

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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Grace Does Good

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5

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Our Relentless Coach

SCRIPTURE

Titus 2:11-15



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Well, it is great to see you and if you are new here, we are thrilled that you have joined us. I hope that this time for all of us is a really helpful, it's very ... Well, it's really encouraging. That's my hope. That's my prayer. Almost 100 years ago, a man, his name is Joshua Wooden, he began to coach his son in all kinds of really pertinent practical ways of life. He was a noble man and he raised a son who grew to be a noble man and his son could recall for most of his life the various life lessons that his dad had taught him. Things like pray every day and be humble and be gentle towards people to show respect to all people no matter what they look like or what they've done to you, to be loyal as a friend. One of the life lessons that really marked his son that he could recall was his dad telling him to learn to love one woman. And that's not in exclusion to mothers and aunts and sisters and friends, but to learn to love one woman.

And his life is one that if you have a child who loves sports figures and if you want to read about somebody who lived a noble life, John Wooden would be one to actually do this. He was married to his wife Nell for 53 years and then she passed when he was 74 years old and he outlived her by another 25 years. She died on the 21st of the month and so for the next 25, 4 years, he wrote her a letter, sealed it on the 21st day of every month and placed it on her side of the bed until he could no longer write because he had a hard time seeing. He died when he was 99 years old and, he much like his dad, became a coach.

For him, he coached basketball and he coached life to his basketball players. He became not just the most successful coach in basketball, he's one of the most noble people that you can read about. His Bruins won the National Championship 10 times in 12 years, which is an absolutely remarkable feat. And just like his dad, he coached his players as though they were his sons and he left no stone unturned. He talked to them about basketball, about shooting and dribbling and defense and strategy and all kinds of things about the game, but also teamwork and character and how being on time because your team matters how being clean because you're a team matters. Things like friendship and respect and loyalty and wearing socks. It sounds funny but his players, they now write and they write about things that they remember how he coached them.

And one of the things that John Wooden would do with his new class of high school all Americans. When they came to UCLA is he would gather the freshmen in the locker room and he would say, "I want you to all take your shoes and socks off. I want you to do that because I want to show you how to put them on right." Now, these were all American athletes. They all assumed that they knew how to put shoes and socks on. And so they looked at him. In fact, they said that they looked at him as though as though he was crazy, but he pushed through the stares and all the perplexity of the moment and he took his own shoes and socks off. And so they followed suit and he began to show them how to put socks on in a very particular way. And then he said this to him, this is what they remember. He said, "In basketball, you play on a hard surface and you make cuts quickly. If you have wrinkles in your socks, you'll get a blister. And if you get a blister, you can't play. And if you can't play, we won't win. So let me show you how to put your socks on."

Wouldn't it be amazing ... Some of us have this, but wouldn't it be amazing if we all had somebody that's spoken to our life on all the things that confuse us? All the things that bring us hardship of what we simply do not know that people could look into our life and they say, "This is how to live, this is how to behave, this is how to relate to people." So many of us, we look at life right now and it's so confusing. It's so perplexing. We look at our marriage or our parenting or a friendship or some situation that we're in and we kind of look at it and you sort of have on your face the look that somebody has the very first time they ever walk into a gym and they just look around, they see everybody that looks like they know what they're supposed to be doing and they're all actively doing their thing and they walk around and like, "What do I do first?" Have no idea.

And some of you that's exactly how you're behaving when it comes to parenting or your workplace or your friendship or your marriage. You're in a place and you have no idea what to do and you need a coach. And the good news that we find here in Titus is that God has given us a coach to help us. And so I would beg of you to listen to his word to you today and to yield to this coach that is so kind. So let me pray for us. Father in heaven, we come to you today on a day when our nation, once again is mourning. Lord, the mass shooting and deaths of so many people in Ohio, in Texas and we ask God for your grace and mercy in the lives of those family members who are grieving the loss of a loved one or for the many people who are in hospitals right now where their condition is critical because they've been injured.

