

## Restored Witness Part 3

May 13, 2018 - Titus 2:11-15

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our 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 lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

15 Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

*(2:11–15) “Grace” is charis (χ α ρ ι σ). Of this word, Trench in his Synonyms of the New Testament has this to say: “It is hardly too much to say that the Greek mind has in no word uttered itself and all that was at its heart more distinctly than in this.” With regard to its use in the New Testament, we could say; “It is hardly too much to say that the mind of God has in no word uttered itself and all that is in His heart more distinctly than in this.” In the ethical terminology of the Greek schools, charis (χ α ρ ι σ) implied a favor freely done, without claim or expectation of return. Aristotle, defining charis (χ α ρ ι σ), lays the whole stress on this very point, that it is conferred freely, with no expectation of return, and finding its only motive in the bounty and free-heartedness of the giver. But in pagan Greece, this favor was always conferred upon a friend, not upon an enemy. When charis (χ α ρ ι σ) is taken over into the terminology of the New Testament, it takes an infinite leap forward, and acquires an added meaning which it never had in pagan Greece, for the favor God did at Calvary’s Cross, He did, not for a race that loved Him but which hated Him. Thus, in the n.t., charis (χ α ρ ι σ) refers to an act that is beyond the ordinary course of what might be expected and is therefore commendable. All the human race could rightfully expect would be condign punishment for its sins. But it is offered mercy from the Judge who stepped down from His judgment throne in the Glory, to take upon Himself the guilt and penalty of human sin, thus satisfying His justice and making it possible to bestow mercy on the basis of justice satisfied upon a hell-deserving sinner who puts his faith in the Saviour who died for him. “That bringeth salvation” is sōtērios (σ ω τ η ρ ι ο σ), “bringing salvation,” an adjective qualifying “grace.” “Hath appeared” is epiphainō (ἐ π ι φ α ι ν ω), “to appear, become visible, to become clearly known.” “Teaching” is paideuō (π α ι δ ε υ ω), “to instruct, train.” Our words, “pedagogue, pedagogy,” come from this word. “Ungodliness” is asebeia (ἀ σ ε β ε ι α), “lack of piety or reverence toward God.” “Lusts” is epithumia (ἐ π ι θ υ μ ι α), “a passionate desire.” “Worldly” is kosmos (κ ο σ μ ι κ ο σ), “worldly, having the character of this present age.” The word kosmos (κ ο σ μ ο σ) is used here of the*

world system of evil of which Satan is the head, the fallen angels and the demons are his emissaries, and all the unsaved are his servants, together with the pleasures, pursuits, practices, and purposes of the individuals involved. "Soberly" is *sōphronōs* (σ ω φ ρ ο ν ω ς), "with sound mind, temperately, discreetly." "Godly" is *eusebōs* (ε υ σ ε β ω ς), "piously, godly." "World" is *aiōn* (αιων) which Trench defines as "that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitute a most real and effective power, being the moral or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale." Christians live in this atmosphere. We breathe it. It confronts us wherever we go. It seeks our destruction. It is pernicious. It surrounds us like the air we breathe. We take it in unconsciously like every breath of air we breathe. We must therefore be well supplied with an inner antidote which will counteract its evil tendencies, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, a godly life, and the upward look for the coming of the Lord Jesus. "Looking" is *prosdechomai* (π ρ ο σ δ ε χ ο μ α ι), "to receive to one's self, to admit, give access to one's self, to receive into intercourse and companionship, to expect, look for, wait for." The verb has an atmosphere of expectancy about it, and a readiness to welcome the person looked for and expected. The a.v. makes "that blessed hope" and "the glorious appearing" to be two different things, whereas the Greek text requires that they be construed as one. We have Granville Sharp's rule here, which says that when there are two nouns in the same case connected by *kai* (και) (and), the first noun having the article, the second noun not having the article, the second noun refers to the same thing the first noun does and is a further description of it. Thus, that blessed hope is the glorious appearing of our Lord. The translation should read, "that blessed hope, even the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ." The same rule applies to the words, "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Both expressions refer to the same individual. The deity of the Lord Jesus is brought out here by a rule of Greek syntax. The pronoun "our" is polemic. The god and saviour of the Roman empire was the Emperor himself, who was looked upon as a god and as the saviour of the world in that he by his government brought peace and prosperity to the people. He was worshipped as a god in the state religion of the Roman empire, which was Emperor Worship. But the Christian's God and Saviour is Jesus Christ. This is a protest against emperor worship. "Blessed" is *makarios* (μακαριος), "prosperous." The hope we have of the return of our Lord to catch out the Church, is one that is prosperous, it is filled with richness, benefits, good things. "Appearing" is *epiphaneia* (επιφανεια), which was used by the pagan Greeks of the glorious manifestation of their gods. Here it is used of the glory that will accompany the return of the Lord Jesus. The Greek does not speak of "the glorious appearing." It is "the appearing of the glory" of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. "For" is *huper* (υπερ), the preposition of substitutionary atonement. It means, "for the sake of, in behalf of, instead of." It is used in John 11:50: "It is expedient for you that one man should die instead of the people, and not that the whole nation perish." In Galatians 3:13 we have: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse instead of us." The local meaning of *huper* (υπερ) (instead of) is "above." One could translate, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of

