

(Titus - Part 19): The Grace of God I

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon explores the multifaceted nature of God's grace as both a means of salvation and an empowering force for righteous living.

Duration: 25:37

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:8-10, 2 Peter 3:15, 2 Peter 3:18, 1 John 2:24, 1 John 2:27

Topics: "Titus"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the inability of the human race to rise to the teachings of great teachers and religions due to the inherent bad nature of human beings. However, the grace of God brings salvation and also provides the moral impulse within the heart to enable righteous living. The preacher highlights the significance of the word 'pardon' and how it represents both a desire for forgiveness and a condemnation of wrongdoing. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the importance of living a moral and virtuous life, growing constantly in righteousness and brotherly kindness, as taught by the grace of God.

Transcript

...an organic part of that, grace as an in-working power to save us from the bondage of our sins. I hope that you've gotten that. I'd like to have you students and those of you who are wanting Bible teaching actually put that down.

Don't be afraid of that. And don't say, said that, but I don't think he quite meant that. I meant that exactly, and I'll stand for that before all the theologians in the world.

That no man is teaching truly who teaches the grace of God as a method of escape from our past, who does not add that the grace of God is also a power to escape from sin, present bondage. The Bible teaches both. The Bible teaches both.

And in the text I read, the grace of God that brings salvation, there is the technical, the judicial method of escaping from the sins of our past. But it teaches us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world. Now it teaches inwardly, that is, there is a moral impulse.

I do not think there's any other religion, and I don't know of any other religion, that teaches this moral impulse. There are some good religions, that is, there are some religions which if they could be kept, would make very good people. I think if everybody in the world was a Buddhist, after the doctrines that Buddha taught, it would be a vastly better world than it is now.

I think that while Confucius was not a religious teacher, but a moralist and a philosopher, he has been made into a religious teacher in China, and if everybody in the world would bring his moral standards to the level of Confucius, the world would be a pleasant place in which to live. You could throw all your keys away, you'd never need to lock up anything. And so it is with a number of other religions.

But the difficulty lies in the if. The human race cannot do this. It's like saying to, say, a man in the last stages of consumption, now if you would go out and hit a home run, you'd be all right.

And he whispers with his last thin voice, but I couldn't lift a bat. He's dying. The human race cannot rise to the teachings of the great teachers.

They cannot rise to it, because human nature's bad and there's no inner power to enable it. But the grace of God, which brings salvation, also brings the moral impulse within the heart. It is God that worketh in you to will and to do, of his own good pleasure, so that the Christian faith provides that which none of the great religions of the world even thought about, and that is an inward power to enable.

Now John mentions this, let me read it. John in his epistle says, let me see, it's in the second chapter and it's in the 24th verse and following. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.

If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, he also shall continue in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written, but the anointing which ye have received of him remaineth in you.

And ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now little children abide in him, and so on. Now that's what John said, that there was an anointing, an afflatus.

I do not know where this has been better said than by Isaac Watts in that line where he says, the Lord pours eyesight on the blind. Incidentally, that was not Watts' line, that was Wesley's line. Wesley put that in.

The Lord pours eyesight on the blind. Now what does that mean, pouring eyesight on the blind? Here stands a poor man groping, and suddenly the Lord pours an oil on him that makes him see. The Lord pours eyesight on the blind, and he sees by an outward enabling now in him.

An oil is poured on him, a seeing oil. And I believe this is what's taught here, that the grace of God is a kind of an anointing, a moral anointing that comes into a man who has received the grace of God in truth, and it teaches him inwardly. The inward teaching of the moral impulse of Christianity is one of the greatest things about Christianity.

But we have degraded it into an escape from hell in our day. Evangelists have degraded into escape from hell. We paint a terrible picture of hell and say, do you want to escape that? And of course everybody does.

And I do. And I believe in hell. And Christianity, the gospel of Christ, is an escape from hell.

That's only the negative part. The other part is the positive, affirmative, dynamic part is that it is an oil poured into the heart. The grace of God teaches us.

Now what does it teach us? If you're following me closely, you're going to be shocked. It says, teaching us that denying. Imagine that, Paul, teaching us that denying.

Now why is that word here at the head of the list of things that the grace of God teaches us? The grace of God is conceived as a beautiful, warm, angelic thing floating down from the throne of God with a smile sweetly coming to the heart. But the Holy Ghost says the grace of God teaches us that denying. Why is that there? For that word denying means to contradict, to disavow, to renounce.

Every student of the Greek knows that. And I search into these things and don't stand here in ignorance. I'm ignorant, but I know where to look up some things, and so I look them up.

And this word denying means to deny, means to contradict, disavow, and renounce. And why are these three negative words, disavow, contradict, renounce, deny, why are such words as that at the top of the list here? How is it explained? Now, if I had said to you that I was going to deny, I would have said this in the day of Phine, nobody would have battered an eye. But saying it now, I expect repercussions.