We ask Father for your grace, your sustaining grace, to protect and sustain life. We ask God, we ask that your name would be hallowed and that your kingdom would come and your will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. We ask that you would provide your people with daily bread, that you would forgive us the ways that we have sinned against you. And you would give us strength to forgive others. We ask that you would protect us, that you would deliver us from temptation and evil. Father, I pray that as we open up your word, we've just sung songs about how you're the champion, how you're the victor, how there's new life in Jesus, and sometimes it can feel like a fairy tale. When we walk out and we walk out into a world that's just so utterly broken. Some of us that brokenness, in fact for all of us, we bring it in.

And so I ask Father that you would show us that this time is not some interlude in a world of reality, that what we're doing right now is we open up your word, that it has the potential to transform the way that we see and respond to all of the brokenness in our world. And so I ask that you would speak through weakness and give grace to us as a people so that we would show people that your grace is sufficient for us. And we pray all of this in the strong name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

If you are new, we're glad that you're here. We're in a book called Titus and so I would love for you to head there in your Bible. If you don't have one with you, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you. And if you don't have one at home, take that as a gift. We would love for you to have that. This book is written by a man named Paul and Paul was an older Jewish man and Titus was a Greek man. He was a younger man, and Paul had shared the Gospel with him.

He trusted Jesus Christ and Paul became his mentor and they're on an island called Crete and sharing the gospel with people. And it's time for Paul to leave. And Titus stays on the island of Crete in order to kind of give oversight to the young churches. And so Paul writes him a letter and that's the letter that we have right here in our hand. Titus is a manual on a good life. A good life is good for other people and a good life that literally is made possible only by trusting Jesus Christ with our life. You see, the one thing I want you to see within the book, in fact, there's several things.

I wish you could just see my Bible. You can't right now, but there's certain words that they're like hooks that the entire book is sort of hung upon and that you can see these words, they're so critically important. One of them is good works like in chapter 11 verse 14 that says that "we are his possession who are zealous for good works." And you can find this idea of good works scattered throughout the whole letter. But there's another thing that's really important. It's sort of hidden if you don't know that you should be looking for it, but it's stunning once you see it. And that is that God wants people to know that Jesus, his son, is a Savior, that he can save. And so you find six different times in the book of Titus, the fact that Jesus Christ saves.

But what's also remarkable is every time it's used, it's not impersonal. It's always placed in a personal context that he's not just the Savior. He's our Savior, he's our Savior. Six different times. He says, Jesus Christ is our Savior, and so he's talking to a people, assuming they all have trusted Jesus Christ and he is all of our Savior. Why is that so important? Because Jesus wants the world to know he saves and he communicates this through saved people. We are the evidence of his saving power, our words, our relationships, our deeds, how we live, how we love people. It's the window that people look through in order to see the credibility of the Gospel. They look at our lives. 2 Corinthians 5:20 actually says, and this may surprise you, but this is God's plan. You may say, no, that's a bad plan. You should know we should only look at Jesus, but Jesus himself, it says that "We are ambassadors of God, God making his appeal through us." So you can back up from that responsibility or you can lean into that responsibility and the Bible encourages us to lean into that responsibility.

What that means is this. Is that we wake up living as though people will be watching. We're hoping they're watching. We're hoping that we can give them not only a witness of good works, but when we fall short, we can give them a witness of what confession and repentance looks like and how his grace comes and rushes into our life in order to redeem. That we would be an example to people of the reliability and the credibility of Jesus Christ our Savior. I want you to know there is no greater honor given to man than to represent Jesus Christ in the world. You have been given the most noble task of all created things. We have the privilege to represent Jesus to people who don't know him. There is no greater man. There's no greater king. There's no greater person who's ever loved or lived or led people, and we have that privilege.

What we find here is that we have been given a coach to help us along the way and that coach is the grace of God. Notice what he says in verse 11 he says, "For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people.