the law, having become a curse above us." In His death on the Cross, He came above us and between us and a holy God, thus intercepting the penalty that would have fallen upon us. "Redeem" is *lutroō* ( λ υ τ ρ ο ω ). There are three words in the n.t., translated "redeem," which tell the story of the Cross. The first is *agorazō* ( ἀ γ ο ρ α ζ ω ), "to buy a slave in the market place" (I Cor. 6:20, II Peter 2:1, Rev. 5:9). The slave market is this earth. All the unsaved are slaves of sin and Satan. Our Lord paid the penalty for sin at the Cross. Those who trust in His blood, belong to Him as His bondslaves. The second is *exagorazō* ( ἐ ξ α γ ο ρ α ζ ω ), "to buy off, to buy up," thus, "to buy out of the slave market" (Gal. 3:13, 4:5). The saved are never to be put up for sale in any slave market again. They belong to the Lord Jesus forever. The third is *lutroō* ( λ υ τ ρ ο ω ), "to set free by the payment of a ransom" (Titus 2:14, I Peter 1:18). The Lord's slaves are set free from sin and their old master Satan, to experience in their lives, that for which God created them, fellowship with and service to God. "Iniquity" is *anomia* ( ἀ ν ο μ ι α ), "lawlessness," made up of *nomos* ( ν ο μ ο ς ), "law," and *Alpha privative*, thus, "without law." "Peculiar" is *periousion* ( π ε ρ ι ο υ σ ι ο ν ), from the participle of *perieinai* ( π ε ρ ι ε ι ν α ι ), "to be over and above." It also means, "possessed over and above," that is, "specially selected for one's own; exempt from ordinary laws of distribution." It refers therefore to a private possession. The word "peculiar" is from *peculium* ( π ε χ υ λ ι ο υ μ ), "a private purse, a special acquisition of a member of a family distinct from the property administered for the good of the whole family." Thus, Christians are the private possession of God.

Translation. For the grace of God bringing salvation, appeared to all men, instructing us that denying impiety and worldly cravings, we should live discreetly and righteously and piously in the midst of this present age, expectantly looking for the blessed hope, even the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself on our behalf in order that He might set us free from all lawlessness, and purify to Himself a people of His own private possession, zealous of good works. These things be constantly speaking and exhorting; and be rebuking with all authority. Let no one despise you.<sup>1</sup>

11. *For the grace of God hath appeared.* He argues from the design of redemption, which he shews to be a desire to live a godly and upright life. Hence it follows, that the duty of a good teacher is rather to exhort to a holy life than to occupy the minds of men with useless questions. "He hath redeemed us," says Zacharias in his song,— "that we may serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life." (Luke 1:74, 75.) For the same reason Paul says, *the grace of God hath appeared, teaching us*; for he means that it ought to hold the place of instruction to us to regulate our life well. What is proclaimed concerning the mercy of God is seized by some as an occasion of licentiousness; while others are hindered by

<sup>1</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 9, pp. 193–196). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

slothfulness from meditating on “newness of life.” But the manifestation of the grace of God unavoidably carries along with it exhortations to a holy life.

*Bringing salvation to all men.* That it is common to all is expressly testified by him on account of the slaves of whom he had spoken. Yet he does not mean individual men, but rather describes individual classes, or various ranks of life. And this is not a little emphatic, that the grace of God hath let itself down even to the race of slaves; for, since God does not despise men of the lowest and most degraded condition, it would be highly unreasonable that we should be negligent and slothful to embrace his goodness.

12. *Teaching us that, denying ungodliness.* He now lays down the rule for regulating our life well, and how we ought to begin, namely, with renouncing our former life, of which he enumerates two parts, “ungodliness and worldly desires.” Under *ungodliness*, I include not only superstitions, in which they had gone astray, but irreligious contempt of God, such as reigns in men, till they have been enlightened in the knowledge of the truth. Although they have some profession of religion, yet they never fear and reverence God sincerely and honestly, but, on the contrary, have consciences that are useless, so that nothing is further from their thoughts than that they ought to serve God.

By *worldly desires* he means all the affections of the flesh; because we look at nothing but the world, till the Lord has drawn us to himself. Meditation on the heavenly life begins with regeneration. Before we have been regenerated, our desires lean towards the world, and rest on the world.

*That we may live temperately, and righteously, and piously.* As he formerly mentioned those three, when he wished to give a comprehensive summary of Christian life, so he now makes it to consist of those three, “piety, righteousness, and temperance.” “Piety” is religion towards God. “Righteousness” has place among men. He who is endowed with both of these lacks nothing for perfect virtue; and, indeed, in the law of God there is absolute perfection, to which nothing whatever can be added. But as the exercises of godliness may be regarded as appendages to the first table, so “temperance,” which Paul mentions in this passage, aims at nothing else than keeping the law, and, as I said before about patience, is added to the former as a seasoning. Nor does the Apostle contradict himself, when at one time he describes patience, and at another time temperance, as the perfection of a holy life; for they are not distinct virtues, since  $\sigma \omega \phi \rho \omicron \sigma \acute{\upsilon} \nu \eta$  (here translated temperance) includes patience under it.

He adds, *in this world*, because the Lord has appointed the present life for the trial of our faith. Although the fruit of good actions is not yet visible, yet the hope should be sufficient for stimulating us to doing well; and this is what he immediately adds,—

13. *Looking for that blessed hope.* From the hope of future immortality he draws an exhortation, and indeed, if that hope be deeply seated in our mind, it is impossible that it

should not lead us to devote ourselves wholly to God. On the contrary, they who do not cease to live to the world and to the flesh never have actually tasted what is the worth of the promise of eternal life; for the Lord, by calling us to heaven, withdraws us from the earth.

*Hope* is here put for the thing hoped for, otherwise it would be an incorrect mode of expression. He gives this appellation to the blessed life which is laid up for us in heaven. At the same time he declares when we shall enjoy it, and what we ought to contemplate, when we desire or think of our salvation.

