

Main Idea: The gospel reveals grace that both rescues us AND empowers us.

Titus 2:11–15 (ESV)

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who 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. ¹⁵

Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

One of my favorite things about summer is hanging out with my kids. One of the things the boys and I did this summer was make bluetooth speakers. You buy the electronics, and then build the housing out of wood. The boys were able to learn some new skills, like using a table saw and a router table, along with some other things.

Imagine if the boys learned those new skills, but didn't plan to do anything with them. That would be pointless. Learning to use tools but never using that knowledge to do anything is kind of like realizing the gospel is true, believing it, but never seeing that this same gospel empowers your daily life.

It's kind of like that, but actually it's much worse than that, because that's a gospel that rescues us, but can't conquer sin in our daily lives. And that's not the true gospel. So, here's the main idea for us to wrestle with and wrap our minds around today: **The gospel reveals grace that both rescues us AND empowers us.**

Theological Center of Titus

We have arrived at what is arguably the theological center of the book, and it's really the driver of all that we see in Titus. We have said that the big theme of the whole book of Titus is that God's grace revealed in the gospel leads to godliness in the lives of his people. Nowhere do we see that clearer than in our text today. This is one of the clearest places in the entire New Testament that connects the redemptive work of Christ to our daily lives. And we all NEED this!

If you're not a Christian—if you've rejected the gospel or have never heard the gospel—my prayer for you has been that you will respond in repentance and faith today. That you will see this description of the rescuing grace that empowers the Christian life and find it to be irresistibly compelling.

Christian—we can get trapped into not seeing how the gospel connects to all of life. We believe the gospel for eternity, but...we have trouble seeing how it affects our daily life. I want to remind you of what actually makes it possible for you to obey. Because obedience matters, and that has been a major thrust in this letter. Godliness matters. But if we get this wrong, at best we end up with guilt and burdens on ourselves that Christ has already taken. At worst... we miss the gospel. So good works matter profoundly. But not just any good works. Gospel-fueled good works.

Reverse Theology

You may be familiar with how Paul often explains the theological basis, and then gives the application of how we should live based on that truth. He reverses that here in Titus 2.

Chapter 2:1-10 is the practical snapshots of sound doctrine lived out. Then in v.11-15, Paul unleashes the soundest of doctrines. Chapter 2:11-15 is the engine that makes the Christian life go. If the relationships we outlined in v.1-10 seemed unachievable—they are. Apart from who God is and what he has done for us in Christ.

Apart from the gospel, we will not have a healthy church. Apart from the gospel, we CANNOT live the Christian life. And we KNOW that. For the most part we do. We know that we cannot live the Christian life apart from the gospel. But I'm not sure we know that quite like we think we know that.

In our text, Paul arranges it so that we read the grace of God appears (v.11)—that's the first appearance of Christ. Then we read that the glory of God will appear (v.13)—that's the return of Christ. But in between these two appearances—both textually and actually—in this present age there is this thing called the Christian life.

Do you want to know how to actually live the Christian life? This is it! The entire Christian life is based on this sound doctrine. And it's the main idea for today, so here it is again: **The gospel reveals grace that both rescues us AND empowers us.** That AND is really key here. Because Christians understand that in the gospel we have rescuing grace.

Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Which is awesome! But the very next verse—v.10—in Ephesians 2, says...

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus FOR GOOD WORKS, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Patterns in the Christian Life

We often stop at rescuing grace and miss the empowering grace of the gospel. Because...we miss the connection between rescuing grace and empowering grace. Here's the connection: rescuing grace IS empowering grace. So that AND in the main idea is huge. And really is vital for our life as Christians. **The gospel reveals grace that both rescues us AND empowers us.** So the question is, what does that look like? The rescuing grace of God empowers three patterns in the Christian life.

