

THE EDUCATION OF GRACE  
PART 4

TEXT: TITUS 2:11-14

November 10, 2013

**INTRODUCTION/REVIEW**

In chapter two, Paul seeks to counter the harmful effects that the false teachers' licentious lifestyles and doctrines are having on the church. As we have learned, at the core of the false teachers' doctrine is a separation of belief and behavior, theology from lifestyle. Paul says they profess to know God, but they deny him by their works (1:16). The false teachers felt no compulsion to exhort the Cretan believers to renounce ungodly Cretan ethical norms and to pursue virtuous lives.

Unlike the false teachers, Paul issues clear ethical instructions for the church members, regardless of their age, gender, or legal-social status (2:2-10). Rather than following the culturally determined vices of Cretan culture, believers are to be exhorted to follow the grace-instructed virtues of the gospel. Exhorting believers to live godly lives in an ungodly culture is part of Paul's overall strategy to set in order the things that are lacking in the Cretan churches.

Believers must be exhorted to pursue virtuous Christian living so that they may be zealous for good deeds (2:14) and constantly pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit to produce in them the fruits of holiness and righteousness so that they can live lives that are pleasing in God's sight and helpful to their neighbors (see HC, Q. 115).

But the vital point to note is that Paul grounds his ethical instructions in the grace of God (2:11-14). Douglas Milne writes, "The gospel is more than good advice or a set of ethical ideals, which are powerless against ungodliness and worldly passions. The gospel succeeds over its competitors in the reformation of morals because it puts real moral steel into the hearts of Christian believers, and motivates them to live a godly life of goodwill toward their neighbors and of self-control over their own passions," (*1.2. Timothy and Titus*, 220).

Paul understands that the proper preaching of Christ—the grace of God—is always the best remedy for combatting license in the church. Far from being a license for self-indulgent sin, the gospel is a fountain of grace for obedience and good works. Any teaching that separates or removes obedience—godliness—from the purpose of Christ's saving work must be silenced in the church (1:11). Paul argues that there is no salvation without sanctification since the whole purpose of Christ's salvation is to guide believers into a whole new way of life.

Paul's emphasis on good works throughout Titus receives no greater emphasis than here and in 3:3-8. Paul is not teaching the abuse of grace but rather the purpose of

grace, which is to lead believers to a live a life of godliness/good works (2:14). So then, in 2:11-14, Paul highlights four saving actions of God's grace, which educate believers to live godly lives in their ordinary, daily routines of life.

I. THE GRACE OF GOD SAVES. v. 11

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people..." Paul personifies grace as the believer's Savior. In His first coming, Jesus appeared with "saving power" (σωτήριος) to free His people from the power and bondage of sin so they can be free to live godly lives.

II. THE GRACE OF GOD EDUCATES. vv. 12-13

In vv. 12-13, Paul personifies grace as the believer's teacher who guides believers into a new way of life. Christ is the teacher, the believer is the student and godliness is the subject in the school of grace. In vv. 11-13a, Paul speaks in more general terms about Christ's saving work, personifying the grace of God as the believer's Savior and Teacher. But, at the end of verse 13 and in verse 14, Paul makes explicit the grace of God that has appeared (v. 11). Paul writes, "who [i.e., our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, v. 13b = "the grace of God has appeared" v. 11]...gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works."

Having introduced the person of Christ as "our great God and Savior" in v. 13, Paul now explicitly presents Christ's saving work for us and presents two effects and two intended purposes of His salvation. The point of v. 14 is that to be unconcerned for godliness and good works is to totally misunderstand the effects and purposes of Christ's saving work on the cross. This brings us to two final saving actions of God's grace.

**LESSON:**

III. THE GRACE OF GOD REDEEMS. v. 14A

Paul writes, "who [i.e., our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, v. 13b]...gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness..." Paul presents Jesus as our Savior (v. 11), Educator (vv. 12-13) and now as Redeemer (v. 14a). The first intended effect of Christ's self-giving is redemption. Paul's builds his words in v. 14 on several Old Testament themes, showing that Jesus fulfills the meaning of all the Scriptures in His first appearing (v. 11, i.e., the whole saving event of His life, death, burial and resurrection, cf. Luke 24:27, 44).

