

Titus 2:11-14

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[0 : 0 0] This morning we were listening to, and as we listened we were also seeing, a revelation of Jesus as he appeared to John in his vision on Patmos.

And as John records that for us in the first chapter of the book of Revelation. This evening we also want to explore or consider a revelation or appearing of God.

In actual fact, the passage that we read speaks of three appearings. Two of them are identified explicitly with that language of appearing, and then there's a third appearing where the actual word is not present, but the reality of an appearing of some description is present.

So let me just note what these three appearings are in that passage in Titus chapter 2. And having identified them, then we can think a little bit about each of them.

First of all, we're going to think about the appearing of God's grace in the past. In verse 11 we read, for the grace of God has appeared. So Paul is looking back to an appearing in the past, an appearing of God's grace.

[1 : 3 1] Then we're also going to consider a second appearing, the appearing of God's glory in the future. In verse 13, Paul speaks of how we wait for the blessed hope, and then notice the language, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

So the appearing of God's grace in the past, then the appearing of God's glory in the future. Then the third appearing, where as I say, the actual word, the vocabulary of appearing isn't present.

But what I think we can also describe as an appearing, the appearing of God in and through His people in the present. And we see something of that in verse 12, but that will require a little bit more explanation, given that you don't actually have the explicit language of appearing that you do have in the first two of the three.

But we'll come to that in a few moments. So let's think of these three appearings this evening. First of all, the appearing of God's grace in the past.

As I identified just a moment ago there, at the very beginning of the passage that we read, we have reference to this. For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.

[2 : 4 5] Verses 11 to 14, the verses that we read at the beginning of the service, are in Paul's original writing of the letter to Titus in the Greek language, one sentence.

Paul was a great fan of long, long sentences, which sometimes makes it complicated to follow exactly what he's saying. And here was one of them, although some are much longer.

But as I say, verses 11 to 14 constitute one sentence. And the subject of the sentence, that's the reason why I mention this, the subject of the sentence is the grace of God.

For the grace of God has appeared. So basically everything that follows is really a development or a description of this grace of God that is spoken of at the very beginning of the sentence.

It is the subject of the sentence. What are we told concerning the appearing of God's grace in the past, which is our first concern or interest?

[3 : 48] Just to confirm, I think we've already done so, but just to make doubly sure, it is very clear that at the beginning of the sentence, Paul is referring to historic or past appearing of God.

The tense he used is in the past tense. For the grace of God has appeared. So he has in mind, whatever it is he has in mind, he has in mind something that has already taken place.

He's looking back and acknowledging that in the past, the grace of God appeared in history. We want to think about this past appearance of God's grace.

We want to think of two aspects of it. We want to think, first of all, the nature of this appearing, but then also the purpose of this appearing.

So how God's grace has appeared and why God's grace has appeared. The nature of it and the purpose of it. We'll think, first of all, or we'll note first of all, the nature of this appearing.

[4 : 51] Well, what Paul tells us is that God's grace has appeared in the person of God's one and only Son. In the person of Jesus Christ. Now Jesus is not explicitly mentioned in verse 11, where we read that the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.

But it's very clear that when he is mentioned in verse 13, in referring to this second appearing, the appearing of the glory of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, it's clear that the one being spoken of in verse 13 is the same one who has been spoken of previously in verse 11, though not named.

And then, indeed, in verse 14, Paul goes on to speak of what Jesus did at his first appearing, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own.

And the language there clearly is talking about Jesus. So, the one who appeared in the past, revealing the grace of God, is Jesus Christ.

But who is this Jesus, or how is this Jesus spoken of? This Jesus who is described as the grace of God. Well, notice how Paul describes him in verse 13, in the second half of verse 13.

[6 : 15] There he's moved on to speaking about the second appearing, but we have this description of him. The appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Now, there is some debate, I suppose, as to who Paul is referring to in the language he employs.

Now, you might say, well, it's very clear. What debate could there be? But the debate really boils down to whether Paul here is speaking of God the Father and God the Son, or if Paul here is speaking solely about God the Son.

So, basically, if you see that part of the sentence there at the end of verse 13, you could understand it as being a reference to our great God, implicit God the Father, and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Some would understand it in that way. So, both God the Father and God the Son are being spoken of. That is a possibility. The other possibility, and the one that I think is suggested by what Paul says, is that all of that is a description of Jesus.

[7 : 32] The appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Now, in the manner in which the sentence has been punctuated, and of course, the punctuation is something that is introduced in translations, but in the manner in which it's been punctuated with that revealing or that critical comma after Savior, there's no doubt that the translators here do want us to understand and are of the opinion that the one being spoken of here is Jesus, who is our great God and Savior, comma, Jesus Christ.