Training, meaning the grace of God is training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Declare these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.” You notice verse 11 begins with the word “for” or “because.” In other words, if you were here last week, we looked at how Titus was supposed to teach the people how to live in accord with sound doctrine.

And so he began older men, older women, younger women, younger men, all these different kinds of people. And then, and he says, so that I want you to do this so that you’ll adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior. And then he tells us why it’s all possible, how it’s all possible. And he says “For,” in other words, because this is all possible because of what I’m about to tell you. That is that God has given us a relentless coach. It’s grace. You see this in three different ways here. First is that God’s grace rescues us from great peril. He rescues us from great peril.

I hope this never happens to you, but let’s just say that you’re at the gym and you’re in the middle of a heart attack. You’re sweating uncontrollably, your arms are numb, there’s chest pains. You can’t take a full breath. You know there’s something wrong. You don’t know you’re having a heart attack, but you think it and and suddenly you have a trainer that you’ve employed. You’re supposed to be meeting this person and the trainer knows the signs, and so the trainer looks at you and you’re wincing as you’re grabbing your chest and you can’t take a full breath. You’re sweating like crazy even though you’ve not done anything yet. And your trainer comes up to you and says, “Man, something’s not right. I think you’re having a heart attack, but you know what? You could really lose a few pounds. So drop down and give me 50.”

we would think no, that wouldn’t be it. Why? Because there’s priority. A good trainer recognizes there’s priorities and the first things must come first. And that’s what he says here. He says, God’s grace appeared and he looked us over and he targeted the greatest need of our life and that was salvation. Before it says he trains us to renounce certain things and the take on certain things. The first thing he does is he brings salvation to us. God’s grace saves. You see, if I need advice, let’s just say that I’m driving to work and I need advice, whether it’s in finance or marriage or parenting, and I have that need and I show up to the office and I’m working for a while and I still have that need. I need advice. And then all of a sudden the building is on fire and I’m stuck. Now I’m in a blazing building and I need advice. So now I have two needs.

One need has not taken away the other, and yet one is a greater priority than the other. True? I need to be rescued more than I need a lesson. More than I need advice. I need deliverance, I need salvation, and it says that when God’s grace came, it brought salvation because that was our greatest first need. Romans chapter 3 verse 23 says this, “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” Now the brevity of those words and the familiarity for many of us of those words leads us to hear those words and our heart rate does not rise in either fear or gratitude.

Fear that it's true, gratitude that we've been saved from it, and this is one of the tragedies that the New Testament tries to address and that is that we get over being saved so fast because we don't quite understand how severe it is when the Bible says that we have sinned against the glory of God. You see, one day we're going to see, we're going to see the blinding holiness of God that the Bible describes as brighter than the sun.

See, we look at the sun and we're like, "Ooh, it's a sunny day. Let's go out to the pool." That's because you're all far from it. But the Bible says one day that we're going to stand before Jesus Christ and his face is going to be like the blazing, it says brighter than the sun at full strength. And when he talks about the holiness of God in the Bible, what he's talking about is this: it's his perfection. In other words, his purity is that bright. His righteousness is that bright. It is so exposing that any sin, any darkness is absolutely consumed by such holiness, which is why the Bible says that sin has no place in heaven, that sin cannot be in heaven because he is holy, holy, holy. The angels as they sing holy, holy, holy, it says that they have to cover up their eyes.

They've never sinned, and yet they have to cover up their eyes and their feet because they're in the presence of holiness that is even consuming to them. It's overwhelming to them. And here we are on the earth. And the Bible says that when we sin against God, what we're essentially doing is declaring our independence and saying, "I rebel against you." We're the only part of all of his creation that's ever done so. Everything in creation from the wind, to the whales, to the sea, to the rain, to the snow, to the butterflies, they all cast perfect obedience to God. And yet God says this to us and we look at him and we say no. Everything says yes except humanity. And we're the only thing that God ever created in his image. So you can see the horror of all of this. The Bible says that we were all conductors on our own little personal runaway train that was heading to death.