A. PRIESTLY THEME: LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD

Paul says Jesus, who is our great God and Savior, "gave Himself for us to redeem us" (cf. Gal. 1:4; 2:20; Eph. 5:2, 25). Jesus' self-giving is a priestly activity/offering on

behalf of others (Marshall, p. 283). These words echo the sacrificial imagery of the old covenant where Priests offered the sacrifice of animals to God in the place of sinful worshippers (cf. Lev. 4, 16). In Hebrews 10:1, the author says that these sacrifices were only “a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.” These old covenant priestly sacrifices are only a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Heb. 10:4-5). But, when Jesus appeared (v. 11) instead of offering animal sacrifices, He gave Himself for us as a single and final sacrifice to redeem us from all lawlessness (cf. Heb. 10:5-14; Titus 2:14).

Hebrews 7:26-27 states, “<sup>26</sup> For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. <sup>27</sup> He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up Himself.” Unlike the old covenant Levitical priests, Jesus didn’t offer daily sacrifices for Himself and then on behalf of the people. Further, the Levitical priests were only shadows but Jesus is the substance. The Levitical priests offered animals but Jesus offered Himself as both our priest and sacrifice. He gave Himself as our priestly representative and as our perfect sacrifice.

These words summarize the heart of the gospel, namely Christ’s substitutionary death on the cross for sinners. Paul says that Jesus “gave Himself for (ὁπᾶρ) us.” Paul clearly sets forth the idea of substitution. Jesus’ death was not forced, unwilling or reluctant. Rather, He gave Himself in our place willingly and voluntarily to His Father’s saving mission. In John 10:17-18, Jesus declares, “<sup>17</sup> For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Jesus’ death is an act of selfless sacrifice that was well-pleasing to His Father (cf. Towner, p. 579). In Ephesians 5:2, Paul writes, “Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Isaiah 50:6, “I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.” Christ, dying “for us” is the heart of the atonement. To be sure, Christ’s atonement is a victory over all demonic powers (Col. 2:15; Christus Victor—Christ the Victor; the ransom theory). Further, Christ’s atonement demonstrates God’s love for us (Rom. 5:8; moral-influence theory of Abelard). Both of these views convey biblical truths about Christ’s atonement. But, if Jesus’ death had not been at its core a penal substitutionary death, the atonement of Christ would not have been a victory or a revelation of divine love.

As our priestly representative, Jesus substituted Himself in our place. Philip Bliss captures this truth beautifully in the second stanza of his famous hymn, “Hallelujah! What A Savior.”

He writes,

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned He stood;  
Sealed my pardon with His blood.  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

He took upon Himself the punishment we deserve. Jesus who is, “holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens,” died “for us.” Who is “us?” “Us,” in the context of Titus 2:14 are the lawless and impure ones. Jesus gave Himself for those who are marked by ungodliness and worldly passions (i.e., desires of the flesh, which in this context are the Cretan cultural vices Paul addresses in 2:2-10, e.g., the self-indulgent; selfish; adulterous and philandering husbands; sexually indulgent young men and women; drunks; gluttons; liars and deceivers; irreverent; faithless wives and mothers; greedy; thieves and insubordinate employees). These are the ones who Jesus gave Himself for.

It is one thing to believe Christ gave Himself for others but quite another to believe that He gave Himself for me. You have not understood the gospel correctly until you understand that Christ’s self-giving is “for us.” Paul’s statement about Christ’s substitutionary death is an invitation not only to Titus and the Cretan believers but also to us today to find ourselves within this drama (Towner, p. 760). We must understand that Jesus’ death was “for us” and is presently teaching us to live in a whole new way of life. This new way of life—godliness, 2:2-10—is possible because of the two-fold effect of Christ’s substitutionary death.

