Message 7/1/2018 - Grace

Titus 2: 11 – 15

 The Grace of God, revealed in Christ Jesus teaches us to live with wisdom, righteousness and devotion to God in the present, looking forward with hope to the day when our Savior and Lord Christ Jesus returns!

 Paul's letter to Titus, "his true son, in our shared faith", was written about the same time as he was writing to Timothy and with similar purpose. Paul instructed them to exercise authority and oversee the correction of false teaching and establish strong Christian leadership in the churches.

 Paul was a gifted leader, it would have been difficult for anyone to take his place in the churches he established. Paul wrote to Titus to proclaim faith to those God has chosen and to teach them to know the truth of Grace that shows them how to live godly lives.

 Paul knew Titus would encounter opposition to being accepted as leader of the church at Crete, so the letter also worked as an introduction and official notification of Titus' authority over the church.

 Paul was a faithful witness, ambassador for Christ Jesus, he faithfully proclaimed the Gospel of Christ Jesus throughout the Roman Empire; lives were transformed, and as a result churches were established.

 Paul centered the church on Christ's teachings not on a himself. Knowing eventually, he would no longer be there to build, encourage, discipline, and teach. So, he trained young believers to assume leadership in the churches after he was gone. Paul urged them to center their lives, teaching, preaching on the Word of God and to train others to do the same.

 The passage we will explore today is Titus 2: 11 – 14. Paul is encouraging Titus to live Christ centered and teach the Gospel with courage and conviction.

**1. Grace Has Appeared**

 *Titus 2: 11 For the Grace of God has appeared, (been revealed), bringing salvation to all people.*

 **A. God's Grace**

 We have all learned that grace is "unmerited favor", a gift from God we cannot earn and do not deserve. So, how do we get it in the first place?

 We just get it! Grace is a gift, you don't set out to get it, God gives, and you have the opportunity to respond by receiving and accepting or not! Partaking or not! Reflecting it or not!

 Two pastors were on their way to Atlanta, Ga. for a large Christian men's gathering. One of them had never been in the south before. After staying in a motel overnight, they stopped at a nearby restaurant for breakfast. When their meal was delivered, the pastor who had never been south before, saw this white mushy looking stuff on his plate. When the waitress came by again he asked her what it was. "Grits", she replied. "Ma'am I didn't order it and I'm not paying for it". "Sir, down here you don't order it and you don't pay for it, you just get it." How like the grace of God!

 Paul shares in 2 Timothy 1: *9 For God saved us* (those who respond and accept) *and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was His plan from before the beginning of time to show us His grace through Christ Jesus.*

 I would like to share with you an excerpt from John Wesley's sermon *Free Grace* written in 1739.

 1. How freely does God love the world! While we were yet sinners, ‘Christ died for the ungodly.’ While we were ‘dead in sin’, God ‘spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.’ And how ‘freely with Him’ does He ‘give us all things’! Verily, free grace is all in all!

 2. The grace or love of God, whence cometh our salvation, is free in all, and free for all.

 3. It is free in all to whom it is given. It does not depend on his good tempers, or good desires, or good purposes and intentions; for all these flow from the free grace of God. They are the streams only, not the fountain. They are the fruits of free grace, and not the root. They are not the cause, but the effects of it. Whatsoever good is in man, or is done by man, God is the author and doer of it. Thus, is His grace free in all, that is, no way depending on any power or merit in man, but on God alone, who freely gave us His own Son, and ‘with Him freely giveth us all things’.

 As Nazarenes we believe, "that the grace of God through Christ Jesus is freely bestowed upon all people, enabling all who will to turn from sin to righteousness, believe on Christ Jesus for pardon and cleansing from sin, and follow good works pleasing and acceptable in His sight."

 **B. Salvation Available**

 In this passage God's Grace appeared, was revealed in the person of Christ Jesus our Savior and Lord. **All people** are given the **opportunity** to receive salvation from sin through what Jesus did on the Cross.

 Paul continues in 2 Timothy 1: *10 And now He has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News.*

 God loves you too much to leave you in your sin, He desires to be an active part of your life, not just on Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings but every minute of every day of your life.

 As Nazarenes we believe, "*Participating in the means of grace, especially the fellowship, disciplines, and sacraments of the Church, believers grow in grace and in wholehearted love to God and neighbor".*

 When we respond and accept God's grace our life will change, be transformed to perform God deeds, and witness to the power of the Gospel.

**2*.* Grace Teaches**

 *Titus 2: 12 And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God,*

 *13 while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed.*

 **A. Say NO to the World**

 Grace in Christ appeared to teach us how to live Christlike holy lives before He appears again. He is coming again!

 Paul stresses the teachings of Christ Jesus to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures and live as Jesus in our world.

 As we surrender daily to grace our lives will be transformed so that, Christlike holy living will become more a reflex and less of a choice.

 **B. Say Yes to God**

 Paul encourages Titus and us to be an upright example of a mature believer, transformed by grace to show others the way of grace.

 Just as this church's mission statement says, "To offer a safe and loving fellowship of believers who are allowing the love and light of Jesus to shine through them to reach our community for Christ and **make disciples who make disciples**".

