

(Titus - Part 20): The Grace of God li

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the value of Christ's sacrifice and the nature of man, highlighting the need for purification and the uniqueness of being a peculiar people.

Duration: 42:33

Scripture: Titus 2:11

Topics: "Titus"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of focusing on the words 'Our Savior Jesus Christ' in the face of imminent death. He suggests that in such a critical moment, theological debates and rituals become insignificant compared to the power and significance of these words. The preacher then refers to a passage from Titus 2, highlighting the grace of God that brings salvation to all and teaches us to live righteously. He concludes by urging the members of the official board of the Church to meet with him. Throughout the sermon, the preacher emphasizes the timeless and refreshing nature of the message of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Members of the Official Board of the Church, please meet me down here. Now the difference between a classic and anything less than a classic is that that which is less than a classic gets tiring after you hear it a good many times, a few times. But the classic never wears out.

It's good anywhere, anytime, and continues through the years. And though heard over and over, never loses the freshness of its youth. I mention this because I want to read again, for I guess about the fifth time, that beautiful passage from which I've been preaching lately.

Titus 2, beginning at 11th verse. The 11th verse. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

These things speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority, and let no man despise thee. Our Savior Jesus Christ. You see, we have dealt with the earlier part of this passage, so we begin with the last line of verse 13.

It's the last line in my Bible. Our Savior Jesus Christ. I read the other day, and the children of this world are often wiser in their generation than the children of light, and I read the other day by a Polish writer who was writing about communism, that is, he was writing about, he had escaped from it and was writing against it, but not from a Christian standpoint.

He was a child of this world with such light as a child of this world may be expected to have, an unusual degree of it, for he was an unusually brilliant man. And he said this, that the only teaching worthwhile is that which is valid in the face of imminent death. He said that because he had been, and mentioned others who had been at times, faced with instant death.

And he was forced to say, what do I believe now? Here, death's facing me. It may be a matter of three heartbeats away. What is this that I believe? And he said, no teaching's worth your time unless it stands solid and true and valid, faced with immediate death.

I mention this because I begin with the words, our Savior Jesus Christ. And I'd like to guess, if I might be allowed, how many have faced imminent death with these great, beautiful, meaningful, strong words in their mouths? Our Savior Jesus Christ. If you knew that death was three heartbeats away, or five or seven, I'm sure you wouldn't try to remember what the Greek baptizo was, and what form of baptism was the proper one.

I'm sure that it would make very little difference to you whether the Presbyterian or the Episcopal form of government or the Congregational were the right form of government. I'm sure that there would be an infinite number of things that clutter up your spiritual thinking now that would fall away from you instantly if you knew that death was a heartbeat away. But there's one thing I'm sure that you'd cling to and repeat over and over and over until you could repeat it no more.

Our Savior Jesus Christ. I know you'd want to say those words because they're valid under any circumstance, you see. Those words are good any time, young or old.

Our Savior Jesus Christ. Beautiful, wonderful words. Then Paul goes on to say, who gave himself for us.

Who gave himself for us. Now we may learn the value of a thing by the price men are willing to pay for it. That is, we may learn its value to the individual who's procuring it.

I remember when Charles E. Dawes, the great American general, was vice president. I'm not sure he was vice president at that time, but he had been vice president, or was, of the United States. And that was the least thing he did.

He was a great general in the First World War. And I remember what he said when they were, they had him before some kind of a committee accusing him, or at least inquiring, why he had paid such vast, huge prices for horses in France. And he settled the whole business and set his inquisitors back on their heels by this abrupt expression.

He said, I'd have paid horse prices for sheep if they could have pulled my guns where I wanted them. It wasn't a question of how big the horse was. It was a question of a desperate and critical need.

And though he did pay huge and exorbitant prices for French horses, he used those French horses to win a war. And he said, I'd have paid that much for sheep if they'd have done the job for me. Now what I'm trying to illustrate is this, that a need, a value, determines a price you'll pay for a thing.

Even though a man is wrong in his appraisal, personally I think that we human beings have set a wrong value on jewelry. I think, for instance, that we've set a wrong value on diamonds. A piece of glass can't be told across the room from a diamond.

And yet the difference that runs up into the hundreds of thousands of dollars in some instances is because we have set an arbitrary value upon jewelry. I don't mind people wearing it. I don't own any except this thing to hold my tie down so I won't flap around when I get to preaching.

