

Reflection of Redemption

Titus 2:11-15

It has been said that never before has the gospel been preached as far and wide as today, and never before has it made so little impact on people's lives. Part of the reason that this is true is because the integrity of the gospel has been compromised.

In a way that befits our culture the gospel is often "marketed" as a get-rich-quick scheme. A fast way to better one's life. People often believe that they enjoy a name it and claim it privilege in which God is attendant to their every whim.

Another reason is that people often attempt to divorce obedience from faith. We must be aware of our responsibility as believers to obey His Word and manifest the fruits of repentance in our lives. Truth must be in accordance with godliness. Doctrine leads to duty on the part of the believer. The redeemed life that produces good works brings glory to God. Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven."

This morning as we hold up the mirror of God's Word we will examine the reflection of the redeemed. Let's pray.

Introduction

Open your copy of God's Word to the book of Titus. Titus is the third of the three pastoral epistles. It was written by Paul to Titus, his "true son in our common faith". It is generally accepted that Paul led both Timothy and Titus to saving faith in Christ.

Titus traveled and served with Paul extensively. He was with Paul in Corinth and accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to attend the Council of Jerusalem, during which the issue of Judaizing was settled. Titus, a gentile convert himself, was well-acquainted with the arguments of the Judaizers and their false gospel that he would later deal with as he ministered in Crete.

After Paul's first imprisonment, he took Titus with him to Crete, where they ministered together for a while. When Paul departed, he left Titus behind to carry on the ministry.

There were numerous churches on the island of Crete, and Titus was charged with the responsibility of appointing elders in every city to be overseers and provide instruction to the members of their respective congregations.

Titus is an evangelistic letter in which Paul speaks repeatedly of the heavenly Father and of Jesus Christ as Savior. The ultimate purpose of the letter was to prepare the church for more effective witness to unbelievers on Crete.

In order to do so, false teachers needed to be silenced, thereby removing the poison of their corrupt ideas and living. The society of Crete had a terrible reputation. In fact,

Epimenedes, a Greek poet, quoted by Paul in this epistle, referred to Cretans as "lying beasts and lazy gluttons." The economy was so bad that boys were sold as mercenaries as young as the age of twelve. Hence, the people were left with few male role models and even fewer abiding beliefs. Greed was their god; schemers were admired; and cheating was wrong only if you were caught. Right and wrong were determined by the situation, and rape was not a crime. Believe it or not, some of that sounds familiar, doesn't it?

More generally speaking, unbelievers value their mind, their thinking, their desires, and their whims. Whatever they think and whatever they want governs their behavior. When we were unbelievers "we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind,..." (Eph 2:3).

Paul looked at the evil pagan world and concluded that its self-centered, useless thinking leads to darkened understanding and hard-heartedness. That, in turn, leads to insensitivity to sin and shameless behavior, which then leads to unblushing obscenity. Those who belong to the world make it their business to drag down others to their level.

The believers in Paul's day found it difficult to live differently than the unbelievers surrounding them. They were constantly subject to the vile habits and deeds of the pagans. We have the same problem today. The church in America has difficulty affecting people because our country is so affluent and is constantly inundated by the media's propagation of evil. Our problem isn't getting people in the world to live like Christians, but getting Christians to stop living like the world.

These threatened the spiritual lives of believers and the very salvation of those to whom they witnessed. Paul knew that the gospel message falls on deaf ears when those proclaiming it live ungodly lives that show no evidence of redemption.

So he transitions from the need to silence the false teachers to the exhortation to live out the truth proclaimed. In the first verse of chapter 2 Paul is not saying speak sound doctrine. That's already been covered basically back in verse 9 of chapter 1 where the leaders of the church are instructed to hold fast the faithful Word and exhort with sound doctrine. What he is now saying is you must speak the things which are properly to be associated with sound doctrine, that is those things which affect daily living. Teach the practical requirements for every day life that suit true doctrine. You can't just fill people's head with theology. You must be truly useful by teaching the required behavior that is consistent with sound doctrine. Healthy teaching, yes. And then instruction about healthy living.

