

Lake Cities Community Church
Series: Take the Next Step – Book of Titus
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February 17, 2008

Grace: Our Master Teacher
Titus 2:11-15

The following is a true story. In 1787 Captain William Bligh and his ship the Bounty left Tahiti, an island paradise in the Pacific, and set sail for England. One morning he woke up and was facing mutiny. Many believe that *the reason* the men rebelled, was that they had grown to enjoy the life of pleasure and immortality that the tropic Island offered. There was little to look forward to, from this perspective, in returning to England.

Bligh and his officers were put into a lifeboat and cut adrift. The crew returned to Tahiti. Fifteen of the 24 crew members had second thoughts and decided to stay in Tahiti and wait for the next ship. The remaining nine men met up with twelve young women and six more Tahitian men and one baby and together the 28 of them they set out in the ship to find another Island where they could live. They landed on the then unknown Pitcairn Island. The Island was an earthly paradise. They took all the provisions from the ship, set it on fire and sunk it – so that no passing ship could know they were there. Then, left to themselves, they let loose their passions – they were free to do whatever they wanted to do.

And there on that Island with no authority, no religion and no prohibitions they provided for you and I and all of history yet another sad example that there is a serious flaw in human nature. Someone has said that civilization has a very thin veneer, meaning that – yes, you may find virtuous and ethical people in the general population, but when restraints to evil are set aside, the veneer is broken and the corruption of humanity is easily seen.

Over next 10 years their pursuit of pleasure degraded into a horrible scene of perpetual drunkenness, immorality, fighting and murder. The men became like animals. One man went mad and jumped over a cliff to his death. The killing continued until the women fled barricading themselves into a cave and only two men were left alive. It seemed that the tide of evil would only be stopped through complete annihilation.

Like a corrupt hard-drive on your computer that has destroyed all your precious pictures and documents, the human nature is also corrupt – but we don't need to be on a deserted Island to experience this. We have a natural bent to sin, don't we? In the privacy of our homes we lose control of our tempers, we give in to gossip, we act in undignified ways, we cheat, we lie, we hit our brothers, needle our sisters and give in fully to bad attitudes. And we deep down wonder if it is at all possible for us to live the kind Christian life like Paul has instructed us to in the book of Titus.

Paul addresses this issue in our passage this morning. If you have your Bibles please turn to Titus 2:11-15. Today we finish chapter two, the section where Paul has sought to teach godly behavior to the church, which is consistent with sound doctrine. My question is – “Has Paul only set them up to fail – knowing they could never attain this level of behavior?” No! Not at all. Hope is just around the corner in seven short words. Look at verse 11.

Titus 2:11

“**For the grace of God has appeared.**” Paul is saying – hey you know all that teaching we have been going over – it is possible – not because you are smarter than everyone else. Not because you are a little bit better than the next person. It is possible. Why? Because the *grace of God has appeared!*

Well, Craig: “What is grace?” Grace is, by definition, God showing to you kindness and favor, which you do not deserve. But Paul’s reference here is not, “What is grace”, but “Who is grace?” Grace has appeared in the person of, Jesus Christ. He embodies God’s good will and favor toward you. God’s grace is extended to us through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. This is the gospel – the “good news” that, “brings salvation to all people.” To elderly people, to young people, to children, even to slaves! To every person who puts their faith in Jesus Christ.

Speaking of good news – you may have heard the story of the farmer to went to the banker and said, “I have some good news and some bad news. Which would you like to hear first?” “I guess the bad news,” said the banker. “Well,” said the farmer. “My crops have failed, so I can’t pay off the loan for the seed. And the mortgage note on my house – I will have to default on that too. And the farm equipment – the tractors and harvesters will have to be repossessed, because I have no means to pay. And, I guess the bank will need to take over the farm all together, everything has failed.” There was a long silence. “Well, what is the good news?” asked the banker. “The good news is that I'm going to keep on banking with you,” said the farmer.

The grace of God that has appeared in Jesus Christ is God’s way of saying – despite the utter failure of humanity, “I am still going to do business with you” – because grace has appeared in Jesus Christ. And grace is at work, verse 12:

Verse 12

Grace “trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires.” A double rejection – to reject godless ways – this is personal wrong choices you are tempted to make and to also reject worldly desires – that is the whole world system – (lit: the *cosmos*). The system that is contrary to God’s desires.

And on the positive side grace trains us, “to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.” Self-control is what? The highest sign of maturity in the Christian life – Hey you know those desires to do what is wrong? They are still there, but now that you have been trained by grace, you can control yourself and act rightly. You control yourself, so that you can live an upright life (righteous life) and that in turn is a godly life. There is a progression. Control yourself – and you will live rightly in front of the world and that will please God. And when is all this to happen? Now, today, “in this present age.” This is not for someday in heaven, but today on earth.

When I signed up to be a camp counselor in the summer of 1988, I didn’t know what to expect. I arrived a week early for orientation and I was told I would teach (all summer) the boys how to play tennis, ride horses, to canoe and sail. The problem was, I had no experience playing tennis, riding horses, canoeing or sailing. Impossible! Don’t worry, the staff said, we will train you! We are not setting you up to fail – you will be trained on what to do – how to do it.

Paul is saying to you and I – “Welcome to camp Christianity! Worried about living up to the standards here. Don’t worry – we know you can’t do it. We know your nature is flawed.” That is why we have Grace – the Master Teacher – here to instruct you and teach you and bring you along. You are not without help and therefore you are not without hope.

