

Keynotes from Steven Driver's am Sermon on 31/10/2021

Text: Titus 2 v 11-14

Series: "Living godly lives in a godless culture"

Part 7: "Zealous for good works"

Scripture references from the ESV

Titus 2 But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. ² Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. ⁶ Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. ⁷ Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, ⁸ and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. ⁹ Bondservants^[b] 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, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, 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. ¹⁵ Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

A question that often comes up with new Christians is this: If Jesus paid the price for our sins and we are guaranteed a place in heaven, why do we need to change or do anything? Throughout the Bible, we read that Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice for sin, and therefore we are judged by his merit and not ours, so why is there any necessity to do good works, and to live a holy life by living out the instructions we have been given in this letter to Titus.

How can we answer that question?

At times it might sound as if Paul is teaching the same doctrine as the empty talkers and deceivers he refers to in **Titus 1:10** (see p4). Those men were teaching a legalistic faith by works equation, rather than basing their instructions on a real faith in Jesus. They told people they must do the good works spelt out by men so that they could earn their way into the kingdom of heaven.

It is easy for us to think this way too. We may think that God cannot like us very much at the moment because:

- We haven't done some particular thing and have failed to fix some area of our life or
- We have thought wrongful thoughts and only done a little of something we should have done more of

These ideas come from a philosophy that is rooted in faith by works, leading us to be fearful of God and anxious to appease him.

Our culture lives by this philosophy too. It tells us the lie that people who follow the way of the world are the free ones and Christians are imprisoned by rules. Yet if you look at what is being called 'cancel culture', you will quickly realise that if you don't conform and act in line with what culture currently says, then you are likely to find yourself on the outside looking in. It is legalistic and essentially faith by works where culture is concerned. The motivation to conform in this is also fear, and indeed the world we live in seems to be defined by fear.

The options seem to be fear of God or fear of man,

yet Jesus tells us 'I came that they may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10).

In **Titus 2:11-14** (above), Paul shows us that we can live a life that is truly transformed from both those options. This new life is zealous for good works, not out of fear and a need to conform, but out of what we have received and will receive in God – his appeared grace and his appearing glory.

1. God's appeared grace

God's grace has always existed, and everything he does is planned. His love, kindness and goodness are seen

throughout creation in every single moment. It is only by his grace that we have breath in our lungs today, and he extends that common grace even to those who reject him. This God of grace, who has always been in existence, has now appeared (v11 above). Paul shows us that this grace is doing two things.

a) **Grace transforms us**

Paul is inviting us to look back to the physical appearance of God on earth, in the form of Jesus. The living embodiment of God's grace on earth, God's grace incarnate, has brought about salvation for all people, so that everyone can hear about it. Because God's grace has always existed, we can know that this plan of salvation has also always existed.

- God's grace, from before time began, made a way in which salvation from the punishment of sin could be made possible for all people, though not all will put their trust in Jesus.
- This way of salvation involved the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross as he took the punishment for our sin, dying in our place
- The power of sin over all who put their trust in him also died with him there.

He has done it all! For those of us who have put our trust in him, he has paid the price for us so that we can be:

- Truly free from all lawlessness and all ungodliness
- Truly free from worldly passions and the control of this world

Hence, we are free from fear and the need to conform because he has purified us and given us a new heart of flesh instead of a heart of stone, as God promised (**Ezekiel 36:26** see p4). He has given us life and made us his precious possession, as he planned all along and has pointed to throughout history.

Living as a Christian has nothing to do with what our works achieve.

It is God who has saved us, who calls us to himself, who has redeemed us through
Jesus.

Grace transforms us

but grace doesn't just leave us to it!

b) Grace also trains us

We have a new heart but our body has to be trained to use it! Though we have been justified by the blood of Christ and freed from the slavery of sin, becoming Christ's possession, we are not yet living perfect lives. At the moment, we don't know how to use this new heart. We are not able to fully enjoy it and so we are not able to fully enjoy God.

