

Audio Sermon: The Grace of God by T Austin Sparks

by T. Austin-Sparks

T. Austin-Sparks' sermon explores the profound implications of God's grace in redeeming and transforming believers into a people zealous for good works.

Duration: 23:19

Scripture: Titus 2:11, Titus 2:15

Topics: "Divine Grace", "Christian Character"

Description

This sermon delves into the profound message of grace as outlined in the Letter of Paul to Titus, emphasizing the costliness and demands of grace. It explores the purpose of grace in redeeming and purifying a people for God's possession, characterized by high spiritual standards and zealous for good works. The method of grace is depicted as instructing and disciplining believers to develop strength and beauty in their Christian character, reflecting the perfect balance found in the grace of God.

Transcript

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Chapter 2. I take the first part of the last verse of Chapter 2, in order to throw back to what has just been said. These things speak, and exhort, and reprove with all authority. These things speak, exhort, reprove with all authority.

And so we look to see what these things are. And we go back to verse 11. The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and the fearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works.

Three things in that paragraph. The gift of grace, the goal of grace, the method of grace. The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men.

And you have to link with the first statement, the last. That he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works. Why did the grace of God appear unto all men, bringing salvation, not just that they should be saved, and then rest upon the fact that they are saved people and nothing more matters, but that, that he might redeem unto himself a people for his own possession.

Something more than their possession, possessing salvation through grace. The goal of grace is that he should have a people for his own possession. The kind of people for his own possession are here defined.

We will not dwell upon the characteristics and features of that people. You will see the various words and statements on both sides. The negative side, from, from.

The various things that are said, from which this people for his own possession are to be redeemed, and the things which they are to deny. The negative side, that it is very positive as a negative statement. Something that must be, it must be.

Grace demands character. Character is what God must have for his own possession. It's a kind of people.

I think, dear friends, perhaps one of the great needs of our time is to recover the greatness of the cost of grace. Grace perhaps has been made a little too cheap. The greatest word in our vocabulary, but it has become perhaps one of the cheapest words.

Words most easily used, because it is the common and all-inclusive word of the Christian vocabulary. But oh, what grace has cost. And therefore, what really does lie behind our being redeemed and a people for God's own possession? You will not misunderstand the use of the word.

I think that this passage suggests that this people should be a spiritual aristocracy. That word can be used, of course, in a very wrong sense. But it means a people of high character, of high dignity, who have looked at these things mentioned on the one side and said, no, no more of that, no more of that.

I'm done with that. That belongs to a low level of life. And have looked on the other side and said, this is the standard which God has set, and that's my standard.

By the grace of God. Because the grace of God is not only that favor which is unmerited. It is a demand.

It is a call. It is an energy. It is something by which we are able to rise to a very high level of spiritual character, a people for his own possession.

Grace has come. But grace, by its costliness, makes great demands. Very great demands.

And the end is this. Who gave himself for us then. He might redeem us from all iniquity.

Redeemed from all iniquity. And purify unto himself a people for his own possession. Zealous of good ones.

The gift of grace. The object of grace. The way or the method of grace.

What is it? It's in this one word at the beginning of verse 12. In the authorized version the word is translated, teaching us to the intense depth. In the revised version it is instructing us.

Perhaps you wonder what the difference is between teaching and instructing. Well there is a difference. But the revisers were seeking a word which would convey a little more than the word teaching.

You look back to chapter 1 and verse 11. You have it like this. Whose mouths must be stopped.

Men who overthrow whole houses. Teaching things which they ought not for filthy lucre's sake. Now that word teaching is an altogether different word from the one in verse 11 of chapter 2. Not the same Greek word.

First word in chapter 1 means what we mean by teaching. Telling people things. Telling people things.

But this word here in chapter 2 and verse 12 is another word altogether. And it's the same word as is translated in Hebrews 12 Three times chapter 12 the letter to the Hebrews. Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.

It is for chastening that ye endure. They verily for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them, but he for our profit. That word chasten and chasteneth is the same Greek word as is here interpreted or translated instructing us.

Now everybody can see the difference between teaching, that is telling people things and chastening them. Chastening is something very much more active isn't it? And so here the method of grace is instructing, chastening, child training us. Child training us to the intent that now you see grace leads us into trouble or grace leads us into discipline.

Grace brings us into a difficult school. It's grace. Oh what a different idea of grace from well grace, yes grace is grace and receive the gift of grace and everything is all right.