And death apart from him, the Bible calls hell. The word hell is a Biblical word. And Jesus used it frequently and he talked about it as though it is a real place. Some people talk about the Bible as descriptions of itself as being symbolic. It says it's like outer darkness. It's like a lake of fire. It's a place of gnashing of teeth or weeping. But have you ever thought about what a symbol is? A symbol is given because words can't express its proper value, and so we're straining to be able to symbolize its significance. In other words, symbols never oversell the target. They always undersell or try to help people to grasp it. So what I'm saying is this, for those that would try to satisfy their heart by saying, "Oh, this talk about hell on all of his descriptions is just symbolic." That hell is either those things or it is infinitely worse.

When it says it's a lake of fire. It's either an actual lake of fire or it's something that lake of fire is trying to describe. And so when God's grace comes, and he says that he brings salvation to us, this is supposed to be really good news for every single one of us, that the news has reached us. You see, it says then, then grace appeared, it became visible. He's talking about a historical event. For the grace of God has appeared. He's talking about chronological time. It happened in time and space. And next week we're going to actually learn that this grace was actually a description of someone. His name is Jesus Christ. Titus 3:4 and 5 says that "When the goodness of and loving kindness of God, our Savior appeared, he saved us."

You see what he's doing? When he says here, the grace of God, he's saying, you can just put Jesus.

When Jesus appeared, Jesus is our coach. It is his attribute of grace that flows from his heart that coaches us throughout our entire life. Grace in the person of Jesus landed Bethlehem, a historical event. You remember old man Simeon, Luke chapter 2. God tells him you're not going to die until you see the promised one until you see the Messiah and suddenly he's in the temple. It says he's filled with the Holy Spirit. He's walking around, he's worshiping. He's so happy to be there and he sees Jesus there, little baby Jesus, and he says, God, you can take me now "for my eyes have seen your salvation." Grace has appeared. It's in baby form and that baby form is going to grow up and that baby form did grow up. He grew up in order to save us. You know, it's amazing. Jesus didn't appear on a tight budget. He didn't come and go, "You know, I get so much grace to give, so let me be really discriminant in how I kind of give it out. This might be a waste. Hey, here's some." No. What does it say? It says that he appeared bringing salvation for who?

For all people. All people. You see Jesus Christ, he lived without sin. He died on a cross in order to redeem us from our own lawlessness, to purify for himself a people. He died on that cross and then he rose from the dead. When he says all people, what he means is this, is that God's provision in Jesus Christ is great enough to embrace the whole world, but its benefits are limited to those who will believe. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son" to the world, "that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life." You see in those who believed, isn't this good news? It says that we become his possession. Some of us think, "Oh, I've got my little Jesus. I'll put him in my purse and I take him around and I talk to him all day long and I hope I don't drop him."

He is not your possession. You are his possession. It's not about you holding him fast. It's about him holding you fast. No one can pluck us, he says, out of his hand, nothing and heaven and earth, good evil, sin doesn't, righteousness. Nothing can separate us from his love, for we are his possession. Grace came in the person of Jesus Christ and he sized us up and he says, "Oh, there's a lot of things I can do in your life. But the very first thing is I need to bring salvation." And so I encourage you today, you know you can pray to go on right now. You can. You can pray to God and say, "God, I believe in your son. I admit that I cannot save myself. I believe that Jesus Christ is your son who died on a cross and who rose from the dead, and I confess him as Lord of my life."

You know what the Bible says? Not that there's some magic spell that you say there's not magic words and all of a sudden if they're sincere and in your heart and you're not believing in yourself, but you're placing your full trust in Jesus Christ, the Bible says that you will be forgiven of all of your sin and you will be saved. That all of the benefits that have been accrued by Jesus' accomplishments, by dying for sin and rising from the dead will be given to you and me. And so I urge you today to trust Jesus Christ.