- Our actions don't make us Christians or make us more of a Christian – for our union with God is all his work.
- Our actions do make a difference to our enjoyment of God – for our communion (our enjoyment of our union with God) involves a two-way relationship (**Tim Chester – Enjoying God**)

The grace that saves undertakes our training so we can enjoy our salvation now.

Grace is challenging us to live godly lives, not through fear and conformity, but for the enjoyment of what we have gained in Christ.

As promised in Jeremiah **31:33-34** (see p4) the grace of God writes on our hearts, so that we can know how to enjoy him, his creation and each other all the more. Every time we open the word of God, his Spirit is writing that truth on to our hearts and minds. He is training our bodies to use our new hearts.

- We are learning to say no to ungodliness because we want to say yes to godliness
- We are learning to give up self-centredness in favour of self-control.

What motivates us to keep going with that training?

Having looked back to what has already appeared, how it transforms and trains us, Paul now asks us to do something

that seems physically impossible – to **look back to when grace appeared** and at the same time to **look forward** to:

2. God's appearing glory

When we think of training, we generally think of putting in the work to achieve the goal we're aiming for, whether it be physical or mental. How will we grow in godliness and learn to say no to worldly passions? How are we trained and what is our motive for it? Paul tells us that this is not like our human understanding of training. It comes by:

- a) **Waiting** – the way God trains and motivates his people is by waiting. We are called to be in a posture of waiting, not doing. The Christian life comes from a place of waiting ...
- b) **In the blessed hope** – Paul underlines for us the sheer joy to be found in this hope by calling it blessed. This hope is unlike any other hope you will come across – it is the object of certain joyous supreme everlasting hope. Peter calls it a living hope (1 Peter 1:3 see p4)
- c) **Of the glory of Jesus-** we are to be in a posture of waiting for the blessed hope of the glory of God appearing, as the Saviour, Jesus Christ, returns. Then we shall see him as he truly is, in all his fullness as he finishes his salvation work.

When Jesus first came, we got glimmers of God's glory, but when he returns we will see the whole picture. Jesus will complete his work in us and we will be so overcome by his glory that our bodies and hearts will be completely as one. He will take us and hold us as his precious possession. We will live in the glorious new creation, dwelling with our God with every day better than the previous one. We will be fully redeemed.

When we wait in that blessed hope, the glorious return of Jesus, it creates in us a zealotness for good works. We want to start living the truth we have found in him now.

Grace transforms and trains – glory motivates

In any difficult situation, a Christian motivated by the glory of Jesus will want to deal with it in a way that reflects what they have received and will receive in Christ. They will ask other Christians to pray for them, they will read the word and allow grace to train them. God has transformed us for training by his word and we are motivated to keep coming back to it, and to live it out. Regular time to be with God is vital.

God's appeared grace transforms and trains us as he has begun his saving work in us, and his appearing glory, completing his saving work, motivates us to live it out.

That is why Paul can give instructions on how to live. This way of life is not rooted in legalism, fear or conformity. It is rooted completely in the saving work that Jesus started and will complete. Until then, we get the joy of living out a life now that reflects both aspects. When we live that life which truly adorns the sound doctrine of our God and

Saviour, it becomes a beautiful witness to those around us as people see a life transformed by the gospel.

- Are you going to church because of legalism, fear or a need to conform or is your heart truly transformed by the gospel?

If the latter, then be encouraged. We are in a privileged position where we can regularly delight in God and we need to take up that glorious privilege every day, reading the word, worshiping God, singing out truths. Then we need to put our training into practice and go out and share what we have been given.

**Fill your life up with looking back at the appeared grace and looking forward to the appearing glory on a daily basis,
and see how the glorious gospel works out in your life even today**

Titus 1:10 For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.

Ezekiel 36:26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Jeremiah 31: 33-34 ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

1Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to **a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,