Pattern #1: Rescuing grace empowers us to continually repent

Pattern #2: Rescuing grace empowers us to intentionally obey

Pattern #3: Rescuing grace empowers us to expectantly wait

This is the Christian life. We continually repent. We intentionally obey. We expectantly wait. But you cannot do these things apart from the rescuing grace revealed in the gospel. And if you miss this connection—between the work of Christ on the cross and your obedience every

day—you will be trying to do this in your own power. And you will be unable to live a godly life—*actually* unable to live a godly life. And you will be frustrated. You ever feel that? Me too. That's why this is so big!

Rescuing Grace Empowers Us to Continually Repent

Titus 2:11 (ESV)

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,

And we'll stop there for now. Paul begins this section with another conjunction—FOR. This connects with the previous section in v.1-10. This gives us a clue as to why the kinds of relationships mentioned in v.2-10 are even possible in the Christian community. Only because of the grace of God that has appeared—or been revealed—in the gospel

Grace is God at work in those who don't deserve it. Rescuing grace is God's work through Christ given freely to sinners who believe. Empowering grace is rescuing grace applied by the Spirit of God to the people of God. This is the kind of grace that brings salvation for all people.

“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people” (NIV)

“For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people.” (NLT)

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,” (NKJV)

Are All Saved?

The literal wording is “The grace of God appeared saving all men.” Does this mean that all people will be saved? Universalism is the idea that all people will be saved. But the New Testament does not teach this. Only those who repent and believe the gospel will be saved. So what does this phrase mean here? Word meanings don't exist in a vacuum. Context determines meaning. We must always interpret Scripture in context.

Without getting into all of the details, I believe this is referring to salvation being brought to all kinds of people. For 2 main reasons. First, the immediate context in Titus 2. Paul has just finished talking about older men, younger men, older women, younger women, slaves and masters. And he ends the section with “so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (Titus 2:10 ESV). And then continues right on into our section “for the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people” (Titus 2:11 ESV).

The second reason is the broader context of the letters to Timothy and Titus (pastoral epistles). Elitism was a problem in Ephesus where Timothy was. So much so that they were excluding secular rulers and Gentiles from their prayers. This is one reason Paul writes in 1 Timothy the God desires for all to be saved. Often when we read a text like Titus 2:11, we can think immediately of election or predestination, or the lack thereof, while forgetting the context in which it is written. Tim Chester, in his commentary *Titus for You* says “God does not save all people, but he does save all kinds of people—so we all need to live in a way that commends the gospel to all kinds of people.”¹

Are you living in a way that commends the gospel to everyone? It's one of the reasons that our relationships here—within our church—matter so much. Older men and women need to be saved. Younger men and women need to be saved. Elected officials who we don't agree

with need to be saved. Employers who are unfair need to be saved. Are you praying for that and earnestly desiring their salvation?

Saving Faith Works

The context of the entire NT is that a relationship with God is not just for the Jews. This is the incredible mystery that is now revealed. Salvation is for all people. The grace of God has appeared “training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions” (Titus 2:12). Ungodliness is godlessness—the ultimate root of sin. Worldly passions result from godlessness. They are the fruit.

If godliness characterizes the Christian life, then ungodliness is a deliberate contrast. If godliness is gospel-fueled good works, then ungodliness is anything not fueled by the gospel. Grace trains us for this pattern of life. And the right pattern of life is to renounce both the root and fruit of sin. Deny it. Refuse it. Disown it. Turn from it. This is not a one time thing when you become a Christian. This is a pattern of life as a Christian.

The biblical word for this kind of pattern is repentance. It means a change of heart and mind. Not just being sorry for your sin. Or shame that you messed up again. This is whole-hearted reorientation. Behind every sin is a lie about God. Not just a change of mind, but a change of who you believe God to be.

There is a line of thought that says you simply need to believe on Jesus to be saved. That no repentance is needed for salvation. That no obedience needs to follow salvation for it to be legitimate. But this is a false gospel. It is short-sighted and fails to account for the whole teaching of the New Testament. To say that a person is saved by simply acknowledging truth about Jesus, without any repentance or evidence of a changed life is to ignore passages such as Matthew 3:8 and Luke 6:45, and perhaps most clearly...

