

Studies in Titus - Part 1

by Paris Reidhead

Paris Reidhead's sermon explores the universal message of God's grace in salvation as outlined in Titus 2:11-14, emphasizing the importance of scripture, intercession, and living as examples of grace.

Duration: 40:30

Scripture: Titus 2:11

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that believers are living examples of God's grace. They are called to live out their faith in front of others, demonstrating what it means to be a Christian in all circumstances. The speaker shares a personal story about missionaries struggling to learn a difficult language and how their presence in a community served as a sample of God's grace. The sermon also highlights that God uses various methods to bring salvation, but the first step is always putting a sample of His salvation next to the person in need.

Transcript

But I have a suspicion, and I'm sure theologians will not be happy at the end. Titus, chapter 2, verses 11 to 14. Now, there are certain key scriptures that you should memorize, and this is one of them.

So, I would like to recommend that you copy it out on a little 3x5 card and use a rubber band or something and put it on the inside of the visor card as you're sitting at a stoplight instead of just counting the ribs and the tires in front of you. Test yourself on Titus 2, 11 to 14. It's only the scripture that you hide in your heart that you can count on in the event that there's any reason why you can't read it handily.

So, I urge you to do it. Now, remember, the scripture is what God said, and the lesson is what the teacher thinks God meant. And if you've got to remember one or the other, always remember what God said, because the teacher, however well-meaning he is, could be wrong.

Titus 2, 11 to 14. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, every word is important, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might save us from hell and take us to heaven when we die. Is that what it says? I must be reading from the reverse vision, don't you think? Because commonly that's what is associated with one who gave himself for us, whereas the scripture says, the

great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar, a pecuniary, a purchased people, zealous of good works.

These things speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority, that no man despise it. So the grace of God that brings salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us. Or, if I may paraphrase it to suit the purpose of the moment, the grace of God that brings salvation has taught everyone to whom God in his grace has brought salvation the same thing.

He doesn't have one salvation in Japan, another in Indonesia, and yet a third in Burma, and a fourth in India, and something else in Africa, and yet something else in Europe, and again in America, Latin America. As though each could somehow improvise and make up a tune to suit their culture and their fancy. The grace of God that brings salvation teaches everyone to whom he brings salvation identically the same thing.

Regardless of the language in which the message is conveyed or the culture in which the people live, it's always the same thing. Now, it doesn't necessarily mean that it's the same time frame or the same means of communication, but if they've been had salvation brought to them through God's grace, they have been taught the same thing. I remember when my wife and I arrived in the sedan back in 1945, we had come from Khartoum on the train down to a little town on the river called Kosti, and by Nile steamer three days against the stream up to our station, which was Malut.

We arrived at night, and when the steamboat came, why, there was the whistle, and you could see the lanterns. People came from their--no electricity, of course--came from their mud-walled huts. And when we arrived, it was to see the gangplank put out on the shore, and here were--ooh, talk about Arabian nights.

It was eerie, because the Chilooks were there, who had these great bumps. They put a fishhook in their forehead, pulled it out, cut it off, rubbed soot in the cooking pot, spears. And the Dinkas were there, smiling, had no lower front teeth, scraped out teeth buds off the jawbone when they were babies, by which doctors have no front teeth if you're on the lower fore.

And the Arabs were there, their long, white jellabias, these flickering lanterns casting this eerie glow, and then the light on the stern wheel steamer that had wood. We had to stop. One reason it took us so long, we had to stop, and they loaded wood and put it on their heads and carry it in and load up the barge with wood, and that's what furnished the steamboat.

At any rate, right about then, if I could have blinked my eye, I'd have been back in Indiana. I want you to know, because it looked, yeah, it did indeed. Well, the next, we went up to the house where we were to stay, and I'll never forget, I came in and the ceiling swooped, a beautiful swoop.

And I said, what makes the, it was a cloth ceiling. Oh, she said, there are bats up above. So I knew what made the ceiling cloth swoop.

And it gave a characteristic odor that was a little unusual, hard to get used to the first night. And about three in the morning, our hostess awakened with a lamp and a stick. And I heard it, and I said, what are you doing? Well, she said, oh, don't worry about a thing.