So, who is Jesus Christ? Well, he is our great God and Savior. Now, I'm no Greek linguist by any means, but those who are and those who have greater knowledge of these things, I think make a solid case on grammatical grounds to conclude that the reference here in verse 13 is to Jesus Christ as the one who can be described as our great God and Savior.

But it's not only grammar that points us in that direction. Perhaps more significantly is the fact that in the New Testament, any reference to the second coming invariably concerns the return of Jesus himself.

It is Jesus who will come again in the clouds, to pick up on language we've been looking at in Revelation. And we remember the words of the angels at the time of Jesus' ascension.

This same Jesus will come back in the same way that you have seen him go into heaven. Now, if Paul is indeed speaking exclusively about Jesus, then we are being given a hugely significant description of who Jesus is.

[9 : 22] He is, Paul contends, our great God. The appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Now, the divinity of Jesus is established and indeed assumed by the New Testament writers in a manner that is beyond any reasonable doubt or debate.

But it is unusual, it is rare, for Jesus to be identified in such an explicit manner as God in the way that he is here. Jesus, our great God and Savior.

It is so explicit. And as I say, that's unusual to find such explicit language identifying Jesus as God.

And so it's very significant. Our conviction that Jesus is God, the eternal Son of God, is not grounded solely on this verse, but this verse certainly is a very important one in declaring so clearly and so vigorously or identifying Jesus as our great God.

So the appearing of Jesus, the appearing of God's grace in the past. This is how the grace of God has appeared in the person of God's own Son.

[10 : 51] Or in the language that Paul employs, God has appeared in Jesus Christ. And that's why Jesus was able to say to Philip on that occasion when Philip wanted to know the Father and see the Father, what was Jesus' reply to Philip?

Don't you know me, Philip? Even after I have been among you such a long time, anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. So the nature of the appearing of God's grace is the coming of Jesus Christ, our great God and Savior.

But also let's think about the purpose of His appearing. In verse 11 we read, For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.

The purpose of the appearing of God's grace in the person of Jesus is to bring salvation for men and women and boys and girls. Jesus may have been born in a manger, but He did not come empty-handed.

He came bearing gifts. He came bearing the greatest gift of all, salvation for sinners such as you and me. But what does that mean, to speak about Jesus bringing salvation, offering or bringing salvation in the language of verse 11?

[12 : 18] How did Jesus bring or secure salvation for His people? Well, verse 14 gives the answer to that question. We're told of Jesus Christ that He was the one who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own.

Notice that Paul is not concerned with considering each appearing in a neat and self-contained manner. He begins by referring to the first appearing.

He moves on to talk about the second appearing. And here in verse 14, he comes back and speaks again about the first appearing and what Jesus did when He first appeared on the scene of time.

What did Jesus do? How did Jesus bring or secure our salvation? Well, we're told here that it was by an atoning and substitutionary sacrifice who gave Himself for us.

He gave Himself for us, where the for is to be understood not only in the sense of on our behalf, though that is true, but also in the sense of in our place. He gave Himself for us.

[13 : 33] He died in our place. The death that we deserve, He died in our place. Jesus occupied the place that we deserved. He endured the punishment that was our due.

He died in our place. This is how He brought, how He secured salvation. And Paul goes on, this death in our place secures our redemption.

He gave Himself for us to redeem us. And a redemption that, as Paul goes on to say, involves two related aspects.

We are redeemed from all wickedness. Notice there in verse 14, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness. So we're redeemed from sin and wickedness, but we're also redeemed for purity, for purification, to redeem us from all wickedness, and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own.

In other words, we could say that we are redeemed from slavery to sin, and we are redeemed for freedom from sin and for belonging in Christ, a people that are His very own.

[14 : 52] This then is the first appearing, the appearing of the grace of God in the person of Jesus Christ, who came to bring, to secure, to offer salvation for all people.

But moving on to the second appearing that Paul speaks of here in these verses, and that is the appearing of God's glory in the future. Verse 13, while we wait for the blessed hope.

So here Paul isn't looking back to an appearing that is already taking place, he's rather looking forward and contemplating and awaiting a second appearing. The blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Now, I guess it's worth noting that in the titles that we're giving to these different appearings, we're distinguishing between the first appearing as an appearing of God's grace and the second appearing as an appearing of God's glory.

Now that is quite neat for the purposes of sermon headings, but it's also limited or has its limitations. It is clearly the case that in both the first and the second appearing, you have a revelation of both God's grace and God's glory.

