

This Blessed Hope  
Titus 2:11-15

Romans 5:1-11  
Romans 5:12-21  
Psalms 19:7-14

This morning we are going to be closing out chapter 2, of Titus looking at the last 5 verses or so. Let us just go ahead and start out this morning by reading our text, I want to go ahead and read the whole chapter to give full context to what Paul is saying here in these last 5 verses. But before we read, I just want to take a moment to also point out that Leading into chapter 2 here, at the end of chapter 1 Paul is talking about the false teachers specifically the issues that have arisen in the church at Crete, we can see that they are law bringers, imposing a sense of morality and external reformation as we see in verse 13 of chapter 1, “ This testimony is true, therefor rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.”

This is the contrast that Paul sets right before he talks about the conduct of believers within the church. He is pointing out the teachings of these false teachers, and implores Titus, to teach otherwise as he writes to Titus, in verse 1 of chapter 2...”But as for you.” Last week we talked about this, as Paul addresses various groups within the church and sets for expectations both for them, and for what Titus is to teach them. Let us go ahead and read our passage, starting in verse 1. (Read Titus 2) So it would seem to me, that these last 5 verses here stand in parallel with the last few verses of chapter 1 IN chapter 1 he is talking about law, and some self imposed righteousness brought in through as he says, “fables and commandments of men” But in the opposite here in chapter 2, he gives the reason for our conduct, not out of law, not to seek justification, but simple for the sake, that “the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly righteously and godly in the present age.”

The stark difference between these 2 lines of thought, law, and grace, is that law is predicated upon the ability of man to live righteously, to live justly, and fulfill such requirements to find oneself holy enough for God. But grace, says, you are unholy, unworthy, and unable..but God makes you holy, worthy, and able through his mercy toward you. One is seeking justification by our own ability, and the other is justification given to us as a gift, by God through Christ. This puts the Jewish mind in a difficult spot, they strive to honor God, yet by the denial of Christ there is not the ability to do so. The righteousness found by the law, is an external righteousness, by that I mean it appears pious, appears holy, but has little effect on the inward reality. Where as the new birth through the death of Christ works inwardly flowing outward the good works of which the law and commandments seek to force. Again it is the opposite spectrum, law vs grace. I wouldn't just put them on opposite ends, but rather they are in opposition to one another, law denies grace, and grace denies law.

By that I mean, law sets for requirements needed for justification, for holiness. Do these things or you are unclean, live this way or you are unworthy. Grace has no prerequisites, God loves us, gives us the gift of faith, and we believe. Grace denies the law, because it is no longer necessary. With a heart change, comes a life change for the gift of God has done what law could never do. Change the heart and mind of people.

This is what God does, this is his business, changing the hearts and minds of people so that they may believe, so that they may know him, and that they may live a life worthy of him. We do not know who God will call, we do not know who God has chosen to work his work of grace and mercy, so we teach, and we preach to all people calling them to repent and believe. I don't need to stand up here every week reciting what you can and cannot do in life, or point out some law or principle to follow, for through the new birth we have been given the Holy Spirit. We have Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb that was slain, the final and true sacrifice, written upon our hearts. This is a reality that no law could touch, that no law could create, a pure heart can only be made by God himself. As Paul wrote in verse 15 of chapter 1, "to the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure." Good works, and law keeping won't get you into heaven, will not make you worthy of standing before God, for if the heart has not been purified through the new birth, all good works are defiled, for they carry with them a weight of self worth, and self righteousness, but Christ is the only righteous one, the only one worthy, and he as imputed, laid to our account, his own righteousness so that we may be declared righteous.