But outside of that I have many and don't want it, but I think that we have set wrong values on things. But the illustration still holds. We can tell how precious a thing is to a man or woman by how much they're willing to pay for it.

We can learn that. And so when it says here, he gave himself for us, we learn how dear we are and were to Christ. Remember when we say are about Christ or were about Christ, whether we're using the past, present, or future tense, we're using all the tenses there are.

Because Jesus Christ, being himself very God of very God, embodies in himself all the tenses there are. Or better still, he has no tense. There is no yesterday and today and tomorrow with Christ.

There is a yesterday and tomorrow and today with us. The Bible says Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever. But it's not talking about his yesterday and today and forever.

It's talking about ours. We have a yesterday and really not a very much of a yesterday. The oldest one of us has a much of a yesterday compared, say, with a mud turtle or a crow or a sequoia tree in California.

We have a much of yesterday, but we've got a little yesterday. We have a today, which is getting away from us fast, and we have an eternal tomorrow. So that our yesterday and today and tomorrow are valid.

But when we apply that to God and Christ, we invalidate the meaning of it. For we cannot say that God was, or would you do me the favor of taking more water to run me these days. But one of these times I'll pull out of this laryngitis and it'll be all right.

Where was I? That Jesus our Lord has no tenses because all that he is, he ever was, and all that he ever was, he ever will be. So when we say how precious we were to Jesus, we mean how precious we are to Jesus. And when we say how precious we are to Jesus, we mean how precious we will always be to Jesus.

For I, the Lord, change not. Thank you. I, the Lord, change not.

Now we can learn how precious we are to Christ by how much he was willing to give for us. What was the price that he paid? For don't forget that all through the Bible, Old Testament and New, and particularly in the New, the idea of redemption is found. The idea of the paying, the giving of value for value, the giving of price for something precious.

And Jesus Christ gave, says the Holy Ghost here, gave himself for us. What was he willing to give for us? Let's look back at the book, say, of Colossians. No, Philippians.

Look back at Philippians. He says, Jesus Christ, 2nd chapter, 5th verse. Jesus Christ, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.

Oh Lord, in the form of God, in the beginning was the word, and the word was God, and the word was with God. Thou, oh Lord, art the eternal word, the eternal Son begotten of the Father before all worlds by the mystery of eternal generation. Wilt thou then, oh Lord, give up this mystery and wonder even for a while that men might be redeemed? He answers, yes.

He considered it not something to be held on to, but made himself of no reputation. By becoming for a time less than God, he made himself of a reputation less than God, and thus to him of no reputation. Oh Lord, how far will you go? I will take upon me the form of a servant.

He had been before in the position of the master. Now he stoops to the position of the servant. But how much more will you pay for men, oh Lord? The answer is, he will be made in the likeness of man.

And how more, Lord, for the price is going up. He will be found in fashion as a man, and even then he will humble himself. Not only be a man, but be a humbled man.

Not a humble man only, but a humbled man. And how much more wilt thou pay, oh Lord? I will become obedient unto death. But all of the sons of men are obedient unto death.

Yes, but for their sakes I choose the worst death that ever was invented, death of the cross. So that is how much he paid for us. And the scripture says then, Jesus, our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, and who advertised to all the intelligent universe how precious we are to him by how much he was willing to give for us.

Now if you're ever tempted to think little of yourself, I want you to know that it's never a godly thing to do. I want you to know that if you're puffed up and think you amount to anything, then that's wrong. I want you to know if you overlook your sin and imagine you're good, that's wrong.

I want you to know that if you are inclined to compare yourself with another and put yourself above that other, that's wrong. And all these wrongs should be repented of and amended so they don't occur anymore in your life. But this idea of voiding our preciousness and writing down our value and putting a price tag on us that's cheap, cross out the value that used to be and put a lower one on, that never occurs in the Bible anywhere, never.

When God wants to talk about man's weakness, he says that man's breath is in his nostrils. When he wants to talk about how little time he's here below, he says that time like an ever-rolling stream bears all its sons away, and that a thousand years in God's sight are but as yesterday when it is past. When God wants to talk about how weak we are, he recalls us grass and says we're like the grass that groweth up.

But never anywhere in the Bible does God say anything derogatory about the nature of man. For the scripture says, so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And the passage we read from James this morning said, why curse ye man who was made in the similitude of God.

