

When Grace takes us to School

Titus 2:9-15

Introduction: Over these last few weeks, many of our students have felt the joyful release of the end of the school year. Sleeping in, vacation, and trips to the beach on hot summer days lay ahead, along with the prospect of no homework, deadlines, and for some of you, no reading (books on tape give partial credit). Though some of us love school and have dedicated their lives to the pursuit of learning (same kind of people who run for fun), most of us embrace the break and appreciate the change in schedule. School is often a means to an end, to grow in wisdom, knowledge, character, and expertise in community in order to be prepared for future ventures. Some go to school in a classroom, some on a battlefield, workshop, construction site, studio, or any other place where training takes place. We view this training as temporary, preparing us for “real life”. What we learn in Titus 2 is that no one ever graduates from God’s school of grace in this life.

We started last week looking at how training happens in the church. Older are trained in wisdom and the word over time, and they are to allow that wisdom to flow down to the younger, teaching successive generations by modeling what mature belief looks like. Titus, commissioned to help acknowledge elders, was to teach the young men, while the older women were to train the younger women. This would require some “formal” declarative teaching, but mostly it was intentionally living life together, passing down practical wisdom and giving a reference point to attain.

The way Paul explains this to Titus is different than how we often think. We often want to know the “why” before the “what”, the reason or how before we know the activity we are committing to. But we will see that in verses 1-10, Paul lays out the imperative, what the church should be doing, and the purpose behind it, and now he brings to the forefront the indicative, or the basis by which we can function and live out those commands. In verses 9-14 we see that God’s grace takes us to school, assuring, instructing, and causing us to hope, and that grace provides the means by which we can function in this perpetual reproduction of training in the church.

Assignments of Grace

Older training Younger

Slaves/Workers working differently

Slaves are to be **submissive** to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative,¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good faith,

Paul jumped to a final category that encapsulated both men and women, young and old when it came to the slave class in the church (which would have been more of the “middle class” of the church). This was most likely a majority or large percentage of the church, which necessitated a separate category. For us, this shows how healthy teaching plays out in the home, church, and work, since slaves were those under authority, just as our working class is today. They were given 2 positive and 2 negative commands:

Be pleasing - Workers emulating the gospel seek to please God in all things, and thus seek to uplift their company, bosses, and customers.

Do not talk back - This is where submission truly kicks in, when there are differences of opinion or preference with a boss. We want to justify and defend ourselves, but the call of a worker is to submit to the authority over us, and as long as we are not called to violate God’s law or our conscience, we are to seek to support.

Do not steal - This is more than just stealing paper clips, its stealing time. It's what I did when I was 19 and working at Grace Baptist, where we'd find a classroom on the night shift as a maintenance worker to hole up in rather than finding things to clean. We steal when we do not work to our fullest, even when our bosses are not looking or will ever know.

Be faithful - We are dependable, hard working, have integrity, can be trusted, and treat others with dignity and respect. Gospel driven workers should be the hardest workers, most dependable, and biggest servants.

Purpose of Grace Filled Learning

Why does all this matter. I want to show you three key phrases, each translated "*so that*". These *hina* clauses are key to understand purpose and intention.

For the sake of God's Word and Name

that the word of God may not be reviled. (5)

Why is it so important for our men to be taught and be mature and dignified, our older women to be reverent and younger women loving their husbands and children? Because the world is watching, and they are either going to understand the grace and truth of the gospel or see it as a big fat sham, reviling the word of God. It seems like our world's love language is COMPLAINING, whether it is about a spouse, kids, job, boss, government, you name it, we complain about it. When we join in, and yet claim to know the truth about Christ, we offer nothing different, nothing distinct, nothing better. This does not mean we should have plastic smiles and showy marriages. Rather, we live and walk humbly, trusting the Lord and seeking to honor Him each day in all areas of life, knowing that these relationships are ways to show the world the consistency of the gospel.

For the reality of our opponent

so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. (8)

Why were young men to be self-controlled and Titus to match his teaching with good works and integrity? Because the world is watching, and they are ready to pounce on inconsistency which they will chalk up to hypocrisy (and they may be right). Notice that Titus was to act a certain way so that nothing evil would be said about **US!!!!!!!** How you act in this world affects the whole reputation of our church, which affects our mission. What you act like on the ball field as a coach, what you post on social media, and how you act at work reflects on this whole family. We think that we leave here to a private, personal life with consequences only felt ourselves, not realizing that the ripple effects are felt by all of us. This is why John Bakker sat down with me when I was 18 (never to return to live) and said I was representing Christ and the Bakker family, no matter where I went. This is a proper weight to feel as we exist in this world.