Let me say to you, my friends, that the word grace stands as an everlasting condemnation of the human race. The word grace, the grace of God hath appeared, and the first thing the grace of God does when it appears to a man is to condemn him. Why should it be necessary that there should be something which should be good to the undeserving except the undeserving were there? Why should it be necessary that God should send something that could give everything to the pauper unless the pauper were present? Why should grace appear which gives goodness to the bad man unless the bad man were here? The very fact you use the word grace implies and takes for granted that there is evil present, that there is badness there, that there is deserving of people, there deserving of death.

And the very word grace comes. There comes a pull motor down the street, and the whistle is blowing, the siren blowing. What's that pull motor doing? Somebody's sick down there.

Somebody's about to die, and they've got an oxygen tent there. Why is that oxygen tent and pull motor? Somebody's about to die of a heart attack or drowning. And though that pull motor and oxygen tent are positive things, they're good things, they're excellent things worked out by fine minds and administered by dedicated doctors and nurses, yet the very fact they're there indicates somebody's about to die.

Another word that's beautiful is pardon. And I suppose the average governor of the average state's a decent fellow, be he Democrat or Republican. He's a decent fellow, and I suppose there wouldn't be a word he'd like better than the word pardon.

I suppose if I were governor or you were governor of one of the states and somebody came to me and said we want to appeal on the part of so-and-so for a pardon for this man condemned to die, I suppose that there would be the sweetest word imaginable would be the word pardon. But the very word pardon itself would stand as a condemnation. Why? Because it would be useless and meaningless unless somebody were condemned.

You can't pardon a man who has no sentence against him. And so the grace of God cannot forgive a man who deserves forgiveness. Or the grace of God cannot forgive a man who needs no forgiveness.

The very word grace itself stands as an instant and eternal and everlasting condemnation, but it also carries with it deliverance and cleansing and forgiveness and resurrection into a new life. But unless I am prepared to admit that I am a condemned sinner, unworthy of God's smile, and that hell is the place where I belong, grace can never reach me. But that word grace itself, somebody says grace, what does grace mean? It means everything for nothing.

It means being good to the worthless. It means forgiving the condemned. It means pardoning those who ought to die.

Well, who are these? My brother, it's you and me, you and me. The very fact the word grace had to be here and that grace had to appear indicates to all immoral intelligences that the human race is bad, condemned, and apart from the grace of God will perish. Human beings in their present situation, only will continually in the world, consisting of human beings as they are, can be saved from this situation only by disavowal and renouncement.

The drowning man who won't renounce the water will die in that water. And the man who has swallowed a lethal dose of poison and who refuses to have his stomach pumped and will not accept the ministrations of the physician will die by his refusal. And so the scriptures say, the grace of God brought salvation teaching us that we must renounce our own sins and renounce organized sin, which is the world.

Renounce. If I said renounce, I mean renounce. And to disavow and contradict and stand as a judgment against it.

As soon as I see the grace of God appearing to save me, I admit I'm lost. I admit I deserve to die. I admit hell is my portion.

And then I rush to the grace of God. Condemned but delivered because I'm condemned. Ready to perish but saved because I admit I'm ready to perish.

You get that, friends. You see that. And this is where we're failing.

And I don't want you. I want you, my brethren. I am persuaded better things of you and things that accompany good Bible teaching.

Now the cross of Christ, how beautiful it is. But it stands as a judgment upon this moral order. The very fact that cross had to appear is all angels need to know, to know how bad we are.

It's a judgment, I say, upon the world's moral order. And it expresses God's rejection of man's sin and God's rejection of man apart from grace and the cross. And the cross of Jesus is the place where every redeemed man must die.

Jesus said, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and so take up his cross. I looked at that very carefully to be sure I was right yesterday because I thought I remembered that's what he'd said. And I checked it and found out actually that's what he said.

And you know, twisting out of it by any translation, that's what he said. His cross, not, not my cross, not my cross. You can't call, you can't carry Jesus' cross.

He carried it. Joseph of Arimathea helped him a little, but he carried his cross. He carried it.

You can't carry his cross, but his cross becomes your cross. And then you carry your cross. And so the cross of Christ stands as a judgment upon the world's moral order.

And the only way I can be benefited by that cross and have all of the advantages it provides is by renouncing that which it renounced. And the only way I can be saved by the grace of God is by repudiating that which it repudiates and disavowing that which it disavows. Salvation then, according to this, begins with an outright renouncement, a renouncement of my sin, of myself, of my ungodliness, of my worldly lusts.