James 2:14–17 (ESV)

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Let me be clear—we are not saved by what we do. We are saved by faith in who God is and what he has done for us in Jesus. But faith that doesn’t result in continually repenting and intentionally obeying isn’t saving faith. It is dead faith. And dead faith doesn’t save.

For those of you that consider yourself to be a Christian, but your sin doesn’t seem like that big of a deal to you. And you don’t give much thought to the people around you. And dying to yourself and your own preferences is the last thing on your mind. And you are not at all concerned with obeying the commands of Christ...you either misunderstand the gospel OR you are not a Christian. In either case, the way forward is the same.

Repent. Turn from a false gospel that is stripped of its power. Turn from your selfishness and arrogance. Turn from your pride. Put your faith in Jesus. The one who gave himself to redeem and purify and to bring salvation to all who believe.

Continually Repenting

If rescuing grace empowers Christians to continually repent, what does that look like? It looks like uncovering sin that's rooted deeply in our hearts. It looks like not settling for fruit level conversation. It looks like honest heart work in the context of Christian relationships around the table. Instead of trying to stop being angry, ask why you are angry? Instead of trying to be less prideful, ask what is driving your pride? This seems like a subtle shift, but it has massive implications.

When you eat a cookie you weren't supposed to eat because company was coming. Or you hit snooze repeatedly in the morning. Or you rush bedtime with the kids so you can watch something. Or you argue over a scheduling conflict. All of which I have done just this week. It's not really about the cookies, or the alarm, or the bedtime, or the schedule. It's about what's going on in your heart through all of that. We must fight sin at the level of desires. Once that sin is uncovered, we see it for what it is. A lie about the character of God. His sufficiency or His glory or His grace or some other aspect of his character. In a word—unbelief. Unbelief about who God is and what he has done.

Daily repentance means abandoning that unbelief and trusting again in the sufficiency and beauty of who God is and what he has done for us in Christ. Believing the gospel for both eternal rescue and daily life. Jesus is everything that we cannot be. He obeyed perfectly on our behalf. We know this. But do we know that his work on the cross makes our continual repentance possible? Make no mistake, Christian. This is a battle. It is a daily battle that we will fight the rest of our time on planet earth. But it is a battle that has already been won! John Owen, in his book *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, says “if you are fighting sin, you are alive. Take heart. But if sin holds sway unopposed, you are dead no matter how lively this sin makes you feel. Take heart, embattled saint!”² Take heart, embattled saint! It is not rules that lead us to repentance. It is grace that teaches us to say no to sin. Rescuing grace empowers us to continually repent.

Rescuing Grace Empowers Us to Intentionally Obey

Titus 2:11–12 (ESV)

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,

We are not just renouncing ungodliness and worldly passions. We are actively working to live godly lives. Rescuing grace leads to a certain pattern of life—self-controlled, upright, godly. These are 3 adverbs that describe our living. If it's been a while since English class, adverbs modify verbs. Here they describe the action of living. We live in a self-controlled, upright and godly way. Another way to say it is that Christians live in a measured, righteous, making-Jesus-look-good kind of way. This isn't the first time we've seen these ideas in Titus. They show up in the qualifications for elders in ch.1. Self-control plays into every level of our relationships in 2:1-10. Godliness fueled by the gospel is all over the letter. All of this points to an intentional pattern of life.

Recently, we've been watching a lot of Bear Grylls in our house. Its fun to watch. A survival skill you'll sometimes see is navigating with a compass. When you are using a compass to navigate, you have to keep checking it. So you stop and check it to see if you're on the right track. If you don't actively check the compass, you will eventually go off course. The Christian

life is like navigating with a compass. Changing course is like the process of continually repenting and intentionally obeying. The Bible shows us where we need to correct our desires and actions. Continually repenting is course correcting. Intentionally obeying is actually going the right direction. It's no good if you see where you need to course correct, but don't actually walk. You'd just be standing in the middle of the woods not actually doing anything. You actually have to move.