#### B. REDEMPTION THEME: ROMAN SLAVERY AND THE EXODUS

Two ideas lie behind Paul’s use of redemption. First, redemption is a 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman slavery term. In Paul’s day, slaves were bought out of slavery—“redeemed, λυτρώω”—by the payment of a ransom. Like a 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman slave, Paul says Christ has “redeemed” us from all lawlessness/iniquity (ἀνομία). Lawlessness literally means, “against the law” (Knight, 328). In 1 John 3:4, John says sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). Lawlessness is the breaking of God’s law and the opposite of righteousness. It is synonymous with iniquities, wickedness (Marshall, 284). Lawless living (e.g., the vices in 2:2-10) results in bondage/enslavement under the curse—death penalty—of God’s law (Gal. 3:10). Jesus, by His death, gave Himself to redeem us from all lawless living (i.e., ungodliness and worldly passions, v. 12, cf. vv. 2-10). He paid the ransom price in order to free us from the curse (Gal. 3:13) and bondage of sin (i.e., the controlling power of sin; Eph. 2:2-3). Jesus, Himself, states that He came for this very purpose, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many,” (emphasis added; Mark 10:45).

Second, redemption is a major Old Testament theme, namely the Exodus. Paul is drawing on the saving act of the LORD when He redeemed Israel from slavery in

Egypt in the Exodus event. At the Exodus, the LORD redeemed the Israelites and made them His own people. In response to the LORD great redemption, Moses and the people sang a song saying, “You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed...,” (Ex. 15:5). In Deuteronomy 7:7, Moses reminds Israel that the LORD chose her and redeemed her from Egyptian bondage not because of her goodness, merit or inherent righteousness (Deut. 7:7). Rather, Moses writes, “<sup>6</sup> The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth... <sup>8</sup> because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that He swore to your fathers [Abrahamic Covenant-J.F.], that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt,” (Deut. 7:6, 8; cf. Rom. 3:24; Gal. 3:13, 4:5; Eph. 1:7).

Paul’s “redemption” language/theme in Titus 2:14 echoes Psalm 130:8 (129:8 LXX), “<sup>7</sup> O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with Him is plentiful redemption. <sup>8</sup> And He will redeem Israel from all His iniquities.” Paul sees the whole Christ-event (v. 11- appearing) as the LORD’s ultimate “Exodus-event” (i.e., act of salvation/redemption (Towner, p. 765). Notice carefully, in Titus 2:13b that Paul attributes the same title of Yahweh (LORD) to Christ, i.e., “our great God and Savior.” And, in 2:14, he attributes the same saving actions of Yahweh (LORD) to Christ, i.e., redemption.

Just as God “redeems Israel from all His iniquities” even so Jesus by His death on the cross redeems us from all lawlessness/iniquities. In addition, like Israel, our redemption is not based on any inherent righteousness we possess but solely on God’s grace alone (Titus 2:11; 3:5, 7). By His self-substitution, Jesus paid the ultimate price by giving Himself on the cross in our place to secure our release from “all lawlessness.” Note how Paul emphasizes the completeness of Christ’s redemption, “all lawlessness” (πάσης ἀνομίας). Christ does not redeem us from some but all iniquity. We who were once enslaved to ungodliness and worldly passions (i.e., selfishness; adultery; drunkenness; gluttony; lying and deception; irreverent behavior; neglect of domestic home life; greed; thievery and insubordination) have been set free from the controlling power of sin. Jesus, our great God and Savior—Yahweh—gave Himself on the cross as a ransom payment to the God the Father to redeem us from our enslavement to sin. Consequently, a Christian is no longer a slave to sin.

The natural man—man in Adam—is a slave of sin; he has no freedom but is in total moral bondage. Thus, he is unable to pursue a godly life. The effect of Christ’s redemption is to deliver sinners from the slavery of sin. Christ redeems us from “all lawlessness.” Thus, the Christian is no longer the slave of sin as Paul says in Romans 6:6, “We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.”

Regrettably, as those who are free, Christians still often allow sin to rule in them allowing worldly passions—the flesh—to govern them. Yet, because Christ has

redeemed us from all lawlessness, no one can make an excuse for living a life of license. Christ has redeemed us not only from the penalty of sin (Gal. 3:13, curse of the law) but also from our bondage to sin. Jerry Bridges writes, “These two aspects of redemption always go together. Redemption from the curse infallibly secures redemption from the bondage,” (*Gospel For Real Life*, p. 85). The grace of God redeems us from the power of sin so that we might be a people who desire to live a godly life (cf. 2:2-10). This brings us to the final saving action of God’s grace.