You never need worry about things anymore and you're just going to heaven and everything is going to be beautiful. It's all of grace you see, it's all of grace. And in grace we've got everything and we need not give another thought to it at all.

But here it says that grace has come to discipline us. To bring us into a school. But in the school of grace but we don't often think of it like this.

In this hard school. In this discipline. In this child training.

In this chastening. We very often think this is anything but the grace of God and we mean the graciousness of God. We have got to just adjust ourselves to this.

Get our minds changed about this. It's just as much of divine grace toward us to perfect us as it is to begin the work of salvation. It's just as much a part of the grace of God not to let us off when we are wrong but to bring us up short and it means to do it, to do it very strongly.

And seemingly unkindly it's just as much a matter of divine grace to do that as it is to bring us into salvation. It's grace dear friends. After all it's the grace of God.

You and I do have to learn this lesson because you see for young Christians sometimes when things begin to get a bit difficult and the early blossom on the tree of their beginning of their Christian life also beautiful then that begins to be torn off by rough winds and there's nothing but apparent nakedness left and it all seems now to have lost a lot of its glamour this Christian life. Passing into difficult times the temptation is to think that this is not the grace of God. This is not the grace of God.

This cannot be grace and the devil will tell you that you've fallen from grace. Not at all. Do believe it young Christians when the times become difficult in your Christian life it's all grace that it should be so.

No one wants to be weak and flabby and sickly as a Christian. One who cannot stand up to anything at all. One who must have everything so nice and comfortable in order to go on being a Christian.

Well if you looked at others like that you wouldn't admire them at all. You wouldn't think that that was really after all much good. Well that's how we look at other people.

Let us remind ourselves that God's grace is at work to make us able to stand up and be strong to go through and it's grace and this can only be learned in a hard school. The people whom God wants for his own possession are people like that who really can stand their ground in adversity. Who really can hold on when there's a tremendous shaking.

Who can show grace in their own lives when everything is ungracious around them. The Lord wants two things in the Christian life. Two things which he has written so visibly in creation and yet which two things it is so difficult to combine in human character.

They are perfectly combined in the Lord Jesus and conformity to his image will be conformity to him in these two respects. The most difficult combination beauty and strength. Strength and beauty.

In our family worship this morning we read the psalm in which that phrase occurs. Strength and beauty are in his temple. Study the temple again and see.

Strength. Massive pillars. Mighty foundations.

Strong walls. But look at the beauty, the carvings, the fruit, the ravines. Strength and beauty.

Look at it in creation. The massive mountain. The very embodiment of strength and nestling at its foot the beautiful wildflowers.

So tiny and yet so superb and wonderful. Strength and beauty in combination throughout all creation. God has said this is his mind and grace can make that combination.

But it takes grace, you know, for us to be strong. To be strong and yet to be beautiful. A lot of grace is wanted for that combination.

Some people are inclined to be too strong and there's not the beauty and the loveliness and the kindness and the gentleness and the graciousness. On the other hand some people are all for the artistic and that other side and there's, as I used the word just now, this flabbiness about them. They're not strong.

No. A combination of these things in a people for his own position. So here instructing or teaching, you see, is the school of grace.

The headmaster of the school of the Christian life is one who has full of sympathy on the one side but full of stumbleness on the other as occasion requires. But there's a perfect balance in him and his name is grace. Don't think of grace as something that is only soft.

Grace can be very strong. But do not think of grace as always and only making exacting demands. Grace is full of sympathy.

Think then on these things. These are the things. I've curtailed them very considerably because of the time but here they are.

These things where there's talk about. These things talk about and exhort and exhort. Come along now.

Come along. Look here. Look here.

You're having a bad time I know. A bad time. And you're inclined to think the Lord's against you.

And this is not what you were led or led yourself to expect in the Christian life. Now come along. Not only after something stronger.

Something deeper. You can never have the fruit until the blossom's gone. And it takes terrible winds to get rid of the blossom in order to bring on the fruit.

Come along now. That's exhorting. These things speak.

Exhort. Reprove. Oh, is that a right word to use in the same sentence as the word grace? Reprove.

With all authority. Yes, it's all grace. Holy Spirit is like this because he is called the Spirit of Grace.

Spirit of Grace. He can be stout with all his sympathy. He can be full of sympathy and yet quite stout.

He has and after all when we think about it some difficult children to deal with. And what difficult children we are. We are.

But grace in the combination of sympathy and strength will make us a people for his own possession. This sermon is ministered to you.

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