*And the appearing of the glory of the great God and Saviour.* I interpret the *glory of God* to mean not only that by which he shall be glorious in himself, but also that by which he shall then diffuse himself on all *sides*, so as to make all his elect partakers of it. He calls God *great*, because his greatness—which men, blinded by the empty splendour of the world, now extenuate, and sometimes even annihilate, as far as lies in their power—shall be fully manifested on the last day. The lustre of the world, while it appears great to our eyes, dazzles them so much that “the glory of God” is, as it were, hidden in darkness. But Christ, by his coming, shall chase away all the empty show of the world—shall no longer obscure the brightness, shall no longer lessen the magnificence, of his glory. True, the Lord demonstrates his majesty every day by his works; but because men are prevented by their blindness from seeing it, it is said to be hidden in obscurity. Paul wishes that believers may now contemplate by faith that which shall be manifested on the last day, and therefore that God may be magnified, whom the world either despises, or, at least, does not esteem according to his excellence.

It is uncertain whether these words should be read together thus, “the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great God and our Saviour,” or separately, as of the Father and the Son, “the glory of the great God, and of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” The Arians, seizing on this latter sense, have endeavoured to prove from it, that the Son is less than the Father, because here Paul calls the Father *the great God* by way of distinction from the Son. The orthodox teachers of the Church, for the purpose of shutting out this slander, eagerly contended that both are affirmed of Christ. But the Arians may be refuted in a few words and by solid argument; for Paul, having spoken of the revelation of the glory of “the great God,” immediately added “Christ,” in order to inform us, that that revelation of glory will be in his person; as if he had said that, when Christ shall appear, the greatness of the divine glory shall then be revealed to us.

Hence we learn, first, that there is nothing that ought to render us more active or cheerful in doing good than the hope of the future resurrection; and, secondly, that believers ought always to have their eyes fixed on it, that they may not grow weary in the right course; for, if we do not wholly depend upon it, we shall continually be carried away

to the vanities of the world. But, since the coming of the Lord to judgment might excite terror in us, Christ is held out to us as our “Saviour,” who will also be our judge.

14. *Who gave himself for us.* This is another argument of exhortation, drawn from the design or effect of the death of Christ, who offered himself for us, that he might redeem us from the bondage of sin, and purchase us to himself as his heritage. His grace, therefore, necessarily brings along with it “newness of life,” (Rom. 6:4,) because they who still are the slaves of sin make void the blessing of redemption; but now we are released from the bondage of sin, in order that we may serve the righteousness of God; and, therefore, he immediately added,—

*A peculiar people, zealous of good works;* by which he means that, so far as concerns us, the fruit of redemption is lost, if we are still entangled by the sinful desires of the world. And in order to express more fully, that we have been consecrated to good works by the death of Christ, he makes use of the word *purify*; for it would be truly base in us to be again polluted by the same filth from which the Son of God hath washed us by his blood.

15. *Speak these things, and exhort, and reprove.* This conclusion is of the same meaning as if he enjoined Titus to dwell continually on that doctrine of edification, and never to grow weary, because it cannot be too much inculcated. He likewise bids him add the spurs of “exhortations and reproofs;” for men are not sufficiently admonished as to their duty, if they be not also vehemently urged to the performance of it. He who understands those things which the Apostle has formerly stated, and who has them always in his mouth, will have ground not only for teaching, but likewise for correcting.

*With all authority.* I do not agree with Erasmus, who translates ἐπιταγή “diligence in commanding.” There is greater probability in the opinion of Chrysostom, who interprets it to mean severity against more atrocious sins; though I do not think that even he has hit the Apostle’s meaning; which is, that Titus should claim authority and respect for himself in teaching these things. For men given to curious inquiries, and eager about trifles, dislike the commandments to lead a pious and holy life as being too common and vulgar. In order that Titus may meet this disdain, he is enjoined to add the weight of his authority to his doctrine. It is with the same view (in my opinion) that he immediately adds,—

*Let no man despise thee.* Others think that Titus is instructed to gain the ear of men, and their respect for him, by the integrity of his life; and it is indeed true that holy and blameless conduct imparts authority to instruction. But Paul had another object in view; for here he addresses the people rather than Titus. Because many had ears so delicate, that they despised the simplicity of the gospel; because they had such an itch for novelty, that hardly any space was left for edification; he beats down the haughtiness of such men, and strictly charges them to desist from despising, in any way, sound and useful doctrine. This

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confirms the remark which I made at the outset, that this Epistle was written to the inhabitants of Crete rather than to any single individual.<sup>2</sup>

## Saving Grace

**For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (2:11–14)**

Actors, musicians, athletes, entertainers, politicians, and other celebrities who have achieved exceptional media exposure, popularity, or success often are called *stars*. Because they have risen to great prominence in their fields, they stand out brightly in the world's eyes and are accorded great acclaim and deference. Most of those stars, however, are far from being luminaries in God's sight.

In Daniel's final vision, the angel said to him, "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:3). Daniel himself was such a star of righteousness, as were Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Rahab, and all the other godly men and women of the Old Testament who gained God's approval through their faith (Heb. 11:4–39). A few of them, such as Moses and David, also achieved worldly prominence. But often the lives of those ancient saints, including Moses and David, were characterized much less by worldly success than by physical weakness, torture, mocking, scourging, chains, imprisonment, affliction, destitution, and even execution (vv. 34–37). The world considered them unworthy of respect or admiration. But in God's sight "the world was not worthy" of them (v. 38).

Those who hold to divine truth and have divine wisdom are able to discern the sinfulness, hopelessness, and futility of the world's wisdom and standards. Because they choose God's way above man's, they not only live righteously themselves but also "lead the many to righteousness." And for their faithfulness they "will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, ... like the stars forever and ever."