That is why it is so sinful to call a man a fool or to say raka, because it is heaping contempt upon man. And remember that there isn't an order of angels before the throne of God that is as high as man will be when God is through with him. Remember that there isn't a cherubim nor seraphim, there isn't a creature before the shining throne of God that gazes upon the sea of glass.

But what must be beneath man when God is through with man? For God has made man in his image, and when man sinned, turned around and made himself in man's image, that he might thus duly and forever unite Godhood and manhood, Godhead and manhood, so that man is the creature nearest to God, nearest equal to God of all the beings that fill the vast universe. So if you imagine that you're humble by thinking little of yourself, you're all wrong. Why callest thou unclean that which God called clean? Why callest thou worthless that which God called worthy of giving himself to die for it? No, no.

We must remember how dear we are to Christ by what he gave for us, and he gave himself for us. Why did he give himself? It says, the next phrase, to redeem us from all iniquity. Iniquity was our problem, you see.

We were caught in the meshes of iniquity, and he gave himself to redeem us from all iniquity. Notice the prepositions, and they're actually there, not in but from. He shall save his people from their sins.

Let me repeat, and I've said it I guess a thousand times, that any interpretation of New Testament Christianity that allows sin a place in the human life is a false interpretation. Let me remind you once more that any interpretation of mercy or grace or justification by faith that allows any kind of sin, external or internal, to live unrebuked, unforsaken, and unrepented of, is a travesty on the gospel of Christ and not the true gospel at all. He gave himself, and the price was himself, that he might redeem us and purify unto himself.

Purify. Now the one deep disease of the world, you know, is impurity. And by impurity we mean anything that is unlike God.

Sexual misconduct, yes, but that's only one one facet of this impurity. Contentiousness is another. There are some people that you can't say, it's a nice morning, isn't it? But what they will say, no I don't think it is, and start an argument.

If you compliment, they will start an argument. And no matter what you say, they're contentious. I've met that kind of contentious people.

They live in the world by the mercy of the people who aren't contentious, and they imagine themselves wonderful when they're merely the recipients of an almost infinite amount of patience on the part of people who would like to tramp on them but won't. And so these contentious people are impure people. Then there are hatreds, hatreds of every sort.

That's impurity. Gluttony is impurity, and slothfulness is impurity. The lazy person is impure, or the person who works only that he can play is impure.

Self-indulgence is another form of impurity. Pride is another form. Egoism is another form.

Self-pity and resentfulness and churlishness, I have named only a few, but all that is not of God, this is all impurity. And the work of Christ is to purify a people. Now remember it, my brethren.

You can quote scripture by the yard, but if you haven't been purified by the fire of the Holy Ghost and the blood of the Lamb, you are of all men most miserable because you will find in that day that you will be rejected from the presence of the Lord, because it will not be your beliefs so much as the state of your heart that will tell where you go in that day. Though your beliefs will certainly take you to a purity, the work of Christ is to a people by blood and by fire, and to rid them of these things. The churlish Christian excuses

it and calls it by some other name.

The resentful Christian says he's nervous, but he walks around with a chip on his shoulder, and I have been informed that if you find a chip on his shoulder, it's very likely to have come off of the block further up. But resentfulness and self-pity and egotism and pride, all these we are to be purified from. And if we had as many Bible teachers busy proving or trying to teach how pure Christians can become as we do, trying to teach that they can't become pure, we would have a better church than we have.

Now he says here he purifies unto himself a peculiar people. A peculiar people. Let's look at that a little bit, that word, peculiar.

Well, that word has been used, it's gotten into the hands of the enemy, and it's been used to cloak some very weird goings on in this, in the Christian church. But the word has no connotation of strange or irrational or queer or ridiculous or foolish. No, Jesus Christ was the perfect example, and he walked among men with utmost rationality.

Everything he did was as logical and as clear and salty and sane as a sunshine on the grass of a June morning. Jesus our Lord was the perfect example of a mind that was poised and balanced and symmetrical and in perfect adjustment to itself. And yet, of course, he was our example.

He was our sample man. And he never did or said anything or left anything unsaid that would cause the raising of an eyebrow or the wondering if he might not be quite there. Now they said he had the devil because he healed the sick on the Sabbath day, the false teachers, and those who were, who believed in commandments instead of people, who loved law instead of men, those who loved texts in place of children, and those who would rather take the evil woman and hurl her into hell than sear forgiven, they, of course, said he had the devil.