We see the same rhythm in Romans and other Pauline epistles. Paul comes in to Romans chapter 12 and says, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you,..." and then launches in to talking about a living sacrifice and rolls on for several chapters of Christian duty after he laid out eleven chapters of doctrine. Therefore because all these mercies of God are true, live like this. As Paul writes to the Ephesians after three chapters of doctrine, he simply says that I'm going to now urge you therefore

to walk worthy of the calling to which you're called. That's the calling, here's how you live. In Colossians chapter 3 after two chapters of doctrines, he says now that you've been raised with Christ, seek the things which are above. Here's how to live your life. In Philippians after three chapters of dealing with doctrinal issues he says, "Therefore I'm urging you to live this way," and he goes through chapter 4 with a list of required behaviors. This is basic. This is absolutely central. The Lord wants churches that know His truth and that live it. In fact, what other value does the truth have if it isn't lived out? He wants a chaste virgin, He wants a pure bride, He wants a holy church. In fact, in 1 Peter 1:16 it's clear just how holy, "You shall be holy for I am holy, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior, be like the holy One who called you." I want you as holy as I am.

So holy living is proper and holy living is inseparable from sound doctrine. That's the point.

Now our text this morning, Titus 2:11-15 is really the heart of the letter. Let's look together at the manifestation, the mandate, and the motivation of saving grace.

The Manifestation of Saving Grace (v. 11)

Titus 2:11

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,

It's Personification

One fundamental aspect of God's grace is simply in its appearing - for had God not chosen to invade our darkness, we would have been utterly hopeless. It was in a measure of great love for His glory that He graciously revealed Himself to us in the person of God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is evident in verse 2 of chapter 1 that this revelation was promised long ages ago or "before time began." Which of us were around before time began? Were any of the created beings present? To whom was this promise made? To none other than the Lord Jesus -- this was an inter-Trinitarian promise from the Father to the Son.

This same Jesus stooped from eternity and, in an act of unprecedented humiliation, stepped into time for the purpose of redeeming a special people to Himself. So we see the personification of this saving grace in Our Lord Jesus Christ who appeared to all men. Immanuel - God with us. Remember what Simeon prayed when he took the infant Jesus in his arms? (Luke chapter 2), "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples..."

It's Effect

So what is the effect of God's grace? Salvation. It is His unmerited favor toward wicked unworthy sinners, by which He delivers them from condemnation and death.

It is clear from Scripture that Christ came to save sinners. Luke 19:10:, "for the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost."

It's Breadth

To whom does this apply? Does this verse teach universal salvation, whereby Jesus' appearing to "all men" guarantees that every individual will be saved? Certainly not.

The same word for "all men" is seen in chapter 3:4, indicating all mankind. Look back at chapter 1:1. Salvation is through the faith of God's elect. It is undeniably clear from Scripture that only those who believe will be saved.

The Mandate of Saving Grace (v. 12)

Titus 2:12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,

Its Negative Commands

Notice the contrast here in verses 11 and 12 with chapter 1 verse 16. The false teachers professed to know God, but what? Their works - or their fruit deny Him.

True repentance, that gives evidence of salvation, results from godly sorrow over sinning against a holy God and is manifested by turning away from a life characterized by sin to a life that is well-pleasing to God. From sin to righteousness. This is the process of sanctification, which is continued throughout the life of the believer.

This turning away is seen in denying ungodliness. This refers to the conscious, purposeful action of the will. It means to say no. Saying no to sinful acts that reflect irreverence for and a lack of devotion to God.

It is also saying no to worldly lusts -- sins that even if not committed, one longs to commit. The desire or craving to commit sin. Deny that longing, that temptation. This is reminiscent of what we've been covering in our "flee and pursue" series on Sunday evenings.

Our walk with Christ is not at all passive. It involves active denial of sin even at the level of our minds - long before the act is carried out. 2 Corinthians 10:5 "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,...". Our minds have to be actively engaged in the warfare of denying the longing to commit sin as we are bombarded in our current culture.

Its Positive Commands

And it is saying yes to or pursuing the following:

Living lives that are sensible or sober. And the thought here is of voluntarily placing limits on your own freedom. The Christian that lives sensibly has control over the issues of life. He is not only careful not to become involved in things that are immoral or unspiritual, but also avoids things that are simply trivial and unproductive.

Second, living lives that are righteous - faithfully obeying the Word of God, the divine standard of what is right, without reservation. At the time of salvation we were declared righteous by our justification through Christ and made capable of righteous behavior by our conversion. Now we are mandated to practice righteousness in our sanctification.