It goes further. God's grace also trains us for good works. He trains us for good works. In other words, once our heart is made healthy and salvation, well then grace begins to train us to get rid of certain things and to take on certain things. But most of you probably never heard the name Lloyd Scott. In a moment, I want to show you a little picture of Lloyd Scott. He's a pretty remarkable man. It took him five hours and I'm sorry, five days, eight hours and change to run 26.2 miles, a marathon in London. That's a long time to run and the reason that it took him so long to run it is because he chose, willingly, to wear 130 pound old-time diver's suit, the entire 26.2 miles. Now he did it to try to raise money, which is an interesting way to raise money, but most of us, we would look at that and we think, you know, that's not the wisest way to run.

But isn't it interesting that other people, maybe a coach would look in our life, maybe we would look at our life and you have to ask the same thing when we look at someone else and said, "It's kind of foolish to carry around all that baggage as you walked through life, you only got one shot," and yet some people could look at our own life. We might be able to look at our own life and imagine all the things that we are carrying around unnecessarily and people might look at us and say, "You know, it's just not all that wise that you're running with all that weight."

Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1. What does it say? It says, "Let us also lay aside every weight and the sin which so which clings so closely and let us run." And this is what he says to us. He says in verse 12 he says that grace is training us to renounce ungodliness. Ungodliness is simply a way of life. It's a lifestyle that happens when we disregard God. When we turn our back to God and live, it produces ungodliness. It's unlike God and then that's generated by things in the world. He says, worldly passions, the same word as lust, worldly lust. Things that we think, man, if I had just had that, if I had more of that than I would ultimately be happy. He says, we need to part with these things and if we don't, the fact is is that we smear a testimony, which is why then moves on and he says, look, grace trains us then not only to get rid of some things to renounce certain things, but also to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives.

I love what he says and how he says this to a young man named Timothy. He tells him how to develop self control in his life. He says, look, Timothy, flee youthful passions, same word, worldly passions, worldly lust, flee youthful passions, and then he says that you can't just flee things. By the way, you never flee with class, right? There's usually screaming and running involved, right? It's never like, "Let me saunter out of this burning room." No, we're fleeing for our life. And then he goes on and he says, "Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace." In other words, all of that energy that's, that's geared and aimed at worldly passions and lust. He says, now we need to read direct that towards righteousness, towards peace, towards faith and towards love. And then he says this along with, in other words, don't run alone. "Along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

What that means is we need accountability. We need people in our life to run with. We're supposed to be pursuing this along with people who are also pursuing these things. This is the importance of you being involved in a life group. I know many of you come to this big room and you think, "Okay, that's good. That was a good hour. Now I'm out of here." You're missing literally half the meal. To pursue in godly relationships with other people who were seeking to be godly and allow grace to be our coach. I love it that grace does not change us against our will, but grace works to change our will.

Sin is so stubborn, isn't it? But the Bible says it's not nearly as stubborn as grace and so he rescues us from peril. He also trains us for good works and lasts as he reassures us. God's grace us about coming glory. None of us in this room are good at waiting. We just struggle at it and yet life has played out in a waiting room called this present age. What happens is this, is that when we get impatient, grace comes just like a good coach and he says, look, I promise you it's worth it. You got to keep running, and the reason is because God's grace always has a long view of things. God's grace is like a Sherpa that helps people up Mount Everest. People want to quit. People want to say, you know, I just can't do it anyway. No, you're not going to believe the view because when you get up, you may be able to see something like this.

You may be able to look out over all of the Himalayan mountains and see such grandeur and beauty that's unseen by any other place in the world, and this is what grace does. He says that grace trains us as we wait for our blessed hope. That's a hope that blesses and that is the appearing of Jesus Christ, our Savior. You see, the good news is this, is that Philippians 3:20 says that our citizenship is in heaven. It's in heaven. "And from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body." You know, when I was younger, when I was in high school and college, I ran track a lot and we had an amazing coach and one of the ways I knew that he was an amazing coach was whatever he told us to do, he did it with us.