But read, if you will, all four Gospels and see, not one instance did Jesus do or say anything that was not sane and salty and completely normal and right. So those who do irrational things in the name of the Lord have their own selves to blame. And those who are queer and ridiculous and foolish and then then flippantly say I'm a fool for Christ's sake, they're not.

You know, you can't do anything you want to do and say I'd do it for Christ's sake and make it all right. Keep that in mind, brother. You can only do for Christ's sake that which Christ told you to do.

You cannot do what you've decided to do and then make it good by saying it's for Christ's sake. That is offering a swine on the altar of the Lord and it'll be rejected abruptly by great God Almighty. So let's remember that Christians are not to be weirdies, strange people, oddballs, not at all in any sense of the word.

But what does the word peculiar mean here? Well, it means the same thing in Greek as it does in Hebrew, so the scholars tell us. And it's found in Hebrew, Exodus 19 5, thou shalt be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, he told Israel, a peculiar treasure unto me above all people. If you'll allow me, indulge me again, my own family laughs at me, but if you'll allow me, this afternoon, God willing, about 1.30, I'll see a little boy, five years old, blondie, blue-eyed, no, brown-eyed, blond.

His name is Paul and he's my grandson. And I'll see him. Well, if we both live that long.

Now there's a boy, really, there's a boy. And you know, there isn't anything peculiar about him. He is sensible, sane, good natured, poised, balanced, symmetrical in his character so far as a five-year-old can be.

And he's already learning to read and he's a wild mathematics and can connect with a ball every time it's tossed to him. And he's just a boy. And there's nothing peculiar about him at all.

If he was playing on the lawn with a half a dozen other boys, you wouldn't pick him out. Except, of course, he's better looking, but you wouldn't pick him out. He would, he'd just be one more boy there playing on the lawn.

And yet to his father and mother and to us at our house, he's a peculiar boy. Why? Because he's peculiarly ours. I saw him when he was just a few hours old in the hospital, a terrible homely looking mess of something or other there.

And then, but now he's blossomed into a grand boy. Well, now he's peculiar. How is he peculiar? A little off? No.

Because he acts queer? No. He's peculiar because he belongs to us. He is ours, as God said of Israel, a peculiar treasure unto me above all people.

And every mother knows what I'm talking about. Every mother knows her little crow is the blackest. And every cat knows her kittens are the softest.

And every father knows his son is the sharpest and his grandson the brightest. Everybody knows that. A peculiar treasure unto me.

Love has made you mine in a way that logic can't explain. That you have to feel it to know it. And so that same word peculiar came on over into the Greek and then into our English, that same word.

The same meaning, I mean, a peculiar treasure. Etymologically, it means shut up to me as my spatial jewel. Imagine that.

Shut up to me as my spatial jewel. I have you under my hand as my spatial jewel. Buddy Robinson used to say, that dear old saint, one of the few modern saints that I've ever known, Buddy Robinson said that the Lord holds him in the hollow of his hand and every once in a while raises his hand a little and says, are you all right, buddy? Now that was Robinson's simple childlike way of telling what a butler or a Calvin or a Wesley would have cloaked in great heavy resonant resounding English phrases.

But Buddy just simplified it. Moody had a way of doing that too. Take some great profound doctrine and simplify it.

Well now that's what it all means. That the Lord has us as his peculiar treasure and he is purifying unto himself a people to be his as spatial jewels. And yet Israel in the Old Testament, they were different, but they were not different in a queer or ridiculous way.

When Daniel, say, went to Babylon, he was different. Daniel wouldn't eat the meat of the Babylonians. And Daniel prayed several times a day facing toward Jerusalem if that made him mentally disturbed.

Nowadays, you know, they'd have sent out a booklet on that and they'd have said that that mental health outfit would have wanted to take Daniel up on that because he prayed three times a day facing toward Jerusalem. But was there anything crazy about that? No. Daniel simply recognized a higher loyalty than Babylonian kings.

And he stayed by that loyalty even to be cast into the den of lions. And so in the New Testament, Christians are God's special jewels marked out for him to be peculiar but not queer, to be peculiar but not ridiculous, to be peculiar but not foolish. And yet they are different.