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<sup>2</sup> Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (pp. 317–323). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

Speaking of John the Baptist, the angel declared to his father Zacharias that “he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother’s womb. And he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:15–17). In the final verse of his letter, James assures us that any believer “who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his [the sinner’s] soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:20). It should be our constant purpose to “prove [ourselves] to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom [we are to] appear as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15). Those who follow the instructions in vv. 2–10 and are godly in this life will become heavenly luminaries in the life to come.

The promise given through Daniel is based on character, not accomplishment. It is faithful believers who know, live, and reflect God’s redeeming truth so that others are led to belief who will shine like stars forever in His heavenly kingdom. It is God’s gracious plan to demonstrate His saving power through His saved people. Just as “the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), so should the purpose be of those whom the Son has already sought and saved. The sovereign purpose of all exhortations to holy living in Scripture is to honor and glorify God through the righteous living of His people, leading to the salvation of more sinners.

Paul wanted to reinforce this central reality of redemptive purpose and therefore culminates this practical instruction with a monumental section about the saving work of God. He begins where we should always begin—with **the grace of God**. God’s **grace** is His unmerited favor toward wicked, unworthy sinners, by which He delivers them from condemnation and death. But **the grace of God** is more than a divine attribute; it is a divine Person, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ not only was God incarnate but was **grace** incarnate. He Himself personifies and expresses **the grace of God**, the sovereign, eternal, and unmerited divine gift of Him who **has appeared, bringing salvation to all men**.

**Has appeared** is from *epiphainō*, which carries the meaning of coming to light, especially that of becoming manifest in a way that previously was unseen. Jesus brought God’s saving purpose out of the shadows, as it were, into full light. God “has saved us, and called us with a holy calling,” Paul reminded Timothy, “not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the *appearing* of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:9–10, emphasis added). As Paul again declares later in this letter to Titus, it was in the very person of Jesus Christ that salvation appeared. “When the *kindness* of God our Savior



and His *love* for mankind appeared, *He saved us*" (3:4–5, emphasis added). He not only was **grace** incarnate, but also love and kindness incarnate.

As the godly Simeon took the infant Jesus in his arms, he "said, 'Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for my eyes have seen Thy salvation' " (Luke 2:28–30). Just as Isaiah prophesied, in the incarnate Son of God, "all flesh [would] see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6; Isa. 40:5). In Jesus Christ "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.... For of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace" (John 1:14, 16).

Speaking of the incarnation, the noted German theologian Erich Sauer wrote, "Of all times it is the turning point, of all love it is the highest point, of all worship it is the central point, of all salvation it is the starting point."

The very point of the redemptive **grace of God** through Jesus Christ is to save men from the corruption and damnation of sin—sin that debilitates and crushes human life, that separates sinners from a holy God, and that persists in unredeemed mankind like an incurable and fatal disease.

In Titus 2:11–14, Paul condenses the eternal plan of God in Christ by grace. He gives four aspects, or realities, of God's redemptive grace: salvation from the penalty (v. 11b), the power (v. 12), the presence (v. 13), and the possession (v. 14) of sin.

## Salvation From the Penalty of Sin

### **bringing salvation to all men, (2:11b)**

The single word **salvation** sums up the longing of God that is manifested in His redemptive work, because it denotes deliverance, rescue, and release from sin. What verses 11 and 12 imply, verse 14 makes explicit: Jesus "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed."

In His sovereign grace, God often saves from physical danger and affliction, even death. Daniel, for example, was divinely delivered from a den of lions (Dan. 6:19–22), just as his compatriots, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, had been delivered from a fiery furnace (3:24–27). During a storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saved the Twelve from almost certain drowning (Mark 4:39). But unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, when Scripture, either Old or New Testament, refers to **salvation**, or redemption, it is always in regard to deliverance from sin and its consequences (spiritual death and separation from God) and from its penalty (eternal damnation). "The wages of sin [always] is death" (Rom. 6:23). Jesus scathingly warned, "You shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins" (John 8:24; cf. v. 21). "Do not fear those who kill the body, but are

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unable to kill the soul,” He had warned on another occasion; “but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).

Hell, “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44; cf. Isa. 66:24), is the certain, inescapable destiny of those who die unforgiven in their sins. It is from that dreadful prospect that God’s sovereign and supreme grace brings eternal **salvation** to those who place their trust in His Son, Jesus Christ.

If, as some Christians maintain, salvation can be forfeited, it then would be obvious that God’s grace lacks everlasting power, that the life He bestows on believers is not eternal. A believer’s hope could only be temporary. He would be in continual danger of losing salvation, because it would be dependent on his own faithfulness and power to avoid sin that would cast him back into lostness. If that were true, one’s own power to sin would be greater than God’s power to save, and any testimony given to unbelievers to bring them to salvation would be undermined.

Without qualification, Jesus declared that “all that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37) and that “I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand” (10:28). The Lord *will not* revoke a believer’s salvation, and anyone else—whether the believer himself, another human being, or even Satan—*cannot* revoke it (cf. Rom. 8:28–38).

Or if, as others maintain, a believer cannot lose his salvation but can lose his faith, disregard Christ’s lordship, turn from Him to complete disobedience, and continue to live in sin, his testimony is equally impaired, because his life gives no evidence of God’s saving power. As Paul states later in the present text, Jesus “gave Himself for us, that He might *redeem* us from every lawless deed and *purify* for Himself a people for His own possession” (Titus 2:14, emphasis added). A person who is not being purified from sin has no claim on being saved from it.

Those twin truths have significance not only in regard to personal salvation but also in regard to world evangelization. If God is unable to keep a believer saved or to purify his life after he is saved, He has nothing by which to demonstrate His saving grace to a lost and condemned world.

**To all men** does not, as some maintain, refer to universal salvation but rather to the universal opportunity for salvation. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul speaks of “the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers” (1 Tim. 4:10). God “is Savior of all men” in the sense of delaying their deserved judgment for sin and of granting them countless temporal blessings that they do not deserve but nevertheless receive because of His gracious love.