Verse 13

We reject wrong and embrace the good as we “wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Jesus, who appeared the first time (lit: *epiphany*) as an act of grace, will appear again. He came in humility and will return in glory. And this is additional motivation to live for Him today. Don’t be caught unprepared! You might also note here that Jesus’ deity is highlighted. Jesus is not often directly

called God (lit: *Theos*). More often He is the Son of God or Son of Man, but here his deity is clearly presented – our great God and Savior – Jesus Christ.

Verse 14

“He gave himself for us to set us free from every kind of lawlessness.” Paul now speaks more clearly of the grace that appeared in verse 11. This is the gospel. Jesus died for you – so that you would be set free from sin! This is the good news of grace.

Mark Fallon was a young pilot in the RAF in 1987. He was on a routine training mission in South Wales in 1987 when something went terribly wrong. They lost control of the plane and it crashed, Both Fallon and the navigator on board were instantly killed. However, the story behind the story is that it appeared the plane, was going to crash into the town of Tenterfield. If the pilot and navigator would have ejected at the proper time, the plane would have indeed smashed into that town, causing great damage. Instead, they delayed their ejection to steer the doomed plane into the countryside. The local newspaper editor said, “There’s a feeling in this town that we owe our lives to those two. It would have been no trouble for them to eject.”

That is a picture of God’s grace to us. God’s punishment was coming toward us like a screaming airplane and Jesus could have bailed out on us, which would have left us dead. But rather than save himself – he saved us by steering away God’s wrath and bringing death upon himself – dying for us, instead of us. That is grace – that is the power of the gospel that trains us and compels us to obey Him.

Jesus died for us “To set us free from every kind of lawlessness and to purify for himself a people who are truly his, who are eager to do good. God died for us not because He didn’t have anything better to do that day, but so that He would create a special people for Himself – who are eager to do good. The death of Christ is intended to change the words you speak with your

mouth, the places you go with you feet and the work you do with your hands – Jesus has died so that you might accomplish the good works that have been assigned to you, in this present age.

Verse 15.

“So communicate these things with the sort of exhortation or rebuke that carries full authority. Don’t let anyone look down on you.” Verse 15 is very, very interesting. Why is this verse needed? Well, it brings up the fact that the people at Crete had a problem with authority. Paul knew some of them would not listen as well as they should do Titus. Paul knew that Titus might be tempted to soft-sell the message, because of the pressure of the local church dynamic. And so Paul says: “Titus you are carrying the very message of God – don’t you dare back down from what I have given you to say. Communicate it in your voice and in your manner and in your gestures as one who has full authority. Do not let anyone look down upon you!” This also sets up next week’s message, which focuses on their issues with submitting to authority.

Application:

Our message this morning has been about the appearing of God’s grace – who teaches us to reject what is evil and to embrace what is godly. How do we apply this message? How do you and I become a good student of Grace – our Master Teacher? First, you have to join the class. You can’t be taught by grace until you join the classroom and you do that by believing in Jesus Christ and his death for us – that he steered away God’s wrath so that we might live. If you have done that, next you must next listen to the teacher. That is what Paul said in verse 15 isn’t it? Titus – you have the instruction they need. God’s Word contains the transforming message of grace. When you are listening to a sermon – you are only listening to me in so far as I am communicating the truth of God’s Word, by which God is trying to get your attention. You may

get to heaven one day and God says to you – remember that sermon series on Titus, in your new little church, back in 2008? That was just for you – that was because I was training you in self-control. Were you a good student? Did you pay attention? Or are you the same person now as you were when we started? Finally, set your expectations. Encouragement, correction and discipline will come along the way. When you are being trained, sometimes you are encouraged through success and motivated to greater faith; and other times you need to be corrected and even disciplined. That is normal when you are in training. Painful but normal. Grace will train you – the question is will you be a good student?

Conclusion:

The two men remaining on the Island, after the bloodshed and evil, was a man named Edward Young and another named Alexander Smith – who had led the rebellion.

One day Edward Young found the old ship's Bible – from the Bounty. Known today as the Bounty Bible. Alex Smith could not read, and strangely in one of their sober moments, Young became to teach him to read from the Bible. They started to learn, reading the Bible from Genesis all the way through. They saw that God is holy, and they were sinners. They were gripped for the first time. The reading of the Bible began to affect them. They realized that their lives were an offense to God and they began to change. Grace was beginning to teach them. The children on the Island were the first to notice, and the women and children returned. After Edward Young died, Smith continued to read the Bible – every day. When he came to the New Testament something remarkable happened to him when we read of the life of Jesus. In his own words, he wrote, "I had been working like a mole for year and suddenly it was if the doors flew

wide open and I saw the light, and I met God and the burden of my sin rolled away and I found new life.”

From that moment everything began to change on the Pitcairn Island. The people joined the classroom of Grace and became believers. 18 years later a ship from Boston came across the island. The captain came ashore and there he found a community of people were trained in godliness. They had a love and peace, which the captain reported they had never seen before.

This is a fascinating story and a true story. I did some further research and Pitcairn Island continues to be inhabited by the descendents of those original mutineers. There is a population of about 50 people today on the Island. Yet very few of them any longer attend church and they are facing a new crisis. As they have fallen away from God’s truth, ungodliness has risen and charges of abuse are under investigation by law officials in New Zealand. But there is hope – because a new pastor, Michael Browning and his wife Anne have moved to the Island.

The grace of God trained and educated the people once – and it can do it again, and it can do it in your life. Let’s pray.