They are different. Somebody told me he'd heard a sermon on the air recently where some preacher, I suppose he was a young preacher, I hope he was, God forgive him if he was over 21, but he preached anyhow and said, so people think to become a Christian you've got to be a square, but I tell you, you don't have to be different to be a Christian. Oh brother, if he had said five times five equals 99 and three fourths, he couldn't have been any wronger than he was.

To be a peculiar treasure unto God does make you different. And you do live differently. You have a higher loyalty and you'll recognize the right of God to tell you how to live.

And men's philosophies come and go. Religions come and go. Quasi-revivals come and go.

Healing campaigns come and go. And new ideas come and go. And scientific notions come and go.

And all the time this Christian has got his in focus the heart of God and he's living just alike the way he had been, going on doing the will of God and recognizing only one final loyalty. Thrones and crowns may perish, kingdoms rise and wane, but the church of Jesus constant shall remain. And that constancy is because of her.

She's got God in her focus. And so other things come and go. They're like the winds that blow and the storms that come and pass, but we go on.

That makes us different, but doesn't make us foolish. It makes us right. Put one sane man in a ward where everybody else is in a bad, advanced state of paranoia, and the one man who looks right and is right will look wrong.

H. G. Wells wrote a book called The Country of the Blind. Just a simple little story, and it was just to tell, to bring before his readers an idea. A man fell into a little valley somewhere where people had no eyes.

And he of course had eyes. And there among these blind people who had learned to live without eyes, they were scientists and philosophers and poets and all the rest, without eyes. And he had eyes.

And it wasn't very long until they were preparing to operate on him to get rid of those strange perturbances that were just beneath his eyebrow because they said it made him act queer and say queer things. But his queerness was his own sight. He saw and therefore he was different from those who did not see.

And so a Christian is one who sees. And because he sees, some people who don't see say he's all wrong. But when God says he makes a peculiar people, he doesn't mean that he makes a lot of ridiculous and queer people.

He merely makes them his, peculiarly his, shut up unto him. And of course the world won't like them because they're his. Lastly, zealous of good works.

These peculiar people, they sing loudly, but they give generously. They pray long, but they work hard. Zealous of good works.

The Bible knows nothing of armchair Christians. The Bible knows nothing of ivory tower Christianity. I maybe could mention this.

Just within the last two weeks, I've had a least partial offer. And if I cultivate a little bit, it would become a valid offer. From a foundation with 13 million dollars in it, to be turned out to pastor like a fine old horse that has seen his day and just write and have my time.

Just do nothing but accept a big salary and just be retired to write and have fun. I'll give you three guesses whether I'm going to accept it or not. An ivory tower Christian.

For me to move out among the blue birds and sit with an electric typewriter in an air-conditioned study done in knotty pine, you couldn't sell me that, my brother. You couldn't give it to me. You couldn't get me to take it.

I'm not for sale. And furthermore, if I lived, I don't suppose I'd live very long at that rate, but if I lived even a year, I'd become an ivory tower suburbanite. A Christian that just couldn't live unless I was looking on green things and that just have to have a bird song in order to be happy.

No, my brother, the Bible teaches that we are to be zealous of good works. I talked last evening to a woman. I don't know too much about her and I'm not setting her up as an example, but she was here at our meeting and her husband told me of how in the pursuance of her work, she goes to all these areas north of here into places where it looks dangerous for anybody to be.

He said, she's got faith, Reverend. She's got faith. She goes in anywhere.

He said, she's afraid of nothing. She was a little afraid, but she went. And yet she belongs to a congregational church somewhere in the suburbs.

But she comes in where the need is and goes from home to home. And I say, God purifies unto himself a people peculiarly precious to him. And while they're down here, they're going to be zealous of good works.

Now the church can silence her critics by good works and she can silence him no other way. Take doctrine and they'll turn your doctrine against you. Quote scripture and they'll say that isn't the right translation.

You can silence your critics only by godliness and good works. And nobody can argue down godliness and good works. The devil himself wouldn't try it.

He wouldn't try it. He knows better. Godliness and good works shut the mouths of everybody.

They may take you out and hang you, but they'll respect you while you die. Godliness and good works. And yet not to be seen of men, but to imitate our Lord who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.

So we have it again, this beautiful passage that can't be worn out. Our savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Then Paul adds these words.

I don't know why they're here, but they're here. These things speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority and don't let anybody despise you. Amen.

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