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- I. My Notes ... WWC message 3/14
- II. Series: Finding Rest in a Restless World
  - Title: Grace First, Grace Always
  - Text: Titus 2:10-14
  - Quote: Grace is the factor that says: You are accepted. You are loved. Now, let's see what that love makes of you. – Brennan Manning (Author)
- III. Introduction
  - You don't need a platform, a pulpit, or a PhD to make the Gospel attractive. Often, it is the person in the most difficult or "invisible" position whose grace-filled response makes the world stop and ask, "Where did they get that power?" With where we have been looking over the last few weeks, it's a good thing to remember that Paul is writing the lowest rung on the "social ladder" ... bondservants. In fact, the Apostle includes himself in this order. I often use the tagline, "Grace First, Grace Always" in my writing and accompanying my messages. Today, we are going to unpack it a bit.
  - We often treat the Christian life as a project of self-improvement—a constant, exhausting cycle of trying to be 'good enough' to keep God interested. But if we want to understand the healthy community Paul describes in Titus 2, we have to start by letting go of the steering wheel. As the theologian Gerhard Forde once put it: 'Grace is not a helper for those who are trying their best. Grace is the end of our trying and the beginning of a whole new way of being.'  
When Paul writes that the 'Grace of God has appeared,' he isn't offering us a tip for better living; he is announcing a takeover. This 'Epiphany' is the end of our performance and the beginning of our training. It is only when we stop trying to manufacture holiness that we finally become free enough to be trained by the one who already calls us His own.
  - Last week, we looked at the blueprint for a healthy community, a place where generations invest in one another and where our daily lives 'adorn' the truth we profess. But if we stop there, we risk turning the church into a mere moral finishing school. We must ask: Where does the power for this kind of life come from? The answer lies in the 'for' that anchors this entire chapter. We don't build a healthy community by staring at our own behavior; we build it by staring at the Epiphany. To understand how a community actually transforms, we have to move from the 'what' of our conduct to the 'who' of our salvation.

#### IV. The Epiphany

- **Titus 2:11 CSB**

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

- Simply defined, theology is the study of God: who he is and what he does. For many Christians theology is somewhat mysterious; it suggests ideas and concepts that are deep, profound, and often confusing. While it is true that some aspects of theology are difficult, if not impossible, for the finite human mind to understand, it is equally true that much of theology can be easily understood. (New American Commentary, 1992)
- We often treat grace like a safety net—something to catch us when we fall. Yet, in this part of his letter, Paul presents grace as a teacher. He tells us that the healthy community we all want isn't built by trying harder; it's built because an 'Epiphany' happened. Grace came first, and it's that grace that is now 'training' us to live lives that actually look like the God we follow.
- The term "For" can be easily overlooked. It is key to our understanding and acceptance of what comes next. In the original Greek, that little word *gar* (for) acts like a heavy-duty power cable. It connects the Community and its behavior (v. 1–10) to the Power Source (v. 11–14).
- The Problem with "Behavior First": If we try to be "self-controlled" or "kind" (v. 2–5) to earn God's favor, we eventually run out of gas. We become judgmental of those who aren't doing as well as us, or we become despairing because we know we're faking it.
- The Power of "Grace First": When the "Epiphany" happens—when you realize that the Creator of the Universe has already appeared with salvation in hand—the pressure to "prove yourself" evaporates.
- This Epiphany does more than just save us from our past; it begins to train us for our present. Verse 12 tells us that this grace teaches us to 'renounce' worldly passions. In the original language, this is a word of denial—like Peter denying Jesus. Grace trains us to look at our old drives for status, control, and self-protection and say, 'I don't know you anymore.' We don't do this through willpower, but because the Epiphany has shown us something infinitely more beautiful.

#### V. It's About Focus

- **Titus 2:12-13 CSB**

*... instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, while we wait for*