Everything's all right. Oh, I said, well, what happened? Well, she said, there was a cobra in my bedroom, and I just killed it. And I said, well, what are you going around like diogenes for? She said, well, they

always go in pairs, and I'm looking for them.

But you go back to sleep. Sure, we'd slept six inches off the bed, you know. I mean, never touched a sheet.

That was our first night, and it went downhill from there. No, not really. The next morning after breakfast, a senior missionary had come with us, and I want to show you around the station.

So I went up to the school, which was, oh, 300 yards down the road. It led way out into the wild blue yonder, and I had to clear out. And we ended up in the classroom.

It was a room about this size, come to think of it. Grass thatched, peaked ceiling, mud walls, holes but nothing in the windows, and benches on mud bricks. I was there from Minnesota by way of Indiana.

John Phillips was there from Baltimore by way of Wheaton College and Harvard School of Business Administration. And Paul was there. And Paul was a Dinka.

And Paul had no lower front teeth. They'd been scraped out. But he also had the New Era Dinka marks crossed forward.

Didn't he? He had marks. He had marks. When he was 18, he had gone to the witch doctor and the elders of the tribe and said he wanted to be a man.

And so he lay down in front of the witch doctor's hut, and he took a short spear blade that's been sharpened, and he put it in here, and he cut clear to the skull and then took soot off a cooking pot and put it in the wound and then did that every half inch up to the hairline. And these had healed and rose across his forehead. But somewhere in this thing, God in his sweet and marvelous and sovereign grace had found a young guy by the name of Parris Reedhead out in Minnesota whom a pastor in his zeal had mistakenly invited into the membership of the church because he had a fairly facile memory and could memorize scripture verses and could answer questions when asked.

And the good pastor made the mistake of thinking that if you answered the right questions, that meant you had what you were being asked about. By the same token, a tape recorder could have been a member of that church, I guess, because it could answer all the questions properly, primed. And this little eighth-grade teacher, still living, born without hip joints, about that high, who had a heart big as her head, and when this little guy, Parris Reedhead, went to her and said, Miss Bourne, I joined the church yesterday because she was that kind of a person, you know, be interested in it.

Instead of patting him on the back the way the rest of his family and friends had, two big tears rolled down the corners of her cheeks. And she said, I said, What's the matter, Miss Bourne? I thought maybe she felt I was from Brooklyn. I said I'd joined the church instead of adjourned it, you know.

I said, What's the matter? Why are you crying? She said, Oh, I don't think you were ready to join the church. I said, I don't know why. I knew the answer to all the questions.

My preacher was satisfied. She said, Sonny, there's more to being a Christian than knowing the answers to the questions. I said, What is it? My preacher didn't talk about anything else.

He said, Sonny, when you become a Christian, Jesus comes into your heart, and you know. You don't have to have your preacher tell you or anybody else tell you. When he comes in, you know, because he

tells you.

And she said, I'm going to pray that he'll come into your heart. Well, he did. Now John Phillips, as I said, born in Baltimore, and somewhere God in his sovereign grace found a Baltimorean and humbled him, brought him to the end of himself, so that he cried out, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

Save me for Jesus' sake. And God did. And Paul, Paul had been born in the heart of Dinkland, and somehow in his sweet and marvelous grace, God had found Paul.

No lower teeth, marks across the forehead, and God had found Paul, and God had worked a miracle in his heart. And here the three of us stood under this grass thatch roof. My first day in Malut.

Paul's first day back after four terms in Africa. And Paul had been born there. We didn't, for some reason we just stood there after we'd been talking and had been asking questions.

And all of a sudden, the three of us, for no reason, we started to weep. We sensed his presence. Because, you see, we'd all been taught the same thing.

We'd all been taught identically the same thing, the grace of God that brings salvation. It was a marvelous moment for me. It was a moment that I'll never forget.

Because I realized that regardless of where one is brought into an experience of God's grace, it's always taught the same thing. Because God only has one grace, and he only has one method of bringing grace. Though he has a whole host of ways of bringing the message, one method of dealing.