In the instruction that we see from Paul in chapter 1, and here in chapter 2 that we have been looking at over the past few weeks, is not a new law, but rather should be descriptors of God's people. Paul is not saying here, be sober-minded, patient, loving, kind, not greedy, or given to wrath as a way to make oneself righteous, but is rather describing the traits that should be found in God's people. There is a level of exhortation here, a reminder that this is who we are to be, but in the end it is a looking at what is flowing outward from a clean heart which loves God. In the end of this chapter, he shifts from behavioral traits to the doctrine that makes them a reality. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, and it is that grace, that salvation that teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and it is by that grace that we can live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age.

This is the basis that produces these standards of conduct that Paul writes for all believers within the church, for older men, older women, young men and women, and servants. Our lives are to be driven by the reality of this internal truth, that God has changed us, and his Holy Spirit indwells us. Do we fail? Of course we do, as long as we are in this flesh we will fail, but a heart that loves God, that truly loves God, will strive to be these things that Paul lays out here, again not to gain something, but because of something, because of his love for us, because of his sacrifice for us, we are able to be like him in our conduct, as he is our father and we are his children. God in his infinite love and mercy for us, has reconciled us to himself by his grace. It is God who brings salvation, by his grace, and that salvation is not only poured out upon the Jew, but upon the Gentile, upon all of mankind, for there is no distinction, neither male nor female, rich or poor, slave or free.

This is the free gift, given to us without our input, that is we bring nothing to this equation, other than our sin and condemnation. So much of religion, not only today, but basically since the beginning of time what's to add to it God's grace, wants to bring in some ritual, or some works. But the definition of Salvation through God's grace is that it is he who has done it all, God's grace comes from his own favor toward us, his own capacity to give. God demands righteousness, he is holy, he is righteous, and we are rebellious, and sinners. The only way we can be righteous is by his power, it is he who must make us so. This was the point of the law given to Moses, this is the thread that goes throughout all of scripture from Adam to us today. That mankind is fallen, mankind is lost in sin and rebellion against God, and mankind is incapable of reaching God, so it is God who had to reach us and he has done so through his Son.

There is a saying among our Reformed brethren, that Moses pointed to Christ, and Christ points back to Moses. No, all things point to Christ for he is the ultimate end of all prophesy, of law, and is the beginning of our righteousness and justification before God. All things point to Christ, and even in these passages here what Paul is calling Titus to do, is implore the people to live Christ like, because while we are still in this flesh, we need reminders, we need encouragement, we need instruction. It isn't that our works, our goodness enhances our faith, or our righteousness, but rather it proves it, because again it is what flows out of a heart that loves God. As soon as we add anything to the grace of God, we diminish it, we make it about our ability, our works, what we have done, or can do. But it is all about God, and what he has done, simply because he has chosen to show mercy upon his creation and not utterly destroy her for her rebellion.

Paul here is pointing to Christ, in verse 11 he says, the grace of God has appeared. Christ has appeared, and has brought salvation to mankind, the one who has conquered death, who has defeated Satan for he has broken the chains of sin that so easily ensnares us by the shedding of his own blood in our place. The cost of our sin, is death, the righteous judgment of a holy God requires it, but through Christ's death that judgment has been satisfied, and we who are in Christ have been made free of that curse. God's necessary righteous punishment of sin has been satisfied, and it is he who has provided it so that we may be reconciled, so that we maybe brought close to him. This becomes our driving force, our motive for living a Christ like life, the grace of God working in us. As Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15:10 "but by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored all the more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me." or 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:12, "for our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience that we conduct ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you."

The grace of God is our driving force, his work is what drives ours, his love is what drives our love, his work on the cross is what drives our work as his followers, for as it says in verse 12, "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age." The grace of God instructs us, teaches us to deny the ways of the world, to deny our own sinful nature, and chase after Christ. As one commentator said, "There is a renunciation aspect to Christianity. Lust comes from the source of a satanic world system. It originates from pride, status, power and greed. These lusts are inordinate longing for material possessions, vanity, pleasure and power. Refusal to take part in the pleasure of sin must be clear. We reject the delight that such temptations offer, we tear them up by the root. Otherwise, they will put a blemish upon our spirit. Satan will put his stamp on us. Christians march to a different drumbeat than this world system, we are different because we have been washed by the blood of Christ.

