

# The Mighty River of Grace

Titus 2:11-15

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I cannot think of a greater theme for the new year than the grace of God, and I can think of no better text from which to preach it.

I have compared the Grace of God to a great river. You have seen some great rivers, and so have I. There is the great Sacramento River in California. All along the great length of that river there are cities and towns, farms and homes that grew up and thrived because of the river. Great stocks of fish, water for farms, a great highway for transportation; water for the placer mines and the dredges of the gold days. Throughout history men have nestled in next to great rivers and have drawn their life from them.

A few years ago we were able to take a tour of Shasta Dam, that great engineering marvel just north of Redding, California, where the waters of the Sacramento River have been harnessed to form Shasta Lake, one of the largest man-made lakes in the world. I have been told that huge fish have been taken from its waters--even the sturgeon, trapped there behind the dam and growing to hundreds of pounds in weight. Many industries thrive along the banks of Shasta Lake, fed by the waters of the Sacramento: boating, fishing, water skiing, parks, camp grounds, etc.

It is possible to go down into Shasta Dam. A guide will take you into the very entrails of the dam, down to the room where the mighty generators roar; driven by huge turbines that spin with the energy of tons of water crashing from the lake behind the dam to the river below. Huge as the structure is, you can feel the vibration of these mighty forces. The generators provide billions of kilowatts of electrical power that is fed into the grid that provides power for villages, towns and cities.

But all of this is the fruit of the river, the great Sacramento River. The Sacramento River is the result of one thing: the moisture that comes from heaven: in the rain and the snow of northern California. Especially the snow which in normal winters reaches many feet in depth on the mountain ranges.

A few years ago there was a great drought in Northern California and the heavens seemed to be shut up. For several years there was little rain or snow. The sunshine became monotonous: even in the spring and winter, as the heavens refused the life-giving water. Shasta Lake shrunk back. The docks were on dry ground. Even some of the old bridges that had been immersed when the lake was first filled were above the water for the first time. Boat ramps had to be extended for many hundreds of feet. Some of the businesses which depended upon the lake were bankrupted as tourists went other places. We were reminded of things that so often are taken for granted, how we live and die because of the blessings of the rain from heaven.

So that brings us to our text, which I will try to illuminate today.

## Paul's Design

It is important to note what Paul's design is in writing to Titus. The church is to be orderly and godly. The officers are to be faithful in performing their office. (1:5-16) All of the church members, the aged, the young, Titus himself, and servants were all to lead godly lives.

## **The Source of the Church's Life**

After exhorting the church to godliness, Paul then traces these blessings up to their irresistible source: the Grace of God, the mighty River that flows from the Throne of God.

Paul is emphatic: grace is the source of the church's life, and grace is what teaches the church to live soberly, righteously, and godly.

## **Grace to All Men**

What is the grace that has appeared to all men? See John 1:15-18: *“John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”*

Jesus Christ is the fountain of the River of Grace. *“I am the vine; ye are the branches; without me ye can do nothing?”* Jesus is the light that lights every man who comes into the world. John 1:9. The law came by Moses; grace and truth by Jesus Christ. Jesus does what the law cannot do: bring grace and truth. Not that the law is not true; but it cannot give me a heart for the truth. That only comes from Jesus Christ. Jesus gives me a longing after God; a longing after purity; righteousness, and peace. All good things come from communion and fellowship with Christ. *“Without me, ye can do nothing.”*

## **The Holy Spirit**

Jesus has promised to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him. How sweetly that story is told here in Titus 2. It is the grace of God that penetrates the soul of man, transforming him and renewing him. It is the Holy Spirit that applies the work of redemption to the soul, to conform the sinner to Jesus Christ.

### **I. Grace Is the Source of Great Teaching: vs. 11,12.**

The grace of God penetrates the soul of man and teaches the sinner truth. There are several parts to this teaching.

#### **Denying Ungodliness.**

The Holy Spirit unites me to God, for Jesus Christ is God. Truth penetrates my stubborn heart by God's grace and I learn about God, about myself, about others. The first lesson to be learned is to deny ungodliness. Nothing can ever be learned about God, until I am taught that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. In finding Christ by grace, I have found God, and the chains of ungodliness that dominated and enslaved me are broken off.

#### **Worldly Lusts**

Because ungodliness is denied by my union with Jesus Christ, there is no fuel for the worldly lusts that formerly raged in my soul. Those desires held me in bondage to the devil and were the result of my ungodliness, and were God's curse upon me (Romans 1:28ff). Because I am united to God through faith in Jesus Christ, sin no longer has

dominion over me and I am free. Ungodliness is the true source and power of worldly lusts, and when we are restored to communion and fellowship with Jesus Christ, sin's dominion is broken. The source of all our trouble is our alienation from God.

### **Sobriety, Righteousness, Godliness**

It cannot but be that those who are united by Grace to Jesus Christ through faith should not bring forth the fruits of righteousness (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Q. 64). Those who walk in the light must be changed by the light. (I John 1:6-10).

### **II. Grace Is the Source of Great Hope: vs. 13**

How can we live without hope? There is nothing that so reveals our values than what we hope for. The grace of God teaches us that one hope that can never be taken away: the one that is set down here: the appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, whom we love. What we love, we hope for. What drives us? What are the longings and the joy of our hearts? Grace teaches us to love and to hope in Jesus Christ.

### **III. Grace Is the Source of Salvation. vs. 14.**

The reason we love and hope in Jesus Christ is because of the great salvation which He purchased for us. He gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity. We are saved by the blood of the crucified One. Because of this redemption we are purified and made fit for heaven. We have been adopted by Him and belong to Him as a peculiar people. I no longer belong to myself, because He purchased me with His Own blood. Grace teaches me to believe, and by faith I give myself to Him because He has given Himself for me.

It is grace that teaches us to be zealous of good works. This the law can never do. The law can only work death and misery. It can show me my duty and reveal the wrath and judgment of God, but only the grace of God through the blood of Jesus Christ can change my vile heart to deny my ungodliness, to become zealous of good works. We do not receive grace because we have good works, we have good works because we have received grace.

Amen and Amen.

### **A Most Dangerous Prayer**

I challenge you to pray a most dangerous prayer: dangerous, because if you pray from your heart, profound things will begin to happen in your life.

“Lord Jesus, I know you are the Son of God. I know that you died to save people from their sins. Because of this, I want you to take control of my life. I give my heart to you, Lord Jesus. I want you to live in me and do with me whatever you want. I believe that you died for me. You came to save sinners, and I am certainly a sinner. You called the weary and heavy-laden, and I am certainly weary and heavy-laden. I am poor and needy, lost and undone. I want you to save me, for I cannot save myself.”

You do not need to use these words; for salvation does not come from using magic words. What is important is that you give yourself to Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the fountain from which the mighty River of Grace flows, and if you come to Him, it will be well with you.

May God bless you.

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Yes, I do believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He died for my sins.

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Signed

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