

Titus 2:11-15 The Amazing Grace of Jesus Christ

Just this week in my quiet time, I read Acts 15, where the apostles and elders gather together in Jerusalem to decide whether Gentiles must be circumcised to be saved. Listen to Peter's words: **“And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will”** (Acts 15:8-11). Here, they clearly attribute salvation to the grace of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Lord; and this, in the same way God is the Lord. Look at v. 13: **“waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ . . .”** I think of the words from Is. 45:21 as God says: **“Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me.”** Or, Is. 60:16: **“and you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”** In Peter's first sermon he says: **“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified”** (Acts 2:36). This fact is what distinguishes Christianity from other religions. This is the reason Jewish leaders of his day wanted him crucified. Jesus is Lord! He is God, who took on flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). This means we can talk about the grace of God as also being the grace of Jesus Christ. And v. 14 this morning will help us see this amazing grace. I have 3 truths: 1) Grace gives; 2) Grace redeems; and 3) Grace purifies.

1. Grace Gives the Supreme Gift. Let me begin by emphasizing the gift given. We see grace as Jesus gives himself. Look at the first part of v. 14: **“who gave himself.”** Let's focus for a few minutes on the word “himself.” I must say that as I have studied and read, meditated, and prayed about these 3 words, I've realized there is more meaning in these three words than we can ever exhaust, even if we were to fill every book ever written about this subject and try to come to the end of its depths, we would fall short. If you were to ponder the depths of meaning from these three words for eternity, you will not come to the end of the depths of his glory! **“He gave Himself.”** This is the supreme gift of grace. If God were to give you great worldly wealth and honor and riches and knowledge and wisdom and not give Himself to you, it would all be in vain. If God were to give you the greatest gift that you can possibly think of, it would still fall infinitely short of the gift of Himself! All our hopes, all our happiness, all our understanding, all our wisdom, all our noble desires, etc., rely upon the fact that He gave himself. In saying this, I refer to Jesus as God, as v. 13 makes clear: **“waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”** I know there is great mystery here. And if we could unravel and discover all the glories of the essence of God, we ourselves would be God. This is why we must begin with the giving of the Son, who “appeared” (v. 11), and is the glory of God (v. 13). Let's focus on his glory of the Son as God as we read together.

Pastor: He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Col. 1:15-17)

Congregation: And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. (Col. 1:18-19)

Pastor: Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. (Heb. 1:1-3)

Congregation: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1-5)

Brothers and sisters, there is no greater display of grace in this world than the that which is given in the Son of God, Jesus Christ! All of God's grace comes to us through the person of the Son. (And I must add that the grace of God is applied to us through God, the Holy Spirit.)

Application: Ps. 27:4: *“One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.”* This means that the best thing I can do in my preaching is do make much of him and to prepare you for heaven, not earth. *“Nothing makes a person more useful on earth than to be ready for heaven”* (Piper).

Now, so far, I've emphasized the “person” of the Son as God's gift of grace. But, this passage quickly leads us to the “work” of grace by the Son. I think this was Paul's emphasis back as we read from Acts 15:11: **“we are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus.”** Also, “he gave himself” is one of Paul's favorite phrases. And when we see these words by Paul, they are always in reference to Jesus' work, what He has done to save his people. Gal. 1:3-4: **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age . . .”** Gal. 2:20: **“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”** Eph. 5:25: **“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . .”** 1 Tim. 2:5-6: **“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.”** I think of Mark 10:45 which says, **“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.”** In these verses, there is an “exchange” in his giving of himself. It is “for us.” What follows is what this “giving” accomplishes. The grace of Christ in giving himself for us results in “redemption” and “purification.”

2. Grace redeems. Look at v. 14: He **“gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness . . .”** In this truth, we see an emphasis on the work of Christ to save us from sin. Here, we see the word “lawlessness” which is also translated as “iniquity” and even “wickedness.” It is anything that is contrary to the law of God. Paul's picture for this work of Christ is redemption, which comes from buying the freedom of a slave. I've never been a slave, per se, at least in the way we

think of slavery. But, I've read books and plenty of stories of slavery in this country and in the world, of slaves set free because someone bought their freedom. Probably the prime example Paul had in mind when he used this word "redemption" was the people of Israel as slaves in Egypt. They were in bondage of slavery for many years, greatly oppressed and mistreated. But God says to Moses: **"I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment."** Well, God does deliver and redeem them from slavery. And from that time, the word "redemption" has been associated with God's deliverance or "salvation" from something. Ps. 107:2: **"Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble . . ."** Or Ps. 119:134: **"Redeem me from man's oppression, that I may keep your precepts."**