[16 : 12] That said, I think you can recognize that in the first appearing, what is preeminent is the grace of God. Whereas in the second appearing that we await, what is preeminent is the glory of God.

So both are present in both appearings, but I think you can just about justify distinguishing them in this way. So in verse 13, Paul speaks of another appearing, a future appearing that he and the believers are waiting for.

The language of, while we wait. Indeed, this is an appearing that we continue to wait for. It was for Paul something that was yet future, and it is for us something that is still yet future, and it is the appearing or coming that we read of in 1 Corinthians when we're instructed to participate in the Lord's Supper until he comes.

It's the appearing that the angels anticipated when Jesus ascended into heaven and said he will return just as he left you. The second coming of Jesus.

This is the appearing that is yet future, the appearing of God's glory in this second coming of Jesus. And what is it that we're waiting for?

[17 : 30] We're waiting for this appearing, but what is it that we're waiting for? Well, let's just turn to what the passage says, what Paul says. He says in verse 13, while we wait for the blessed hope, the blessed hope.

Now this blessed hope, I don't think it's to be understood as distinct from the appearing, but rather it's descriptive of the appearing. Our hope, the hope that brings blessing and blessedness to us is the very prospect of this appearing.

That is our hope, that Jesus is coming, that Jesus will return, that on a day that we are not privy to, but on a day that has been fixed in eternity, Jesus will return and inaugurate the new heavens and the new earth and all that is the result of the fall and of sin, will be swept away and there will be no more suffering and tears and sickness and death.

That is our hope of Jesus returning again and that is what we wait for. We wait for the blessed hope. We wait for the glory of it.

Again, just picking up on the language that Paul uses, while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[18 : 52] I was just out of interest comparing the language that we have here in this edition of the NIV, which is the 2011 edition, with the previous edition that we used to have as our pulpit Bible.

And for this expression, there is a change in the translation that has been opted for. In the previous version of the NIV, it spoke of the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, where the word glory was understood as an adjective.

So basically, what was being suggested is that the manner of Christ's appearing would be glorious. Of course, that's true. The appearing of Jesus will be glorious. It will be a glorious sight.

It will be a glorious occasion. It will be glorious in every way that you can imagine. But what Paul is saying here and what is captured by the manner in which this edition of the NIV translates the expression is, I think, of greater interest and more startling in a sense.

What Paul is saying here is that the coming of Jesus is the coming of the glory of God. While we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[20 : 04] So not just that his appearing will be glorious in character, but that he himself is the appearing, the appearance, the manifestation of God's glory.

Of course, that's a truth that we find elsewhere in Scripture. Even this morning, I think we made reference to Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 3 where that very truth is stated very explicitly by the author of the letter to the Hebrews.

Hebrews. So we wait for Jesus, the glory of God manifested in the person of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So we have the first appearing in the past, we have a second appearing in the future, but what about the present? Is God in Jesus in some sense absent in the present?

You know, he appeared in the past when he was born in Bethlehem and lived in this world for the time that he did. He appeared in the past to bring or secure our salvation, but as we know, he then returned to the Father.

[21 : 20] So he did appear, but then he returned to the Father, and we know that he will come again. And so the question is this, well, yes, he appeared in the past and we know about it, we can read about it, we enjoy the benefits of it, but nonetheless, he appeared and then he returned to the Father.

And we look forward to a future day when he will come again, and that is good to do so, and that is our blessed hope. But what about the present? In what sense, or is there a sense in which Jesus is present or appearing with us today?

Or do we just have to wait for that day when he will come again? Well, of course, there are different ways and different senses in which, in a very real way, Jesus is present in the here and now.

He is present in the gospel. He is present in our proclamation of the gospel. He is present by his spirit, the spirit of Jesus as the spirit is described.

He is present by his spirit in his church and in his people. In all of these real ways, he is present. And that is clear. But I want to suggest on the basis of this passage how Jesus Christ, our great God and Savior, is present in the present, a third appearing, if you wish, though, as I say, the language itself is not used.

[22 : 46] And this is the appearing of God, the appearing of Jesus, in and through his people in the present. And here the focus is on what is said in verse 12, where Paul is continuing the thought of this salvation that Jesus brings.

And he develops the theme of the nature of this salvation by saying as follows, and we just read the verse, it teaches, that is the grace of God, it teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age.

Now, the contention that I'm making or what I'm proposing is that Jesus Christ appears or is made manifest in his own people, in his very own, to use this wonderful covenantal language that Paul uses.

