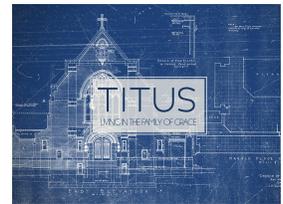


STUDY GUIDE

PLEASANT RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH
TITUS: LIVING IN THE FAMILY OF GRACE
SALVATION: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE
TITUS 2:11-14
08/13/2017



MAIN POINT

The past, present, and future of salvation ground us in the gospel of Jesus Christ and encourage us to live godly lives now for the glory of God.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What are some significant memories of the past that have changed the way you live your life in the present?

What are some hopes and dreams for the future that affect your choices, decisions, and actions presently?

As people, we almost always base our decisions in the present on either the past or the future. We have seen how the world works in the past and know that certain choices will most likely lead to certain results. In making plans for the future, we can chart our course to accomplish those plans, knowing we might need to make adjustments as life happens. Things may not always work out how we expect, either in light of the past or the future, but with salvation from God, we can be certain of some things. The past lays a solid foundation for our salvation, and the future reflects a sure hope in the result of salvation. Knowing these things must affect our actions and choices here and now. The past, present, and future of salvation is what we'll be looking at in this study, though we'll look at them in a slightly different order according to how Paul explained them in Titus 2:11-14.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ TITUS 2:11-12.

How are you challenged by the truth that, by the grace of God, salvation is available for all people?

Reading that salvation is available for all people can easily and rightly open up our eyes to seeing others in a new light—those people could come to know Jesus and be saved! No one is beyond the reach of God's salvation. No matter how "good" or "bad" someone is, God's grace has appeared in Jesus Christ, and He is willing for all to come to repentance and faith in Him (2 Pet. 3:9). But it is important for believers in Jesus to see themselves included in the "all people" for whom salvation has become possible. We all need God's grace. And while believers have received salvation from God, this should not lead to pride or an arrogant attitude of being better than others. We are all in the "all people" category of those who need God's grace and salvation. Those of us who have received it by faith now carry the gospel message to others so they can believe, too.

What instructions are given as a result of salvation?

Salvation in Jesus is not an insurance policy, but a way of life. Salvation by faith is followed by instructions, not to earn or keep salvation but to reflect it and live out the purpose of it. After all, what are we saved from? From our sin and its consequences—death and hell. If we are saved from that, then we shouldn't want to continue on that path; rather, in obedience to our Savior, we “deny godlessness” and choose instead to live in a “godly way” in this present age. This world would have us forsake Jesus and our salvation, but our Savior calls us to be salt and light in this world—to stand out in godliness—so that God may be glorified by all (Matt. 5:13-16).

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ TITUS 2:13.

How does Jesus' second coming figure into your understanding of salvation?

What benefits do you expect from Jesus' second coming?

Salvation is typically described in three stages: justification, sanctification, and glorification. We'll look at justification next, and we already looked at sanctification in the previous point—obeying the instructions that come along with salvation in Jesus' name so we grow in the Spirit to look more and more like Jesus. Glorification speaks of our future hope in salvation, when we will finally resemble our Savior in obedience, purity of heart, and glory for the honor of our Lord. In the present, we strive to obey Jesus' commands, but we do so with a future orientation, looking forward to Jesus' second coming. This is a “blessed hope” because it is a sure hope in God's being faithful to His promises and because believers will benefit greatly. No longer will there be death, grief, tears, and pain; rather, God will wipe away every tear from our eyes (Rev. 21:4). We will be made new, along with all of God's creation. No longer will we suffer from hardship, persecution, or even temptation. When Jesus comes the second time in His glory, He will vindicate His people and deal justly with His enemies—He will set everything right.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ TITUS 2:14.

How would you describe in your own words the work of Jesus for our salvation?

We've looked at the present (sanctification) and future (glorification) of salvation, but both of those are grounded upon the past elements of salvation: Jesus' willing sacrifice on the cross in our place followed by His resurrection, along with our faith in Jesus that He accomplished our salvation as He said He would do. The beginning point of salvation in a believer's life is called justification; when we believe Jesus is the Messiah who gave Himself for us to redeem us and cleanse us, we are considered justified, or in right standing, before God because Jesus has taken away our sin and paid the penalty for it Himself. We have been freed from the clutches of sin and death and washed clean; we are now sons and daughters of God along with the Son of God. We are His, and He is ours.

How can our eagerness to do good works help us evaluate our gratitude to Jesus for His gift of salvation?

As this verse wraps up, we see this succinct explanation of salvation come full circle. Where Paul begins with sanctification and then discusses glorification and justification, he returns to sanctification. Being saved in Jesus naturally leads to a change of heart in which the believer becomes eager to do good works in Jesus' name and for His glory. If we find such eagerness does not exist in our hearts, then likely we should be repenting of sin, or perhaps we have not grasped the significance of Jesus' sacrifice on behalf of sinners. Either way, we must turn to Jesus again and again. He is the foundation of our salvation, and those who have been saved have been cleansed and instructed in how to live a godly life as we wait for His second coming to fully and finally complete our salvation.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What changes do you need to make in your life to live in a godly way in this present age, a way that would back up your efforts to share the gospel with others?

How can we grow in our anticipation of Jesus' second coming and let that anticipation fuel our eagerness to do good works now?

How can we encourage one another with the gospel again and again, that we would turn from lawlessness and choose instead to live a life of godliness?