Third, lives which are godly. The Greek work *eusebia* literally means "to worship well", "to be very devout". Godliness is characterized by a God-ward attitude that does what is well-pleasing to Him. It is determined by the principle of love or fear of God in the heart, manifested by close fellowship with God, and expressed in an attitude of genuine worship.

It is contrasted with hypocrisy displayed by those who are "lovers of pleasure" rather than "lovers of God" and who maintain an outward form of piety to be seen by others and impress them for the purpose of self-glorification. (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Its Fruition

This transformation is not other-worldly. It is very practical - where the rubber meets the road in our walks with Christ. It is manifested in the present age and provides a living and powerful testimony within the church and before the world of the saving and transforming power of Jesus Christ.

Look at the three purpose clauses earlier in the chapter in verses 5, 8, and 10.

- Verse 5: All of this matter of behavior is in order that or for the purpose *that "the Word of God may not be blasphemed (disdained, rejected, treated as a lie, disregarded, mocked, shunned, ignored)"*. The first compelling issue here is the honor of the Word of God.
- Verse 8: *"that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you."* We want to make sure that anybody who opposes Christianity will have their mouth closed and stand there in absolute embarrassment because there's nothing bad to say about Christians.
- Verse 10: *"that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things."* The virtue and holiness of God's people make the church attractive. The word "adorn" is the same word from which "cosmetics" was derived.

In other words, how you live will directly determine how people feel about the Word of God. Amazing. A Christian wife who is not what she ought to be, a Christian young man who is not what he ought to be, a Christian older man who is not what he ought to be, a Christian older woman who is not what she ought to be is going to give reason for people to blaspheme God's Word. You see, the world doesn't judge us by our theology, the world judges us by our behavior. And they judge the validity of the Scripture by our behavior. They judge whether Scripture is really true and powerful and life changing by whether it changes our lives.

The Motivation of Saving Grace (v. 13, 14)

Titus 2:13, 14: looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

Its Redemption

Our gracious Lord gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from the bondage of sin - delivering us from every lawless deed. 1 Peter 1:18-19: "knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." God did not spare His punishment for our sin but poured it out on Christ, who paid the ransom for us and satisfied God's fierce wrath.

Its Purification

Just as we were formerly possessed by, and enslaved to sin, now we are possessed by, and enslaved to Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:9, 10: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

Joy over our Lord's redemptive and purifying works causes us to be zealous for good works. Good works, the product and not the means of salvation, become a natural and integral part of our daily living. They characterize the believer. Hebrews 9:14:, "how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" What's more, these are good works that God prepared for us to walk in before time began as indicated in Ephesians 2:10.

Its Eager Expectation

What fuels us? Our eager, confident expectation of that great day when Christ will appear in His glory. The elect of God, His own special people, who have been transformed by the power of His saving grace maintain a heavenward focus that is characterized by an intense longing and waiting for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior.

Conclusion

So the manifestation of God's saving grace is Christ Jesus, God the Son, in accordance with the promise made from the Father to the Son before the foundation of the world and before even time began, who humiliated Himself by passing from glory through the birth canal to earth to save those whom God had given Him - the elect - from everlasting condemnation and death to the hope of eternal life.

As a saved people we are to give evidence of our transformation by the active denial of both sinful acts and the desire or longing to commit such sins and by the pursuit of lives above reproach. This is for the sake of the integrity of our proclamation, and

even for the sake of souls, eternal souls. Wrong conduct on the part of Christians leads non-Christians to slander God, holy conduct on the part of Christians leads people to glorify God. The issue in holy living, then, is not just self-centered -- I want to be happy, I don't want to be chastened. The issue here is the whole matter of evangelization. What we believe is linked to how we live and how we live is directly linked to evangelism.

Our heavenward focus helps us to maintain a proper perspective and gives us a greater sense of the responsibility to lead lives that reflect our glorious redemption. This sort of teaching needs to occur even out of the pulpit in everyday conversation, reminiscent of Deuteronomy 6, confronting sin with the authority of Scripture wherever necessary.

God is a saving God, who redeems people that they might live godly lives so that others might also be saved through the proclamation of the gospel, supported by the testimony of transformed lives. In His transforming power and through the good works of transformed people, God's great Name is made famous.

Let's pray