Now, in order to see the manner in which Jesus appears in his own people, or how he would wish to appear in his own people, it's helpful to notice how in the immediately preceding verse, this theme of the faith of God's people being a visible faith is one that is touched on very explicitly.

Let's just read the previous verse. We'll read verses 9 and 10, though, the specific teaching that we have here may seem a little bit obscure to us, but then it leads on to the point that I want to highlight.

[24 : 17] So, from verse 9, you know, Paul is giving this instruction to Titus and he says, teach slaves to be subject to their masters and everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted.

And then, it's what follows that particularly interests us. so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. You see how the concern of Paul is that these believers, in their own particular circumstances, by their lives, by their conduct, by their behavior, by their attitudes, would make the teaching about God our Savior attractive or visible to others.

The implication is that their masters were not believers, but the servants, by their behavior, by their conduct, would make their faith visible, would make their Savior visible, would make the teaching about God attractive.

And so, this is the idea of God's people making visible the gospel by the lives that they live. And this is picked up on or developed or certainly this idea can be applied to what Paul says in verse 12.

But how do we manifest Jesus? How do we make the gospel attractive? How do we make him visible? Well, we'll do so in the measure that we are the objects of his saving work in our lives as described in verse 12.

[25 : 45] The verse speaks of how the grace of God, that's the it that we have in verse 12. I mentioned a moment ago that the grace of God is the subject of all this sentence. So, when in verse 12 it says, it teaches us, it's referring back to the grace of God.

The grace of God teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives. And this teaching is an integral part of our salvation.

You know, there is a very real sense in which we continue to be saved. We sometimes speak about, well, when were you saved? We use that language and it's legitimate to use that language. It's legitimate to be able to look to a particular time, perhaps, when we were brought to faith.

And of course, the experience of salvation can be different for each of us. But, you know, we can speak in those terms. But it's also true that in any real way we continue to be saved.

We are continually being saved as this teaching is brought to us and as we listen and as we learn and as we respond and as we obey.

[26 : 49] This teaching is part of our salvation. And this teaching, in verse 12, reflects or echoes the twofold aspect of our redemption that we already noted.

We noted in verse 14 how we're redeemed from slavery to sin and redeemed for freedom in Christ. And that's mirrored in this teaching. This teaching is also twofold.

What does it say? What does Paul say? We are to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions. We've been freed from that. We've been liberated from that. Well, we are to say no to that.

No to ungodliness. No to worldly passions. But then on the other side, we are to say yes or we are to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives.

And so, the nature of our redemption is reflected in the nature of our lives as believers. As we are taught, as we learn, as we live out what we are taught, we are purified by and for Jesus.

[27 : 52] We become ever more visibly a people that are his very own. In this lovely language that Paul uses there at the end of verse 14.

We begin to bear more and more the family likeness. We think and speak and behave ever more like Jesus.

Now, this isn't something that happens overnight. It's not something that happens quickly. There can be ups and downs in this growing into the likeness of Jesus.

But, for all that, it is to be a real growing into the likeness of Jesus that we might reveal Jesus.

That in that way, through God's people, there is, in a sense, an appearing of Jesus as we make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. Going back to verse 10.

[28 : 53] Others see us and they see Jesus. Of course, the question that we need to pose, and I leave with you as I leave with myself to reflect on and consider, do they, do others see Jesus when they see us?

So, in this passage, in these verses, three appearings that Paul speaks of. Two explicitly and one that we can draw out, I suppose.

The appearing of God's grace in the past, in the coming of Jesus, bringing salvation. The appearing of God's glory in the future, that blessed hope when Jesus will return and gather His people to Himself.

And the appearing of God in the present, in and through His people, in and through you and me. Well, let us pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank You for Your Word.

We thank You for the Bible. We thank You that You are a God who makes Himself known. You are a God who stoops down. You are a God who appears to Your people.

[30 : 00] We thank You for the wonderful way that You have appeared to Your people in the person of Your Son, Jesus. We thank You for that appearing in the past when Jesus came into the world to be our Savior, to bring salvation.

We look forward to that appearing in the future. May that be for us our blessed hope. May it be the hope that we are standing firm on the appearing of the glory of God in the person of Jesus.

And we pray also that in our lives with the servants that Paul was speaking to Titus about, that we would make attractive the gospel of Jesus Christ by the lives that we live.

Lives of obedience, lives where we say no to all immorality and impurity and wickedness and where we say yes to self-controlled, upright, and godly lives.

Help us even in this week that has begun so to live. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[31 : 23] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.