

Grace Has Appeared for All

Titus 2:11-14

Introduction

Our family loves baseball. In fact, I think my wife watched every televised Astros game this past season on FUBO. If the Astros were playing, we were watching at home. I think we made it to maybe one in-person game last season, but we didn't miss them on TV. In fact, when the playoff games were on TV in the middle of the day, the church office had the game on the TV in our common area.

But our family is not just spectators in this wonderful game, we are also participants. My two oldest sons play the game. And since moving to Texas, we have spent a good bit of time around baseball fields. It might have been fielding practice, or a batting practice, a scrimmage, or a real game, but at least one of the parents was there cheering and supporting one of our boys.

If you are around the baseball field enough, you begin to catch on to the lingo. You may hear a coach say something like, "3-0, it's gotta be perfect" or "good eye" or "watch the hook," which refers to a breaking ball. Games like baseball teach kids discipline, hand-eye coordination, and how to play as team. But there is one saying that I have heard on multiple occasions that is unsettling to me.

It is the saying, "You've gotta earn every in life. If you want something, you've got to earn it. Nothing is given to you in life." Now, for the sake of context, I believe that what these coaches are saying is that "if you want to play at the next level in baseball, you have to earn it," which is true. College coaches and professional scouts are not walking through the stands telling a kid's parents, "Even though your son couldn't hit a beach ball or throw a baseball 30-feet without bouncing it, we would like to have him on the team." No, if you are going to play a sport at the next level, it will have to be earned. This principle is true in every sport.

But the problem that I have is that while sports like baseball can teach us a lot of things about life, they can actually obscure our understanding of the most important realities in life. While you do have earn everything that is related to sports and academic, the most important thing in the whole world, in the universe, cannot be earned by our effort. In fact, if we try to earn it, we will lose it. We will forfeit the greatest reality in the universe if we by our own efforts try to earn it.

What is that thing? What is the greatest reality in all the world? Let's turn our attention for a few moments to Titus 2:11-14 to learn more...

Titus 2:11-14

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Exposition

The greatest reality in the whole world, in the universe, is salvation from our sin against a perfectly Holy God. Our sin, our wickedness, our rebellion have made us incapable of pleasing God in our own strength, by our own effort. That is why Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth. This is why God sent His one and only Son, begotten not made, into the world to save sinners like you and me. And God calls this sending of Jesus, the redeemer from sin, the Savior of the world, an appearing of grace.

Grace is unmerited, unearned favor from God to us. It is a gift to be received by faith, not by works, lest we would boast in our achievement (Eph. 2:8-10). We are incapable of doing anything to earn this gift. All we can do is receive it. We cannot pay for grace. We cannot achieve grace. We are not owed grace. According to God's Word, the only thing that we can and have earned is the wage of sin, which is death (Rom. 6:23). Yet Romans 6:23 does not end with this word of condemnation. It concludes with the reminder that while we have earned the judgment of death for our sin and rebellion against God, "the *gift* of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." God's grace is given, not earned!

The greatest reality in whole world, the greatest gift that we could ever receive, is the "gift of God, which is eternal life in Christ Jesus." This is why Christ took on flesh, becoming a baby, born of a woman, under the law, to redeem us from the curse of the law" (Gal. 4:4-5). Grace has appeared in bodily form. The greatest gift we could ever receive, the thing that we need more than anything in this life, is given, not earned!

In our flesh, we don't like this idea. We don't like the idea that we are not in control. That we are in need. That someone else has to save us. That someone else has to rescue us. And the reason for this is because we want the glory of our own rescue. We want to be praised for our achievements. We want to be the one's responsible for earning the greatest thing that the world has ever known. But this is not how it works!

We want to be able to say, "I deserve salvation because I was good enough. I deserve salvation because I worked hard, I gave a lot of money to charity, I served a lot in church and in the community, I did it and I did it my way. I don't need anyone to do anything for me!" We want the glory, but God's Word tells us that He will not share His glory with anyone (Isa. 42:8). If we would possess the greatest gift that the world has ever known, then it must be received by faith, not our works and efforts. For our effort, our work, will never be good enough to pull us out of the pit that our sins have placed us in. We need the grace of God that has appeared in the form of Jesus Christ to save us.

Conclusion

And this gift of salvation is offered to all. To all who would receive Jesus, they will become children of God (John 1:12-13). They will be forgiven. They will be redeemed. They will receive eternal life from the One who earned it for us through his life, death, burial, and resurrection in our place. This is what we remember and proclaim during the Christmas season. That the greatest gift the world has ever known is given not earned. We cannot earn what has already been earned for us. We must simply place our faith in the One, in Jesus Christ, the grace that has appeared that offers salvation for all!

Christians, as you meditate on this grace that has appeared, I want to remind you that your relationship with God is based on His grace, not your performance or your efforts. You stand before God as One who has been declared righteous in His sight by His grace to you in Jesus Christ. Freely you have received this grace. You do not begin the Christian life by grace and then end it in your own strength, in your own effort. As you reflect during this Christmas season, I want you to think deeply about the fact that you belong to God because of His grace.

Maybe you have wandered away from God, maybe you haven't been following as you know you should, maybe you haven't been involved in church for a season because you feel as though you don't belong or even deserve to be around God's people, maybe you even feel as though you are unworthy to return to Him because you haven't been living for him. Dear Christian, you are saved, being saved, and will be saved by His glorious grace. His grace invites you back. His grace keeps the door propped open. His grace extends the invitation to come home again. And if you do, His grace will welcome you again without words of condemnation or judgment, but instead with words of love, of life, and relationship. Let His grace lead you back home tonight!

But maybe you are here tonight, and you are not a Christian. You believe you are a spiritual person, but you are not yet convinced that Christianity and following Christ is the only way to salvation. You think that all roads eventually lead to the same place. You think, "There's really nothing unique about Christianity that should compel me to give it serious thought." In love, let me encourage you to search and see if you can find any other religion that offers salvation freely and totally on the basis of grace while also maintaining the justice of God.

In his book, *What's So Amazing about Grace?*, author Philip Yancey recounts a time when C. S. Lewis interacted with a group of experts in comparative religion who were working through this same question: What is it, if anything, about Christianity that makes it unique to all other religions in the world? After some discussion, Lewis interrupted and said, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace." Yancey goes on to say that "The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of Karma, the Jewish covenant, and Muslim code of law—each of these offers a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional."

Why search for a way to earn what has already been provided for you in Jesus Christ? The approval before God that you are looking for and hoping to achieve through your own efforts is only found in Jesus Christ. It can only be received. It cannot be earned.

There are certainly many things in life that you've got to earn. But salvation is not one of them. Salvation has appeared for all, and all are invited to receive it today. Would you receive this grace that has appeared in Christ? Would you be saved, even tonight, by asking God to save you?

The invitation of His grace is before you. There will never be another offer like it. Today, you can receive the salvation, the forgiveness, the redemption from sin and guilt and shame and judgment in this very moment, because Grace has appeared for you. This is what Christmas is ultimately about. Grace coming from heaven to earth for us!