This is repentance. Failure to see this is responsible for thousands of deluded Christians, thousands of deluded Christians, responsible for the low moral standards among Christians, responsible for the effort everywhere to make the cross of Christ acceptable to society. For the cross of Christ can never be acceptable to society and still remain the cross of Christ.

It becomes something else. The cross of Christ then is the condemnation of society. And just as the ark floated above the waters and stood as a condemnation of the human race, and only those who entered it could be saved, so the cross of Christ, towering over the wrecks of time, stands as a condemnation of the human race.

And only those who enter it, so to speak, who enter the heart of Jesus by means of it, can be saved. So how can the cross be acceptable to society when it stands as a judgment of that society, when there's a contradiction between the two? And this is the reason, I say, the failure to see this is the reason for the strange popularity of Jesus today. Jesus is very popular.

But the Jesus of the New Testament, who bore a cross that condemned the world while it condemned him, never, never was popular and never will be. Except in that hour when he comes down with that sword upon his thigh riding that white horse, and all moral intelligences in heaven and on earth and under the earth are forced, some happily and joyously and voluntarily, others solemnly are compelled to kneel and say he is Lord of all to the glory of God the Father. But how can Christ be popular among persons who don't intend to obey him, and yet he is? How can he be popular among those who don't intend to acknowledge his lordship nor carry a cross nor quit their ungodliness nor cease from indulging their worldly lusts? Yet tens of thousands and multiplied tens of thousands are in and out of our evangelical churches.

And Jesus is very popular. But because we misunderstand that the grace of God condemns us and saves us, the cross of Christ slays us and raises us. And the very fact that Jesus had to come is the last, final, terrible proof of the world's guilt.

There is a close connection between Christ and the Noah, Ark of Noah, and the fact that the Ark of Noah had to be there was proof enough of the world's depravity. The fact that the cross of Jesus had to be raised on the hillside is proof enough of the world's depravity. How, my friends, if we could only believe how bad we are and then in a burst of faith believe how good God is, what a happy bunch we'd be.

But we walk halfway in between, trying to keep on God's good side at the same time, preserve our morality and our goodness and half obey him and be half Christians. So what does the grace of God tell us? The we had a distinguished preacher here last week. Here comes another one, a distinguished

looking brother, thin, lean, old, and I ask, who are you? And he says, I am Simon Peter, a servant.

Oh, you're Saint Peter. Oh, no, not Saint Peter. I denied my Lord.

I am Simon Peter, an apostle and servant of Jesus Christ, to like precious faith with us to the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Well, then I get a little frightened because I don't know. I'm afraid of an apostle.

I'm afraid I'm not doing this thing right. And I say, well, would you say a word? And he says, grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, our Lord, according as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that called us up to glory and virtue. And I say to him, Brother Peter, we've been talking about the grace of God and you live near Jesus Christ's heart and you wrote two epistles and you lived with the other apostles and with our Lord.

Tell us, what does the grace of God do for people? And what should people do seeing that they have obtained like precious faith and the grace of God? Peter says, well, do this, brethren, and you'll be all right. Give all diligence and add to your faith virtue. But Brother Peter, if we seek to be virtuous, they say we're legalistic.

A dry smile comes on his face and he says they talk that way about me too. But add to your faith virtue and to virtue knowledge, yes, and to knowledge temperance. Excuse me, what does temperance mean, Peter? It means being able to control your own body.

Don't eat too much. Don't drink. Don't abuse your own body by the way you live.

And to temperance add patience. And to patience add godliness. And to godliness brotherly kindness.

And to brotherly kindness love. Well now, Peter, doesn't the grace of God prepare me with nothing further? Doesn't it prepare me to meet the Lord? Well, he says, if it had, then I wouldn't tell you this. Here's what I want to tell you.

If these things be in you and abound, they make that ye shall be neither barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacks these things is blind and can't see afar off. He's forgotten that he was purged from his own old sins.

Wherefore, says Peter, the rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure. But Peter, I accepted Jesus when I was eleven. And if Peter knew the days, he knew his day, he'd say, maybe the Jesus you accepted was the popular Jesus without a cross and without a code and without any commandments and without any demands.

Maybe it was merely an imaginary Jesus. Make your calling and election sure. And if you do these things, you shall never fall.

So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That's Peter's exhortation. That's what he says, and he doesn't contradict Paul.

He and Paul were brethren. They had one little argument, and Paul won. But later on Peter humbly wrote about our beloved brother Paul and some of his deep stuff.

But they were agreed. So Paul says, the grace of God teaches us, and Peter says, here's what it teaches us. Let your life grow constantly in morality and righteousness, in charity and virtue, in goodness and in brotherly kindness.

That's what the grace of God teaches. I don't want to disturb anybody that's actually believing, but I want to make it awfully sure that you don't think you're believing when you're not. For the grace of God that brings salvation also teaches us inwardly a high moral standard and enables us to live.

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