

The Grace That Trains Us (Titus 2:11–14)

This short lesson walks through Titus 2:11–14 as a compact picture of the gospel. Paul does not treat grace as a soft excuse for sin, but as a powerful force that has appeared in Christ, that trains us in the present, and that prepares us for His coming again. It is ideal for reminding the church that true grace always leads to holiness, hope, and zeal for good works.

Introduction:

1. Many people speak of grace only as something that excuses sin, as though grace were simply a gentle blanket thrown over our failures with no call to change (Titus 2:11–12). Paul, however, presents grace as active, powerful, and demanding, because it comes from a holy God who gave His Son for us (Titus 2:13–14). In these verses, he shows that grace is not a permission slip to continue in sin, but the very power that turns sinners into saints who live differently in this present world (Titus 2:11–14).
2. Titus was left in Crete to set things in order among Christians who lived in a culture known for lying, laziness, and moral laxity, and Paul even quotes a Cretan poet to describe them as “always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies” (Titus 1:12). Into that rough environment Paul sends a message about grace that does not ignore sin, but directly confronts it and teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts (Titus 2:12). The same grace that could train Cretans to live holy and disciplined lives can also reshape believers today, no matter how strong the surrounding culture’s pull toward sin may be (Titus 2:11–14).
3. In four short verses Paul gives a complete time line of grace, looking back to Christ’s first appearing, describing His work in us now, and pointing forward to His return (Titus 2:11–14). Past grace saves us, present grace teaches us, and future grace fills us with hope and zeal for good works (Titus 2:11–14). If we will listen carefully, this passage answers the question of what grace really is and what kind of people grace is meant to produce in every congregation (Titus 2:11–14).

1. Grace Appeared Bringing Salvation (Titus 2:11):

- a. Paul writes that the grace of God “hath appeared,” which means that God’s kindness and saving purpose were made visible and concrete in the person of Jesus Christ, who came in the flesh at a real point in history (Titus 2:11). Grace is therefore not just a feeling in the heart of God, but a revealed reality in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son (Titus 2:11). When we speak of grace, we are really speaking of God acting in Christ to rescue those who could never save themselves (Titus 2:11).
- b. Paul adds that this grace which has appeared brings salvation to “all men,” showing that God’s saving desire is universal and that no class, nation, or background is beyond His concern (Titus 2:11). This does not mean that all will be saved, but that the offer is genuinely extended to everyone who will receive it on God’s terms through obedient faith (Titus 2:11). In a divided world, this universal reach of grace destroys pride, prejudice, and partiality among God’s people, because every saved person stands on the same ground of mercy (Titus 2:11).
- c. By grounding salvation in the appearance of divine grace, Paul reminds believers that the starting point of the Christian life is always God’s initiative, never human achievement or moral superiority (Titus 2:11). This keeps the church humble, because no one can boast that he or she has earned salvation by personal goodness or religious performance (Titus 2:11). At the same time, it gives great assurance, because if salvation is rooted in God’s grace revealed in Christ, then the believer’s hope is as steady as the character of God Himself (Titus 2:11).

2. Grace Teaches Us How To Live (Titus 2:12):

- a. Paul writes that grace is “teaching us,” using a word that suggests ongoing training and discipline, like a teacher patiently shaping a child over time (Titus 2:12). This shows that salvation is not only about what God has done for us in the past, but also about what He is doing in us day by day through His Word (Titus 2:12). The believer who has truly received grace will submit to this teaching process, allowing God to correct, instruct, and mature him through the gospel (Titus 2:12).

- b. Grace teaches us first in a negative way, calling us to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts,” which means saying a firm and deliberate “no” to anything that pulls our hearts away from God (Titus 2:12). Ungodliness includes attitudes and choices that leave God out, while worldly lusts are desires shaped by a world that is passing away and lying in wickedness (Titus 2:12; 1 John 2:15–17). Paul’s words remind us that grace does not leave sin untouched, but leads them to renounce it decisively as part of belonging to a holy God (Titus 2:12).
- c. Grace also teaches us positively “that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,” giving three clear directions for daily conduct (Titus 2:12). To live soberly is to exercise self-control and sound judgment in our personal lives, refusing to be ruled by impulses or passions (Titus 2:12). To live righteously is to deal justly and honestly with others, and to live godly is to walk in reverence, worship, and loyalty before God, even in a society that does not honour Him (Titus 2:12).

3. Grace Prepares Us For Christ’s Return (Titus 2:13–14):

- a. Paul now turns our gaze forward, saying that grace teaches us to live while we are “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). This hope is not a vague wish, but a confident expectation that He will come again in glory as both God and Saviour to complete what He began at His first appearing (Titus 2:13). When we keep this blessed hope before our minds, it steadies us in suffering and motivates us to live in a way that honours the One we expect to see (Titus 2:13).
- b. Paul reminds us that Christ “gave himself for us,” stressing that His death on the cross was voluntary and purposeful, carried out in obedience to the Father and in love for sinners (Titus 2:14). He gave Himself “that he might redeem us from all iniquity,” buying us back from the slavery of sin by the price of His own blood (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18–19). This redemption is not only from the penalty of sin, but also from its power, so that the believer can truly walk in newness of life (Titus 2:14; Romans 6:4).
- c. Paul further explains that Christ aims “to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” describing the kind of church that grace is designed to create (Titus 2:14). A “peculiar” people are special, set apart as His own possession, distinguished from the world not by arrogance, but by holiness and devotion (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9). Because they have been redeemed and cleansed by Christ, they do not drag their feet in service, but are eager and enthusiastic to do good works that bring glory to God (Titus 2:14; Matthew 5:16).