For the attractiveness of the gospel

so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. (10)

The last is my favorite because its positive. Why are we to work a certain way in whatever job or industry we find ourselves in? Because the truth and reality of the gospel is to be worn in such a way that becomes attractive to others! The word "adorn" means layering clothes in such a way as to become more attractive. How you live and work matters! Truth becomes beautiful when we live out the deep realities of the gospel everyday, willing to be wronged, willing to serve, willing to sacrifice.

Curriculum of Grace

We define grace simply most often, which is good and helpful: grace is unmerited favor, something that cannot be earned, and God giving us what we do not deserve (mercy is God withholding what we DO deserve. But there is far more to be understood concerning grace. The Bible talks about grace **coming**, “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17), of grace **reigning** ‘even so might grace reign through righteousness” (Rom. 5:21), and of grace **strengthening**, “be strong (i.e. be strengthened) in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:1), and here we will see grace **educating**.

There are two major realities that stand out in this small but packed section on God’s grace. **The first is** the fact that grace appeared in the person of Jesus Christ, both his first appearance bringing salvation and he second bringing glory. So grace is not merely an idea, it is personal. “Grace is not some abstract doctrine or theological construct. Grace comes as Christ does. Grace is as personal as he is. In fact, **Christ is grace**. The unmerited favor of God is what Jesus is about, but it is also who he is. We should thus see grace as a **personal action by a personal God** who saved us from our helpless condition out of pure love.”¹ God’s grace is His personal expression of love to us, and that love is unlike we’ve ever experienced before since we absolutely did not earn or deserve it, yet it was lavished on us like a favorite son.

The **second** is found in the timing of how grace works out in our lives. Notice that grace is seen in a past work of salvation, a present work of growing in holiness and becoming more like Christ (a process called sanctification), and a future aspect that looks forward to Christ’s coming again in glory. These aspects make up a three-fold braided cord of the gospel. Now, though I have girls I stink at braiding hair. But a few things that braids of three parts have: they are extremely secure; it is very difficult to see which strand is which while looking at it. In other words, the aspects of God’s grace in salvation overlap, since they are all important, all bring security, and are necessary for a complete gospel. This is important to keep in mind when we think about grace, since some have been lulled into a trap thinking that only one aspect of grace (usually grace for salvation) is all that matters. “God saved me, and all the rest of the stuff is just stuff” does not explain Biblical grace well, and in falling short, can far too easily communicate a false gospel. But what are these three aspects?

Past work of Christ’s Grace

For the **grace of God has appeared, bringing** salvation for all people (11)

This is a summary statement of the purpose and work of Jesus in His coming to earth, incarnating Himself to redeem sinners to the Father. This is the good news that we cling to, knowing that salvation is found in Jesus alone and no one else (Acts 4:12). There are a few principles we see here:

- **This is good news since salvation is offered to all people** – In the context, the elect of Titus 1:1 are seen as younger men and women, older men and women, and slaves. Grace is for sinners, salvation extended to those without hope, who are wicked, stubborn, and cold-hearted. No one is out of the reach of salvation, and God can and does melt the hardest of hearts. I was talking with a family member this week dealing with a rebellious person in their life, who is rejecting all authority, declares hatred toward parents, and desires to do things his way, on his own. What is the hope in that situation? When all techniques, tactics, and parental wisdom fails, God’s grace is trusted, knowing that God can turn a rebellious son into a loving one.

¹ Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *Titus*, p. 339.

- **“To all men”** does not refer to universal salvation for everyone, but rather to the universal opportunity for salvation – This means that the offer of salvation is real for everyone, since “anyone who enters through Me, he shall be saved.” (John 10:9). “He does not offer salvation to a person either as elect or not elect, but simply as a sinner.”² God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9), and people are condemned because they reject God and His offer of salvation (John 5:24, 38, 40; 2 Thess. 3:2). God’s grace is sufficient for all, but not all trust in His gracious and sufficient provision. This is why John 3:18 is so important coming off of John 3:16, “Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but *whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.*”

Present training in Christ’s Grace (12)

Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives **in this present age**