#### IV. THE GRACE OF GOD PURIFIES. v. 14B

Paul writes, “our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...gave Himself for us...to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.” Jesus—the grace of God—is the believer’s Savior (v. 11), Educator (vv. 12-13), Redeemer (v. 14a) and lastly Purifier (v. 14b).

The second intended effect/result of Christ’s self-giving is purification. Lawlessness—iniquity—is not only enslaving but also defiling. It leads to moral impurity before God, which among other things prevents a person from doing good works (i.e., false teachers, cf. 1:16, “unfit for any good work”). Therefore, Christ’s substitutionary atonement effects not only redemption but also purification. The gospel both liberates and purifies. The grace of God—Christ’s substitutionary death—is the remedy for both sin’s enslavement and sin’s defilement. Christ gave Himself to purify (“to make clean...spiritual cleansing,” Marshall, p. 285) those who are impure—morally defiled.

Again, Paul’s language echoes an old testament theme, perhaps Ezekiel 37:23, where the LORD says, “They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. 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.”

The moral defilement God has in view is Israel’s idolatry. Paul no doubt has in mind the idolatrous notions of purity held by the false Jewish teachers. Paul insists they have not been purified from the ungodly vices of Cretan culture (1:15-16). They saw themselves as morally pure because of their devotion to ceremonial observances (1:15). The false teachers are teaching the young, gullible Cretan believers that if they eat unclean foods they will be defiled but if they abstain they will be pure. In reply, Paul argues in 1:15, “To the (morally) pure, all things are (ritually) pure, but to the (morally) defiled and unbelieving, nothing is (ritually) pure; but both their minds and their consciences are (morally) defiled.” No amount of devotion to man-made commandments, human traditions, religious rules, rituals and regulations can lead to moral purity before God. In fact, these things are not only ineffective for cleansing the heart but they actually lead to disregard for God’s Word (lawless living) moral defilement before God (1:15-16).

Paul's major point, like Jesus in Mark 7, is this: Food doesn't defile. Rather, it is what resides in the heart that defiles (cf. Mk. 7:15-23). Moral purity comes through Christ's substitutionary death alone. Christ's blood cleanses His people from the defilement of sin (1 John 1:7, "if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.")

The purpose of Christ's redemption and spiritual cleansing is twofold.

First, Jesus redeems and purifies so that He might have "for Himself a people for His own possession..." This phrase is the fulfillment of the phrase at the end of Ezekiel 37:23, "they shall be my people, and I will be their God." Paul takes the OT covenantal promise and applies it to the NT people of God. This is the heart of God's covenantal promise to His people. By Christ's substitutionary death, which brings both liberation from our bondage to sin and purification from our defilement of sin, we become Christ's own possession—the people of God.

The word, "possession," (περιούσιος) conveys more than simply "a people of possession," (Marshall, p. 286). It expresses the idea of "a costly possession, a choice treasure," (Marshall, p. 286). Paul's language echoes Deuteronomy 7:6 where Moses writes, "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth," (cf. The LXX translates the phrase הַיְיִדִּים אֱמוּנָה as "λαὸν περιούσιον.").

Just as the LORD, at the Exodus, delivered the Israelites and made them His own treasured possession, so Christ redeems us so that we might be His own treasured possession. Christ gave Himself for us to purify for Himself a people for His own rich possession, the crown jewel of God. Paul teaches this same truth in Ephesians 1 where he states that because of God's choosing (1:4), adopting (1:5) redemption (1:7), and sealing (1:13), the church is God's rich possession (1:18). Thus, Paul prays that believers would come to know they are valuable to God because Christ redeemed them and purified them in order to inherit them—the church is God's inheritance, His treasured possession. Douglas Milne writes, "This is the language of intimacy and love, recalling the terms in which the Lord addressed Israel as his covenant people, chosen and called to be His own (Exod. 19:4f.). These terms are now transferred to the Christian church, which stands in the same relationship to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:9)," (p. 224).