There is a stark difference here between what Paul is instructing, and what many of these teachers who were in the churches in Crete were teaching. Paul teaches that righteousness comes through the grace of God, and right living, and good works come from a proper understanding of that grace. Where as many others teach, that right living and good works are driven by law keeping. The whole point of much of Paul's ministry is that for the believer there is no need for an external law to guard us, or protect us from evil, no ritualistic life style, will protect us from the sin that lies within us. That is why the change must come from within, that is why this change must be enacted by God and God alone.

For we do not have the power, nor the capability to make what is inside us holy through outward ritual and reformation. We maybe able to fool those around us, we may be able to make ourselves appear pious and clean, but God doesn't look at the shell of man, he looks at the core, at the heart.

The continual operation of God's grace in our lives is the foundation for our Christian living. By that I mean it is by God's grace that we continually grow in our understanding, in our faith, in our trust and belief in him, as he guides us, and shows us through his word. When the grace of God is revealed to us, when it takes a hold of our lives, it challenges us to live according to God's will for we see what he has done, and recognize that we owe him everything. Our good works, and our conduct is not to earn favor, but to show favor for what God has done first. Knowing we have been given such great a gift that we strive to be worthy of it. And even our striving is driven by what God has done, As Paul said, it is not us, but the grace of God working in us to strive, to labor, to work all the more. As we are looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Our lives our bound in this hope, in the hope of his return, and in the hope of one day being with him in heaven. We are looking forward to that day, we live in a constant expectation of the imminent return of Christ. This hope, brings a sense of peace and assurance to us as we face day to day the struggles of life before us. A hope knowing there is more then this, a hope knowing that is meaning and purpose to it all, and it is likewise this looking forward to that glorious day that fights against the temptations of our flesh. Looking forward for a greater joy, a greater pleasure, a greater peace that we have been promised. This is not empty wishing, but is grounded in the promises of God himself. Who sent his son to ensure the salvation of his people. As verse 14 says, "who gave of himself for us, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people, zealous for good works." He is the center, the reason, the purpose, and the object of which our hope clings. The author and finisher of our faith, the Lord of Lords, the changer of hearts, the might king who gave of himself so that we may know him.

This is why we read Roman's 5 this morning, Because it is all about this blessed hope. It is about God's work in the lives of his children, breaking through the curse, breaking through the sin and rebellion changing the hearts and minds of those who reject him, those who do not know him. He died for us, while we were sinners, while we were deserving of the death he suffered, he took it upon himself so we may know him and live. Christ knew us, before the foundation of the world..he loved us, before the world was, and in due time reveals himself to us. Those who now believe, rest in this reality, pray for others to know, as God continues his work in calling his people to himself, revealing himself to the blind, and expressing himself to the deaf so that they may see, and they may hear of the glorious hope given to us by the King.

Jesus gave of himself, the ultimate gift, to lay ones life down for another. He was not a victim of the Jewish religious leaders, he was not a victim of the Roman Empire, but willingly gave of himself so that he may redeem his people from their sin, as Paul writes in verse 14 "to purify for himself his own special people." God has a plan, and a kingdom that is built out of unworthy people who has has made worthy by his grace and mercy toward them. Again this is the reality that we live in as Christians, that is because of what he has done, that we are made holy, that we have been set apart for him. The supernatural renewing of our heart is we can love him, and it is by that love in which we do good works. Paul says God's own special people, zealous for good works.

We strive to be Christlike because we love him, that is all, that is the driving force for good works within the Christian. Not to gain favor, but simply because that is who we are in him. As John wrote, (1 John 3:1-2 ) “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when he is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.”

So, we persevere, we pray, we worship and praise him until he returns. Teaching and preaching the gospel so that others may know, so that others may believe, and rest in this blessed hope.