Contrary to what many people think, the Old Testament does not portray a God of judgment and wrath and the New Testament a God of love and mercy. In both testaments, He is above all a God of infinite grace who desires the salvation of all mankind. By His very nature, God is a Savior. Over six centuries before the birth of Christ, the Lord declared through Isaiah: “There is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me” (Isa. 45:21; cf. 43:11). Earlier the prophet professed, “Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation” (Isa. 12:2).

As noted above, God delivers all sorts of people—individuals and nations, Jews and Gentiles, believers and unbelievers—from various physical dangers and afflictions, including death. Paul told Jewish members of the church at Corinth, “I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:1–4). All of the people were guided by the cloud that went before them; all of them were saved from death or enslavement by the Egyptians after passing through the Red Sea; all of them were saved from thirst and starvation by God’s gracious provision of manna to eat and water to drink in the wilderness; and all of them had the blessing of knowing God’s righteous standards through the law. “Nevertheless,” Paul goes on to say, “with most of them God was not well-pleased” (1 Cor. 10:5). Although all of the Israelites were blessed by God, most of them did not trust in Him and were not spiritually saved.

In his book *The Five Points of Calvinism*, R. L. Dabney writes: “Christ’s sacrifice has certainly purchased for the whole human race a merciful postponement of the doom incurred by our sins, including all the temporal blessings of our earthly life, all the gospel restraints upon human depravity, and the sincere offer of heaven to all. For, but for Christ, man’s doom would have followed instantly after his sin, as that of the fallen angels did” ([Harrisburg, Pa.: Sprinkle Publications, 1992], p. 62). “Do you think lightly of the riches of [God’s] kindness and forbearance and patience,” Paul asks rhetorically, “not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4). God graciously delays judgment and showers unbelieving mankind with every sort of blessing in order that they might repent and come to Him in saving faith. His temporal manifestations of grace, however, are not permanent or eternal. One day they will end. “Because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart,” Paul goes on to warn unbelievers, “you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:5).

In His atoning death, Christ did not save all men spiritually but provided the *means of salvation to all men* who would be saved. In His matchless grace, God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Emphasizing that same truth, Peter wrote, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is

patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). As our Lord Himself declared in His beautiful and familiar promise: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whoever* believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16, emphasis added; cf. John 6:51). The gospel is good news **to all men**, not because they are all elected or because Christ died for each one of them in particular, but because, as Jesus promised, “*anyone* [who] enters through Me, he shall be saved” (John 10:9, emphasis added).

When God calls on all sinners to believe, He does not command them to believe that they are divinely chosen or that Christ died especially for them. He commands them to believe that Jesus Christ died for all sinners in the world. He does not offer salvation to a person either as elect or not elect but simply as a sinner.

Scripture nowhere teaches what is commonly called double predestination. God does not deterministically elect some men to salvation and others to damnation. In a way that is inscrutable and incomprehensible to our finite minds, God’s Word makes clear that every believer was chosen by God “in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him” (Eph. 1:4). Scripture makes equally clear that those who do not believe are responsible and guilty for their rejection of Christ (cf. John 3:17–20). Jesus gives us the marvelous assurance that “all that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.... And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day” (John 6:37, 39; cf. 17:2). With that assurance, He also gives the promise that “he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst, ... and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:35, 37).

In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul further explains that “whom [God] foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Rom. 8:29–30). A bit later the apostle gives the immortal promises that “whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed” and “whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:11, 13).

But Scripture does not teach what might seem to be the corollary of that truth—that God predestines unbelievers to hell. As noted above, God is by nature a Savior, and it is unbelievers alone who are responsible for the sin that sends them to hell. The Lord “desires *all* men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4, emphasis added), “not wishing for any to perish but for *all* to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9, emphasis added). Men are not condemned because God has not chosen them but because they have not chosen Him. The Lord says to all unbelievers what He said to unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem: “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into

life.... And you do not have His word-abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.... and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life” (John 5:24, 38, 40; cf. 8:24). All men are not saved for the single reason that “not all have faith” in Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 3:2). It is not the extent of the atonement that excludes some people from salvation. As John makes clear in his second letter, Jesus “Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the *whole world*” (1 John 2:2, emphasis added). Jesus tasted death for everyone (Heb. 2:9). The atonement was sufficient because Christ was divine perfection and completely satisfied God. If God had chosen every person who ever lived, no further atonement would be needed than Christ’s.

In his *Discourses and Sayings of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, the noted eighteenth-century Scottish Puritan John Brown wrote,

There can be no doubt in the mind of a person who understands the doctrine of personal election, that those who are actually saved are the objects of a special love on the part of God; and that the ... Savior had a special design in reference to them. But there can be little doubt that the atonement of Christ has a general reference to mankind at large; and that it was intended as a display of love on the part of God to our guilty race.

Not merely was the atonement offered by Christ Jesus sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, but it was intended and fitted to remove out of the way of the salvation of sinners generally, every bar which the perfections of the divine moral character and the principles of the divine moral government presented.... In consequence of that atonement, every sinner may be, and if he believe in Jesus certainly shall be, pardoned and saved.... The revelation of mercy made in the gospels refers to men as sinners, not as elect sinners. ([New York: Robert Carter & Bros., 1855], 1:33)

The problem, therefore, is not in the sufficiency or the scope of God’s grace. “There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for *all*” (1 Tim. 2:5–6, emphasis added). Without any exception, God calls all men to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, whose atoning sacrifice was more than sufficient to cover every sin that has been or ever will be committed.