And I think it's important for us to understand a little bit of this. We've covered it in the past. There are a few of you that have been with me in other visits.

But there's always someone who I haven't talked to, and I find it's necessary for me to refresh my mind quite frequently on certain cardinal points. What does God do when he wants to bring salvation? The grace of God that brings salvation. What's one of the first things God does? Well, it's this.

When God gets ready to turn a savage into a saint or a cannibal into a Christian, though the Dinkas weren't cannibals, they certainly were savage in all their practices and attitudes. Though I admired many aspects of their culture and their language and so on. Still, when God gets ready to bring someone out of death into life, he does the same thing.

What does he do? First, he puts a sample of his salvation up next to that candidate. Did you ever wonder why you live where you live? Well, I've got good news for you. You thought you bought that house because, A, you liked house B, you liked the neighborhood C, whatever C, D, and E are.

I know why you bought it. Because God wanted to put you up there as a sample of his grace to someone that would see you and to whom you would become the best Christian they've ever known. And in their minds, if they ever go to heaven, it's going to be because they live near you, because they saw something in you.

That's the first thing God does. He puts a sample. Oh, we may call that sample a missionary.

We may call him a youth worker. We may call him a layman or an elder or whatever. It makes no difference what you call him.

There is a sample of God's grace, an example of it, living proof of it. That's what you are, wherever you are today, living, that's what you are. You're a sample of God's grace.

You're there to live Christ before this candidate for salvation, to demonstrate in 3-D, living color, the kind of a person a Christian is in all kinds of circumstances and all kinds of difficulties. When John Phillips and Peg had to leave to go back to the States, Peg, Margaret Phillips, one of the sweetest people you'd know, and she had awful trouble learning Dinka. Oh, Dinka is a terrible language.

Oh, I'd start out with that 243 phonemic vowels. How's that for 243 phonemic vowels? Because they could all be three lengths and seven tones and two methods of articulation and 11 to start with. And poor Peg, she just couldn't do it.

But the worst thing was Ann MacMillan was her teacher. And Ann MacMillan was Australian. Well, that's nothing wrong with Australian.

That's no problem, except Ann MacMillan had bad dentures. And what Ann MacMillan would say, it wasn't just normal. She was getting an extra whistle from the back of her dentures.

And poor Peg, who had all her teeth as they're trying to imitate Ann's denture whistle. And poor Peg just couldn't stand the pressure of not being able to speak. And she had what I don't understand, but we called a breakdown, a nervous breakdown.

John had to bring her home right away. And the day after she left, Marjorie was there caring for our little son. The Dinka women from the distant villages would come in, and they'd say, Where's Miss John? Miss John.

That was the extent of their English. They said it in Dinka. And she would say she had to go to her country, to her home.

And they would say, I'm so very sorry. And then they would say, Miss John, she loved us. And they'd turn and walk back.

She couldn't talk Dinka, but she talked grace. Do you understand? She talked grace. They understood it.

She loved us. We had some others that were superb in language, but they didn't talk grace. And the first thing God does when he wants to bring someone out of death and life is put someone along the side of him that talks grace, believes it.

She loved them. And if your neighbors and friends ever come to Christ, it's going to be because you or somebody else loved them. It's hard to do.

Most neighbors aren't lovely or lovable, any more than you and I were to somebody that loved us for Jesus and brought us. That's the first thing God wants to do. It does.

Put somebody alongside him to live Christ before them as a sample of his grace. Then the second thing he does is to get somebody, maybe the same body, somebody to intercede for them, someone to pray for them. It may be there, it may be elsewhere, but D.L. Moody wrote to the committee at St. Louis because they were inviting him to go back to St. Louis for what would have been the third great citywide campaign in St. Louis.

And he had to turn it down because of failing health. And his letter, I saw it at Moody Church in the archives there. His letter said, Thank you for the invitation.

I regret because of ill health I'll not be able to accept. But I just would say this to you, my dear friends in St. Louis. After 40 years in evangelism, during which I have seen tens of thousands of persons profess faith in Christ, I have yet to find anyone who has made a profession of faith in Christ in my meetings and who lived thereafter for two years as a consistent Christian, but what there was someone who interceded for them and witnessed to them before I ever came to town.