Grace in salvation is typically in the realm we are comfortable talking about. We understand that it is by grace we have been saved, by faith, and that he saved us not because of works but according to his own mercy (Titus 3:5). But grace in the **present** is just as important. There are two abused views of grace. One is that grace at salvation is free, but not costly. It is free and thus nothing else afterward is required nor is it important. The second goes something like this, “Yes I sinned, disobeyed, or did it my own way. But why are you giving me consequences? Where’s the grace, bro?” Each of these misses the full understanding of how God’s grace works. Notice that when Paul talked about grace in term of **training, teaching, and the way we bring up children**. This is an ongoing curriculum that it progressively taught in our walk with Christ. This grace trains us in two main ways:

1. **Trains us to renounce** – Far from being a soft, cuddly, easy form of living, grace in Jesus teaches us to turn our back on those things that categorized us *before* salvation and that currently describes the world around us. Worldly passions are difficult because we live in the midst of it all the time. Yesterday I was talking to friends and explaining people moving from Simi to Rancho, and relatives of mine moving from California to North Korea. They had no compartment, no measure of thought to compute the logic of this move. “Why would they do that?” My friends are the type that work and work to build and acquire, and they actually have no time to enjoy the fruit of their labor. God’s grace trains us away from worldly passions, moving our minds and hearts toward Christ, seeing Him as our greatest treasure. When this happens, we take the good by the hand of God and respond in praise, and take the hard from the hand of God and respond in worship.
2. **Trains us to live** – Grace is not about earning but it is about effort. Grace frees us from pointing to our works for salvation, but frees us to work harder than ever (1 Cor. 15:9-10). It is the grace of Christ that moves us to a life of self-control, godly, and upright lives. This is a beautiful tension, and wonder of paradox, where God works in us by his grace which allows us to work like never before with completely new motives and purpose. **Philippians 2:12-13** explains it this way:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

² John MacArthur, *Titus*, p. 110

God energizes our purpose and actions so that we are no longer living for ourselves but for Him. Grace is not passive in our lives. It enables, frees, and empowers us. To see grace as something in the past and not presently working in and through us means we have misunderstood what grace truly is.

Future hope of Christ's Grace 13-14)

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.

Anticipating the return of Jesus is not optional in our life with Christ. Not only do we all face the reality of death, as maturing Christians, we should see this day as more glorious rather than something to face with dread. When the believers at Thessalonica first came to faith, they were marked by repentance that showed in turning *from* idols *to* serve the living and true God, and *to wait* for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:9-10). We see that waiting, longing for, and hoping in the return of Christ was a mark of God's grace as we move away from worldly passions to treasuring Christ. Note a few amazing principles:

- **Our blessed hope is the Divine Jesus who is described God and Savior** – What are we waiting for? We are waiting for Jesus to return so that we will be with Him forever. We know we will become like Him when we see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). Notice here that this is a plain declaration of the deity of Jesus Christ. When Jesus returns we will see Him, and in seeing Him, we see the Father, since He and the Father are one.
- **Jesus death was voluntary** – Grace shows itself in love, and we serve a unique God and Savior who **"gave himself for us."** He did not wait for us to clean ourselves, to get right, to become worthy. He demanded righteousness, so He provided the means. No one forced Him to die for us, but freely gave Himself up. Forced servitude is not love, so we know that Jesus died to satisfy the wrath of God, to glorify the Father, and to give Himself for us.
- **Jesus death was vicarious** – How did Jesus buy us back? He gave Himself **FOR US**. He died in our place, taking on sin for us.
- **Jesus' redemption was possessive** – *Why did He die?* We are His precious bride that He not only died for but desires to present pure and free from blemish (Eph. 5:25-27). We cannot live with Him forever in our sin, so Jesus not only took care of the penalty of sin in His death, He broke the power of sin in His ongoing grace, but one day He will do away with the presence of sin when we are fully redeemed. This reminds us that we are not our own, but were bought with a price, and that we are no longer slaves of sin but are slaves of Christ (Rom. 6:22). We have purpose, meaning, and direction in life as we wait for Christ's return knowing that in the time here and now, we are like an engaged bride who is waiting for our wedding day, anticipating our groom, and preparing ourselves for Him. We engage in good works because that is what Christ wants us to do and what He has prepared for us to do in His absence. We are His, and that is good news since He will not let us go.

Are you learning in God's school of grace? Has grace saved you, are you being trained in it, and are you waiting for future grace to come when Jesus comes in full glory? What aspect of this cord is not true of you, or are you not exercising? What have you misunderstood about grace? Training in grace happens like all training: we must remember what is true, feast on what's nutritious, and exercise what we learn. So we continue to grow together and seek to live out the following:

" But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Titus 3:4-7