The Holy Spirit revealed that great truth to the prophet Isaiah, who declared that “all of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way” and then foretold of Christ that “the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him” (Isa. 53:6). John the Baptist testified of Jesus, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Paul explains more fully that, “if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.... So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.... And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin

increased, grace abounded all the more” (Rom. 5:15, 18, 20; cf. 2 Cor. 5:14–15). The abundance of God’s grace more than exceeds the whole of man’s depravity.

But not all men trust in God’s gracious and sufficient provision of salvation. That is always the reason, and the only reason, that Scripture gives for a person’s not being saved. Jesus’ beautiful promise in John 3:16–17 is followed by the dire warning that “he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (v. 18). Part of the Holy Spirit’s work is to “convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me” (John 16:8–9). In an appearance after His resurrection, Jesus reiterated that truth, saying, “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved, but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16). It might be said that Christ’s atonement is *sufficient* for the whole world but is *efficient* only for those who believe.

God calls His people, those who are already saved, to demonstrate His saving power in their lives and thereby show Him to be a saving God, to glorify Him and to draw others to Him. “Now all these things are from God,” Paul declares, “who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:18–20).

## Salvation From the Power of Sin

**instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, (2:12)**

As ultimately important as salvation from the penalty of sin is, Paul’s major emphasis in this passage is on salvation from its power. In Jesus Christ, God’s redeeming grace breaks sin’s power and dominion in our lives and gives us a new nature that desires holiness.

**Instructing** is from *paideuō*, which carries the closely related meanings of teaching, training, disciplining, educating, and nurturing. It is the term from which we get *pedagogy*. The subject of **instructing** is “the grace of God,” which, as has been pointed out, is personified in Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God’s grace, who has appeared and brought salvation (v. 11). Revealed and personified in Christ, God’s sovereign saving grace not only is a deliverer but also a teacher, a guide, a counselor. When we were saved, we immediately came under the tutelage of God through His Holy Spirit and through His Word. “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world,” Paul explained to believers in Corinth, “but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the

Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words” (1 Cor. 2:12–13). “We have,” the apostle goes on to say, the very “mind of Christ” (v. 16).

In chapter 3 of his letter to the church at Rome, Paul describes the total depravity of every human being apart from Jesus Christ. Quoting from the Psalms, he says: “There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one” (Rom. 3:10–12; cf. Pss. 14:1–3; 53:1–4). Because of that total bondage to sin, “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (v. 18; cf. Ps. 36:1). “A natural man *does not accept* the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he *cannot understand* them, because they are spiritually appraised” (1 Cor. 2:14, emphasis added).

Paul reminded believers in Ephesus of their former condition of uninterrupted sinfulness, saying, “You were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest” (Eph. 2:1–3). It was only because of God’s “being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, [that He] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus” (vv. 4–6). The person who “is in Christ, ... is a new creature; the old things [have] passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor. 5:17).

As emphasized in two of my books, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Zondervan, 1988) and *Faith Works* (Word, 1993), when a person is genuinely saved, truly converted and given new life in Jesus Christ, there is a transformation not only of nature but of living. It is not possible—as those who oppose what they call “lordship salvation” strongly insist—to be saved from the penalty of sin and not be saved from its power and dominion. Because of a Christian’s new nature and the indwelling Holy Spirit, he simply cannot continue to live in unmitigated sin, bereft of any outward evidence of his new, holy, and righteous nature and of the presence of Christ’s own Holy Spirit within him.

By His divine grace, Jesus Christ completely reprograms our computers, as it were. He throws away the old disks and deletes the previous programs and files—all of which were permeated with errors and destructive “viruses”—and graciously replaces them with His own divine truth and righteousness. “I have been crucified with Christ,” Paul testified to the churches of Galatia, “and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20).

Scripture does not teach that sinless perfection is possible in the earthly lives of believers. Although Paul could say sincerely, “I am conscious of nothing against myself,” he immediately went on to say, “yet I am not by this acquitted” (1 Cor. 4:4). He clearly testified that he had not “already become perfect.” But “I press on,” he said, “in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:11–14).

Nevertheless, a person who is divinely born again is no longer under the pervasive dominion of sin and of Satan. He has a radical new nature and is called and enabled to reflect that new nature in a radically new way of living. By the work of God the Father, we “are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). The “grace and truth [that] were realized through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17) during His earthly ministry are to be realized and evident in the lives of those who bear His name and His nature. They have “laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created [them]” (Col. 3:9–10).

Our present earthly life is a time of sanctification, a two-sided process of becoming less and less like our old and sinful self and more and more like our new and Christlike self. “Just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness,” Paul explained to believers in Rome, “so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification” (Rom. 6:19).

Because sanctification is both negative and positive, separating believers *from* sin and *to* righteousness, so, therefore, is Christ’s gracious **instructing** of believers.

Negatively, the Lord instructs **us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires**. Christ’s own power, through the work of His indwelling Holy Spirit, not only warns us about but enables us to resist and renounce sin. “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts,” Paul admonishes, “and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:12–14).

**To deny** carries the idea of a conscious, purposeful action of the will. It means to say no. It is to confess and consciously turn away from that which is sinful and destructive and to move toward that which is good and godly. It includes the commitment a believer makes when he first acknowledges his sin and receives Christ as Savior and Lord as well as the



countless other decisions he makes **to deny** and forsake the **ungodliness and worldly desires** that continue to find their way back into his life.

Those who hold the reductionist notion that a person can be delivered from hell without being delivered from sin contradict the clear teaching of Christ and His apostles. Both John the Baptist and Jesus Himself, the Messiah whom John heralded, began their ministries with calls to repentance (Matt. 3:2, 8, 11; 4:17). In the same way, the first work of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus would send in His name, would be to convict men of sin (John 16:8). After the promised Spirit had descended at Pentecost, those who heard Peter's sermon "were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins' " (Acts 2:37-38).