I conclude, therefore, that the most important part is not the coming of D.L. Moody, but the intercession by and the witness of the people that are right now in St. Louis. Telling, isn't it? Striking. Hadn't found anyone living two years, but what someone who interceded for them and witnessed to them before he came to reap.

So the second thing I'm saying that God does when he wants someone to whom he wants to bring salvation is he gets someone there to intercede for them. Now, there's a strong theological reason for that. Why intercession is so important.

You see, man is a morally responsible individual. God gave to man the right to go to hell, and he won't take it away from him. God deals with man as being responsible.

You know why people don't repent? I'm jumping the gun a little bit. You know why they don't repent? It's not because they can't repent. They got all the equipment with which to repent.

The reason why people don't repent is because they won't repent. Unless God moves upon them. We've heard it.

We've sung it. Oh, incline me to repent. Let me now my fall lament.

Lord, incline me. Well, you see, God gives to sinners the right to go to hell. Now, I had to say to my youngest son one time, I said, David, I love you.

Your mother and I love you. We love you too much not to respect the fact that God gave you the right to go to hell. And if you're determined to do it, we're not going to stand in your way.

We're going to grieve. We're going to weep. But I couldn't do anything about it if I wanted to other than love you and pray for you, David.

I have the power. God didn't give it to me. Listen to him as he speaks to the prophet.

As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn you. Turn you. Turn you.

For why will you die? Don't you see? You say, well, there's a big conundrum here, isn't there? Between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Oh, there is. Do you have all the answers? Oh, no.

All the answers I've got are in the Scripture, but the Scripture still leaves you confused. That's right. Don't go beyond the Scripture.

My mind says I've got to understand the moment that you come to the place that you've got to reconcile what God hasn't reconciled. You've got to deal with this on the basis that God deals with it. Intercession, therefore, is the sovereign God's way of dealing with responsible sinners.

And he is saying to you, to me, unto him who loved us and washed us in his blood and made us to be kings and priests. He didn't ask us if we wanted to be kings and priests. He exercised his sovereignty and he made us to be kings and priests.

And you know the function of a priest is twofold, isn't it? It's to go into the presence of God on behalf of sinners, represent sinners before God, admit their guilt, accept their condemnation, and plead for mercy. And to go before the sinner and to indict the sinner with the justice of God and the holiness of God and plead with sinners to repent. It's both.

And he made us to be priests. And the second thing God does when he's going to bring grace to sinners is put someone alongside of them to intercede. To legally represent the sinner before God because we are kinsmen to the sinner.

You go into the presence of God. Why? Because you've been invited into his presence. You've been urged to come into his presence.

You're seated in the heavenlies in Christ. And because of these high and holy privileges washed in his blood, made to be priests, we can represent that sinner before God. I think of Dr. A.B. Simpson.

Many of you know I was for many years pastor, ten in fact, pastor of the Alliance Church, the one that he founded in New York City. And Dr. Simpson had a heart for the world. The record is told of his secretary going by his door, his office door and seeing him with a small globe he kept on his desk.

And his fingers were on Tibet. And he was clutching it like this and tears streaming down his cheek. Washing down the sides of the globe.

As he cried out to God to send somebody to Tibet to tell the Tibetans about Christ. And strangely enough, there wasn't anybody in that generation God could send. But when they got there, 25 or 27 years later, it was found that every one of the missionary group of 11 had been born within 18 months after Dr. Simpson had spent the better part of a year in daily intercession for Tibet.

God had to raise up a generation that were willing to obey Him. Intercession to intercede. To intercede, to legally represent the sinner.

Because you see, we'll put it like this. What's the scripture say? In Him we live and we move and we have our being. God is not far from every one of us.

Did you know right now you're sitting in three atmospheres? First atmosphere, the easiest one to identify, is air. And the most dependent, we are very dependent upon it. Air.

Hold, clamp your nostrils, cover your mouth. Five minutes, six minutes, your statistic. Ten maybe at the most.

We gotta have it. In it we live and move and from it we have our being. But there's a second atmosphere, equally close but not the same, and that's electronic sound.