If he said, "We're going to run 12 400 meter dashes for practice today," he would run 12 400 meter dashes with us. It was amazing. Every morning we met 5:00 in the morning, we'd run three miles and then we'd have practice afterward. He was just relentless, but he always did it with us and it's interesting that he began to learn all of our tendencies that when we wanted to quit in a race and what he would do with me is he would go to a certain place at a certain distance and he would wait because he knew that was the place that I always fell apart, that I wanted to quit or slow down and that he would stand there and this is what he used to say. He'd say, "Hey," I'm running by, "think about the tape." That's what he said. "Think about the tape."

It didn't matter if I was in first or last. He would say, think about the tape. The tape, the finish line. Don't forget the tape and this is exactly what grace does. It says, don't forget the tape. Jesus is coming back. It will all be worth it. So before we take the supper, let me give you just a few thoughts. First is I want to encourage you to trust Jesus and be saved. There are a million things that you can run to. It looks like a tower, it's not a tower when you're in danger.

There are things this last week that you ran to when you felt stressed and this next week when you feel stressed, there's going to be something you're going to run to. We all run to a tower. The question is, is that an imaginary tower or is it a real tower? Proverbs chapter 18 verse 10 says this, that "The name of the Lord is a strong tower and the righteous man runs into it and is safe," He's safe.

And so I urge you today, some of you are looking at coming to faith in Jesus Christ and you're saying, "But I already have a tower. I already have something else that I'm relying on" and I beg of you today to humble yourself to God's provision for you, and that is to trust the Son who is so strong in the day of adversity. Second is this, I encourage you, let's consider the spiritual needs of others. Titus is written with the lostness of Crete on Paul's heart. He knows that these Cretan unbelievers are looking at the church and wondering about the credibility of Jesus. Oh, it's true that good works, they may create happy lives and homes, but they do not terminate with us. People are watching.

And third is let's examine our life. I've talked about a pattern the last couple weeks. The pattern begins with grace. It's all seen in this little passage. It doesn't start with our good works does it? That's last. Our good works is last in the sequence. He starts with grace appeared. If it's not overflow, it's not Christian. It always starts with God. Grace appeared in Jesus. He came. Salvation comes to those who believe. As we continue to grow in knowledge of the truth, we receive a new identity that makes us zealous for good works. So let me ask you, is there overflow?

Are you excited today about Jesus' return or apathetic about Jesus' return? See, one of the beautiful things about God is that he gives us tangible reminders to assist us because he knows that we get distracted. And one of the things he gave us is called the Lord's Supper. So for those that will be serving us, if you want to go ahead and stand up and head to the back. And as they retrieve the two elements, the bread and the cup, let me just remind you of something. It's so important you get this. There's three reasons that the Bible tells us, why he gave us the word suffer. One is that we would remember what Jesus did. Second is that we would proclaim to other people what Jesus did, that we believe it. But then third is that it would give us a regular time to examine our life, to ask ourselves, what am I hoping and what is my tower?

What is my functional tower? What have I been running to? And so I encourage you as the elements are being passed, you would examine your life. If you've never trusted Jesus Christ, we invite you to do just what the Bible says. And that's to let these elements pass because to take them is to proclaim to everyone in the room that you believe in them, that you believe in the realities that these symbols point to. And that is that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. But if he is your Savior and Lord, we welcome you to the table. So let me pray for us.

Father in heaven, we thank you for your grace in our life and as we are served these elements and hold them in our hands, I pray Father, that you would unveil whatever you see within us. Help us to confess to you and receive forgiveness of sin for those that will be unable to take these elements. I pray, Father, that in your kindness, you would help them to see just how much love you have for them, that you would send Jesus to rescue them. We thank you for this time and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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