For those who are actively working to live a life of repentance and faith, rescuing grace empowers us to intentionally obey.

Accidentally Following Jesus

You don't accidentally follow Jesus. You have to be intentional. You make time to pray. You read the Bible. You spend time with other Christians. You spend time with non-Christians. You speak the gospel to both Christians and non-Christians. You help others follow Jesus. You gather with the church. Think about one area of your life that you can be intentional and you're currently not. If you're a kid, consider being intentional about obeying your parents. If you're older, be intentional in prayer. If you're somewhere in between, be intentional in helping someone else follow Jesus.

Obedience matters for all of us. Whether we are 8 or 88. Not because we're trying to make God love us more. But because of God's grace to us already revealed in the gospel.

Romans 8:30 (ESV)

³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

The death of Christ has not only paid for our rescue and our repentance. The death of Christ has purchased our obedience. He will glorify those whom he justifies. Rescuing grace empowers us to intentionally obey.

Rescuing Grace Empowers Us to Expectantly Wait

Titus 2:13 (ESV)

¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

This isn't just passive waiting. The participle "waiting" suggests expectant waiting. This is a pattern of life that looks forward with certainty. There is a settledness to our hope. Not a settling that makes us inactive, for we are in a battle. But we fight with the return of Christ in mind. Our blessed hope! When you feel like the the battle is not worth it. When you grow weary of continual repentance. When you seem to be the only one trying to do what is right. When we—church—may be tempted to bend to the cultural tides. Hold fast to our blessed hope! Grace that rescues us is the grace that empowers us.

If you've ever helped a kid across the monkey bars—you know they're going to make because you're holding them. But they don't always know that or feel that. They might be working really hard and unsure of themselves, but you know you have them and won't let them fall. God's grace in our Christian life is like that. He's holding us. We will make it to the other side. God's grace is what keeps us secure.

Rescuing grace empowers us to wait expectantly. Grace has appeared. Glory will appear. And it will be unlike anything we can even imagine! This is one of the few places in the New Testament that directly refers to Jesus as God. Our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ! Brothers and sisters, there is an end to our striving. And that end is not a place, but a person. It is Jesus Himself!

Titus 2:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ who 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.

This is the rescuing grace that appeared in verse 11. This is substitutionary atonement. Jesus died in our place. He paid the price for our sin. He rescued us and made us clean. He made us to be his people and we belong to him. So that we can be passionate about obedience and point people to what it looks like to have Jesus as our King! These phrases ring all across the Biblical storyline in places such as Exodus 19:5, 1 Peter 2:9 and Ezekiel 37:23. Then Paul says in v.15...

Titus 2:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

“These things” refers to all that Paul has said to Titus thus far. In the immediate context—declare that rescuing grace is empowering grace. In the broader context—declare sound doctrine and all that comes with it. The same word translated “declare” in v.15 is translated “teach” in v.1. It means “to speak.” They are both commands that bracket this section. And not just speak, but encourage and rebuke. Which ties together all of chapters 1 and 2. He is to do this with all authority, letting no one disregard him. That is how much is at stake for the church. That’s how important this connection is between rescuing grace and empowering grace.

These are the three patterns of the Christian life empowered by rescuing grace. We continually repent, intentionally obey, and expectantly wait.

Chester writes...“Grace does not simply prepare us for the future age (by saving us from God’s judgment). Grace also shapes our lives in the present. The gospel is good news for the last day, but it is also good news for the next day.”³

Oh how we need this good news of rescuing grace that empowers!

¹ Tim Chester. *Titus for You*. The Good Book Company, 2014. p.86.

² John Owen. *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*. Chapter 7

³ Tim Chester. *Titus for You*. The Good Book Company, 2014. p.76.