*the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*

- You have heard me say that you have a “calling” ... While your calling is wrapped up in demonstrations of love through serving, who you are is a reflection. “Being” always comes ahead of “Doing.” Please hear me, you are saved by grace, you are loved by the One who created all, you are accepted without pretense or preference. As you understand and learn to trust that, as you lived knowing that you are loved and have worth, the actions that speak of this will follow.
- That being said, we have a struggle on our hands that we must be aware of. Things that are acceptable in the minds of culture and society that doesn’t trust God, that doesn’t call Jesus “Lord,” can pull us off course if we aren’t aware.
- Paul isn’t giving Titus a list of “don’ts” ... he is not telling believers as long as you don’t do these things you will be ok. Paul is explaining there is a new way of “being.” It starts with the epiphany of grace.
- The cravings and values that the world holds tell us of a false salvation that comes through status, money, or accomplishment. They promise peace and security. What they really push us to are performance traps that keep us in control and calling the shots. The more you do, the harder you try, the greater your accomplishment will provide you the satisfaction and contentment you are looking for.
- Grace teaches us something different than what the world says. Grace shows us a path that makes sense, that seeks peace even when there is turmoil and remains faithful to the One who showed us the Way.
- Because of grace, we stop 'trying' to be holy and start being 'trained' by the One who already calls us His own. Most of our 'worldly passions' are just frantic attempts to find rest in a restless world. We chase success or control because we don't truly believe the Epiphany was enough. But when we see that the Creator of the Universe has already appeared with salvation in hand, the pressure to prove ourselves through these passions simply evaporates.
- The chaotic attempts to find rest, to live stress free can fade away. Chasing success and control is a way of saying that grace isn’t enough. So, we change our perspective to Christ's perspective. Understanding that He will not only help us carry our burdens, but He willingly bears the majority of the load.

## VI. Let’s Get Real

- The thought of 'training' (even with assistance) can sound like just more work for an already weary soul. Take a closer look at the Teacher. Grace doesn't train us like a drill sergeant trying to break us down; it trains us like a father raising a beloved child. This training isn't about adding more 'to-dos' to your list; it's about unlearning the frantic lies of a restless world. Grace invites us to put down the heavy burden of 'trying' so we can pick up the light rhythm of 'being.' We renounce the old passions not because we have to, but because we've found a Rest that makes those passions look like cheap toys.
- We aren't training to be able to carry more. In the past, I have lifted weights to train my body. As one weight became easy to manage, I would switch to a heavier weight to continue to train my muscles. In many ways this is how believers view training. I just need to get stronger to be able to handle the burden of the worldly passions and distractions that are in my way. This isn't the type of training we should be looking for.
- We are training to see that the "no" to the distractions and desire for control is the step to discover the freedom that we were purposed to have.
- We aren't just training for the sake of being "good people." We are training because we are waiting for the "appearing of the glory" (vs.13). The training is infused with hope. It's like training for a wedding or a homecoming; the anticipation makes the effort joyful.
- When we stop trying to carry the weight of the world, our hands finally become free to do the work of God. Paul says Christ redeemed us to make us 'zealous for good works.' This isn't the 'frenetic doing' of a restless world; it's the 'joyful doing' of a rescued people. We don't do good works to get His attention; we do them because we have His heart.

## VII. Good Works

- "If we are resting and 'unlearning' the heavy burdens of the world, we might wonder: Do I just sit still then? Paul's answer in verse 14 is that we become 'zealous for good works.' But this isn't the chaotic, anxious 'doing' of the restless world. This is what we see in **Ephesians 2:10** – *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” (LSB).*
- We, every believer, are His masterpiece (His poem), created for good works which God prepared beforehand. We aren't manufacturing these works; we are walking into them.
- As 1 Peter 2:9-10 reminds us, we are a 'chosen race, a royal priesthood.' We don't do 'good' to get God's attention; we do 'good' because we finally know who we are. We are His prized possession. When you know you are

a child of the King, you don't work for a paycheck of approval—you work from a position of favor. The 'zeal' Paul talks about isn't the heat of a furnace trying to stay lit; it's the warmth of a house that has finally found its Home.

#### VIII. Bringing it Together

- “Grace First, Grace Always” is more than a tagline. It is a lifestyle that moves us from a ‘performance based’ identity to one that can rest and trust in our bond with our Lord. Grace didn’t wait for us to get our acts together, to clean up our mess. It appeared because of the initiative of God to reveal His deep love for every one of us. This is power of the life of a Christ-follower. That He loved us right where we were, at our lowest point, separated because of our choices and weaknesses. We could do nothing to earn it. And without it life would continue to be a burden too heavy to carry.
- Because of grace, we learn that it is God who sustains us. Even when we stumble and make a mess of things. He doesn’t change, He continues to teach, to encourage, and to carry us along the way. It is grace that shows us the good works that God has created for us to do. This is why He called us out of the darkness and to Him. So, we would have the privilege of reflecting His Light to others.
- The important thing is that we have lessons to learn, that growth will continually occur as we seek to honor the Lord. This too is sustaining grace. It points us to the Blessed Hope of our redemption and life in God’s presence.
- This tagline ensures that we never slip back into the "restless" cycle of performance. It reminds us that the same Grace that brought us in is the same Grace that will lead us home.
- Let’s Pray
- Grace First, Grace Always