 Titus 1: 14 – 16 is how Paul described the church at Crete to Titus*14 They must stop listening to Jewish myths and the commands of people who have turned away from the truth.* (People who have heard the truth of grace but return to myths that God only blesses those who obey the law.) *15 Everything is pure to those whose hearts are pure. But nothing is pure* (Not even themselves) *to those who are corrupt and unbelieving, because their minds and consciences are corrupted. 16 Such people claim they know God, but they deny Him by the way they live. They are detestable and disobedient, worthless for doing anything good.*

 The transforming power of Grace in not visible in their lives, they did not accept the way of grace.

 In the early church false teaching was dividing the people, diluting the Gospel, and the most prevalent issue Paul was constantly writing about and resolving in person with the churches.

 When disputes divide the Body of Christ, Satan rejoices and steps in to aggravate and exaggerate the issue to divert the church's focus from Christ.

 No matter the circumstances of your life Grace teaches us to "*live in this evil world with wisdom, self-control, righteously with others, and devotion to God"*.

 This will go a long way in the world to draw others to Christ and grow His Kingdom. Like working with Pastor and Dee to start home groups where the unsaved are invited, taught, and shown the Grace of God.

 Looking forward, drawing closer to Jesus in expectation of eternity together.

**C. Patience as We Wait for the Lord's Return**

 Over the last several weeks Pastor Ralph has been preaching on the second coming of Christ Jesus. In Titus we are instructed to live looking forward with hope, expectant anticipation " when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed".

 Grace through Faith has saved us and the only way we grow as Christians is by grace poured out on us from God's love.

 Paul reminds the Philippians who they are and who they wait for, *Philippians 3: 20 But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.*

 There is a song "I Can Only Imagine", now a movie, that says "I can only imagine what it will be like, When I walk, by your side, I can only imagine what my eyes will see, When your face is before me".

 Believers live in expectant hope, confidence founded on the resurrection of Christ Jesus, and the promises of God.

 Does grace bring you to live in anticipation of being face to face with Christ Jesus, walking and talking with the Lord of the Universe?

**3.** **Grace Brings Freedom**

 *Titus 2: 14 He gave His life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us His very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.* Grace on display.

 Recently I found this story about Billy Graham, not sure it is factual, but I will share it anyway.

 When Billy Graham was driving through a small southern town, he was stopped by a policeman and charged with speeding. Graham admitted his guilt but was told by the officer that he would have to appear in court.

 The judge asked, "Guilty, or not guilty?" When Graham pleaded guilty, the judge replied, "That’ll be ten dollars -- a dollar for every mile you went over the limit."

 Suddenly the judge recognized the famous minister. "You have violated the law," he said. "The fine must be paid--but I am going to pay it for you." He took a ten-dollar bill from his own wallet, attached it to the ticket, and then took Graham out and bought him a steak dinner! "That," said Billy Graham, "is how God treats repentant sinners!"

 Grace frees and blesses the sinner and the righteous.

 Jesus paid the price and all of creation celebrates your return.

 **A. Graces Process**

 Imagine being a prisoner and hearing the good news, you're free to go! Someone else is taking your place.

 Grace is God's love, kindness, and gentleness to us, the undeserving, even while we were separated from Him by sin. He could have let us rot, instead He chose, in the words of Paul "*to cleanse us, and to make us His very own people".* To set us free from slavery to sin.

 Grace calls for a response from believers not as repayment for what we have received but out of a repentant grace-filled heart.

 Jesus paid it all for our sins to restore us to right relationship with God. Grace pardons believers from guilt and penalty for sin, when they acknowledge and repent, change their ways.

 Nazarenes believe we are justified, regenerated, and adopted when we cooperate by responding to God with repentance and faith in Christ Jesus.

 To be justified is to be vindicated, made holy, and righteous through grace alone, by no word or action of our own.

 Regeneration, new birth is God's gift received by faith, a spiritual rebirth making believers a new creation in Christ Jesus.

 Adoption is the act of God making each of us His child, siblings of Christ Jesus, and as is written in

 Romans 8: 16 – 17, *16 For His Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children. 17 And since we are His children, we are His heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. But if we are to share His glory, we must also share His suffering.*

 Showing Grace, unmerited favor to those in our world who don't deserve it.

 Just as we are free from the penalty death for our sin, we are also purified from sin’s influence as we grow in Christ and live to draw others to His Kingdom.

 *Ephesians 2: 10 For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.*

Who in our community does God want you to show Grace to? EVERYONE! Our challenge is to seek God and join Him in what He is already doing.

**B. Produces an Eagerness to be God's Co-worker**

 Grace creates in us a heart ready and *"totally committed to doing good deeds".*

 In 2 Corinthians 5: 14 – 15 Paul writes *14 For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

 Last Sunday Pastor Bernie Slingerland brought us a message from Joshua 1: 1 – 18, to Be Strong and Courageous. In the first 9 verses of Joshua, God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous 3 times. God also tells Joshua in verse, *5 No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you.*

 Believers have promises from Christ Jesus as in Hebrews 13: 5 - 6 *5 "For God has said, “I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." 6 So we can say with confidence, “The LORD is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me"?*

 In Titus 2: 11 – 14 Paul shares with Titus and us the benefits of growing in Grace the way to holiness.

 In verse 15 we are instructed to not only live the Scriptures but also teach them. *15 You must teach these things and encourage the believers to do them. You have the authority to correct them when necessary, so don’t let anyone disregard what you say.*

 Growing in grace we learn not to be afraid of others who are older, younger, wealthier, or more influential.

 Grace leads us to Be Strong and Courageous, to eagerly, and boldly encourage others, who may be imprisoned lacking grace and share with them the key to true freedom… GRACE!