Correct? This room is filled with electronic impulses that we call radio and television. I guess those are the two wheels. Maybe there are others, but those are the two I'm familiar with.

You know, if all the electronic sound in this room were to be turned up to 100 decibels, these concrete black walls would powder. We'd have to have rows and rows just floor to ceiling to get all of the electronic, all of the non-electronic, all of the radio and television array. I don't know if you'd call it electronic.

You see, I get all my science from the Reader's Digest and it qualifies me as an expert. I don't know what I'm talking about when I get out of ABC. But at any rate, if we're all here, we have to have a receiving set for it.

We have to have all these little radios and so on. But it's there. You know it.

There's no big thing about that, but when I told my friends in the coma people about the electronics, about the radio waves and so on and sounds they couldn't hear with their ear, they just laid down and flew ground and rolled in laughter to think that there was anything around them that they couldn't hear. I had a little radio, one of those things in the government surplus after the war when I was 45. It had to run cables to the battery and it had electric tubes.

I had a visit from my informant and his wife and her sister and they had gone around. I saw the sister slide out on the sand and I saw her scrunch around and come in and she was back looking in and she whispered. She got back, she whispered to her sister, whispered to Celia.

And what did she say, Celia? What did she say? She said she knows where that noise is coming from. Oh, where is it coming from? She said she sees that you've got a whole village of little people back there. She saw the lights on in their village.

That was the glow of the tubes. And when I tried to tell her no, no, it was coming from the air, those three people just laid rocked and laughed. It was outside the pale of their experience.

Now when I tell you that there is a third atmosphere, God, God is not the air and He's not the radio waves and the TV waves, not electricity. God is God. But in Him you live and move and have your being.

And He's just as near to you as the air you breathe or just as near to you as the radio waves. But you see with the sinners, He makes no contact. What? Their receiving set is dead.

You go into the morning and you put your radio on and nothing happens. What do you say? Well, if you're like most of us, you say, well, it's dead. What's that mean? It's rusted and gone down into a pile of ashes.

It just means it doesn't work. Maybe a little filament broke. When it says we're dead in trespasses and sins, what's it mean? Well, it just means that the receiving set to know God isn't operating.

Now God's not going to bother the sinner. Every sin the sinner commits, he commits in the presence of God. But God doesn't bother him.

God doesn't trouble him. Because the sinner is... When do I quit? Right now, don't I? Oh, I've got too many. What I give becomes like wallpaper.

You can cut it off anywhere and not spoil a pattern. Carry on. And so that receiving set in the sinner just doesn't operate.

So what he's asking you to do for that candidate for grace, since his set's on the blink, and God won't communicate with him, and he won't communicate with God this way, enmity against him. He's an enemy against God. See, he's a traitor and a rebel and an anarchist and a transgressor and an enemy.

God's not his enemy. He's God's enemy. And there's no communication.

So God says to you, I want you to intercess, I want you to intercede, I want you to go between. So what he wants you to do is to legally represent that sinner in his presence, to accept the justice of God's condemnation, accept the fairness of God's judgment, that he does indeed deserve God's wrath, because he does. And then, having done that, for you to say now, God in your grace, Father in your mercy, you've moved upon me, he was no worse than I, didn't deserve your wrath any more than did I, and you were kind and merciful and loving to me, and in your grace you moved upon me, O in the name of your Son who loves sinners like him and like me, I entreat you to begin to work his life, or her life, or their lives.

And this now means that you as the kinsmen, do you understand? The kinsmen representative. That's what you are to the sinner. You're his kinsmen.

Once you were like he is, she is. And so you begin to legally represent that one, intercede. Now, now because you've done what you were supposed to do, now God begins to work.

Oh, I thought I'd be far further along than this, but we'll just quit there and resume two weeks from now. Father, there's enough here for us to get started. First, we can memorize the scripture, and secondly, we can realize that we're put there to live Christ before sinner neighbors and friends and intercede for them.

Maybe it's just as well we didn't get any farther than this. Grant to us, Father, the grace to begin with these two first steps that those around us might come to know Him, whom to know as life eternal. In His peerless, matchless name we ask this.

Amen.

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