned, begins when one declines to live for God. An ungodly person is one who simply thinks, speaks, and acts without any reference to God; one who does not consult Him about anything. Every man who has the grace of God in his heart will think much of God. God will enter his calculations, God's presence will be his joy. God's strength will be the basis of his confidence, and God's glory will be the chief end of his being.

Worldly lusts imply sensuality, selfishness, pride, and the desires or longings which attach themselves to the fleeting things of this life. Ungodliness and worldly lusts are not only to be renounced and repudiated, but they must be defied, resisted, and given up.

After teaching us what we are to cease connection with, the gospel of the grace of God instructs us what to do. Viewing the text from the positive standpoint, we observe that it says, "We should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." That is a clear and simple way of setting forth one's duty to self, to others, and to God.

The gospel of grace requires all believers to live soberly. They should live soberly in all of their eating, drinking, thinking, speaking, and acting. There is to be sobriety of conduct in all worldly pursuits. Believers should resolutely endeavor to gain and keep control of all their desires, and do their best to resist every form of temptation.

The gospel of grace requires all believers to live righteously. They should be the most punctual, reliable, and trustworthy of all people. Righteousness of life, which is required of all believers, means exercising justice towards all others, or rendering to all men their dues. Our living righteously is simply the outliving of the inliving Christ.

The gospel of grace requires all believers to live godly. To live godly is to recognize the presence, the love, and the claims of God in our every-day life. Godliness has an internal and an external phase. The internal phase consists in a right knowledge of God, an entire trust in Him, a complete subjection of will to Him, a fervent love for Him, and a genuine longing for the full enjoyment of Him. The external phase consists in adoration and worship of Him, and faithful service for Him. Godliness is the nature of God, implanted at regeneration, outworking in the daily conduct of the believer.

We are required to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, here and now.

3. Looking for Christ.

"Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." There are two appearings of Christ, the one in grace and the other in glory. He is the means of making the grace visible, and He will be the means of making glory visible. And these two appearances are connected in such a manner that the former is evidently incomplete without the latter.

What is meant by "the blessed hope?" It is the hope of Christ's second coming in glory, that hope which is the joy of life, the strength and comfort, of every instructed Christian soul.

It is the hope that when He comes again we shall rise from the dead, if we have fallen asleep; and that, if we are alive and remain, we shall be changed at His appearing. That the sun is shining is no more certain than Christ will come again. Our faith in the absolute certainty of His second coming is based on the testimony of the Word of God. We have accepted the promise of His return to be a living hope, a glorious hope, a purifying hope, a blessed hope, and a comforting hope. It is also a great stimulus to victorious living and Christian activity.

We know that He came first to redeem us. We believe that He will come again to receive us. As believers in Christ, we are not only ready for His return, but we should be thrilled with anticipation as we earnestly look for it. If we know our hearts aright, we really want to learn from Him, live for Him, and look for Him, while we are here between His advents of grace and glory.