Christians do not habitually and continually practice sin, because when a person genuinely believes in Jesus Christ, there is a divinely empowered separation from **ungodliness and worldly desires**. **Ungodliness** translates *asebeia*, which here refers to lack of true reverence for and devotion to God. It is "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven" (Rom. 1:18). A person whose life is characterized by **ungodliness** cannot be truly saved, no matter how vocal and orthodox his profession of Christ may be.

The apostle John warns: "Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He [Christ] is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God" (1 John 3:7-10).

After giving a long list of "the deeds of the flesh ... which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these," Paul declares "that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God ... Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:19-21, 24).

**Worldly desires** refers to sins that, although we may not actually have committed, we nevertheless long to commit. These **desires** include all of the countless sinful lusts and cravings that characterize the natural man. They include "youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22), "fleshly lusts" (1 Pet. 2:11), and all other "foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction" (1 Tim. 6:9). When we "walk by the Spirit, [we] will not carry out" the **worldly desires** "of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

On the positive side, Christ graciously instructs us to live **sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age**. Having been *declared* and *made* righteous by our justification through Christ, and made capable of righteous behavior by our confession and God's forgiveness of sin, we therefore are to *practice* righteousness in our sanctification. God has ordained our lives in Christ to be lives of ever increasing righteousness, holiness, and goodness. "As sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21).

Sensibly translates the adverb *sōphronōs*, which carries the basic idea of having a sound mind. Paul has used other forms of that word four previous times in this letter in referring to a quality that should characterize elders/overseers (1:8), older men (2:2), young women (2:5), and young men (2:6). The Christian who lives **sensibly** has control over the issues of life. As noted in chapter 3 of this commentary under the discussion of 1:8, the sensible believer does not allow circumstances or the irresponsible influence of others to distract him or affect his own judgment. He not only is careful not to become involved in things that are immoral or unspiritual, but also avoids things that are simply trivial and unproductive. By the enablement and power of the Holy Spirit in his redeemed inner person, he brings the unredeemed flesh under control.

Christ also graciously instructs us to live **righteously**, faithfully obeying the Word of God, the divine standard of what is right, without reservation. And Christ graciously instructs us to live **godly**, which has the obvious meaning of close fellowship with our heavenly Father.

Our gracious instruction could be seen as three dimensional. The first, living **sensibly**, could relate to the divine and continuing change within us. The second, living **righteously**, connects with our changed relationship toward others, both saved and unsaved. The third, living **godly**, may refer to our changed relationship to God Himself. We are no longer His enemies but His children. We no longer ignore Him, blaspheme Him, or use His name in vain but instead honor Him in reverent adoration, praise, and worship.

All three of those changes, individually and collectively, give distinct evidence **in the present age** of our spiritual rebirth. They are living and powerful testimony, within the church and before the world, of the saving and transforming power of Jesus Christ.

For many people, the only inducement to listen to the gospel is seeing its transforming power producing holiness, love, peace, and the other fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23) in the lives of believers. As Paul declares a few verses later in this letter to Titus, divinely transformed lives are genuinely "zealous for good deeds" (2:14). Faithful believers are therefore to be "careful to engage in good deeds," because "these things are good and profitable for men" (3:8). We are saved in order that God might demonstrate His glorious grace, which produces in us the desire to do what is right and good—thereby giving glory to our Lord and righteously impacting the lives of the unsaved in His name. "For this

reason,” Paul explained to Timothy, “I found mercy [salvation], in order that in me as the foremost [of sinners, v. 15], Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life” (1 Tim. 1:16). As our Lord commands, we are to “let [our] light shine before men in such a way that they may see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

Contrary to the contention of the Pharisees and of most manmade religions, no amount of good works can produce a right relationship with God. It is rather the opposite: only a right relationship with God (secured through personal trust in His Son, Jesus Christ) can produce truly good works. “For by grace you have been saved through faith,” Paul explains in his letter to the church at Ephesus, “and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *for* good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:8–10, emphasis added). The transformed living that the apostle describes in Titus 2:1–10 can only become reality through the divine and gracious work of salvation described in verses 11–14.

## Salvation From the Presence of Sin

### **looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; (2:13)**

One of the marvelous truths implied in this promise is that one day, when our salvation is perfected, we will be glorified, made fully like our Lord in purity and righteousness. “Beloved, now we are children of God,” John assures us, “and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. [But] we know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is” (1 John 3:2).

That future blessed encounter with our Lord will bring total and permanent removal of sin from our lives. Not even a trace will remain. Paul could therefore say to believers in Philippi, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain,” because he had the overwhelming “desire to depart and be with Christ” (Phil. 1:21, 23). The apostle could also say to believers in Rome “that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:22–23).

**Looking for** translates a participle form of *prosdechomai*, which carries the meanings not only of longing and waiting but also of eager and certain expectation. **Hope** translates *elpis*, which, like *prosdechomai*, includes the connotation of confident certainty. It is an especially **blessed**, or happy, **hope** of believers because Paul is not speaking about a fond human wish but about a divinely promised certitude. That certitude is **the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus**. It is for that reason that the apostle

calls it, and that Christians throughout the centuries have called it, the **blessed hope**, the **hope** that is above all other hopes.

**Appearing** is from *epiphaneia*, which has the root ideas of uncovering, unveiling, and disclosing. Paul uses the term both of Jesus' first and second comings. At the first "appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus," He "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). At His second appearing, He will "judge the living and the dead" and establish His earthly kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1). In the meanwhile, His people are to "keep the commandment without stain or reproach until [that second] *appearing* of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:14, emphasis added) and are to rejoice that "in the future there is laid up for [them] the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award ... to all who have loved His *appearing*" (2 Tim. 4:8, emphasis added).