Conclusion:

1. In this brief passage Paul shows that the grace of God is larger and stronger than many people imagine, because it includes the whole sweep of God’s saving work from the first coming of Christ to His return (Titus 2:11–14). Grace has appeared in history through Jesus, it is at work in believers now, and it directs their hope toward the blessed appearing that is still to come (Titus 2:11–13). When a congregation grasps this full picture of grace, it will not treat grace as a soft indulgence, but as the very power of God that shapes everything about Christian life and hope (Titus 2:11–14). Such a view of grace both humbles us and lifts us up, for it shows us our unworthiness and God’s astonishing kindness at the same time (Titus 2:11–14).
2. Paul makes it clear that grace always calls for a response, because the Christ who redeemed us also calls us to deny ungodliness and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Titus 2:12–14). If we claim to stand in grace yet cling to worldly lusts, then we have misunderstood the very thing we profess to rejoice in (Titus 2:12). True grace changes the heart and therefore the life, moving believers from self-will to obedience and from selfishness to service (Titus 2:12–14). A church shaped by grace will not measure itself by how much sin it tolerates, but by how earnestly it seeks to please the Lord who loved it and gave Himself for it (Titus 2:14).
3. Finally, Paul reminds believers that grace is preparing a people who are “zealous of good works,” which means that they are not content with bare minimum religion, but are eager to do all that they can for the Lord who saved them (Titus 2:14). This zeal grows out of gratitude, not guilt, because the more believers meditate on Christ’s sacrifice, the more they desire to offer themselves in return as living sacrifices (Titus 2:14; Romans 12:1). In times of weakness, sickness, or uncertainty, it is a comfort to know that God can still use willing hearts, and that His grace is sufficient even when our strength is small (2 Corinthians 12:9–10). A congregation trained by grace will therefore be ready to serve, to step in, and to build up one another, trusting that God’s power is made perfect in their weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9–10).

Applications:

1. Let grace shape how you see yourself and others: If salvation has appeared to all men, then no one in the congregation is beyond the reach of God's mercy, and no one has the right to boast over another (**Titus 2:11**). This means the church must welcome repentant sinners with the same open-hearted grace that God has shown, while also calling each one to the new life that grace demands (**Titus 2:11–12**). When believers remember that they all stand where they stand only because of grace, it produces humility, patience, and a deeper love for brethren from every background (**Titus 2:11**).
2. Let grace govern your daily choices in "this present world," especially in the small, unseen decisions that form your character over time (**Titus 2:12**). Every time you deny ungodliness and worldly lusts in thought, word, or deed, you are cooperating with the teaching work of grace instead of resisting it (**Titus 2:12**). As you deliberately choose to live soberly, righteously, and godly, you bear quiet witness that the gospel is not only something you believe on Sunday, but a power that directs your life through the week (**Titus 2:12**).
3. Let grace kindle your hope and your zeal, so that you do not grow weary in serving the Lord while you wait for His return (**Titus 2:13–14**). Remember that Christ gave Himself to redeem and purify you, not so that you could stand still, but so that you could be part of a people eager to do good (**Titus 2:14**). When you feel tired, discouraged, or limited, lift your eyes to the blessed hope of His appearing and ask God to renew in you a willing and zealous heart for every good work He places before you (**Titus 2:13–14**).

Questions:

1. What does Paul mean when he says that the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men (**Titus 2:11**)?
2. How does Paul describe the teaching work of grace in the life of a believer (**Titus 2:12**)?
3. What is included in the "blessed hope" that grace teaches us to look for (**Titus 2:13**)?
4. For what purpose does Paul say that Christ gave Himself for us (**Titus 2:14**)?
5. What does it mean for Christians to be "zealous of good works," and how does this flow from grace (**Titus 2:14**)?

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Questions & Answers:

1. What does Paul mean when he says that the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men (Titus 2:11)?

Answer: Paul means that in Titus 2:11 the kindness and saving purpose of God have been made visible and available to every person through the coming of Jesus Christ, so that no class or nation is excluded from the offer of salvation on God's terms (Titus 2:11).

2. How does Paul describe the teaching work of grace in the life of a believer (Titus 2:12)?

Answer: Paul describes the teaching work of grace in Titus 2:12 as an ongoing training that leads believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, showing that grace both restrains sin and promotes holy living (Titus 2:12).

3. What is included in the “blessed hope” that grace teaches us to look for (Titus 2:13)?

Answer: The “blessed hope” in Titus 2:13 is the confident expectation of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, when He will return in glory to complete the salvation of His people and reward their faithful service (Titus 2:13).

4. For what purpose does Paul say that Christ gave Himself for us (Titus 2:14)?

Answer: Paul says in Titus 2:14 that Christ gave Himself for us in order to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, so that those who are redeemed would belong to Him and be cleansed for a life of holiness and devoted service (Titus 2:14).

5. What does it mean for Christians to be “zealous of good works,” and how does this flow from grace (Titus 2:14)?

Answer: To be “zealous of good works” in Titus 2:14 means to be eager, willing, and enthusiastic about serving God and doing what is right, and this zeal flows from grace because those who have been redeemed and purified by Christ's sacrifice are moved by gratitude to offer themselves energetically in His service (Titus 2:14).