Now, these are wonderful pictures of redemption or deliverance from trouble. But, we must go further with this picture. We are not "earthly slaves," merely performing our tasks under the hand of an earthly master. The Bible describes us as "slaves to sin." Jesus says, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin"** (Matt. 8:34). Paul says also: **"Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?"** (Rom. 6:16). Brothers and sisters, **"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"** (Rom. 3:23). We have inherited the sin nature of our first father, Adam. And in both nature and desire, we sin. Let me ask, *"Which of you has not sinned?"* Look back on your life and count your sins. How many do you remember? How many do you see? When I look at my life, I recall outbursts of anger, tantrums when I didn't get my way, small lies, big lies, evil thoughts against my neighbors, and many times my own friends. I see cheating. I see disobedience to my parents. I see laziness, gluttony, giving my eyes attention to things I should not, coveting someone else's position or possessions, etc. And these days, I see others weekly and daily. And I don't even know the depths of my heart concerning sin. Brothers and sisters, this condition sounds like slavery to me. What can I say to these things: **"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"** (Rom. 7:24). And what about you?

The picture of redemption that fits our case is like that of Hosea. God says to this man, **"Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress . . ."** And then we read: **"So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley"** (Hos. 3:1-2). Hosea bought her out of slavery, even when this slavery included adultery and unfaithfulness. In the same way, Christ **"gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness."** We are chained with infinite shackles of slavery and sin, which leads to death and separation from God. For He is holy! And in 1 Pet. 1:16-19 we read: **"You shall be holy, for I am holy . . . knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ . . ."**

Now, I hope you are starting to see the "exchange" I spoke of earlier in the sermon. He "gave himself for us." Jesus was not a slave to sin. He was sinless. And He laid down his life as a ransom for sinners. And in his death, he became a curse; **"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us . . ."** (Gal. 3:13). God punished him "in the place of sinners," "for us." In our place he stood. And then, by faith, those who look unto him, He gives

his righteousness. This is why: **“There is therefore, now no condemnation for those who are Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Rom. 8:1). **“But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Rom. 6:22-23). We are delivered from the sphere of sin. We are no longer slaves of sin, but slaves of righteousness. **“If the Son has set you free, you are free indeed”** (John 8:36). Oh, the Amazing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Application: The blood of Christ is the only price to redeem us from sin. Our sin was against an infinitely holy God. Therefore, our payment must be of a price that is also infinite in value. This is why ONLY the Son of God can be offered and received as payment in full.

3. Grace purifies. Next, we see another effect of the grace of Jesus Christ. He not only delivers us from the domain and power of sin, He also purifies us. Look at the 2nd part of v. 14: **“and to purify for himself a people for his own possession.”** Now, we can’t merely be set free from sin in the great plan of salvation; we must also be purified as a holy people. For without which no one will see God. Paul was merely taking OT pictures showing their fulfillment in Christ. Throughout the OT God’s people are pictured as his bride. Go and read the Song of Solomon, where this picture is numerous. In Isaiah we read: **“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels”** (Is. 61:10). Why do you think in many cultures, the bride wears white? It is a picture of purity.

Also prevalent in the OT is the idea of cleansing. Israel is usually pictured as rebellious and “adulterous” in their marriage to God. And though they are not clean, God often promises he will “wash” or make them “clean.” Ezek. 36:25-27: **“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 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. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”** And this “cleansing” is always to prepare them to be his people. Ezek. 37:23: **“. . . But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.”**

In the NT we see the church as the bride of Christ. Let me go right to the end of the story from Rev. 21:2: John saw this revelation: **“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”** This is what Paul is saying in our verse. God is holy! And in order for us to see him and be with him and enjoy him forever in his presence we must be “pure.” Do you remember Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus? Speaking of cleansing, he says, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”** (John 3:5). Well, through the amazing grace of Jesus, particularly his work, as Christians, we are purified. Again, we must see an exchange. In the gospel of Christ, we give him our sins. And he gives us his righteousness. And in this way, we are “pure,” made ready as God’s special people.

Turn with me to Heb. 9:11-14: **“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”** Let me end with some a few applications

Application: We are zealous for good works. Through the work of Christ, we also receive the Holy Spirit. And He works in us to sanctify us. And, our desire is for good works. This is why we do the things we do as Christians.

Application: to the elders in v. 15: **“Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.”**

Application: On marriage. As Christ gave himself, so should the husband “give himself” for his wife. This means ALL of us, ALL of who we are, holding nothing back. The more we do this, the more we picture the grace of Christ in our marriages.

In closing, Jesus doesn’t merely give “of himself;” but gives “himself.” He truly paid it all. And in giving himself he redeems us from the sin, its penalty, its power, and eventually sin’s very presence. Oh, the Amazing Grace of Jesus Christ!