Again, Paul has in mind the false Jewish teachers who claimed to know God (i.e., to be His treasured possession; 1:16; Towner, p. 763). However, Paul says that those who belong to God belong to Him on the basis of grace and Christ's substitutionary atonement rather than physical lineage or devotion to religious ceremonies. The church takes on the designation of God's people in the Old Testament. Paul applies the Old Testament designation of Israel to the church, which is comprised of believing Jews and Gentiles—the new Israel of God (cf. Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:11-15). In

Romans 9:24, Paul says that in His grace God has called a people to Himself from both the Jews and the Gentiles. In 9:25, he quotes Hosea 2:23, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”

Israel’s proper response to God’s redemptive and purifying grace was devotion to His Law (Exod. 19:5; Deut. 7:11; 26:18). Likewise, the moral virtues in vv. 2-10 are the Christian’s proper response to Christ’s redemption and purification (Towner, p. 764-765). This brings us to the second purpose of Jesus’ redemption and purification.

Jesus redeems and purifies so that He might have “for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.” The word, “zealous,” comes from the Greek word, “ζηλωτής,” which means “an enthusiastic person,” (Marshall, p. 286). It came to refer to Jewish nationalists who were political activists and zealously opposed Roman rule (cf. Simon...the Zealot, Lk. 6:15, Ibid). Grace teaches a Christian to be a “zealot for good works, not politically but morally speaking!”

Grace-instructed, Spirit-empowered zeal for good works is made effective by the substitutionary death of Christ for us. Christ has prepared a people for Himself who are “eager to do good works (1 Pet. 3:13)...” (Marshall, p. 286). Christ’s redemptive and purifying death is the burning heat that ignites all the affections of our hearts and makes us zealous, passionate to live a godly life rather than a lawless life.

“Good works” in verse 14, refer to the moral virtues, which Paul exhorts the Cretan believers to live out in vv. 2-10. Thus, older men who are instructed by the grace of God—Christ’s substitutionary self-giving for us—will be eager to be “sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness,” (2:2). Older women will be eager “to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine...to teach what is good and so train younger women to be faithful wives and mothers,” (2:3). Younger women will be eager to be “self-controlled, pure, ensure their homes are not neglected, kind, and sexually faithful to their own husbands,” (2:5). Young men will be eager to be “self-controlled” and lead an exemplary life of godliness (2:6-8). Christian employees will be eager to give conscientious and faithful service to their employers (2:9-10). In short, the gospel will produce a rightly ordered church that adorns rather than mars the reputation of the gospel (1:5; 2:5, 8, 10).

#### **REFLECTION:**

The entire emphasis of vv. 1-14 is to show that Christian morality/ethics/godliness flows from the redeeming work of God who has brought salvation by His grace and mercy (cf. Mounce, p. 425). Good works (a life of godliness, vv. 2-10) are only possible by Christ’s substitutionary death, which brings liberation and purification to the believer. As we reflect on the education of grace, let us take note that the doctrine of the gospel is not only liberating but also purifying and the purpose of both these saving acts so that Christians can become God’s treasured possession and



a people who are eager to do what is good—live a godly life (vv. 2-10). The gospel is the doctrine of godliness (“the truth, which accords with godliness,” 1:1). Paul calls the gospel the “mystery of godliness” (1 Timothy 3:16). Godliness, zeal for good works, is the great design of the gospel. Good works (the moral virtues, vv. 2-10) are the end of Christ’s redeeming and purifying death on the cross for us. John Colquhoun writes that the gospel,

In the hand of the Holy Spirit...is a fire which penetrates, warms, softens, quickens, purifies, and comforts the heart. It is a light which assimilates (2 Corinthians 3:18) and truth which sanctifies (John 17:17). It is also the ‘law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ which, by making believers ‘free from the law of sin and death,’ brings them under the law to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21). The design, too, of the ordinances of the gospel is that sinners may be converted to the love and practice of holiness, and that saints may enabled to abound more and more in every good word and work,” (*A Treatise on the Law and on the Gospel*, pp. 296-297).

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