I do not think Paul is speaking specifically of the Rapture—the time when, just before the seven-year Tribulation, Christ will appear and receive all believers, both living and dead, to Himself (1 Thess. 4:13–17)—as distinguished from His coming in judgment at the end of the Tribulation to establish His millennial kingdom, when "the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds" (Matt. 16:27). It seems rather that the apostle is here referring to Christ's second coming in general, when He will appear in **glory** and power rather than in humility and submission as in His first coming.

Paul is focusing on the culmination of our salvation, which will be perfected and completed when our Lord calls us up to the place He has prepared (cf. John 14:1–3), when "we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:51–53; cf. Matt. 24:30–31; 25:31). Paul therefore could assure us that "now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed" (Rom. 13:11). Even while we remain on earth, "our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself" (Phil. 3:20–21). Even when we come back to earth to reign with Him, we will be untemptable and untouchable by sin. In the New Jerusalem, "there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 22:3–5).

The rendering of the nasb (**the appearing of the glory**) is a more accurate rendering than that of the kjv ("the glorious appearing"). In this context, **glory**, like "grace" (2:11),

“kindness,” and “love” (3:4) is not simply a description of Christ but also a personification. In his incarnation, His first appearing, Christ was grace personified. In His second **appearing**, He will be **glory** personified. He will be the blazing Shekinah glory that Peter, James, and John saw partially revealed at Jesus’ transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–8).

**Our great God and Savior** is one of the many plain declarations in Scripture of the deity of Jesus Christ (see, e.g., John 1:1–18; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:1–3). Some interpreters hold that in this passage **God** and **Savior** refer to different beings, the first (**great God**) to the divine Father and the second (**Savior**) to the human Son, **Christ Jesus**. But that explanation has several insurmountable problems. Besides the other clear affirmations of the divinity of Christ in Scripture are several grammatical reasons found in this passage itself. First, there is but one definite article (**the, tou**), which indicates the singularity and identity of **God** and **Savior**. Second, both of the singular pronouns in the following verse (“who,” *hos*; and “Himself,” *heauton*) refer back to a single person. And, although the Old Testament makes countless references to God the Father as **great**, in the New Testament that description is used only of God the Son (see, e.g., Matt. 5:35; Luke 1:32; 7:16; Heb. 10:21; 13:20). Perhaps most importantly, the New Testament nowhere speaks of **the appearing** or Second Coming of God the Father but only of the Son.

## Salvation From Possession by Sin

**who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.** (2:14)

Fourth, and finally, salvation delivers us permanently from sin’s possession.

The unregenerate person is in total bondage to sin. Paul asked believers in Rome, “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” (Rom. 6:16). Because “we have become united with [Christ] in the likeness of His death,” he explains earlier in this chapter, “certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin” (6:5–7).

Our gracious Lord **gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from** our bondage to sin, delivering us from **every lawless deed**. **Redeem** is from *lutroō*, which refers to the releasing of someone held captive, such as a prisoner or a slave, on receipt of a ransom payment.

Paul reminded the elders from Ephesus of their obligation to “be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). Peter reminded his

readers, “You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:18–19).

The purpose of the Son of God coming to earth in His incarnation was “to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). As a divine sacrifice, He “gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” (Gal. 1:4). Like Paul, every believer can say with full assurance: “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20). He graciously “gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (Eph. 5:2; cf. v. 25; 1 Tim. 2:6).

Paul first speaks negatively, focusing on Christ’s redeeming **us from every lawless deed**, from the “fleshly lusts, which,” as Peter declares, “wage war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11).

Positively, Christ also redeems His people in order to **purify for Himself a people for His own possession**. Paul explains that marvelous truth more fully in his letter to the church at Rome. “Thanks be to God,” he exults,

that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. (Rom. 6:17–22)

In order to **purify for Himself a people for His own possession**, “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word” (Eph. 5:25–26). The Lord’s **people** “are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 1 Cor. 6:19–20).

Just as we formerly were possessed and enslaved by sin, now we are possessed by and enslaved to Jesus Christ. His **possession** of His **people** is not temporary but permanent. The Lord Himself made that truth abundantly clear. As already noted, Jesus repeatedly emphasized that a person who believes in Him will be saved with divine security. “All that

the Father gives Me shall come to Me,” He said, “and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out... And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:37, 39–40). On a later occasion Jesus repeated the promise of eternal security: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (John 10:27–29). If salvation were temporary, subject to being lost, then, by definition, it could not guarantee eternal life. But even Satan himself cannot rob a believer of salvation. To be able to do so, he would have to be more powerful than the God who made him and who, as Jesus made clear, is “greater than all.”

As God’s redeemed people, we give still further evidence of our salvation by being **zealous for good deeds**, because “we are [God’s] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10; cf. Titus 3:8). **Good deeds** are not to be an adjunct to our Christian lives, something that we do at our convenience, but are to be a natural, integral, and **zealous** part of our daily living. “How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb. 9:14). The same Spirit who cleanses us from “dead works” desires to replace them with living works.

It has always been God’s purpose for His people to be righteous and holy as a testimony to His own righteousness and holiness before the unbelieving world. “The Lord has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you,” Moses proclaimed to ancient Israel, “and that you should keep all His commandments; and that He shall set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the Lord your God, as He has spoken” (Deut. 26:18–19). Early in His ministry, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told those who believed in Him, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Emphasizing that same truth, Peter wrote, “Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:12). Again from the Lord’s own lips, we have no less a standard than being “perfect, as [our] heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1996). *Titus* (pp. 105–123). Chicago: Moody Press.