PRAY

Thank the Father for the precious gift of His Son, who laid down His life for us to save us. Thank Him for the gift of salvation that you rest upon, live out now, and look forward to its completion at Jesus' second coming. Ask the Father to help you live a life of godliness in the power of the Holy Spirit, so the good news of Jesus can be heard and believed and Christ would receive all the glory.

COMMENTARY

TITUS 2:11-14

2:11. Paul did not leave the Christian with a list of duties to perform. He called us to a noble purpose, a higher life. He showed us that it is God's grace—past, present, future—which strengthens and motivates us to live beyond the call of society, embracing obedience to God.

Paul followed up his instructions by proclaiming that the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. Grace has appeared, "epiphanied." It is the same word used in 2 Timothy 1:10 when Paul wrote of the "appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus." The word connects us to Christ's incarnation, his unveiling. The grace of God did not evolve in history; it came forth from concealment, became visible, made its appearance.

Grace breaks upon our moral darkness like the rising sun. This is the incarnation and atonement, the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord, "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). This grace brings salvation that God offers to everyone, though not every person responds to his goodness.

Salvation refers to deliverance or preservation. Salvation brings deliverance from our enslavement to our natural, selfish desires. It frees us from the process of degeneration which leads to the death of the body and soul. In salvation we enter into the redemption of God. The process begins immediately and finds fulfillment in eternity when our soul finds completion in Christ's righteousness and our body changes from decay to wholeness. Christ saves us from the destruction that estrangement from God brings. He restores us to our Creator and recreates a new person and existence for those who believe.

2:12. Grace instructs us. Through Christ's appearing and the Holy Spirit's tutoring, grace teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions.

God wants us to learn how to live to the full. When we believe in Christ as our salvation, we become enrolled in his school of living. In turning to God, we agree that we must turn away from ungodly living and turn toward godly living. We do not just wish for this change to occur; we do not simply hope it might happen. We must take ourselves in hand and say "no" to all those behaviors, attitudes, and desires that are opposed to God. Then we can learn to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives.

We have encountered the word self-control before. It designates mastery of the self, personal authority over natural impulses. Upright living involves all that is respectable and good. But Paul's inclusion of godly takes these qualities beyond the philosopher's jargon and connects behavior with faith in God. A Christian's life should point

toward God.

Many are the voices today which argue against such “narrow” terms of right and wrong. Postmodern people claim a liberation from religion’s inhibitions. The popular response to life today is not Paul’s “no” or “yes” but a faddish “whatever.” Most of the people who deny a standard of righteousness leave the philosophical reasoning on the shelf when their own children confront them, reject their ideas, and live rebellious lifestyles. Man’s denials and rationalistic fabrications do not survive reality. Only God’s truth and revelation do.

Paul focused on now. This salvation, this godly living, is for today: this present age. Christians often speak of salvation as though it applied only to a far-off eternity. But salvation begins in this present life, in this present age. God intended redemption to infiltrate the current state of affairs, to penetrate the human heart in the entanglements of this life.

2:13. While salvation digs deeply into the difficulties of our todays, we recognize that our experience of God’s rescue is incomplete. We are not left with the partial successes and recurrent failures which even faith encounters in this world. Instead, we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This “hope” is not a wish. It is the certainty of blessing which will occur when Christ appears again. In this epiphany, the splendor of God’s glory will be seen. This is the brilliance of his beauty that was witnessed at the transfiguration and the dazzle of his holiness before the world began. Christ’s Second Coming will not be hidden. It will blaze in fulfillment of his authority over all the universe. It is what all creation groans and waits expectantly for (Rom. 8) and what all believers anticipate.

2:14. Paul illustrated the glory of God’s grace in Christ Jesus, who gave himself for us. Christ was not the victim of Roman authority and Jewish malevolence. He gave himself willingly in obedience to the Father. In addition, he gave himself for us. His death was suffered on our behalf. We deserved the punishment of our sins, the wrath of God upon us for our rebellion and evil. But Christ stepped in and suffered and died on our behalf.

The reason he did this was to redeem us from all wickedness. To redeem is to release at a price, or to buy back. This was a term used for slaves who were purchased out of slavery. Their freedom was bought at a price. This pictures Christ’s purchase of our freedom from slavery to sin. At the cost of his life, we were released from our bondage to evil which resides by nature within all human beings.

But God never quits halfway. He redeems us for a purpose, and this is to purify for himself a people that are his very own. Not only were we paid for; we were released into the freedom of belonging to God, of fulfilling our original design and purpose for which he created us.

God’s plan can be traced throughout the entire Bible. From the very beginning, God chose particular people to belong to him—people who would bear his image and establish his righteousness on the earth. Whether we speak of Noah, Enoch, Abraham, or his selection of Israel as a special nation, God has always worked to establish a community of faith that honors him and lives in obedience to his laws.

In Christ God flung wide the doors of admission into his family, accepting anyone who would trust in Christ’s saving death and resurrection. In the act of faith, we transfer our obedience from wickedness to righteousness, from Satan and self to God. “You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Belonging to God carries responsibilities. We should live with the sole objective of pleasing our Lord. Paul told us how we can delight our Savior— by being people who are eager to do what is good.

The Book of Ephesians has great theme verses of salvation by grace: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). But we should keep reading, for the next verse completes God’s purpose for his creation: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (2:10, emphasis added). Christians are the creative work of Christ. We are new creations, formed and shaped by Christ’s death and resurrection.

Good works, deeds born from the goodness of God’s Spirit, characterize those who belong to God. Christians should never have to be cajoled into service, nor should they follow God’s commands as a duty. We should be zealous, eager, passionate to please the Father by extending his goodness to others.